



UNRWA

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gaza Violence Putting Humanitarian Operation in Jeopardy

A 13-year-old schoolgirl and an UNRWA teacher were injured in crossfire during armed clashes that took place in the vicinity of UNRWA schools on Tuesday. In a separate incident an UNRWA driver on duty narrowly escaped injury when his vehicle was hit by gunfire in Beach Camp, north of Gaza City.

John Ging, UNRWA's Director of Operations in Gaza expressed his grave concern at the armed clashes underway in the Gaza Strip. He warned those involved that they are putting the Agency's humanitarian operations in jeopardy.

Ging described this week's violence as tragic, taking a population that has been living in abject misery for the entire year to breaking point. "We need an immediate end to this mayhem before more innocent people are killed or injured", he stated.

UNRWA is a human development organization that provides education, health and humanitarian assistance to over 4 million refugees in the Middle East.

UNRWA schools were closed on Tuesday for the third day in succession in those areas of the Gaza Strip where intra-Palestinian violence has affected the safety of children and teaching staff. Twelve schools were closed on Tuesday for precautionary reasons, down from 26 on Monday. Decisions on closure are taken by the Director of Operations on a day-by-day basis depending on the level of risk. In total, UNRWA operates 194 schools in the Gaza Strip, educating 197,000 students.

On Wednesday 20 December UNRWA stated through the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General: Despite public statements from the Palestinian parties concerned that the ceasefire is holding, five more persons died today in Gaza, either as a consequence of injuries sustained earlier or else as a result of fresh clashes today in Gaza City, some of them related to clan feuds. However, UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip closed earlier in the week for precautionary reasons reopened today. The agency expressed its concern at the recent intra-Palestinian violence which has put the UN's humanitarian operation at risk.

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