unrwa west bank – camp profile: balata camp*

overview

Balata camp is located in Nablus, in the northern West Bank. Originally intended to serve approximately 5,000 Palestine refugees, it is today the most populous camp in the West Bank and home to 32,561 people. Poor and insufficient infrastructure puts pressure on camp residents as the effects of overpopulation profoundly impact daily life. Over the years, construction of new residences has encroached on public spaces and turned streets into narrow alleys with barely enough space for people to pass. This results in a sense of lack of privacy and living space for camp residents. UNRWA facilities remain one of few safe spaces for children to play outdoors.

The Israeli Security Forces (ISF) conduct operations in the camp, and generally enter with a large deployment of troops, confrontations between ISF and local residents often involve the use of live ammunition and other forms of weaponry – with the risk of injury and loss of life.

High unemployment, particularly among youth who make up around 60% of camp residents, is a major challenge. Unemployment rates remain a challenge inside all camps with 17% recorded by PCBS’s Labour Taskforce Report, Q4 2022.

Balata camp’s levels of poverty and food insecurity are among the highest in the West Bank camps. The critical socio-economic situation in the camp brings with it a pronounced sense of frustration for camp residents about their future prospects.

Despite the major challenges facing residents, Balata camp is known for its strong civil society and has a large number of active community organizations.

32,561 Registered population

8,920 Children 0-18 year (4,394 female 4,526 male)

education

UNRWA has two girls’ schools and two boys’ schools in Balata camp, which serve a total of 2,601 students based on 2021/22 scholastic year data. In 2014, UNRWA reconstructed one of the Balata boys’ schools. Facilities in the four schools include libraries and both computer and science laboratories. UNRWA psychosocial counsellors are present in the camp’s schools to respond to the students’ needs.

Socioeconomic and political problems in the camp are reflected in the children’s behaviour, contributing to discipline difficulties and incidents of violence among students. Children often come to school without having eaten and without money for lunch. Despite limited resources and intense workloads, teachers work hard to keep the children engaged and enrolled in school.

4 Schools

2,601 Students

2 girls’ 1,409

2 boys’ 1,192

85 Education staff: teachers, school principals, deputy school principals and school counselors

health

Balata health centre serves almost 50,000 refugees from both inside and outside the camp and provides an extensive list of services. The health centre was reconstructed with funding from the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) and completed in 2017. The centre provides primary health care services including reproductive health, oral health, infant and child care, immunizations, screening and medical check-ups, treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases, physiotherapy and psychosocial counselling. The centre is implementing the Family Health Team approach which focuses on the family with the aim of providing comprehensive, continuous care. The Family Health Team has improved patient flow and reduced the number of consultations per doctor. An electronic health information system for patient files is also in place, which increases the accuracy of data and health information, as well as health service efficiency in the centre.

1 Health centre

34 Health staff (Doctors, Specialist, Pharmacists, Dental Surgeons, Nurses and Paramedics)

2,699 Patients with non-communicable diseases provided with care

1,002 Pregnant women provided with Antenatal Care

3,509 Children 0-5 years provided with Child Health Care

*all data presented is unrwa annual data for 2022 unless stated otherwise
Establishment of a waste transfer station due to the current presence of waste removal areas near residential areas which result in odours and unsanitary conditions.

Rehabilitation of storm water and sewage networks. This rehabilitation will prevent damages as a result of overflooding in residential properties during winter storms. In addition, it would prevent the leakage of sewage water into drinking water which can be life-threatening.

Shelter rehabilitation for the most vulnerable to promote the lives of the residents inside the camp. There are still more than 300 homes in need of partial or complete rehabilitation.

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- **2,309** identified poor households* (10,426 individuals)
- **419** Female-headed household identified poor
- **24%** of the identified poor households benefit from the e-card (Social Safety Net Programme and Emergency Cash Assistance)
- **565** Households  **3,528** Individuals
- **81** Female-headed household

**Relief & Social Services**

Through the Social Safety Net Programme, UNRWA provides cash assistance to around 2,448 impoverished refugees each year, which is equivalent to 7.5 per cent of the registered population in the camp. Moreover, through the Emergency Appeal (EA), an additional 1,080 individuals receive emergency cash assistance (ECA). In addition, UNRWA Crisis Intervention Unit provides financial assistance to residents whose shelters have been damaged after incursions to repair broken doors, windows, etc. It also refers the victims to services such as mental health counselling and legal assistance.

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ISF frequently detain camp residents during operations that occur, on average, more than twice every month. The operations that often occur at night often lead to ISF detentions of camp residents and serve as a trigger for clashes. Further, the operations are highly psychologically straining for camp residents who are left with a sense of fear and anxiety, especially young children. ISF often use live ammunition, tear gas and Plastic-Coated Metal Bullets (PCMBs) against camp residents during operations, leading to injuries and fatalities.

In October ISF imposed heavy movement restrictions of people in the Nablus area for 22 days, which also hampered the delivery of humanitarian services, including in Balata Camp.

- **35** Detainees, including 3 minors
- **14** Confrontations
- **31** ISF Operations
- **8** Teargas incidents

**Infrastructure & Camp Improvement**

The UNRWA Sanitation Foreman conducts daily water examinations (residual chlorine test) and manages a team of 22 sanitation labourers (6 temporary staff through various sources of funds). The environmental health team maintains the sewerage and storm water networks and collect solid waste throughout the camp. There are eight collection containers for solid waste located outside the camp because of the lack of adequate space within the camp. This situation, in addition to the large camp population, makes waste management challenging in Balata camp. Moreover, some residents dispose livestock waste in the containers, which contributes to rodent infestation that poses a health risk for residents and requires continuous attention from UNRWA sanitation labourers. The solid waste is transported by the Nablus municipality to al-Siera/f_i Collection point, east of Nablus city, and then to the Zahrit al-Finjan Land/f_ill.

- **10,323** Tons of solid waste removed in camps
- **100%** Sewerage connection
- **22** Sanitation labourers

**Protection & Neutrality**

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In recent years, frequent violent family disputes within the camp have added to the security issues facing camp residents.

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* Poor Households are identified using UNRWA’s standard criteria, the Proxy Means Testing Formula (PMTF).