



unrwa
usa national committee



ANNUAL REPORT

AD

2016

Letter from our leaders

Dear Friends,

This year, Palestine refugees have continued to face tremendous hardships and challenges, across all field offices from Lebanon to Jordan, the West Bank including East Jerusalem to Syria and the Gaza Strip.

Palestine refugees in Syria, facing second, and even third or fourth displacements, following the fifth year of conflict and war, continued to require critical emergency humanitarian assistance with few to turn to but UNRWA. The ongoing Syria crisis has also had a negative impact on Lebanon and Jordan's socioeconomic climate, affecting public service delivery, finances and the environment, directly and indirectly affecting the livelihoods of Palestine refugees and PRS in these two countries. Additionally, Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip faced ongoing economic de-development, growing poverty, and worsening humanitarian conditions, resulting from the continued Israeli and Egyptian blockade and the aftermath of multiple Israeli military assaults.

In the face of these grave challenges and adversity, UNRWA USA, with the help of its generous supporters like yourself, responded to the critical emergencies facing refugee families across the Middle East. In 2016, this included contributing to emergency relief for refugees in the Gaza Strip and Syria, psychosocial support for children, food assistance, and shelter repair in the Gaza Strip, and education materials and University scholarships to refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. This year also marked the biggest and most successful fundraising campaign to date -- Ramadan Across Borders -- and bringing the Gaza 5K to Chicago for the first time.

In other positive news, you have probably noticed a new look and design in our communication platforms in the past few months, including officially becoming the UNRWA USA National Committee, hiring additional Communications staff, and revamping unrwausa.org. This year, UNRWA USA underwent a rebranding to better serve our supporters' experience and thus far it has been very well received by donors, contributing to UNRWA USA's continued growth and organizational development.

Looking ahead to 2017, UNRWA USA anticipates great uncertainty following the incoming presidential administration, but we have worked hard to be prepared for whatever 2017 holds. In light of the challenges we foresee ahead, we would like to emphasize the vital role the American public plays in supporting the work of UNRWA USA.

Our achievements in 2016 and our future plans for 2017 are a reflection of and depend on outstanding support from donors like you, all across the United States. Thank you for your continued dedication to UNRWA USA and your ongoing solidarity with Palestine refugees.

With immense gratitude,



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



Abby Smardon
Executive Director

“The world cannot afford to be fatigued [when it comes to Palestine refugees]. It cannot afford to look the other way.”

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

meet unrwa usa

UNRWA USA is an independent 501c3 nonprofit that supports the humanitarian and human development work of UNRWA through fundraising, education, and advocacy.

UNRWA USA aims 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 in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

board & staff



Abby Smardon
Executive Director



Laila Mokhiber
Director of Communications



Nada El-Eryan
Grants Officer



Lena Badr Abdelhamid
Finance & Administrative Officer



Sarah Gayoso
Events Officer



Nusayba Hammad
Communications Assistant

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- Elias Aburdene
- Karen AbuZayd
- Leila Hilal
- Elizabeth Kucinich
- Amb. (ret.) Richard W. Murphy
- Ghassan Salameh
- George Salem
- Maggie Mitchell Salem

