



31 January 2018. UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl says that every effort will be made to continue its work in education and health for Palestine refugees despite the drastic cuts in contributions announced by the United States.

“We will continue our efforts to keep the schools open, keep the clinics open,” Mr. Krähenbühl told a press conference at UNRIC in Brussels, “because we fear that otherwise that the parameters of hope and aspirations which we have kept alive for millions of Palestine refugees would be at risk.”

In Brussels the *Commissioner-General* has had talks with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, as well as attending an extraordinary session of the international donor group for Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), convened by Mogherini and Norway’s Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide.

Mr. Krähenbühl’s visit is a part of an effort to shore up international support after the United

States cut its annual contribution. So far UNRWA has received \$60 million from the United States, down from 350 million \$. The potential gap for UNRWA is as high as 290 million.

The annual budget of UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, is \$1.2- 1.3 billion. UNRWA is responsible for the provision of assistance and protection of 5.3 million Palestine refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan Lebanon, the West bank and the Gaza strip.



Mr. Krähenbühl expressed his worries about a “total lack of a political horizon,” for the refugees.

“If you meet members of this community, if you meet Palestinian refugees wherever they are, this is what they face, the can identify no structured political process that would lead them to believe that they have a way forward,” the Commisioner General told the press conference.

“At the same time it is very important to mention, that there is not only a lack of political horizon but also a personal horizon.”

In addition to the lack of provision of electricity and water, the population of the Gaza strip faced a number of pressures, not least the lack of freedom of movement caused by a decade long blockade and the trauma of wars.

Mr. Krähenbühl said he was worried about the deep “psycho-social despair that effects the community in the Gaza strip.”

“When you add all these parameters and add to that 65% youth unemployment, an absolute world record, you have a situation that is extremely volatile, very worrying and for many people deeply traumatic.”

“This combination of a lack of a political and personal horizon is something that actually weighs on the entire region and I cannot understand how anyone can see those parameters as recognisable with the security of anyone; Palestinians, Egyptians, Israelis and others.”

