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Speaking at a meeting of the Syria Humanitarian Forum held on 19 February in Geneva, Switzerland, UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi emphasized the vulnerability of the 500,000-strong Palestinian community in Syria, and called on all donors to honor the pledges they made at last month's fundraising conference in Kuwait.

Grandi said that UNRWA would continue to operate in the embattled country, despite intense challenges. He appealed to all the parties to the conflict to respect the neutrality of the Palestinians in Syria, as well as UNRWA installations there.

The full transcript of [the Commissioner-General's speech](#).

Regional overview

The situation in Syria continued to deteriorate this week with a sharp escalation in hostilities reaching the centre of Damascus. Palestine refugees and Syrians alike can no longer meet their basic needs, particularly in conflict-affected areas of Rif Damascus Governorate and Aleppo. With external flight options restricted, Palestine refugees remain a particularly vulnerable group. As a result of the escalation in violence since the launch of UNRWA's Syria Crisis Response 2013, the number of Palestine refugees in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance has reached over 400,000 individuals. This number is rising daily due to the spread of violence including to the centre of Damascus. Violence in Syria has also resulted in approximately 4,092 Palestine refugees who have fled to Jordan. The number of Palestine refugees who have fled to Lebanon is rapidly approaching 30,000 individuals.

Syria

At a glance:

- Hostilities escalate in the centre of Damascus, including shelling allegedly targeting the Ministry of Defense and clashes in the Barzeh neighbourhood;
- The situation remains volatile and unpredictable in camps in Yarmouk and other camps in the Damascus/Rif Damascus Governorate;
- Over 14,000 families in Damascus and Aleppo areas were provided with emergency cash assistance during the month of February;
- Food insecurity is deepening in the Aleppo area due to restricted humanitarian access;

Since March 2011, UNRWA's network of staff and humanitarian assets have been put to use in providing 28,652 refugee households with food parcels, 13,605 mattresses, 25,752 blankets, 2,536 hygiene kits and cash assistance to nearly 60,000 families.

Currently, there are 8,765 IDPs sheltering in UNRWA facilities in Syria. The IDPs are unable to afford alternative shelter and are dependent on humanitarian aid for their basic needs. Almost half of them are children and there are 69 elderly IDPs and 99 pregnant women, 19 of whom are close to term.

IDPs in four UNRWA facilities as of 19 February**:

Area	Women	Men	Children	Total
Damascus Training Centre	407	469	577	1453
Damascus (Jaramana Camp)	280	209	564	1053
Damascus (Mezzeh)	154	146	207	507
Damascus (Khan Eshieh Camp)	451	347	537	1335
Damascus (Ramadan Camp)	574	473	793	1840
Damascus (Dummar)	146	112	286	544
Damascus (Rukn Eddin)	130	145	227	502

Damascus (Khan Dannoun Camp)	171	190	413	774
Aleppo	199	227	303	729
Hama	-	-	-	28
Total	2512	2318	3907	8765

** Over the past weeks, UNRWA has been striving to locate displaced Palestine refugees. These efforts have been successful in locating 2,603 Palestine refugees at 8 non-UNRWA schools in Qudsaya, Khan Esheikh and Khan Dannoun. 1,926 Palestine refugees have been identified in Hama Camp, having come from Yarmouk and Ein el Tal. 5,281 refugees have made themselves known to UNRWA in Homs Camp, having fled from Aleppo, Damascus and Homs countryside. 2,171 refugees have made themselves known to UNRWA in Latakia, having fled from Yarmouk and Ein el Tal. (Total: 11,981)

- **Damascus and the surrounding area:**

Clashes have escalated reaching the centre of Damascus, including reports of shelling allegedly targeting the Ministry of Defense, fatalities in the Mazra'a area caused by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) in the vicinity of the headquarters of the Ba'athist political party and two other VBIEDs allegedly aimed at two security forces' facilities in Barzeh neighbourhood. Intensive clashes and shelling are severely restricting access to Yarmouk camp, with hostilities reported close to the entrances. Security forces reportedly control access to the camp, occasionally blocking the access route via Yarmouk Street. Few refugees have returned to the camp since the outbreak of violence in December 2012 with hostilities spilling over into neighbouring areas such as Hajar Al-Aswad, and other nearly deserted camps in Damascus/Rif Damascus Governorate such as Sbeineh, Seyeda Zaynab and Husseinieh. Although difficult to verify due to restricted access, it is estimated that there are cases of more than 60 per cent of residents fleeing camps such as Husseinieh for safer ground. The most destitute Palestine refugees do not have the means to leave camps during armed conflict and are particularly vulnerable. The situation in Yarmouk and other camps where hostilities continue has forced UNRWA to temporarily close a number of its facilities. Despite the temporary closure of UNRWA services in Yarmouk, the Agency continues to explore alternative modalities for the delivery of essential services including the establishment of emergency health points and alternative learning to meet the needs of displaced Palestine refugees.

- **Aleppo:**

The situation in Aleppo continues to deteriorate. It is estimated that approximately 30 per cent of Palestine refugees have fled Ein el Tal camp. UNRWA is gravely concerned over reports that armed opposition elements are allegedly threatening camp residents and restricting humanitarian access, including the delivery of food for the last five days. Despite security concerns over the reported actions of armed opposition elements, UNRWA

facilities remain operational.

