The fourth quarter of 2016 continued to be marked by a sharp escalation of armed violence across the country. The situation in Aleppo deteriorated, claiming the lives of many civilians, including Palestine refugees. In Khan Eshieh, in southern Rif Damascus, direct shelling destroyed civilian houses and a number of Palestine refugees were reportedly killed. On 16 December, an inter-agency convoy was authorized to reach civilians trapped in Khan Eshieh camp. UNRWA participated in the convoy and successfully delivered food, non-food items (NFIs) and medical items to Palestine refugees trapped in the area. This was the first time since 2013 that UNRWA had gained access to Khan Eshieh camp.

**CASH ASSISTANCE:**
From October through December 2016, UNRWA distributed cash grants to 135,704 Palestine refugees (37,461 families) as part of the third cycle of cash assistance. Each beneficiary received the equivalent of US$ 74 in Syrian Pound via 45 distribution points in Aleppo, Damascus, Dera’a, Hama, Homs, Latakia, Qamishli and Sweida. Simultaneously, a verification exercise was conducted to assess the current caseload of cash assistance beneficiaries remaining in Syria; results from this exercise will be communicated in 2017. The cash assistance programme represents the core of the Agency’s emergency response in Syria and remains vital as economic conditions worsen across the country.

**FOOD AND NFI ASSISTANCE:**
The Agency launched its fourth round of food assistance in November, which will run until January 2017. In total, for the fourth quarter of 2016, UNRWA distributed 219,654 family food parcels, benefiting 690,912 Palestine refugees (177,942 families) via 17 distribution centres in Aleppo, Damascus area, Dera’a, Hama, Homs, Latakia and Sweida. In addition, beneficiaries also received 22,867 blankets, 1,392 mattresses and 3,195 baby kits.

**SHELTER:**
Over the fourth quarter, a further reduction in the number of collective shelters and residents was registered. By the end of December, UNRWA was providing shelter to 2,354 Palestine refugees in need. A further reduction in the number of collective shelters and residents was registered. By the end of December, UNRWA was providing shelter to 2,354 Palestine refugees in need. A further reduction in the number of collective shelters and residents was registered. By the end of December, UNRWA was providing shelter to 2,354 Palestine refugees in need.

**HEALTH:**
UNRWA continues to operate 26 primary health-care facilities and one mobile unit across Syria. In this quarter, more than 239,179 health and 27,335 dental consultations (13,387 preventive and 13,948 curative) were provided to Palestine refugee patients through a network of 15 operational health centres and 11 health points. Health centres provide outpatient consultations, pharmacy services and referrals for hospitalization where required. To ensure access to subsidized secondary health care for Palestine refugees in Syria, the Agency maintains agreements with 23 hospitals across the country.

**EDUCATION:**
The new academic year commenced on 18 September 2016. By December, 45,625 students were attending. They were welcomed by 1,860 teachers in 101 schools across Syria, including 45 UNRWA schools and 56 UNRWA-managed schools in government buildings. The UNRWA Education in Emergencies (EiE) programme continued to provide additional support to ensure the continued delivery of quality education in times of emergency. The UNRWA EiE programme in Syria includes the provision of eight safe learning spaces, psychosocial support, self-learning materials and regular catch-up classes. Ninety per cent of UNRWA schools maintained double-shifts, while 5 per cent upheld triple shifts to accommodate all the students enrolled.

**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE:**
During the fourth quarter, UNRWA provided a total of 29,254 hygiene kits to distribution centres and a further 2,461 kits to collective shelters. In total, 1,592 packs of baby diapers, 12,379 adult diapers and 6,128 sanitary napkins were distributed to displaced refugees in collective shelters. The Agency also provided regular garbage collection, rehabilitation of sewage systems infrastructure, equipment and spare parts to camps and host communities. In addition, safe drinking water was delivered to areas where access to water remains extremely difficult via water trucks, including in gatherings in Jdayet Artouz and Shahba.