

UNRWA expresses deep concern on water situation in Yarmouk

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File photograph/Middle East Eye

Damascus

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA) is deeply concerned by a severe shortage of clean water in Yarmouk. Since the first week of September, the mains water supply has been disrupted, apparently as a result of damage to pipes in a contested area inside Yarmouk. Drought conditions have forced Yarmouk's 18,000 civilian residents to rely on untreated groundwater and a single well. These water sources are unsafe and insufficient to meet minimum water and sanitation needs. Yarmouk's civilians now contend with the threats of acute dehydration, poor sanitation and communicable and water-borne diseases. This is in addition to worsening food insecurity and other dire humanitarian conditions caused by armed conflict and the closure of Yarmouk in mid-2013.

Yarmouk experienced a major outbreak of typhoid in July 2014 that was only contained through the rapid intervention of UNRWA health staff working in cooperation with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. The supply of clean, pipe-borne water to Yarmouk must

be urgently restored and maintained to prevent further outbreaks of communicable disease. Such outbreaks would have grave consequences for civilians in Yarmouk and threaten surrounding areas of Damascus.

UNRWA is liaising with Syrian authorities to re-establish the supply of safe water in Yarmouk, and is also benefiting from the technical support of UNICEF, WHO, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other humanitarian partners.

UNRWA maintains its demands that parties to the conflict desist from conducting hostilities in civilian areas and that full, safe and continuous humanitarian access must be granted to Yarmouk and other conflict-affected Palestine refugee communities. The human rights of Palestine refugees, including those related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation, must be safeguarded. These demands must be heeded to bring to an end to the extreme civilian suffering in Yarmouk and elsewhere in Syria.

Read about UNRWA's efforts to combat communicable diseases in Syria [here](#).

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.