



unrwa  
usa



ANNUAL REPORT

2014

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**“The pressures on Palestinians  
and Palestine refugees are  
immense and the threats to  
their lives, livelihoods and  
future are of such magnitude  
that hope is needed somewhere  
on the horizon.**

**Hope, in this most unstable  
region - can only and must  
be brought about by resolute  
political action.”**

**-Pierre Krähenbühl,  
Commissioner-General  
of UNRWA**

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# Letter from our Leaders

Dear Friend,

In our line of work, we hope that things are quiet in the field. We hope that Palestinians have the opportunity to thrive in their community, to be secure in their homes. We hope that each and every family has plenty of food on the table, a roof over their heads, and a school full of books for their children.

Unfortunately for many Palestine refugees, 2014 was a painful year. Gaza suffered its worst assault in recent memory, where over 2,200 Palestinians were killed, including 551 children. They had nowhere to go as bombs rained down from the sky for 50 days, indiscriminately killing children as they played on the beach. The ongoing illegal Israeli blockade compounded Palestinians' misery, where the unemployment rate is now the highest in the world. Palestinians in Gaza couldn't even escape when a state of emergency was declared due to flooding. Ninety-five percent of Palestine refugees now rely on UNRWA for life-saving services, whose budget is already strained.

Palestinians have been living under siege in areas like Yarmouk, once the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Syria. In 2014, fighting between Syrian government forces, rebel groups and Dae'sh put a chokehold on UNRWA's vital food distributions in Yarmouk. UNRWA could not distribute food packages for over six months, leading to increases in malnutrition and skipped meals for thousands of refugees.

Yet we are hopeful for Palestine refugees. 2014 marked the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. UNRWA USA could not be more thankful for our supporters and donors, who provided funds for life-saving programs such as food aid, as well as necessary programs aimed at helping eliminate anemia.

2014 also marked some changes in UNRWA's leadership. Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi stepped down from his role in March. UNRWA's new Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl, took over the helm and hit the ground running with his commitment to the Palestinian people.

At UNRWA USA, we were excited to add another city to our signature event, the Gaza 5K walk/run, making Orange County/Los Angeles our third city. Funds raised through these events provide vital mental health programs for children and their families in Gaza. We couldn't have done it without your support.

Sincerely,



Amb. (ret.) Philip C. Wilcox, Jr.  
Chairman



Abby Smardon  
Executive Director

# Mission

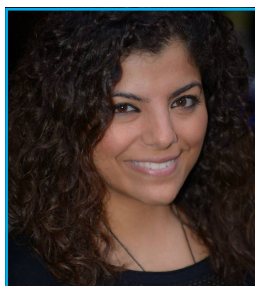
American Friends of UNRWA (UNRWA USA) is a nonprofit organization that supports the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Our mission is to promote a life of dignity and human development for Palestine refugees by informing the American public about UNRWA's work and generating support for its programs through fundraising, education, and advocacy.



**Abby Smardon**  
Executive Director



**John Sakakini**  
Partnerships  
& Outreach Officer



**Laila Mokhiber**  
Communications  
Officer



**Amina Derbi**  
Admin Officer

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# 856.38%

## increase in contributions to UNRWA from 2013 to 2014

	2013	2014
Contributions to UNRWA	\$324,937.00	\$3,107,637.00
Total Revenue	\$729,120.00	\$3,688,867.00

