

# Statement on the situation in Yarmouk from UNRWA spokesperson Chris Gunness

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UNRWA is extremely concerned about the safety and protection of Syrian and Palestinian civilians in the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk in Damascus, where since early afternoon today, intensive armed conflict has been ongoing between armed groups present in the area.

Credible information from public sources indicates that a variety of armed groups are engaged in fierce fighting in areas where Yarmouk's 18,000 civilians, including some 3,500 children reside, placing them at extreme risk of death, serious injury, trauma and displacement. UNRWA is anxiously continuing to monitor the situation closely.

In the strongest possible terms, UNRWA demands from all parties respect for and compliance with their obligations to ensure the protection of civilians in Yarmouk. UNRWA further demands an end to the fighting and a return to conditions that will enable its staff to support and assist Yarmouk's civilians.

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.