- **Dera'a:**

Hostilities continue throughout the area of Dera'a, including the town centre and the southern part of the camp. A refugee was reportedly killed in the area en route to Damascus. Despite clashes, UNRWA continues to implement its plan to relocate the health centre to a new building that is more accessible to beneficiaries and staff.

- **Hama:**

The situation remains calm in the area and UNRWA continues to provide services to beneficiaries in the area, including over 400 displaced families currently in the camp.

- **Homs:**

The situation remains grave in Homs following reports of security forces' operations in search of armed opposition elements allegedly in the camp. There were reports of four refugees killed during the operation, which also temporarily disrupted UNRWA services.

- **Latakia:**

The city and camp remain calm and UNRWA has recently provided emergency food and NFI assistance to 271 displaced families. The Arida border crossing with Lebanon, to the south of Lattakia, was temporarily closed on Monday due to a security incident.

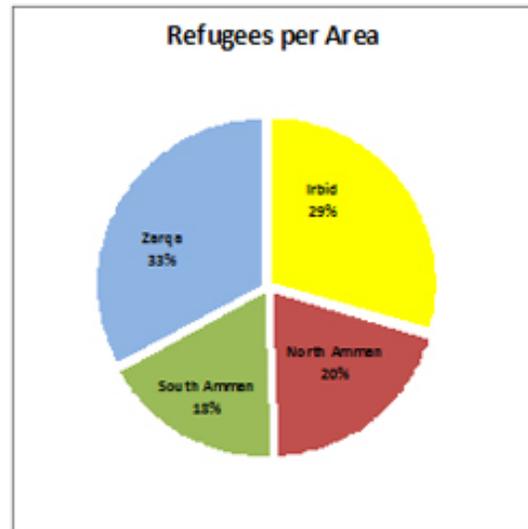
Lebanon

The deteriorating situation and compounding humanitarian needs in Syria has led to an increase in the number of Palestine refugees fleeing to Lebanon, now rapidly approaching 30,000 individuals. In Lebanon, Palestine refugees from Syria are dispersed in Saida (30 per cent), northern Lebanon (15 per cent), Beqa'a (23 per cent), central Lebanon Area (17 per cent) and Tyre (15 per cent). UNRWA continues to provide cash assistance to vulnerable Palestine refugee families from Syria who cannot afford basic shelter. In coordination with the humanitarian community, UNRWA distributed vouchers to assist the displaced Palestine refugees with their clothing and food needs. UNRWA's alternative education modalities programme ensures that approximately 2,700 Palestine refugee children from Syria are able to continue their education despite displacement. In many cases, Palestine refugees from Syria are dependent on the host community, already in a poor socio-economic situation, for shelter and assistance. UNRWA is planning to enhance the environmental health and sanitation systems in camps of host communities where there is severe overcrowding.

Jordan

Currently, there are 4092 Palestinian refugees who have fled from Syria (PRS) registered with UNRWA in Jordan, of which 77% are women and children.Â

Of this total, there are 221 individuals in Cyber City, the government appointed facility in Irbid governorate, north of Amman. UNRWA has begun work to highlight to the Government of Jordan the cases of 'split families' in Cyber City.Â Split families are those where one parent resides in Cyber City and one in the community.



As Jordan is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in which the right to family unity is enshrined (defined in article 9 as the right of children to not be separated from their family against their will), UNRWA is seeking humanitarian bailout of family members in Cyber City when children and parents are separated on the basis of the rights of the children concerned. With increasing refugee numbers (both Syrian and Palestinian) and heightening sensitivities of the Jordanian Government, the bailout system for Palestinians was suspended mid-April 2012.

In Cyber City, core services such as food, education and healthcare are provided by UN agencies and NGOs. UNRWA provides to Palestinians all medicine for chronic illnesses, covers hospitalization cost and offers daily support from social workers. Additionally, In Cyber City, UNRWA supplements core services with a weekly mobile dental clinic that serves all residents of Cyber City, including Syrians. Since July of 2012, when the program commenced, the number of patients provided with primary care ranges from 63 to 75 per month. Palestinians needing specialized care are referred to a clinic in Ramtha.



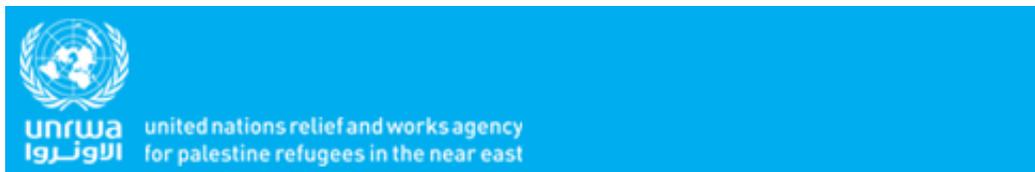
Mobile Dental Clinic in Cyber City, Irbid Governorate.

Funding needs

The total pledged amount against the 2013 Response Plan is now at USD 26.65 million, equivalent to 29.2% of the total budget of the 2013 Response Plan required (USD 91.24 million). New pledges of US\$ 405,280 were confirmed, from Iceland, OCHA (ERF) and the American Friends of UNRWA.

Out of the USD 26.65 million pledged funds, USD 18.16 million were received so far.

Out of the USD 28.9m pledged funds USD 1.98 million remain outstanding (= outstanding installments of 2012 pledges).



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