



**Statement by the United Nations Special Coordinator
for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry**

following his visit to Gaza

Gaza, 12 February 2014



Photo by: Mustafa El-Halabi/UNOCHA

Special Coordinator Serry visits Gaza pediatric hospital

On the occasion of his visit to Gaza today, the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Robert Serry, expressed his concern about the deteriorating situation in the Strip.

“I am worried we are seeing more and more signs that the understanding on a ceasefire reached in November 2012 is eroding in both of its main requirements – the end of all hostilities and the opening of the crossings for people and goods”, Serry said. “During the past two months, we have seen more rockets being fired at Israel, border incidents, and Israeli retaliatory operations causing death or injury to civilians. The United Nations condemns the rise in violence, and all parties must act in accordance with international law.”

At the same time, social and economic conditions in Gaza are also deteriorating as a result of continued closures. In particular, imports of construction materials have dramatically decreased. “The closure of illegal tunnels has not been turned into an opportunity to increase the entry of construction material through legal crossings”, Serry noted. Even the United Nations construction work has suffered delays as a result of increased closures. Contrary to expectations, work on UN projects is still not back at the level that had already been approved by the Israeli authorities, and over 20 projects remain stalled since November 2013. “I sincerely hope that the Israeli authorities will fully adhere to their commitment to reopen Gaza for construction materials for UN projects”, the Special Coordinator said.

The recent decision to allow the entry of 1,000 tons of cement and other construction materials for flood relief is a positive step. Serry stressed that imports of construction materials for the private sector through legal crossings remain essential for the Gaza economy while material must not be diverted from its intended peaceful purposes. He also expressed hope that the Rafah crossing with Egypt would soon resume normal operations.

Serry visited the Gaza City pediatric hospital, which has been affected by frequent power cuts due to the precarious energy situation in the Strip. “I was heartened to see that this children's hospital is one of the facilities that benefit from the fuel emergency safety net created by the United Nations through the generous contributions of Turkey and the Islamic Development Bank, which is securing continuity of vital services. However, this is but a stop-gap measure, and more must be

done to address Gaza's chronic energy problems", Serry remarked. "Energy is the basis for everything – whether desalination, private sector growth, or health services. Short-term solutions, such as the generous donation of Qatar to the Gaza power plant, remain essential. But we must also look to the medium term, and here we support the request of the Palestinian Authority to establish the so-called 161 power line from Israel into Gaza for better and more cost-efficient access to energy. Eventually, it is hoped an agreement is reached for the use of natural gas at the Gaza power plant itself."

The Special Coordinator concluded: "Ultimately, only the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority, based on the PLO commitments, can pave the way to a durable solution for Gaza, as part of political progress towards peace."

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