

UNRWA gravely concerned about heavy gun fire into the refugee camp in the Syrian port city of Latakia

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Statement by UNRWA Spokesman, Chris Guinness

14 August 2011

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, is gravely concerned about reports of heavy gunfire from Syrian security forces into the Palestinian refugee camp situated in the El Ramel district and surrounding areas of Latakia, including heavy fire from gunboats. Reports from various sources indicate deaths and casualties among the Palestinian refugee population, although poor communications make it impossible to confirm the exact number of dead and injured.

UNRWA condemns the use of force against civilians. We call on the Syrian authorities to order their security forces to exercise utmost restraint in accordance with international law and ensure that all civilians including Palestinian refugees are unharmed. We demand expeditious and unhindered access for humanitarian workers to tend to the injured and dying. In addition we demand unhindered access for UNRWA so that the Agency can resume its full services in the camp which have been severely affected by the unrest.

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For more information, please contact:

Christopher Guinness
UNRWA Spokesperson
Mobile: +972 (0)54 240 2659
Office: +972 (0)2 589 0267
[Show Email](#)

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.