

UNRWA Condemns the Killing of Two Palestine Refugee Children Near Damascus

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Statement by UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness

UNRWA condemns in the strongest possible terms the killing yesterday in a mortar attack of two Palestine refugee children near the Palestine refugee camp of Jaramana, 8 kilometers from Damascus. A fourteen and fourteen and a half year old, both male UNRWA students were killed as they walked home after school. Both children were previously displaced from the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. Two more children aged 14 and 15 were injured in the attack. Our hearts go out to their families and friends in communities that have been so cruelly affected by conflict.

There has been an increase in fighting and mortar incidents in Damascus over the past several days, with reports that 50 mortars landed in Damascus yesterday alone. Mortar attacks reaching Jaramana are the result of ongoing hostilities around East Ghouta that have intensified in recent weeks, now deeply affecting civilians in that area and beyond, among them over 700 Palestine refugee families.

As a result of the attacks and due to the deterioration on the security situation, UNRWA has been forced to suspend schools and food distributions in several areas throughout Damascus and surrounding areas. Over 27,000 children will be directly impacted by the closure of the schools and many more will suffer ongoing trauma as a result of the violence.

We remain committed to delivering a quality education to those 47,000 students across Syria who, despite the war, still manage to access an UNRWA education.

UNRWA repeats its profound concern regarding the impact of the Syria conflict on children, including by impeding their right to education. Children are and must be protected under International Law.

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.