### 2014 Contributions to UNRWA:

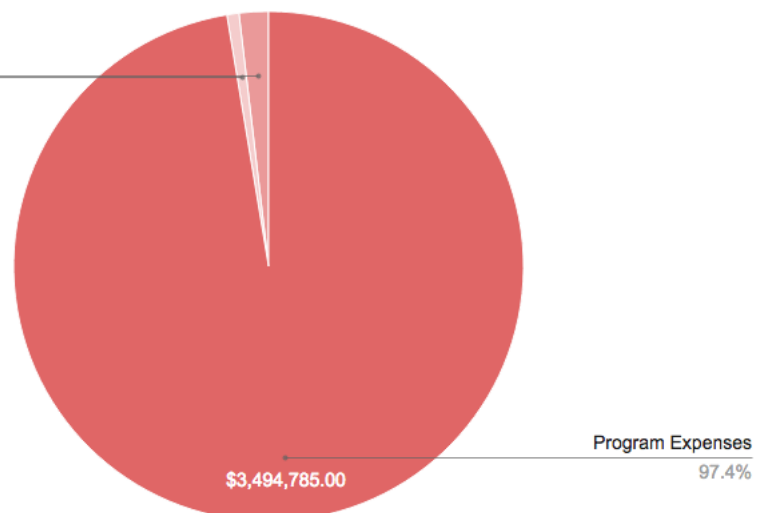
Emergency Appeal - Gaza	\$2,404,524.10
Emergency Food Aid - Syria	\$340,000.00
Community Mental Health - Gaza	\$240,000.00
University Scholarships	\$62,500.00
Shelter Rehabilitation - West Bank	\$20,000.00
Job Creation - West Bank	\$15,000.00
Anemia Elimination - Gaza	\$10,000.00

Total contributions to UNRWA in 2014 to **\$3,092,024.10**. Our budgeted goal was \$372,000.

### 2014 Expenses

Program Expenses	\$3,494,785.00
Operational Expenses	\$27,372.00
Fundraising Expenses	\$66,663.00

Fundraising Expenses  
1.9%  
Operational Expenses  
.8%



# Field Visits

UNRWA USA in the Middle East

Many Palestinians face seemingly insurmountable obstacles with constant threats from illegal confiscation of their homes and land, a crippling blockade, and constant threat of violence from the IDF and settlers. Yet with each family we visited, we saw over and over the hope they had for a better future.

We spent the day at Ramallah Elementary Co-Ed School, one of 69 schools that form the UNRWA education system in Lebanon. We were greeted by smiling children who were eager to learn and share their classroom. UNRWA provides vital primary and secondary education for over 31,000 Palestine refugee students in Lebanon as they do not have access to the Lebanese educational system due to local laws that bar them from attending public schools.

Participants in UNRWA's Job Creation Program were busy planting olive trees during our visit to the occupied West Bank. We also had the opportunity to visit families who made some necessary renovations to their homes through the Shelter Rehabilitation Program.

## Job Creation in the West Bank

UNRWA's Job Creation Program ensures a degree of food security and provides temporary job opportunities to the most vulnerable refugees living in the occupied Palestinian territory with the aim of alleviating high poverty and unemployment levels there. Through the program, unemployed members of the local community are put to work planting and maintaining trees, giving them a chance to earn a decent wage to support their families. Planting olive trees is not only a way to provide jobs in the local economy, but also a way to promote the local agricultural industry.

Across the occupied West Bank, Palestinians continue to face serious threats to security due to various forms of violence related to the conflict and the illegal occupation. Forced displacement remains a common occurrence due to ongoing confiscation and annexation of Palestinian land, increased settlement construction, home demolitions, forced evictions in Area C and East Jerusalem, obstructed access to land, markets and essential service, military violence and

**In February, UNRWA USA staff visited UNRWA to understand the needs of the refugees UNRWA**

harassment, and lack of effective law enforcement for settler attacks. Through JCP, UNRWA has developed protection tailored projects aimed at addressing the economic consequences of illegal occupation policies in the West Bank. Through this program, participants can help strengthen communities' capacity to sustain traditional livelihoods, resist pressures leading to forced displacement and prevent further violations from occurring. Concerned communities are living in areas near settlements, the separation barrier, Area C, and East Jerusalem.

## Shelter Rehabilitation in the West Bank

Four families were the beneficiaries of the project and benefited from repairing their shelters under this grant through a subsidized, self-help approach. A wide range of repairs and renovations were completed in four homes to benefit 23 individuals in Al-Jalazone camp near Jerusalem. By carrying out "self-help" projects, the Shelter Rehabilitation Program aims at improving the living conditions and help preserving the human rights of the four families by empowering families to manage their own repairs.

