



# UNRWA

## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **\$70 MILLION NEEDED FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN WEST BANK AND GAZA**

-Amman, Jordan May 9, 2002

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has identified an extra US\$70 million to meet the emergency humanitarian needs of refugees in the West Bank and Gaza created by the recent Israeli military incursions into the occupied Palestinian territory.

At a meeting of 28 donor and host countries in Amman, Jordan today UNRWA told donor representatives that the US\$70 million was an initial estimate of the needs that is in addition to US\$ 117 million requested in January to fund the Agency's 2002 emergency programmes. The Agency has so far been promised only US\$46 million for the January appeal.

UNRWA has had to draw on its existing, over-stretched, resources to tend to the wounded and supply food, medicine and water to areas affected by the recent strife. Extra funds are now needed to replenish the Agency stocks of food and medicines and to cater to the longer-term needs of the Palestine refugees. UNRWA confirmed to the donors that the United Arab Emirates has pledged to fund the re-building of the 800 shelters and camp infrastructure destroyed in the centre of Jenin camp. The cost of that rebuilding and repair work is likely to reach US\$35 million.

Mr Peter Hansen, UNRWA's Commissioner General, told donor representatives: "The challenges facing the refugees are immense. After 18 months of closure and hardship the recent Israeli invasion has led to large-scale destruction of shelters, water supplies, electricity lines and sewage lines. There has been a wholesale destruction of civic infrastructure with the result that a large portion of the refugee population finds itself without the basic services and means of support for the minimum standards of life. The refugees urgently need the support of the international community."

The Agency also described to donors the extreme difficulties it faces in carrying out its humanitarian work because of the access restrictions imposed by Israel's military authorities. Food distribution is being continually hampered in both the West Bank and Gaza by movement restrictions placed on UNRWA deliveries. The almost complete closure of commercial entry points to the Gaza Strip to containers delivering UNRWA's food commodities has caused particular concern. Many donor delegations underscored the importance of Israeli's compliance with its obligations under international law to allow the Agency humanitarian access and to ensure the safety and security of UNRWA and other relief workers.

Mr Hansen added: "It is particularly disturbing that donations intended for humanitarian aid have had to be spent on storing that aid at Israeli ports rather than distributing it to the needy. Already we have had to cancel the distribution of emergency food aid planned for May 11 because the food cannot be brought into Gaza. That aid is intended for the very poorest of the refugees, people who cannot afford to go without UNRWA assistance."

Donor delegations commended the staff of UNRWA in the occupied Palestinian territories for the extraordinary efforts they were making to deliver humanitarian assistance to refugees in the midst of the conflict and at great personal risk.

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