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United Nations Relief & Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

PRESS RELEASE

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East Jerusalem, 9th July 2007: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, has announced that construction has come to a halt on all of its building projects in Gaza because of the lack of basic building supplies. “Some 93 million dollars worth of projects are on hold because cement and other building supplies have run out”, said John Ging, UNRWA’s Director in Gaza. He added that “This is all vital humanitarian work, including repair of dilapidated and damaged shelters of about 16,000 refugees currently living in appalling conditions. It is imperative that the Crossings into Gaza resume full operations not just for food aid and medicine, but for all commodities and supplies otherwise Gaza faces the prospect of a humanitarian and public health crisis”.

UNRWA’s construction projects include not just repairs and reconstruction of refugee shelters, but construction of schools, community centres, water and sanitation works as well as medical facilities, therefore the Agency's contractors need a large range of construction materials. “Many of our projects are public works, such as sewage treatment plants, water works and health centres. These have serious public health implications. The construction of new schools, now halted, were to address major overcrowding problems and if they are not completed on schedule, then it will be the innocent children who will pay a heavy academic price for the political failure to find solutions to open the borders” said Ging.

“The closure of the borders means a loss of over a million days of employment placing an even larger burden on our humanitarian aid program”, said Ging.

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