

MEDIA RELEASE

Tunisia helps restore normalcy among Palestinian school children in occupied Palestinian territory

Tunis/Ramallah, 3 November 2004 – A Tunisian non-governmental organization ‘Children First’ is giving US 65,000 to UNICEF in support of emergency education activities for Palestinian children in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

UNICEF’s support funded by ‘Children First’ will help restore a sense of normalcy in the lives of school children in the Jenin area in the northern West Bank. The support will allow 10,000 school children in grades 1-3 to continue their education despite closures and curfews. “This contribution is very special to us since it signifies not only solidarity but indeed recognition of the importance of children’s right to education in conflict situations” said Jean-Michel Delmotte, UNICEF Representative in Tunisia. Children First, a Tunisian non-governmental organization created in 1993 by a group of goodwill ladies, aims at supporting the improvement of schooling in the most deprived areas of Tunisia. It organized a solidarity dinner to collect funds to help the rebuilding of the education system in Jenin where HE Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his spouse Mrs. Leila Ben Ali, through a private contribution, added funds to the ones generated.

This donation will help ensure that children in the Jenin area have access to education even when children are prevented from reaching their schools. The programme facilitates that when children cannot reach school they will be able to continue learning at home and when they can reach their school again, they will be able to catch up on the missed learning. “The Tunisian support is a boost for us in oPt and for the children of Jenin since it recognized the UNICEF’s role in improving the social conditions of children in crisis situations. Education is the key to economic development in the Palestinian territory. By investing in children you invest in the future.” said Dan Rohrmann, Special Representative, UNICEF - oPt.

In Tunisia, UNICEF is also involved in the education sector, notably by ensuring equity in access and improving the general quality. The net enrolment rate is high (99%) and this allows UNICEF and its partners to concentrate on rural schools, reform of curricula, better partnerships with parents and students.

UNICEF – the world’s most influential advocate for children in the world - has been working to improve the situation of children and women in oPt since the early 1980s and in Tunisia since 1985. Go to: www.unicef.org

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