



وكالة الأمم المتحدة

لإغاثة وتنفيذ اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في الشرق الأدنى

Telephone : 01/840490 thru 5
01/840461 thru 5
Fax & Tel : 01/840 466

UNRWA Lebanon Field Office

Lebanon Field Office
Facing Cité Sportive
Bir Hassan, Ghoberi
P.O.Box 11-0947
Beirut 1107 2060

UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon and UNRWA Commissioner General Tour Nahr El-Bared Camp

Beirut, 12 November 2007 -- The United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Geir Pedersen, and Ms. Karen Abu Zayd, the Commissioner General of the United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA), today toured the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr El-Bared. The UN officials examined UNRWA-led emergency assistance and recovery efforts underway.

Pedersen and Abu Zayd took a tour of the new camp of Nahr El-Bared. They visited an UNRWA-run health center which provides returnees with health care, as well as centers which provide Palestinian families with temporary accommodation. They also toured two recently rehabilitated water wells, and the old camp of Nahr El-Bared.

Before leaving Nahr El-Bared, the UN officials stopped to see temporary shelters at the southern entrance of the camp. These newly constructed shelters provide shelter to 96 displaced Palestinian families.

“I have come here to see for myself the scale of the task ahead, and it is indeed enormous. UNRWA is actively engaged in working with the affected refugees, the parties on the ground, the Lebanese Government, the army, the donor and the local communities, to ensure that immediate and longer term needs can be met. It is clear already that the reconstruction of Nahr el Bared camp will require strenuous cooperation between the Lebanese Government and UNRWA. UNRWA stands ready and committed to that partnership”, said Abu Zayd at the end of her visit.

“We have just listened to the concerns and fears of the residents of Nahr El Bared who have gone through a terrible ordeal during the past months. The UN and the international community, in coordination with the Lebanese government, are trying to address the immediate humanitarian needs of the families who have returned and others who remain displaced before the winter season,” Mr. Pedersen said. “The government remains steadfast in its commitment to reconstruct the camp, with the support of the international community,” he added.

Pedersen and Abu Zayd will meet with donors from the international community later today to brief them on the relief and reconstruction work undertaken so far and to enlist support for the remaining work that needs to be done.

Both UN officials will hold a press conference tomorrow, at 14:30 at UNRWA headquarters to profile UNRWA-led emergency relief efforts for Nahr El Bared.

Hoda Samra
Public Information Officer

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For more information please contact UNRWA Public Information Office tel: 01-840462 ext 314. e-mail: h.samra@unrwa.org
