



ZAKAT
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The Leader in Empowering Lives Through Zakat

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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amal@zakat.org

P: 708.233.0555

F:708.233.0339 www.ZAKAT.org

PRESS RELEASE

Zakat Foundation & UNRWA Rush Ramadan Food to Gaza

Zakat Foundation of America donors and UNRWA have joined hands this Ramadan to Deliver 772 UNRWA food assistance baskets filled with a three-month supply of provisions to nearly 4,000 of the most vulnerable Palestine refugees in the besieged Gaza Strip.

“Our supporters realize Gaza can no longer sustain the lives of the people locked inside it and wanted to rush food this Ramadan to those they know are fasting in gratitude to God despite their suffering” says Halil Demir, Zakat Foundation’s Executive Director. “UNRWA gives us that vital link.”

“We chose the Gaza Strip for this project because of its dire humanitarian situation,” says UNRWA USA Program Manager Lori Mosher.

Families selected come from Gaza’s skyrocketing population of abjectly poor -- each individual survives on a \$1.74 a day or less. UNRWA social workers qualify each family with extensive home interviews. Nutrition experts specially select food basket items to counter malnutrition, which damages brain development and stunts physical growth in children, and increases the likelihood of sickness in pregnant women and the risk of miscarriage, premature birth, and underweight newborns.

Here’s what a typical UNRWA food assistance basket contains:

Commodity	Quantity	Unit
Flour	30	kg
Rice	3	kg
Sugar	1	kg
Oil	2	liter

Chickpeas	1	kg
Red Lentils	0.5	kg
Milk	1	liter
Sardines	5	can

Gaza’s rising food insecurity doesn’t stem from lack of market availability but from its soaring poverty rate, which shot to 53% last year, up a staggering 14.1% from 2011. That translates to more than a million poor, including 400,000 children, an appalling indictment of Gaza’s blockade and the world’s apathy.

Gaza’s household poverty line has dropped to \$693 for a family of five (two adults and three children), according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics’ (PCBS) “Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017.” Fully two-thirds of Gaza’s poor, roughly 656,000, have tumbled beneath the “deep poverty” line of \$554. That’s a nearly 17-point leap to 33.7% from 2011’s 21% mark.

Gaza’s poverty free fall traces directly back to the total land, air, and sea blockade imposed on it since June 2007, which has “undermined the living conditions in the coastal enclave and fragmented the occupied Palestinian territory and its economic and social fabric,” according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The blockade has spawned one of the highest unemployment rates in the world at 43.2% for refugees, with a whopping 60% youth unemployment level (though Gaza has a world-class 97% literacy rate, 14 points higher than the American literacy rate of 8%, according to an April 2017 study by the US Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy). UNRWA’s Gaza refugee assistance rolls have ballooned to 10 times their pre-blockade size in the year 2000.

The shockingly lethal response to the recent Great March of Return – nonviolent protests to break the 11-year blockade gradually strangling Gaza’s 2 million people – has gravely worsened the Strip’s already grim living conditions and further stressed its crumbling humanitarian infrastructure, where an alarming 80% of Gazans now depend on dwindling international relief aid.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl recently shared the following: “I truly believe that much of the world completely underestimates the extent of the disaster in human terms that occurred in the Gaza Strip since the marches began on March 30, 2018.”

Zakat Foundation plans to further help UNRWA (the largest public sector employer in Gaza with 13,000 staff, 98% of whom are refugees) reach its goal of providing 924,310 Palestine refugees with emergency food assistance, including 526,856 living in abject poverty.

For more information on this project and its outcomes, please contact us using the information below, or visit our websites at zakat.org and unrwausa.org.

Contacts: Zakat Foundation Amal Ali, (708) 233-0555, amal@zakat.org; UNRWA USA Director of Communications, Laila Mokhiber, (202) 223-3767, laila@unrwausa.org