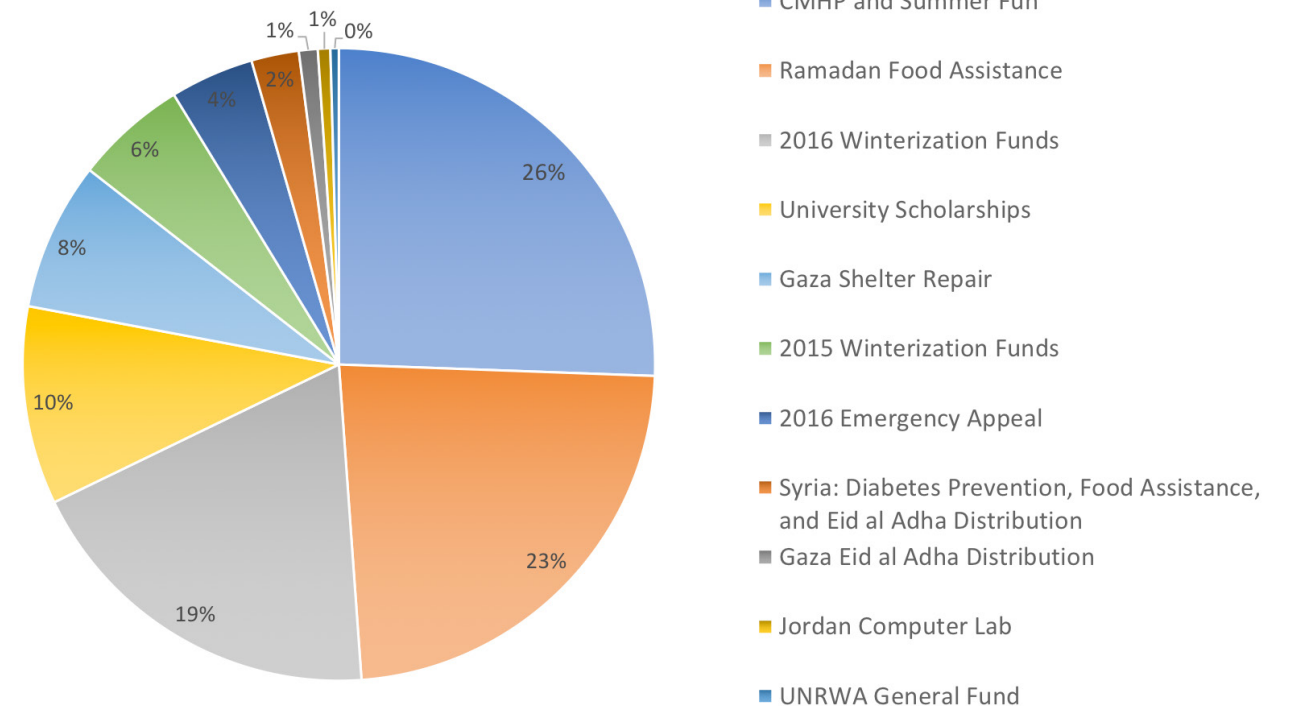
advisory committee

- Dr. Lisa Anderson
- Jean-Claude Aime
- Daniel Levy
- Amb. Clovis Maksoud
- Rima Nashashibi
- Maya Sanbar
- Dr. James J. Zogby
- Mian Qadrud-Din

2016 contributions to unrwa

UNRWA Program or Project	Contribution to UNRWA
CMHP and Summer Fun: Gaza	\$447,071.74
Ramadan Food Assistance: Gaza	\$406,881.75
2016 Winterization Funds: Gaza and Syria	\$331,523.25
University Scholarships	\$177,130
Shelter Repair: Gaza	\$132,543
2015 Winterization Funds	\$100,000
2016 Emergency Appeal: Gaza and Syria	\$74,786.37
Eid al Adha Distribution: Gaza	\$16,850
Eid al Adha Distribution: Syria	\$13,865
Computer Lab: Jordan	\$11,100
UNRWA General Fund	\$7,500
Diabetes Prevention: Syria	\$5,000
Food Assistance: Syria	\$5,000

total: **\$1,729,241**





community mental health supporting mental health services for children in gaza

UNRWA USA supporters came together to raise awareness and funds for UNRWA's mental health services in the Gaza Strip by supporting events and holding fundraisers to fund UNRWA's Community Mental Health Programme (CMHP) and UNRWA Summer Fun Weeks in Gaza.

Americans from all over the US participated in UNRWA USA's signature event -- the Gaza 5K. This year, these run/walks brought more than 3,500 Americans together to support Palestine refugee children and families in the Gaza Strip impacted by psychological trauma.

In 2016, Gaza 5Ks were held in New York City, Washington, DC, San Francisco, and -- for the first time in UNRWA USA history -- Chicago.

The Gaza 5Ks, along with other events and fundraisers held by UNRWA USA supporters collectively raised \$447,062 for UNRWA community mental health programming for Palestine refugee children and families in the Gaza Strip.

ottawa run for palestine

Ottawa Run for Palestine took the cause of Palestine refugees pan-American for the second year in September 2016.

The event featured a 10K, 5K, and 3K race, as well as a Palestinian cultural showcase. This year, 600 Canadians attended the event and fundraised in support of UNRWA's Community Mental Health Programme!

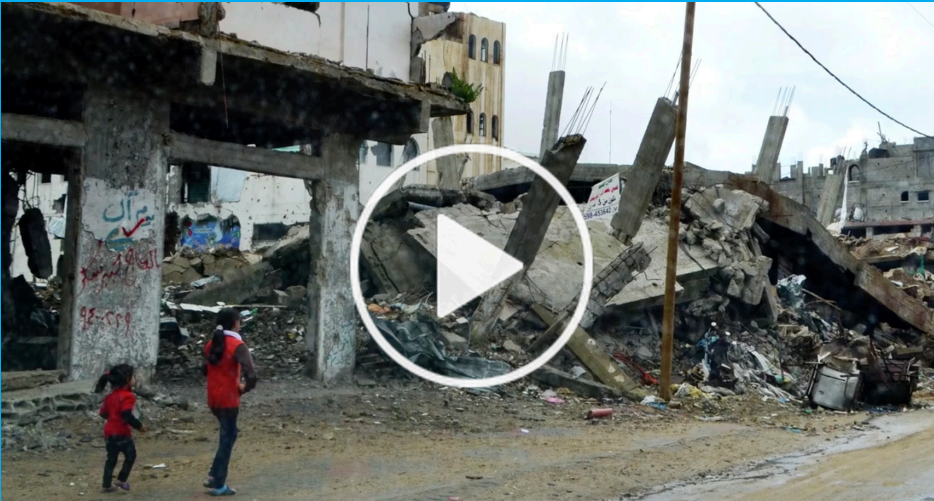
first-ever chicago gaza 5k



More than 850 people came out to the first ever Gaza 5K in Chicago on April 23,

This event was put on in partnership with the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund.

