

UN agency deplores violence in Syrian refugee camp that killed seven Palestinians

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UNRWA

UNRWA Commissioner-General visit to Syria in June 2013 to see first-hand the impact of conflict and displacement on Palestine refugees.

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The United Nations agency tasked with assisting Palestinian refugees today called on all parties in Syria to stop the violence in refugee camps and other civilian areas, following violence near the Dera'a camp which killed seven Palestinians.

“Reports from Dera'a of the further loss of Palestinian lives are deeply distressing,” said Michael Kingsley-Nyinah, the Director of UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Syria.

“UNRWA repeats its calls on all parties to desist from conducting armed conflict in Palestine refugee camps and other civilian areas and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.”

Initial reports indicate that on Saturday, the Dera'a Palestine refugee camp was directly affected by intensive armed conflict, killing seven refugees and injuring 15 others. As a result of the fighting, UNRWA's Primary Health Care Centre and Women's Programme Centre sustained heavy damage.

The Dera'a Health Centre was reconstructed and fully re-equipped with donor funds in June 2008. Prior to the conflict, the centre offered a wide range of health services to over 25,000 Palestine refugees residing in Dera'a camp and the surrounding areas. The outbreak of war in 2011 caused many refugees to seek safety outside the camp and for many months had prevented the health centre from functioning normally, UNRWA said in a news release.

The agency appealed to all sides and to the international community “to urgently resolve the Syria conflict through a peaceful process of mediation and dialogue,” adding that the conflict is aggravating the already severe human suffering endured by Syrians and Palestinians alike.

Despite extreme challenges, UNRWA continues to support some 420,000 Palestine refugees in Syria with health care, primary education, cash transfers, food assistance, psycho-social support access to micro-finance and other humanitarian services.

More than 100,000 people, mostly civilians, have died since the uprising against President Bashar Al-Assad's Government began in March 2011. More than 2 million people have fled the country and 4.5 million have been internally displaced.

The international community is still seeking a political solution to end the conflict. Today, the Joint Special Representative for the UN and the Arab League, Lakdhar Brahimi, met with United States Secretary of State John Kerry in London, and reiterated the urgency of convening the so called “Geneva II” conference which would bring all parties to the negotiating table.

“We agree 100 per cent that there is no military solution in Syria. There can be, there will be a political solution if everybody gets together and works for it,” Mr. Brahimi said, adding that he would visit the region soon to consult with Syrians on how they can contribute to the conference to make it a success.

Mr. Kerry said the US, along with Russia, remains committed to trying to set a date for the Conference very soon, and ensuring it is inclusive so it can lead to lasting peace and stability to Syria and the region.

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4 October 2013

With their numbers swelled by the flow of refugees from Syria, tens of thousands of Palestinian children in Lebanon returned to school for the 2013/14 school year today with new learning and other materials provided by the United Nations and the European Union (EU).