This approach helps foster self-reliance by enabling them to rehabilitate their own shelters. Additionally, it supports the household and local community through the local procurement of building materials.

## Combating Anemia in Gaza

Dr. Randa Zaqqout provides life-saving medical care at UNRWA's Beach Camp Health Clinic in Gaza, where she treats non-communicable diseases such as anemia. In Gaza, many Palestine refugees have anemia because they do not have access to fresh iron-rich foods, or they suffer from Thalassemia, a genetic iron deficiency disorder that affects many people in the Middle East. A 2004 study revealed that 54.7% of children, 35.6% of pregnant woman, and 45.7% of nursing mothers in Gaza have anemia. This study is ten years old and Dr. Zaqqout is certain that these numbers have risen drastically since then. →

A field offices in Lebanon, the occupied West Bank, and Gaza. Visiting the field helps us serves on a human level and to support UNRWA's vital work in the most effective way.



But at the clinic, Dr. Zaqqout takes steps to educate her patients and to combat anemia in Gaza. The clinic provides iron supplements, milk and wheat fortified with iron, and awareness classes and campaigns about how individuals can reduce the incidence of anemia through diet. There is special registration for patients with anemia, and Dr. Zaqqout and her colleagues follow up regularly with these patients. UNRWA also offers deworming treatments as water borne parasites can lead to anemia.



# University Scholarships

Access to higher education is limited for many Palestine refugees because of their difficult socioeconomic situation. Lack of access to higher education limits employment opportunities and their chance to improve their living conditions. The scholarship program provides access to university education for young Palestine refugees who excel academically, but would otherwise be unable to afford higher education. UNRWA's university scholarships are available to students living and attending universities in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Jordan. Past recipients have gone on to hold key positions in UNRWA, host countries, and throughout the world, and continue to contribute to the social and economic development of the region.

**5,661 scholars** have graduated in 53 different fields of study with the assistance of the scholarship program.

## Meet Asma, an UNRWA scholarship recipient

Asma, a 19 year old budding journalist, dreams of reporting on the Palestinian stories that need to be told; stories about refugees, occupation crimes and women's rights.

Asma was accepted into a journalism program at one of the leading universities in Palestine, but her family could not afford her tuition. She scraped together the fees for her first semester of study, but without further financial assistance she would have to drop out of her program.

Asma received a scholarship from funding provided by UNRWA USA through the generous support of a foundation. She says the scholarships have multiple benefits. They help talented students study at the best universities, they help parents economically, and they encourage students to study harder so they have the chance to win further scholarships.



**“I want to help my people and report on the stories that are not covered in the media. Now, with the help of UNRWA I can do that.” -Asma, 19, West Bank**



# Gaza

UNRWA USA provided over **\$2.6 million** for essential emergency relief efforts, including food aid, rental subsidies, and providing non-food items for displaced Palestinians.



Gaza is home to 1.8 million Palestinians, the vast majority of whom are refugees.

Since 2007, Gaza has been under an illegal total blockade, where Palestinians are denied free access to come and go as they please. This has crippled the already fragile economy and suppressed economic opportunities and caused unprecedented unemployment rates.

For 50 days in July and August 2014, Gaza was pummeled by bombs and on-the-ground assaults during Israel's "Operation Protective Edge." At the height of the assault, an estimated 500,000 people – 28% of the population – were displaced, including 300,000 in 90 UNRWA schools that were converted into emergency shelters. Sadly, 2,262 Palestinians were killed, of which 1,500 were civilians, including 551 children and 305 women. UNRWA lost 11 staff members, some in the line of duty. Of the more than 11,000 people injured in Gaza, 1,000 are children who now have a permanent disability. UNRWA estimates that nearly 140,000 houses were either damaged or totally destroyed. With the present pace of construction, it will take 50 years to rebuild Gaza.

The summer 2014 assault resulted in the largest displacement recorded in Gaza since 1967. UNRWA provided emergency food aid and shelter to over 500,000 people during the assault and continues to provide aid to 80% of Palestinians in Gaza.



