

UNRWA condemns the killing of another of its staff

 unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-condemns-killing-another-its-staff

05 December 2013

Damascus

UNRWA condemns the killing of another of its staff, the tenth to die as a result of the Syria conflict. Suzan Ghazazweh, a teacher at Abbasyeh School, Muzeirib, was killed by shrapnel in her home in the afternoon of 2 December when a shell struck her residence in Shamal Al Khatt Quarter, Dera'a. The explosion which took Ms. Ghazazweh's life seriously injured her sister. The thoughts of UNRWA staff are with Ms. Ghazazweh's distraught family.

This tragic death illustrates yet again the devastating impact of the Syria armed conflict on families and on civilian lives. In a war too frequently conducted in and around residential areas, and in which the indiscriminate use of heavy weapons is the norm, the international law obligation to protect civilians is overlooked, and the sanctity of human life is disregarded. As a result, thousands of Palestinians and Syrians civilians are needlessly paying the ultimate price. Sadly, they will continue to do so until the parties to the conflict comply with their obligations to protect civilians, and until the Syria conflict is peacefully resolved.

Born in 1956, Ms Ghazazweh served with UNRWA since September 2001 as a primary school teacher in Dera'a. She is survived by two sons aged 20 and 22 years old.

UNRWA strongly deplores the mounting toll of civilian deaths and casualties in Syria, including among Palestinians and humanitarian workers. In line with the UN Security Council Presidential Statement of 2 October, 2013, the Agency repeats with renewed urgency its appeal to all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, particularly in relation to the protection of civilians. We urge all parties to abide by the prohibition against indiscriminate attacks and attacks against civilians and civilian objects. Once again, UNRWA calls on all concerned actors to redouble their efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the armed conflict in Syria.

Background

Prior to the armed conflict in Syria, Yarmouk, a suburb just south of Damascus city, was home to over 160,000 Palestine refugees. In December 2012 and in the months since, armed conflict has caused at least 140,000 Palestine refugees to flee their homes in Yarmouk, as armed opposition groups established a presence in the area, with government forces controlling the periphery. Between December 2012 and June 2013, civilians could still access UNRWA assistance at the Zahera entrance to Yarmouk. However, from mid-July 2013, Palestine refugees have been trapped in the area, with little or no access or freedom of movement.

Despite extreme challenges, UNRWA continues to support some 420,000 Palestine refugees in Syria with health care, primary education, cash transfers, food assistance, psycho-social support, access to micro-finance and other humanitarian services.

Background Information:

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA programme budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the Agency's programme budget. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals. UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA across its five fields of operation. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.