



# UNRWA

## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **UNRWA Director: "Counting down to a crisis in Gaza."**

Gaza – Another week of closure at Karni commercial crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip adds to the mounting woes facing Palestine refugees living in Gaza. This follows a weekend that saw the killing of 14 Palestinians, protests by refugee farmers who have yet to receive any compensation for bird flu and widespread public demonstrations protesting the cutting of donor funding.

John Ging, Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza, warned that "if Karni remains closed, we are, once again, counting down to a food crisis." 765,000 refugees depend on UNRWA's food distribution of flour, oil, sugar and other basic items. Ging stated that "the clock is now ticking and distribution will have to be shut down entirely for the second time in less than a month if the crossing does not open immediately."

Returning from a visit this morning to an UNRWA primary school in Beit Lahia, where parents and teachers protested that the children are in very real danger from the daily Israeli shelling in close proximity to the school, Ging stated that "from a humanitarian perspective the outlook here in Gaza is bleak at the moment. We are once again facing imminent food shortages, insecurity is making delivery of humanitarian services difficult and we are very concerned about the public health risks from the outbreak of avian influenza. All of this is likely to add up to more refugees falling below the poverty line and becoming dependent on humanitarian assistance." However, Ging warned that UNRWA does not yet have the money to meet today's needs and is facing a bill of almost \$900,000 in penalties for port and other charges arising from the Karni closure.

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