

UNRWA warns harsh conditions await returnees to war-wracked north Gaza

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Palestinians return home to northern Gaza on foot, on January 27, 2025. (By Reuters)

United Nations, January 28 (RHC)-- The UN agency for Palestinian refugees has warned that displaced people who are returning to northern Gaza face high risks, as Israeli strikes have destroyed about 90 percent of buildings and public infrastructure and they lack access to basic essentials in the area.

“The risks of unexploded devices, particularly for children, are very high. And mostly the access to food, to daily comforts is almost non-existent except for – thankfully, over the last eight days of the ceasefire – the aid that has come in,” UNRWA Director of External Relations and Communications Tamara Alrifai told al Jazeera on Monday.

Earlier in the day, hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians began returning to the northern part of the war-wracked Gaza Strip after a ceasefire deal was reached between the Palestinian resistance group Hamas and Israel that includes exchange of Israeli captives and Palestinian prisoners.

Hamas has called the return “a victory” for Palestinians, while the Palestinian Islamic Jihad said it was a “response to all those who dream of displacing our people.”

Alrifai said 60 percent of the food that has entered Gaza since the ceasefire began was brought in by UNRWA, the largest humanitarian agency working in the Strip.

“UNRWA has the largest number of trucks, the warehouses, and the shelters with up to one million people inside them. We have the acceptance by the communities in Gaza,” the official said.

“We coordinated closely with other UN agencies and international NGOs when our food and other supplies were banned and not coming in,” she added.

The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was reached after 15 months of the regime's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, which claimed the lives of at least 47,306 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

The regime accepted the ceasefire after failing to realize any of its wartime objectives, including freeing the captives, “eliminating” the Gazan resistance, and causing forced displacement of Gaza’s entire population to neighboring Egypt.

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