**Stop the Killing in Gaza**

**PRESS RELEASE
27 December 2008**

Gaza, 27 December 2008

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Karen AbuZayd, expressed her horror to the extensive destruction visited upon Gaza Strip today and her deep sadness to the terrible loss in human life. UNRWA, the United Nation’s Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, strongly urges the Israeli Government to heed calls for ceasing its bombardment on Gaza. Israel is a signatory to international conventions that protect non-combatants in times of conflict. These conventions are worthless if they are not upheld.

UNRWA will exert all efforts to respond as quickly as possible to relieve suffering and pain. The killings and destruction today followed weeks of a tight blockade that prevented UNRWA, and other humanitarian agencies, from assisting the population and mitigating the difficult economic situation. The population is paying the price from the prolonged blockade, absence of basic needs to 1.5 million persons and now a military escalation.

UNRWA recognizes Israel’s legitimate security concerns however, its actions should be in conformity with international humanitarian law and it should not use disproportionate force. UNRWA calls on Israel to guarantee humanitarian agencies unrestricted and secure access into Gaza and respect its obligations under international humanitarian law by ensuring the safety of the Palestinian civilian population.