



UNRWA

PRESS RELEASE

Press Release No. HQ/G/22/2004

11 July 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNRWA, UNDP AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SIGN LAND AGREEMENT TO REBUILD HOMES IN RAFAH

Ramallah

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Palestinian Authority today signed a land agreement that will allow the United Nations agencies to build replacement homes in Rafah in the Gaza Strip.

The agreement will see the PA donate 430 dunums of land in Rafah to a project to rebuild homes for some of the more than 15,000 people whose homes in Rafah have been demolished by the Israeli military since the start of the current intifada.

UNDP already has the approval for funding from the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinians to build 300 housing units, in addition to schools, roads and other community amenities. UNRWA has received a pledge from the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society that it will fund the rebuilding of at least 400 homes. Further funds have been contingent on the UN receiving this donation of land from the PA.

The land agreement will now allow UNRWA to complete its negotiations with the UAE Red Crescent and the Saudi Fund for Development who have both indicated that they are interested to provide substantial funding to rebuild more shelters and public facilities. UNRWA is also holding talks with other donors that have traditionally supported the Agency and is confident that pledges will be forthcoming to allow it to eventually rebuild hundreds more homes.

Peter Hansen, UNRWA's Commissioner-General said: "This agreement now allows UNRWA to move on quickly to the most important task in hand - that of translating the concern of the international community for the people of Rafah into bricks and mortar. We can now tap into the generosity of all those individuals who have made donations for the people of Rafah while also approaching the major international donors who wish to help. I wish to pay tribute to President Arafat and Prime Minister Qurei and to the Chairman of the Palestinian Land Authority, Mr. Freih Abu Meddein who have acted quickly to ensure that land has been found in Rafah."

Tim Rothermel, Special Representative of the UNDP in the West Bank and Gaza said: "I join Commissioner-General Hansen in my gratitude to the leadership of the Palestinian Authority for its quick action in allocating land in Rafah for urgently needed housing and sincerely thank the Saudi Committee for its generosity."

Over 22,000 people have lost their homes (approximately 2,270 buildings) to Israeli demolitions in the Gaza Strip, since the beginning of the current strife. Almost three quarters, over 15,000 people, are those who have lost their homes in Rafah.

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