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Hemaya: UNRWA decision to suspend Gaza aid catastrophic

The UNRWA decision to suspend reconstruction and financial assistance for Palestinians whose houses were totally destroyed in the recent Israeli offensive against the Gaza Strip will have catastrophic consequences. The decision follows the failure of promised funds to materialise; UNRWA has received only \$135m of the \$720m pledged at the Cairo reconstruction conference.

The impact on the humanitarian situation of affected civilians will cause immense additional suffering and hardship to hundreds of thousands already reeling from 51 days of sustained attacks followed by the harshest winter in living memory which has left several children frozen to death.

The expected aid was to be part of the initial phase of the international "Serry" reconstruction plan, which has not yet even begun. Over 96,000 homes remain unbuilt or unrepaired, and the lack of rental assistance resulting from this decision will mean even more families left living in the rubble of their destroyed homes.

The Serry plan is little more than rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic of the Gaza siege.

We in **Hemaya** express our deep concern at the UNRWA decision, and the situation that gave rise to it.

In the absence of money and aid for Gaza, and in light of the increasingly desperate living conditions exacerbated by the continuous siege, we in **Hemaya Centre** for Human Rights ask:

1. Donor countries to fulfil the financial pledges they made during the donors' conference;
2. Norway, which is entrusted with the follow-up of donor pledges, to make every effort to implement the conference decisions;
3. The Palestinian government to:
 - a. lobby for a reversal of the UNRWA decision;
 - b. Utilise diplomatic channels with donors to ensure they honour their pledges to end Palestinians' suffering in the Gaza Strip;



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4. The international community to shoulder its responsibilities toward Palestinians by:
- removing obstacles to the implementation of reconstruction;
 - not linking humanitarian aid to political considerations; and
 - insisting on the immediate lifting of the illegal siege of Gaza.

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