



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **New European Union assistance for the Palestinian people**

The European Union has decided to bring forward the first part of its 2013 assistance package for the Palestinian people to the beginning of the year in order to ensure that the support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), who provide vital services to the Palestinian people, is not interrupted.

The Decision has two components. For the first, €60 million will be allocated to the PEGASE mechanism, which supports the Palestinian National Development Plan by helping the PA to finance its budget deficit and implement its reform agenda, meet its obligations towards civil employees, pensioners and most vulnerable citizens, and maintain the functioning of the administration and the provision of essential public services to the population. This amount will contribute to the Palestinian Authority's payments of salaries and pensions for the first three months of 2013.

The Second component allocates an initial amount of €40 million to UNWRA's 2013 regular budget (General Fund) in order to support the education, health, relief and social services programmes which UNWRA is responsible for providing for Palestine refugees in West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

High Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton said: *"The European Union is again doing its utmost to underpin the ability of the PA and UNRWA to deliver essential services to the Palestinian people without interruption. We are committed to continuing our support while urging other donors to follow suit. This year we are also earmarking a specific allocation for the Jerash refugee camp in Jordan, which is home to some of the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees in the Middle East."*

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle, announcing the adoption of the package, said: *"The Palestinian Authority has particular problems in obtaining donor funds early in the year. The EU is aware of this and, as a reliable donor, has taken steps to alleviate the problem. These funds for both the PA and UNWRA for early 2013 are vital for ensuring that there is no interruption in the provision of the basic health and education services which the Palestinian people need"*.

In addition to the two components financed from the 2013 budget, a further amount of €2 million is allocated from 2012 funds to rebuild shelters for around 100 of the poorest Palestinian refugee families in Jordan's Jerash Refugee Camp.

## **Background**

Since its establishment in early 2008, the PEGASE mechanism has sustained the efforts of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan first and from 2011 in the National Development Plan covering the period 2011-2013 - to which the EU has expressed continuing support. The document reiterates the PA's commitment to the effective protection and promotion of the fundamental values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The PA remains committed to budgetary and fiscal transparency, with systematic publication of the budget law. The objective of this action is to support the Palestinian National Development Plan by helping the PA to: finance its budget deficit and implement its reform agenda; meet its obligations towards civil employees, pensioners and poorest citizens, and maintain the functioning of the administration and the provision of essential public services to the population.

The Jerash Camp in northern Jordan was set up as an "emergency" camp in 1968 to accommodate 11,500 ex-Gazan refugees (Palestine refugees who fled to Gaza in 1948 and were displaced from Gaza in 1967) and "displaced persons" from Gaza (Gaza residents who were displaced in 1967 for the first time) who fled from the Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Currently, there are 26,785 refugees in the camp that are registered with UNRWA. Of them, approximately 14,000 live within the official borders of camp.

The population of Jerash Camp is almost exclusively made up of ex-Gazan refugees and "displaced persons" from Gaza. Although they are entitled to hold temporary, two-year Jordanian passports, unlike "West Bank" Palestinians in Jordan they have no national ID number and are thereby excluded from working in a wide range of services and professions in Jordan.

## **For more information**

Website of EuropeAid Development and Cooperation DG:

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm)

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