

syria

unrwa



## supporting palestinian resilience in syria: unrwa syria crisis response

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### Recent developments

In the past two months, Palestine refugees in Syria have increasingly found themselves in danger and pushed from their homes, as conflict spreads through the country's Palestinian refugee camps.

Palestinians' relative safety in Syria, preserved to date by their politically-neutral stance, has effectively been shattered. They are now a particularly vulnerable group. Adding to this vulnerability is the situation in the region, making their presence and movements sensitive.

UNRWA estimates that of a population of 525,000 Palestine refugees in Syria, as many as half have been displaced. Some 400,000 are in need. The majority of Palestine refugees in Yarmouk refugee camp and other Damascus-area camps, as well as Dera'a in the south, have fled their homes. Many have reached

neighbouring countries, most have found shelter in schools or safer camps elsewhere in Syria.

The violent chaos in and around their camps and the unraveling of the fabric of their lives is a devastating material and psychological blow to the Palestinians, who raised their families and built stable communities in Syria after their original dispossession in 1948.

In Lebanon, the number of Palestinians from Syria is now approaching 30,000. The pressure on existing camps in that country, squalid even before the influx, has become enormous. Lebanon is an increasingly desperate option for the refugees.

Some 3,800 Palestine refugees from Syria have reached Jordan. The relatively small number is a direct result of the Government of Jordan's policy to stem the flow of Palestinians. UNRWA is providing support in Lebanon and Jordan, including schooling and health care.



united nations relief and works agency  
for palestinian refugees in the near east

[www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org)

## UNRWA's response

### 1. Operations

UNRWA's six decades of operation and experienced cadre of education, health and relief professionals gives the Agency a robust infrastructure with considerable staying power. UNRWA's 3,700 area staff members in Syria are the backbone of the Agency's response.

Even though five staff members have been killed in Syria, and several have been injured and nine are missing, they remain dedicated to serving their communities.

In spite of the growing challenges, UNRWA's schools and clinics continue to provide services where possible. One-half of the Agency's 118 schools in Syria are functioning, and two-thirds of its 23 clinics are still operating. UNRWA is finding ways to adapt, such as alternative places in safe areas to re-locate services, and flexible or remote working arrangements to maximise staff efficiency and minimise travel dangers.

### 2. Emergency assistance

UNRWA continues to distribute cash, food and supplies to Palestine refugees across Syria, as conditions permit. In December alone, the Agency reached some 123,000 people with assistance; but needs now far outstretch available resources. Cash remains an effective support, but as purchasing power declines and goods disappear from the market, UNRWA is stepping up direct provision of essential supplies.

In collaboration with other humanitarian agencies, UNRWA is providing internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in its schools and other facilities with food and basic supplies and medical care, as well as managing the welfare of IDPs in 13 of its own facilities.

The movement of international staff in Syria is extremely restricted, and UNRWA relies on area staff in Aleppo, Latakia, Homs, Hama, Damascus and Dera'a to manage services and monitor distributions of emergency assistance.

### UNRWA:

- Deplores the unrelenting armed conflict in Syria and continues to call on all parties to comply with their obligations to protect civilians under international law;
- Appeals for USD91 million to cover its Syria regional response through June 2013. 29 per cent has been pledged, but needs estimates have already been exceeded;
- Stresses the importance of shoring up the resilience of Palestinians in Syria to minimise suffering and displacement, which may have regional repercussions;
- Urges the Government of Jordan to uphold the principles of non-*refoulement* and equal treatment of refugees;
- Commends the Government of Lebanon for its full commitment to an open border policy towards Palestine refugees from Syria;
- Urges the international community to support Lebanon and Jordan generously in managing the growing refugee influx;
- Thanks its staff members in Syria for their unfaltering dedication, commitment and bravery in the face of overwhelming challenge and hardship.

