

# *Palestinians in Gaza Protest UN Refugee Service Cuts*

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Gaza City, July 27 (RHC)-- Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip have staged a protest against cuts by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to services provided to refugees there.

UNRWA, said on Saturday, it was decreasing its aid to Palestinian refugees living in the Gaza Strip in recent years due to lack of funding from its international donors. The UN agency usually provides health and educational services to Palestinian refugees in 58 refugee camps throughout the Middle East.

Nickolay Mladenov, the UN special coordinator for the so-called Middle East peace process, warned the UN Security Council that UNRWA has a shortfall of over \$100 million that could lead to the closure of hundreds of schools.

“There is a clear policy by the international community to ignore the needs of Palestinian refugees. Many students will lose their education and teachers will lose their jobs because donors have failed to provide UNRWA with \$100 million. UNRWA operations in all fields could stop because of the international community’s failure to fulfill its commitments,” warned Suheil al-Hindi, an employee at UNRWA in Gaza.

But of the 1.8 million people living in Gaza, 1.3 million of them are refugees, according to reports. Most of the refugees live in miserable conditions in 8 refugee camps across the coastal enclave.

Esam Odwan, with the Hamas Division of Refugees Affairs, announced that, “the cuts will increase the already high poverty and unemployment rate in Gaza and will only harm Palestinian refugees. The international community must increase its aid to Palestinian refugees. “

The Gaza Strip has been under a crippling Israeli siege since 2007. The blockade, which has cut off the territory from the outside world, has led to an economic and humanitarian crisis in the densely-populated enclave.

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