



UNRWA

PRESS RELEASE

Press Release No. HQ/G/02/2005
03 February 2005
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Shelters for Rafah Homeless

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) today handed over 122 new homes to 135 families from Rafah refugee camp whose shelters have been destroyed by the Israeli military during the last four years.

These homes are the visible expression of UNRWA's pledge to provide shelter for all these refugees made homeless by the conflict that has raged since September 2000. According to UNRWA's statistics, by end of December 2004, a total of 2,991 shelters, home to over 28,483 people had been demolished or damaged beyond repair in the Gaza Strip since the start of the strife.

The 122 buildings opened today will house almost 700 people and are part of a five-phase project that will eventually provide 431 new homes. This, the fourth phase, was funded by donations from Canada, Belgium, Norway and unearmarked contributions to UNRWA's emergency appeals. The total cost of this part of the project, including the infrastructure work, is approximately \$ 2.3 million.

Homeless families waiting for their new shelters have already been provided with emergency assistance from UNRWA, in the form of tents, blankets, kitchen utensils, food parcels, and rental subsidies. Additionally, the construction project itself has served to alleviate some of the hardships being felt in the Gaza Strip. It provided around 50,000 man-days of temporary employment for laborers, builders, and tradesmen in an area where unemployment is exceptionally high.

In total in Gaza Strip a total of total of 903 shelters have been rebuilt or are at the planning and tendering stage. However, UNRWA still needs more than \$54 million to meet the current requirement for a further 2,532 new shelters to house homeless families throughout the Gaza Strip.

UNRWA is now in discussions with several donors about the construction of a new small town in Rafah for the homeless. The Palestinian Authority has donated 428.5 dunums of land to the project.

-ENDS-

For more information call Jamal Hamad on 059 416 877