

UNITED NATIONS CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND ALLOCATES US\$15 MILLION TO SUPPORT PEOPLE FLEEING VIOLENCE IN FALLUJAH, IRAQ

(New York, 20 June 2016): United Nations humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien has today released US\$15 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to provide urgent life-saving assistance for people affected by the recent fighting and military operations in Fallujah.

Since last month, more than 85,000 people have been forced to flee the city, displacing families from their homes, communities and livelihoods. Those remaining in the city face dire shortages of food, medicine, electricity and safe drinking water.

"The families who have managed to flee Fallujah have escaped with nothing: they need everything," warned Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. "Humanitarian partners are working around the clock to provide shelter, water, health care, household kits and specialized support for the victims of gender and sexual-based violence. This CERF grant will allow us to rapidly scale up our efforts, so it could not be more timely."

Temperatures in the region are averaging 115°F /46°C and rising. Many people are unable to access clean drinking water, and shade is limited. Already vulnerable communities are more susceptible to outbreaks of communicable diseases, and there is a real risk of a cholera outbreak. Response efforts will include improvements to hygiene and sanitation, to help prevent the spread of disease.

CERF funds will enable the United Nations humanitarian agencies in Iraq, including IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and WHO, to quickly assist the newly displaced people.

We are working with the Iraqi Government to quickly set up camps to provide additional shelters. Humanitarian partners will also focus on relief efforts to assist women and children who are particularly vulnerable in this conflict. Mobile psychological support teams are being established to provide specialized care for victims of the violence. The CERF funding will also enable health teams to provide critical care for new-born babies and children who have had limited health support and who have not yet been immunized.

"People escaping Fallujah are in desperate need of assistance now, this minute. We must act fast before this situation becomes a humanitarian catastrophe. These funds are time critical; however they only offer a small portion of what is urgently needed," said Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien. "I call on donors to immediately support our humanitarian response and leverage this CERF allocation with additional resources so that together we can effectively address the growing humanitarian needs throughout Iraq."

The United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan in Iraq has called for \$861 million to address the needs of people affected by the current crisis. To date this appeal is only 36 per cent funded. In addition a further \$65 million will be needed to respond to the current situation in Fallujah. This is expected to further strain already stretched resources and force humanitarian partners to reprioritize existing relief supplies and services.

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Contingency stocks are nearly depleted, which could leave other communities in the country potentially vulnerable. While agencies have been preparing for the Fallujah situation for some time, the number of displaced people and the scope of their needs have outpaced humanitarian capacity.

CERF is one of the fastest and most effective ways to support rapid humanitarian response. Donors preposition funds with CERF so that money is available to start or continue urgent relief work at the onset of emergencies and for crises that have not attracted sufficient funding. Since 2006, 126 UN Member States and observers, as well as several private sector donors and regional governments have supported the Fund. Over the past 10 years, CERF has allocated almost \$4.5 billion for humanitarian operations in 94 countries and territories. Recently Iraq became the 126th donor to CERF.

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