

UN appeals for \$95 million for urgent Palestinian aid



Palestinians sit in a makeshift tent amid the rubble of their houses which were destroyed by Israeli air strikes [Mohammed Salem/Reuters]

United Nations, May 27 (RHC)-- The United Nations has appealed for \$95 million to help Palestinians over the next three months in Gaza, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, after 11 days of the worst fighting between Israel and Palestinians in years.

Lynn Hastings, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Palestinian territories, said the UN was currently looking at immediate aid needs and would then assess the longer term damage and how much might be needed for reconstruction.

She said the appeal launched on Thursday was to address “very immediate needs,” such as food, health, medicine, medical supplies, quick repairs to infrastructure and cash assistance. On top of the appeal, the UN has also already released \$22.5 million from other funds to help meet needs.

Palestinian officials put reconstruction costs at tens of millions of dollars in Gaza, where health authorities said at least 254 people were killed during the 11 days of fighting. Hastings said the conflict left 800,000 people in Gaza without regular access to piped water. Untreated sewage water was being discharged into the sea and 58 education facilities were damaged, including 285 buildings with more than 1,000 housing and commercial units destroyed. Six hospitals and 11 healthcare centres were also damaged, and electricity was down to four to six hours a day.

Hastings said the majority of the money will go to Gaza but some will go to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, mainly to help injured people, possibly with cash assistance, psycho-social help or protection issues. “We need the immediate life-saving needs moving on to reconstruction and recovery, and ideally with a political horizon in place. That, of course, is the most important thing to stop the continuation of these hostilities,” Hastings stressed. “All of us need to ensure that we are not repeating the mistakes that keep bringing us back to having to rebuild Gaza,” she said.

Separately, Qatar has said it will provide \$500m to help rebuild Gaza, while the United States pledged an additional \$75 million in development and economic aid to the Palestinians in 2021, \$5.5m in immediate disaster relief for Gaza, and \$32 million to the UN Palestinian aid agency based there.

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