

UNRWA deplores increased violence in Khan Eshieh camp

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) strongly condemns the party responsible for the killing of six year-old Ahmad Zuheir Suleiman T'uheimr, a Palestine refugee in Khan Eshieh camp in southern rural Damascus, at around 1300hrs on 27 May. Ahmad was killed when an artillery explosion struck close to his family home on Al Sa'ed Street, spraying shrapnel inside. Ahmad's mother and twin were injured in the explosion. UNRWA staff offer their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

UNRWA is gravely concerned that the current hostilities in Khan Eshieh camp are imperiling the lives and safety of the camp's residents. The incident of May 27 follows two other explosions on May 17 which killed five Palestine refugees. Ahmad's tragic death and the deaths of many before him are a consequence of the conduct of hostilities and the use of explosive weapons in civilian areas. UNRWA demands from all relevant parties respect for, and compliance with, their international law obligations to protect Palestine refugees in Khan Eshieh and across Syria at all times.

Background information on Khan Eshieh camp

Khan Eshieh camp, home to some 9,000 Palestine refugees, is located in rural Damascus approximately 25 km south-west of Yarmouk.

Since 2012, the farms and fields surrounding the camp have been active battlegrounds in which heavy weapons have been deployed with often indiscriminate impact.

Frequent, intense fighting between armed groups and government forces expose the Palestine refugee residents to the risk of death and serious injury, either inside the camp from the direct impact of heavy weapons or as the refugees travel to and from their homes.

Some 75 UNRWA staff residing in the camp have ensured continuous support to Palestine refugees through services offered in three schools, a health clinic, a community centre, and temporary accommodation for displaced people.

However, since 2013, humanitarian access to Khan Eshieh has been heavily constrained. To receive humanitarian assistance, Palestine refugees must travel at great personal risk to UNRWA distribution centres several kilometres away in the towns of Sahnaya or Khan Dunoun.

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.

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