

UNRWA condemns attack on Homs school

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is outraged by the twin bomb attacks on Al Makhzoumi School in Homs on 1 October. The United Nations Secretary-General has also condemned the attack. Initial reports indicate that at least 39 people were killed in the incident, of whom 30 were children. Three Palestine refugee children lost their lives and a further two were injured.

Lana Waleed Elewa (aged 12) and two sisters, Reem Bashar Bakr (aged 12) and Raghad Bashar Bakr (aged 6), Palestine refugee children who live in Homs, were killed when two vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices were detonated close to the gates of their school in the Ekremah neighbourhood of Homs City. The first device exploded as children were leaving school, with the second exploding as frantic relatives and first responders rushed to the scene. All indications are that the explosions were planned and intended to kill, maim and instill fear in children and other civilians at the school.

UNRWA deplores this attack on school children and denounces the parties responsible. Attacks on children are among the most heinous violations of international law.

The thoughts and deepest condolences of all UNRWA staff are with the bereaved families of the victims of these attacks. This incident illustrates the devastating impact the conflict continues to inflict on children and other civilians in Syria, including Palestine refugees.

In the strongest possible terms, UNRWA reiterates its demand that all parties to the conflict in Syria comply with their obligations under international law and cease targeting or otherwise conducting armed conflict in civilian areas. UNRWA calls again on all parties to seek a resolution of the Syria conflict through dialogue and political negotiations.

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.