



Press Release - European Union
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European Union provides €12 million for essential social protection to families in need in the West Bank and Gaza

On Monday 19 December, the European Union (EU) will make this year's fourth and last contribution to the Palestinian Authority's quarterly payment of social allowances to over 66,600 Palestinian households living in extreme poverty in the West Bank and Gaza. The contribution, channelled through the PEGASE^[1] mechanism, amounts to €12 million (ILS 60,861,799) and is funded by the European Commission (€11.5 million) and the Government of Ireland (€0.5 million).

Eligible beneficiaries are identified in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Social Affairs, through the latter's unified cash transfer programme, designed to provide basic safety net to Palestinian households living in extreme poverty. The assistance takes the form of a cash allowance.

The €12 million contribution, through PEGASE, will directly benefit 66,626 eligible Palestinian families – out of which a little less than 40,000 live in Gaza.

The **Minister of Social Affairs, Mrs Majeda Al Masri**, said:

"In line with the strategy of the Ministry of Social Affairs to unify and consolidate cash assistance programs and systems across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and as the result of lengthy efforts, the implementation of the cash transfer programme in Gaza finally came in effect a year after it was introduced and applied in the West Bank. This represents the first payment under the unified cash assistance programme. It will reach around 95 thousand poor and marginalised households living in the occupied Palestinian territory. We would like to seize this occasion to thank everyone who contributed to this national achievement, especially our partners from the European Union."

The **Acting Representative of the European Union, Mr John Gatt-Rutter** said:

"The EU welcomes the recent integration of Gaza into the national cash transfer programme. Through this development the same criteria are now being applied across the West Bank and Gaza to identify the poorest households. This unified database is a comprehensive tool in the hands of the Ministry to effectively target those most in need at a national level. Under this unified programme, 60% of the families receiving assistance come from Gaza; this is a clear indication of the prevalence of poverty in the Strip and the need to provide the people with a reliable social safety net".

Payments will be made across a network of local banks across the West Bank and Gaza. Beneficiaries living in the West Bank will receive their allowance directly through individual bank accounts. In Gaza, beneficiaries will continue to collect their allowance over-the-counter. Beneficiaries may collect their allowances as of Monday 19 December, at the bank branch indicated by their social worker.

Background:

Most of the EU assistance to the Palestinian Authority is channelled through PEGASE, the financial mechanism launched in 2008 to support the three-year Reform and Development Plan presented in 2007. As well as helping to meet a substantial proportion of its running costs, European funds support major reform and development programmes in key ministries, to help prepare the PA for statehood in line with the plan put forward by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in August 2009. Since February 2008, over €1.2 billion



have been disbursed through the PEGASE Direct Financial Support programmes. In addition, the EU has provided assistance to the Palestinian people through UNRWA and a wide range of cooperation projects.

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<http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/westbank/>

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