



For immediate release

7 December 2006

LARGEST EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN APPEAL FOR PALESTINIANS

JERUSALEM, 7 December 2006 – Twelve UN agencies together with 14 NGOs operating in the occupied Palestinian territory today launched an emergency Appeal for \$453.6 million to help meet increasing Palestinian humanitarian needs in 2007. It is the largest appeal for emergency humanitarian assistance ever launched in the occupied Palestinian territory and the third biggest in the world.

“We have been compelled to launch a larger Appeal in the face of the increased need among the Palestinian population”, said Kevin Kennedy, the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator. “It is particularly aimed at assisting the most vulnerable Palestinians, including children who make up about half of the population”.

“Two-thirds of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are now living in poverty. Growing numbers of people are unable to cover their daily food needs and agencies report that basic services such as health care and education are deteriorating and set to worsen much further”, he added.

The rapid deterioration is linked with the fiscal crisis facing the Palestinian Authority that has been unable to pay its 160,000 staff, on whom another one million family members depend for support. In addition, Palestinians are subject to increasing restrictions on their freedom of movement, limiting their access to jobs, markets, health services and schools.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd says, “The loss of life, livelihood and security in the oPt is most distressing. It is increasingly difficult for people to cope in such a volatile and unpredictable environment. UNRWA strives to provide services that enhance the human potential of the refugee population. However, we must go beyond this crisis to be able to help people regain the hope and optimism required for building a stable future. Providing the support outlined in this appeal will be a large step in the right direction.”

Most of the 2007 emergency funding sought will go towards addressing poverty through emergency employment programmes, and expanding food and agricultural aid. Agencies will also support the Palestinian institutions that deliver health, education and psycho-social services. This year’s Appeal also includes a new protection sector in response to the increased death toll and vulnerability of Palestinian civilians.

“Humanitarian assistance can cushion a deteriorating situation, but it ultimately cannot stop the decline,” said David Shearer, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). “Ultimately only a political settlement can generate a significant improvement,” he added.

“We are anxious to help the most needy maintain their dignity and have income. But the humanitarian community is not in a position to provide the full range services offered by the Palestinian Authority – and has no ambitions to do so”.

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