video: nyc gaza 5k highlights



NYC Gaza 5K runner and volunteer filmmaker Lauren Anders Brown produced and edited a video with highlights and interviews from the NYC run/walk event.

dodge for humanity



Sometimes charity work really is just fun and games! A group of college students at the University of Houston, TX hosted a dodgeball tournament, Dodge for Humanity, benefiting mental health services for Palestine refugee children in Gaza.

29 teams participated in the event, competing with each other off the dodgeball court to fundraise for UNRWA's Community Mental Health Programme before the tournament.

ramadan across borders

food assistance



The Gaza Strip has been under occupation for 49 years and subjected to an illegal blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt for nine.

Since the year 2000, and due to the blockade, the number of Palestine refugees relying on food assistance from UNRWA skyrocketed from 80,000 to nearly one million.

During the month of Ramadan, UNRWA USA aimed to raise enough money to provide food assistance to 3,500 Palestine refugee families .

Following UNRWA USA's campaign, which included sharing Lena's personal story and connection to the Gaza Strip, Americans opened their hearts and pocket books to ensure that 4,443 families in Gaza would have what they needed to put food on the table.

lena's letter



Lena as a child visiting family in Gaza

Through a letter written by Lena, our colleague here at UNRWA USA, Americans were given a glimpse into the life of a Palestine refugee forced to observe Ramadan across borders.

Lena spent the earlier part of her life in Gaza before coming to the US, but now she is separated from her family there by blockade and occupation.

She shared a taste of this separation with supporters, describing life under blockade, and how she works to feel close to them -- for instance, by making her grandmother's [maglooba recipe](#) the first night of Ramadan. In a beautiful show of solidarity, people from all over the world [shared](#) what it was like for them to celebrate Ramadan across borders on social media.

iftar events across the united states

Charity iftars were hosted by supporters of UNRWA USA during Ramadan in New York City and Washington, DC, including a joint iftar co-hosted with the DC chapter of the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund.

At an iftar hosted by three prominent supporters (Ahmed Shihab-Eldin, Salah Zalatimo, and Osman Khan), guests used Google Glasses to go on a virtual tour of the day in a life of a Palestine refugee boy in Gaza on his walk to school.



new america foundation panel: "palestine refugees in an increasingly tumultuous middle east"

UNRWA USA board member, Leila Hilal, helped organize and host a discussion with Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl at the New America Foundation, entitled "Palestinian Refugees in an Increasingly Tumultuous Middle East" on March 1, 2016.

The discussion was moderated by Khaled Elgindy, Center for Middle East Policy Fellow at Brookings, and Zaha Hassan, New America Middle East Fellow. The educational event was attended by academics, journalists, thought leaders, and activists.



unrwa usa scholarship fund

funding the future of palestine

Higher education provides a pathway to economic and social stability for Palestine refugees. However, the cost of a university education is prohibitive for many students as their families are living on less than \$3 a day.

Many students who graduate from high school with high grades cannot afford to enroll in a university without scholarship help. UNRWA USA provides full university scholarships to high-achieving Palestine refugee students in the region who would otherwise be unable to afford higher education.

In August 2016, UNRWA USA expanded the scholarship

program by launching Funding the Future, the first annual scholarship fund campaign.

In addition to raising awareness and money to provide scholarships to Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territories, the campaign highlighted the long-term impact of the scholarship program and how by supporting UNRWA USA scholarships, donors are funding the future of Palestine.

In 2016, UNRWA USA supporters provided 75 scholarships. Scholars, like Hind (below), who receive these scholarships are Palestine's future leaders and change.

meet hind mousa, 20



english education major at al-azhar university in the gaza strip

"Behind the educational success of my siblings and I is our parents' encouragement and help finding scholarships from sources like UNRWA.

My family calls me a nerd because I'm always reading books, but they believe that higher education will be the tool that I use to when facing any challenges in the future."

shelter repair in gaza

22 houses repaired with zakat foundation



After the 2014 Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip, tens of thousands of Palestine refugee houses were left destroyed or in need of repair.

As the process of rebuilding drags on two years later, due to the blockade, UNRWA USA partnered with the Zakat Foundation to repair and reconstruct hundreds of houses.

By December of 2016, the two NGOs had managed to repair 22 houses with minor or major damage.

