

Statement by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini on Occasion of the Brussels IV Conference on Syria: Supporting the future of Syria and the region, 30 June 2020

[unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-unrwa-commissioner-general-philippe-lazzarini-occasion](https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-unrwa-commissioner-general-philippe-lazzarini-occasion)

30 June 2020



Statement by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini on Occasion of the Brussels IV Conference on Syria: Supporting the future of Syria and the region, 30 June 2020

Nearly 10 years into the conflict in Syria, some 440,000 Palestine refugees remain in the country.

They are, according to the UN, among the most vulnerable groups inside the country. The harrowing images of the destruction of camps, among them the famous Yarmouk camp, still haunt all those who have lost their homes and livelihoods. More than 90% of Palestine refugee households in Syria live in absolute poverty.

Nearly 45,000 have fled to Lebanon or Jordan.

Yet, too often, Palestine refugees continue to be missing from the narrative of the Syria crisis.

And now COVID-19 is fueling a pandemic of abject poverty among Palestine refugees. Despair and hopelessness are growing.

Palestine refugees rely on UNRWA for cash assistance to cover their basic needs. They send their children to our schools. They use our health clinics. They acquire skills at our vocational training centres.

But this has come at a high cost in Syria. 19 UNRWA staff have been killed and 27 are missing or presumed detained. 40 per cent of our schools and 25 per cent of our clinics are unusable.

Despite these human tragedies and setbacks, we cannot fail the Palestine refugees.

Like the Host countries, UNRWA is struggling to sustain critical services, and this is due to lack of funding at a time when needs are growing.

So today I call on the international humanitarian community to acknowledge the plight of Palestine refugees from Syria and provide the necessary funding for UNRWA to meet their needs. This requires a fully funded programme budget. Without this, our humanitarian operations are at risk.

For Palestine refugees, UNRWA is more than a relief Agency.

It is a source of hope.

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.