

# UNRWA condemns killing of four Palestine refugees in Khan Eshieh camp in Syria and calls for full humanitarian access

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*Statement by UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness*

Four Palestine refugees were killed on the night of 18 October as they attempted to leave the Khan Eshieh Palestine refugee camp, south of the Syrian capital, Damascus, to which access has been highly restricted. Nofeh Mohammed Jarad, who was in her 60's, her daughter Ibaa Saeed al-Nader, 22, their driver and a one-year old baby were all killed when their vehicle was shelled around 10 p.m. The mother of the baby, a Syrian citizen, also died in the incident.

UNRWA condemns this attack and the killing and wounding of all civilians including Palestine refugees. It calls on those responsible to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and demands that the parties to the conflict do their utmost to protect civilian life in accordance with international law.

Tightened security around the area has severely reduced the ability of residents to move safely and readily access humanitarian aid and medical support. Camp residents face grave risks when attempting to leave Khan Eshieh.

UNRWA renews its call for full humanitarian access to Khan Eshieh to deliver emergency food, cash assistance and medicines. Access to humanitarian assistance has been constrained since 2013 and UNRWA is particularly concerned about a lack of medicines and the impact this will have on children, chronic disease patients and the elderly in Khan Eshieh. UNRWA calls on the parties to allow civilians, who wish to leave the area, to do so in safety.

We are deeply concerned about the situation of Palestine Refugees in Khan Eshieh and the real risk of it becoming another Yarmouk, the Refugee Camp in Damascus devastated by years of fighting and terrifying violence.

Khan Eshieh camp, home to about 8,000 Palestine refugees, is located in the rural area south of Damascus. It has experienced intensified armed conflict since 17 May 2016. This has resulted in an increasing number of civilian casualties, including Palestine refugees and other civilians, with at least 31 Palestine refugees killed since May 2016 – and many more injured – in Khan Eshieh camp in the past three months.

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.