

UNRWA Shocked at Shrapnel Incident Causing Damage to School Building in Homs, Syria

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Statement by Amany Michael-Ebye, Director of UNRWA Affairs, Syrian Arab Republic

On the morning of Friday, 1 May 2020, the Al-Shajara School of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Homs Palestine refugee camp was hit by shrapnel emanating from an explosion in an ammunition depot outside the camp, causing damage to at least one of its classrooms.

The school was empty at the time of the incident, as are all 103 UNRWA schools across Syria, due to measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

760 Palestine refugee children are currently registered in the damaged school building in Homs, all of whom have grown up during conflict and experienced violence, loss and pain. The incident triggered traumatic memories of earlier days of the Syrian conflict for families living in nearby homes in the crowded camp, as well as for UNRWA staff guarding the facility.

UNRWA is in the process of assessing the damage caused to the school building.

Educational facilities should be protected and remain a safe haven for students to learn and build their future, where they should feel secure and free from the strain of conflict. The right to education, which includes integrity of and access to school buildings, should be protected at all times.