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LWF Advocates for Gaza Reconstruction

World Not Delivering on Gaza Reconstruction Promises, New Report Warns

GENEVA – The international community must urgently change its approach to Gaza and deliver on promises of reconstruction, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) together with 45 other agencies said today in a new report on the lack of progress since last year's conflict.

“Six months since donors pledged \$3.5 billion towards Gaza's recovery, many people are worse off and not a single one of the 19,000 destroyed homes has been rebuilt. 100,000 people are still homeless and many are living in makeshift camps or schools,” the report says.

The report, "Charting a New Course: Overcoming the stalemate in Gaza," warns that further conflict is inevitable—and with it the cycle of destruction and donor-funded reconstruction—unless world leaders implement a new approach that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict. Donors must insist on a permanent ceasefire, accountability of all parties for ongoing violations of international law, and an end to the Israeli blockade that seals in 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza and keeps them separated from the West Bank. Rather than challenging the blockade, the report found that most donors are accepting ways to work around it.

LWF's response to the Gaza crisis in 2014 through the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) included sending two volunteer medical teams, totaling six doctors and six nurses, to Gaza to care for the people injured in the ongoing conflict with Israel. The teams included specialists in emergency medicine, intensive care, surgery, internal medicine and pediatrics, with accompanying specialty nursing. The team also brought in much-needed medical supplies and medicines. Five hospitals and 34 clinics have been shut down in Gaza due to the insecure situation. As an additional aspect of its emergency response, AVH assisted in evacuating and receiving wounded casualties during the war. Twelve surgical and four intensive care beds were reserved, and on 31 July 2014, AVH received its first trauma patient from Gaza.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam, said: "The promising speeches at the donor conference have turned into empty words. There has been little rebuilding, no permanent ceasefire agreement and no plan to end the blockade. The international community is walking with eyes wide open into the next avoidable conflict, by upholding the status quo they themselves said must change."

William Bell of Christian Aid said: "We must ensure that this most recent and most devastating conflict was the last one. There must be consequences for continued violations. By facilitating a culture of impunity, the international community is committing itself to indefinitely picking up the pieces."

Only 26.8 percent of money pledged by donors six months ago has been released so far. Even when funded, many reconstruction projects have not yet begun due to restrictions on essential material under the blockade. Most of the 81 health clinics and hospitals that were damaged still lack funds for reconstruction, but the few that have funds do not have the material needed to proceed.

Tony Laurance, CEO of MAP UK, said: "The world is shutting its eyes and ears to the people of Gaza when they need it most. Reconstruction cannot happen without funds, but money alone will not be enough. With the blockade in place we are just reconstructing a life of misery, poverty and despair."

Since the temporary ceasefire, violence against civilians has continued, with more than 400 incidents of Israeli fire into Gaza and four rockets fired from Gaza into Israel. The report calls on all parties to immediately resume long-term ceasefire negotiations. It calls on Israel to end its blockade and policy of separating Gaza from the West Bank, and for Palestinian political actors to reconcile and prioritize reconstruction. It also calls on Egypt to open its border to allow humanitarian relief.

Recently, donors have managed to achieve some small increase in the flow of construction material, but not enough to meet needs and its impact is extremely limited while the blockade remains in place. The report sets out specific recommendations to the international community to break the cycle of conflict and destruction, including ways to:

- Speed up reconstruction, by delivering pledges and insisting on the entry of essential material in line with international law.
- Ensure all parties are held accountable for violations of international law, including by considering obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on weapons known to be used indiscriminately against civilians, and seeking compensation for destroyed aid projects.
- End the blockade and rehabilitate Gaza's shattered economy. The blockade has reduced Gaza to dependency on aid, with 80 percent of the population receiving international assistance and 63 percent of youth unemployed. Exports from Gaza are at less than two percent of pre-blockade levels with the movement of people and goods between Gaza and the West Bank practically non-existent.
- Support the development of a unified Palestinian government. Palestinian leadership on reconstruction has at times been weak and uncoordinated and is further complicated due to Israeli restrictions on government officials' travel. Keeping Gaza separated from the West Bank has entrenched the already problematic split between

Fatah and Hamas, with enormous negative impact on the delivery of aid and services in Gaza.

Report signatories include:

1. ActionAid
2. Alianza por la Solidaridad
3. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
4. Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz (ACPP)
5. CARE International
6. CCFD-Terre Solidaire
7. CCP Japan
8. Christian Aid
9. Church of Sweden
10. Council for Arab-British Understanding
11. Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti (COSPE)
12. DanChurchAid (DCA)
13. Diakonia
14. GVC
15. Handicap International
16. Heinrich Böll Foundation
17. HelpAge International
18. Horyzon – Swiss Youth Development Organization
19. Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)
20. KinderUSA
21. Medical Aid for Palestinians (Map – UK)
22. Medicos del Mundo MDM-Spain
23. Médecins du Monde France
24. Médecins du Monde Switzerland
25. Medicos del Mundo MDM-Spain
26. medico international
27. medico international schweiz
28. Mennonite Central Committee
29. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)
30. Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
31. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
32. Overseas
33. Oxfam
34. Première Urgence – Aide Médicale Internationale
35. Quaker Council for European Affairs
36. Rebuilding Alliance
37. Save the Children
38. Secours Islamique France
39. Secours Catholique – Caritas France
40. Terre des hommes Foundation
41. Terre des Hommes Italy
42. The Carter Center
43. The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation
44. The Lutheran World Federation
45. The Swedish Organisation for Individual Relief/IM – Swedish Development Partner (SOIR)
46. United Civilians for Peace, Netherland

Read this story at: <http://www.lutheranworld.org/news/lwf-advocates-gaza-reconstruction>

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