



## Gaza enjoys its first marathon in UN-backed fundraising event



Some of the more than 1,400 Palestinians taking part in the first-ever UNRWA Gaza Marathon

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Gaza's first-ever marathon took place today as some 1,500 athletes defied the sweltering heat to compete in a series of running events organized by the United Nations to raise funds for the forthcoming Summer Games that offer local children an opportunity for fun and recreation.

Nine runners completed the full 42-kilometre distance, and the winner was the 31-year-old Olympic hopeful Nader al-Misri, who crossed the finishing line 2 hours, 42 minutes and 47 seconds after the race began in Beit Hanoun, his home town, according to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (**UNRWA**).

Mr. al-Misri competed in the 5000-metre race at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and is training for the London Olympics next year.

Many other Gazans also entered, with 1,300 children serving as part of relay teams that completed the entire course, and 150 women running the last 10 kilometres to the finish.

"The idea of the marathon is to raise funds for the Gaza Summer Games," said Chris Gunness, a spokesperson for UNRWA.

"We supply these Games each summer for up to 250,000 children – we have sporting activities, cultural activities and remedial activities for children because the situation is so terrible in Gaza. I can now confirm that the \$1 million goal that we set to raise at the Gaza marathon has been reached," said Mr. Gunness.

The marathon was the brainchild of UNRWA staff member Gemma Connell, who also took part in the event.

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