



**Mohammed Assaf, UNRWA Regional Youth Ambassador's remarks at World Humanitarian Day event  
UN Headquarters, New York, New York, 19 August 2016**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, Friends,

Allow me to thank all of the organizers of this important global event. As we mark World Humanitarian Day.

I am delighted to be here with you today at United Nations headquarters. Today, I am not only here to express my solidarity with the Palestinian people and advocate for their rights, but to also speak for the dignity of all of the children and youth around the world, who are eager to exercise their rights and achieve their dreams.

This is particularly true for the children in Syria – the video we saw just now gave us a small glimpse of their daily suffering. In Hala and her children we see their sadness and fear, but also the hope in their eyes.

The international community cannot stand by and be silent about what is happening to these innocent children – for they are the future of humanity. As we gather here, I urge all of you to take action to bring an end to the killing of innocent Syrians, to Palestine refugees in Syria, and to all conflict-affected children everywhere, and to pray for them so that there will finally be peace.

Today, I speak as the UNRWA Regional Youth Ambassador, a role that I am very proud to serve and feel great responsibility for. As a "child of UNRWA" and as a Palestine refugee in the long journey towards dignity and justice, I can speak with confidence, about the importance of UNRWA for anyone who believes in peace and justice for all people. Today, 75 million children in the world cannot access school due to crises, trapping them in cycles of poverty and discrimination and denying them their right to achieve their full potential.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the age of four, I lived in Khan Younis refugee camp in Gaza. I attended UNRWA schools, and my mother today is an UNRWA teacher. I spent my happiest days with my friends in the camp. Despite the siege on Gaza and I believe that I was lucky in many ways. UNRWA – for me, my family, my neighbors for other 5 million refugees – is like a mother who, for the past 65 years, has provided us with health, education, food and shelter and helped preserve our dignity.

In closing, I would like to impart on you today one key message. Building international solidarity in support of refugees everywhere is critical, as is support to humanitarian organizations like UNRWA. I urge you to provide the diplomatic and financial support necessary to these organizations to carry out their duties, often in complex and dangerous environments.

I am confident that, with your help, we can bring hope to the 65 million people – over half of them children – who have been forced to leave their homes.

Thank you.