By April of 2017, repairs on a total of 87 Palestine refugee houses will have been possible through this partnership.

voices of unrwa

"We lost everything. In Syria, we used to give to charity. Here, we must rely on charity to survive. We don't want to have to live this way. We only want the opportunity to live."

- Mohammad, a Palestine refugee lawyer from Yarmouk Camp, Syria who fled his home in 2012





syria

providing emergency humanitarian assistance

On March 15, 2016, Syria marked a grim anniversary: the fifth year of war.

Once a thriving community, the community of over half a million Palestine refugees in Syria are largely scattered, facing death, destruction, and recurring displacement. Children who once learned about dispossession through their parents' stories of the Nakba are now living through dangerous displacement themselves.

And every day, 4,000 local UNRWA staff members -- many of them refugees themselves -- put their lives on the line to serve Palestine refugees caught in the middle of a brutal war. Throughout the war, UNRWA has continued to provide education, shelter, and emergency food and health assistance to Palestine refugees in Syria as well as those displaced to Lebanon and Jordan.

In response, in 2016, UNRWA USA contributed \$40,715 to the emergency appeal helping UNRWA provide critical assistance to Palestine refugees displaced both within and outside of Syria with funds specifically allocated to diabetes prevention, food assistance, and the Eid al Adha distribution.



education in jordan

unrwa alum soubhi al-aryan donates computer lab

UNRWA's has been increasingly emphasizing technology and computer education in its schools as a way to better opportunities for its students. However, over the years, UNRWA has found it increasingly difficult to fund and upgrade computer labs in its schools in Jordan.

In learning of this need, one generous UNRWA USA supporter and former UNRWA student, Soubhi Al-Aryan, decided to fully fund the refurbishing and equipping of Al Jofeh Elementary School's computer lab.

Soubhi, now in Austin, TX, still remembers the obstacles he faced in Jordan as a refugee student in the 1960s and knew he wanted to eventually help other UNRWA students get the leg up they needed to succeed in life.

Once obsolete, the newly refurbished Al Joreh computer lab is now equipped with ten new computers, one new projector and a screen, and necessary electronic accessory items, all thanks to Soubhi's generous gift.

Soubhi told us he wanted to provide refugee children with access to the latest technology, which they might not have at home.

He states: "Because the world is becoming a more globalized community, it is important for this new generation to have access to the internet and other educational tools that will enhance their future by increasing their chances of attending university and their employability."

Read more about Soubhi's project, passion for education, and why he chose to give to UNRWA USA on the [Voices of UNRWA](#) blog.



The brand new computer lab in Al-Jofeh Elementary Girls & Boys School in South Amman, Jordan



Students Sadine and Maya, fifth graders at the school, are thrilled to have access to this new lab.

winterization

keeping palestine refugees warm during the winter



As the war drags on in Syria and the blockade on the Gaza Strip continues, vulnerable Palestine refugees in both fields are left out in the cold -- literally.

Over the last three months of 2016, Americans banded together to provide winterization supplies like blankets, winter coats, food assistance, and weatherproofing of houses in Gaza damaged in the 2014 Israeli assault to help Palestine refugees make it through the winter.

UNRWA USA's 2016 end of year campaign resulted in raising \$331,523, translating to 12,794 Palestine refugees kept warm in Syria and the Gaza Strip.

in the media

On June 23, 2016, The Hill published an op-ed entitled "[Gaza's Plight Matters to the World](#)." In it, UNRWA USA board member Elizabeth Kucinich gave an eyewitness account of the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, as seen on her February 2015 visit to the occupied Palestinian territory with UNRWA USA.

"Gaza's economy is under complete Israeli control. This humanitarian crisis is being engineered. A trapped population witnesses the Gaza Strip undergo de-development and suffers from relentlessly mounting psychosocial pressures, while the international community picks up the tab.

In such an untenable situation, the UNRWA is quite literally a life-sustaining force. Its schools, health facilities, food assistance, and other services are a lifeline for Palestine refugees — not just in Gaza, but in the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and war-ravaged Syria."

unrwa usa volunteer program



What do a translator, registered nurse, and college student all have in common? Volunteering with UNRWA USA!

Launched in November 2016, the UNRWA USA Volunteer Program allows socially conscious individuals all over the US to volunteer remotely with UNRWA USA.

There is currently a network of more than 40 active volunteers all over the country, from Atlanta to Brooklyn to Greensboro to San Francisco to Tampa.

In the few hours a week they dedicate to showing Palestine refugees that they care, they organize educational and fundraising events, act as social media ambassadors, and power the Gaza 5Ks in cities close to them. To learn more and join the volunteer program, visit unrwausa.org/volunteer.



"Building bridges in your communities is just as valuable as financial contributions. Share your passion for UNRWA and the rest will follow."

- Somer S., UNRWA USA volunteer, Orange County, CA

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