

FILIPPO GRANDI

UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL

BIOGRAPHY

Filippo Grandi was appointed Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees on 20 January 2010 after having served as UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner-General since October 2005.



Mr. Grandi, an Italian national born in 1957, has been engaged in refugee and humanitarian work for the past 26 years, 22 of which have been with the United Nations. Prior to joining UNRWA, he distinguished himself in a variety of headquarters and field functions encompassing refugee assistance, protection, emergency management, donor relations and humanitarian and political affairs.

From May 2004, Grandi was Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General responsible for political affairs at the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), where he took responsibility for the electoral process, for the disarmament, demobilisation and integration programme, and for human rights issues, in particular the verification of the exercise of political rights relating to presidential and parliamentary elections.

Prior to that, Grandi was Chief of Mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Afghanistan, a position he held for almost three years. From 1997 to 2001, he served in the Executive Office of UNHCR in Geneva, as Special Assistant of the High Commissioner and then Chief of Staff.

Grandi joined UNHCR in 1988. For three years he worked in refugee programmes in Sudan, and was then involved in the humanitarian emergency response in Syria, Turkey and Iraq during and after the first Gulf War. Subsequently,

as an Emergency Officer, he led emergency operations in Kenya, Benin, Ghana, Liberia, the Great Lakes of Central Africa (including the Burundi refugee crisis in 1993 and the Goma operation in the summer of 1994), Yemen and Afghanistan, among others. After a two-year headquarters assignment dealing with some of UNHCR's main donors, especially the European Commission, Grandi was Field Coordinator for UN humanitarian activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo during its 1996 – 1997 civil war.

His early experience prior to joining the UN included work with non-governmental organisations carrying out refugee programmes in Thailand and Italy.

Grandi graduated from the State University of Milan with a degree in modern history and from the Gregorian University in Rome with a BA in philosophy.

In his inaugural letter to UNRWA staff, Grandi observed that "...the post of Commissioner-General is not a personal honour bestowed on one individual, but a mission to be carried out with and for Palestine refugees". He paid tribute to the uniquely concrete and tangible character of UNRWA's mission, noting that this is "what makes us relevant, allowing our work to make a real difference to the lives of those who continue, after six decades, to be wronged by injustice."

About UNRWA

UNRWA provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 4.7 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a solution to their plight. The Agency's services encompass education, health care, social safety-net, camp infrastructure and improvement, community support, microfinance and emergency response, including in times of armed conflict. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by contributions. The Agency's core budget for 2010-2011 stands at \$1.23 billion. In 2009, emergency appeals for the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon amounted to \$827.4 million.