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Annual UN-backed Summer Games to give Gaza's children 'a chance to be kids'



The lighting of the torch for the Gaza Summer Games

16 June 2011 –

The United Nations-backed Summer Games for children have [begun](#) in the Gaza Strip in an annual attempt by its organizers to “give the kids of Gaza a chance to be kids.”

For five years the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)) has staged the Games – which include sports, arts and other activities – to provide a recreational outlet for an estimated 250,000 children in Gaza.

Noting that this year's Games coincides with the fifth year of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, the acting director of UNRWA operations in Gaza, Christer Nordahl, said: “We are giving these children a rare opportunity – which shouldn't be exceptional – but it is.”

“Through the Summer Games, we give the kids of Gaza a chance to be kids, to have fun, learn new things and meet new friends,” he added.

This year's event kicked off with an Olympic-style torch relay through the Strip involving 57 children and then an opening ceremony at UNRWA's field office in Gaza City. Various activities – including several attempts at setting new Guinness World Records – will take place between now and 28 July.

“Initiated at the request of the local community, the games give Gazan children a chance to have fun and a sense of normality, in an environment which is anything but normal,” UNRWA said in a press release. “The season provides a diverse set of fun activities for children in the beleaguered coastal area, including sports, swimming, arts, and drama.”

Mr. Nordahl said: “The Summer Games build on our ongoing work in Gaza to develop children’s talents, to give them room for self-expression and to teach them to respect one another – all based on the universal values of human rights.”

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