 **Chris Guinness**  
@ChrisGuinness Following

The heart-breaking aftermath @ the UNRWA school in #Gaza hit directly by Israeli shelling RT



RETWEETS 870 LIKES 192

5:02 AM - 31 Jul 2014

# UNRWA schools destroyed by attacks

More than 300 schools in Gaza were damaged in the 50-day Israeli offensive in 2014.

At the Jabalia Elementary Girls School, 3,300 people sought refuge during the assault. Late into the night, Israeli bombs fell on the school, killing 15 Palestinians who had escaped their homes seeking safety.

“The precise location of the Jabalia Elementary Girls School and the fact that it was housing thousands of internally displaced people was communicated to the Israeli army seventeen times, to ensure its protection; the last being at ten to nine last night, just hours before the fatal shelling.”

-Pierre Krähenbühl  
Commissioner-General  
UNRWA



# Community Mental Health Program

## Gaza

UNRWA's Community Mental Health Program (CMHP) provides school counseling, group sessions, and at-home counseling for refugees in Gaza.

Following the devastating assault on Gaza in July and August 2014, nearly 100% of children are showing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues.

Children under the age of seven have now lived through three assaults.

They show signs of psychological trauma such as intense fear, bed-wetting, poor concentration, eating disorders, sleeping disorders, irritability, and hyperactivity. If left untreated, these children face the risk of permanent social and physical health issues. Immediate and ongoing treatment is critical to helping children restore their sense of safety and security amongst the ongoing chaos.

School counselors use a variety of therapy practices to provide a broad range of effective treatment for children.

Traditional one-on-one and group therapy sessions give children an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe space. Art and play therapy provides children with outlets to develop healthy mental health practices and resiliency.

UNRWA provides 365 psycho-social counselors at each of the 252 UNRWA schools in Gaza for comprehensive mental health support in the community.



**In 2014, UNRWA USA  
supporters funded mental  
health counseling for 8,000  
children in Gaza.**

# Gaza 5Ks

Our signature event, the Gaza 5K, expanded to 3 cities in 2014. Supporters signed up for the walk/run and asked their friends to donate to their page or team, helping raise critical funding for CMHP through peer-to-peer fundraising.



## Washington DC Gaza 5K

May 17, 2014

Our DC Gaza 5K, now in its third year, was its most successful yet! We doubled the number of participants from the previous year to 650, and raised \$133,000.

Robert Turner, Gaza Field Office Director of Operations, shared with the crowd the dire need for mental health programming for Gaza's most vulnerable refugees: children.

## San Francisco Gaza 5K

October 18, 2014

Over 550 participants attended our second annual 5K in San Francisco, helping raise \$80,000 to provide mental health counseling and psychosocial support for the children of Gaza.

Our board member, Elizabeth Kucinich and her husband, former Congressman, Dennis Kucinich, joined us for the event, giving powerful remarks about the need to support the innocent children of Gaza.

## LA/Orange County Gaza 5K

October 25, 2014

UNRWA USA was excited to host its first 5K walk/run in Orange County!

Over 400 participants came to this family-friendly event and helped us raise \$65,000 to provide mental health counseling and psychosocial support for the children of Gaza. We were joined again by the Kucinichs.



## Yarmouk Emergency

The conflict in Syria is devastating the lives of Syrians and Palestinians alike. Before the start of the war, only 5% of Palestine refugees relied on assistance from UNRWA. Now, over 95% rely on food aid to survive. In besieged areas such as Yarmouk camp, 18,000 trapped residents suffer severe deprivation, and also die preventable deaths due to the absence of medical care and the ongoing violence. Palestinians are particularly vulnerable, as conflict increasingly encroaches on their camps in Syria.

Unfortunately, the Agency's efforts to meet the needs of the community are subject to regular delays and interruptions. An UNRWA food parcel is sufficient to cover the minimum food needs of an average family for just ten days. Food distributions rarely happened by December 2014 as Yarmouk remains an area of active conflict, forcing civilians to risk sniper and mortar fire to receive assistance.

**In 2014, UNRWA USA supporters provided \$340,000 in emergency food aid to the residents of Yarmouk.**

**unrwa usa**

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