

UNRWA condemns shelling of Khan Eshieh School in Syria

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) strongly condemns the parties responsible for the shelling of one of its schools in Khan Eshieh in Syria.

On 28 September, at approximately 1 p.m., just as the second shift was beginning, the Salameh Girls Preparatory School in Khan Eshieh took a direct hit that resulted in one eighth grade student being injured, as well as two teachers, one of whom was seriously wounded. The explosion hit an entrance door adjacent to the teachers' room inside the school compound. This school provides primary education to 258 girls from grades 5 to 9.

UNRWA condemns in the strongest terms this attack on one of the few remaining educational facilities providing education to refugees in Khan Eshieh camp. This is another grievous illustration of the continued exposure of Palestine refugee boys and girls to unacceptable levels of indiscriminate violence, in the very places where they should feel safe.

Khan Eshieh camp, home to about 9,000 Palestine refugees, is located in the rural area south of Damascus. It has experienced intensified armed conflict since 17 May 2016. This has resulted in an increasing number of casualties, including Palestine refugees and other civilians, with at least 20 Palestine refugee civilians killed – and many more injured – in Khan Eshieh camp in the past three months.

UNRWA reiterates its strong demands that all concerned parties refrain from employing methods and means of warfare – including weapons – that expose civilians, including Palestine refugees, to grave risk of death and injury. All parties must comply fully with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including as regards the protection of civilians.

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.