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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE  
REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Letter dated 20 March 1972 from the Secretary-General to  
all States Members of the United Nations or members of  
specialized agencies

Once again I must approach your Government for urgent help to the Palestine refugees. You will recall that the General Assembly at its last session demonstrated its grave concern over the financial plight of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by unanimously requesting the Working Group on the financing of the Agency to continue its efforts in seeking ways and means to overcome the Agency's chronic deficit. The Group is now actively engaged in working out measures for short- and long-term financial support and, in particular, has launched a campaign for obtaining urgent contributions in cash and in kind. I fully endorse the efforts of the Working Group. While these efforts continue, UNRWA must receive adequate contributions in order to avert a crisis this year.

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA has informed me that, despite a generous response from some contributors, the Agency is still faced with a deficit of the order of \$4.5 million this year, including subsidies to Governments for health and education services to refugees. Because the Agency's cash position is now precarious as a result of a diminution of the working capital and there is a risk of financial collapse in the course of the year, the Commissioner-General has been obliged to propose that some reductions in services should be made at the earliest practicable date. The Governments that are hosts to the refugees are rightly alarmed at the prospect of reductions and are opposed to them. There can be no doubt that any reduction in the services of UNRWA, which are already at the bare minimum, would not only add to the hardships of the refugees but also contribute to instability in the area. In view of this danger, and confident that the international community will assume its responsibility for the support of the refugees, I have asked the Commissioner-General to postpone the proposed reductions for a little longer.

\* A/8700.

The education and health services together amount to nearly two thirds of the Agency's current budget of \$50.5 million and expenditure on them is almost entirely in cash. The major part of the assistance required must therefore be in cash, but contributions in kind of sugar, flour, rice, cooking oil and canned meat will also be welcome.

The General Assembly emphasized "the urgent need for extraordinary efforts and exceptional measures in order to maintain, at least at their present level, the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East". Therefore, after consultations with the Working Group and the Commissioner-General and with the support of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, I address this appeal to Governments, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and private sources, for urgent voluntary contributions. A decision on reductions of services cannot safely be delayed beyond 31 May 1972 and pledges of contributions are required before that date.

I very much hope that your Government will give urgent consideration to this important matter and will find it possible to respond generously.

(Signed) Kurt WALDHEIM  
Secretary-General

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