

UNRWA deplores the violence in Dera'a refugee camp in southern Syria, which reportedly claimed the lives of Palestine refugees and severely damaged UNRWA's Health Centre and Women's Programme Centre.

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The UNITED NATIONS WORKS AND RELIEF AGENCY deplores the violence in Dera'a refugee camp in southern Syria, which reportedly claimed the lives of Palestine refugees and severely damaged UNRWA's Health Centre and Women's Programme Centre.

Initial reports indicate the Dera'a Palestine refugee camp was directly affected by intensive armed conflict on October 12, 2013, alleging that seven Palestine refugees were killed and 15 others injured. As a result of the intense fighting, UNRWA's Primary Health Care Centre and Women's Programme Centre sustained heavy damage.

"Reports from Dera'a of the further loss of Palestinian lives are deeply distressing", lamented Michael Kingsley-Nyinah, Director of UNRWA Affairs in Syria. "UNRWA repeats its calls on all parties to desist from conducting armed conflict in Palestine refugee camps and other civilian areas and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law".

The armed conflict is devastating Palestinian lives and homes. War damage to UNRWA's facilities limits the availability of essential services and aggravates the humanitarian crisis felt by the Palestine refugees. The full extent of the loss and degradation of humanitarian assets remains to be ascertained as many are located in camps and communities, which are not safe to access. These include Yarmouk, Sbeineh, Khan Eshieh, Ein El Tal, Dara'a and Husseiniyeh.

The Dera'a Health Centre was reconstructed and fully re-equipped with donor funds in June 2008. Prior to the conflict, the centre offered a wide range of health services to over 25,000 Palestine refugees residing in Dera'a camp and the surrounding areas. The outbreak of war caused many refugees to seek safety outside the camp and for many months had prevented the health centre from functioning normally.

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. The pursuit of military solutions to the Syria conflict aggravates the already severe human suffering being endured by Syrians and Palestinians alike. Once again, and fully in accordance with the Presidential Statement of the UN Security Council on the

humanitarian situation on Syria adopted on 2 October, UNRWA appeals to all sides and to the international community to urgently resolve the Syria conflict through a peaceful process of mediation and dialogue.

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.