



**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs -
occupied Palestinian territory**

**Preliminary Humanitarian Situation Report:
Operation "Forward Shield"**

Northern Gaza Strip, August 2004 – A preliminary assessment of the effects of the Israeli operation "Forward Shield," in the northern Gaza Strip, particularly in Beit Hanoun, shows that Beit Hanoun and neighbouring areas suffered considerable damage. This report covers the period 29 June to 5 August 2004.

Aside from the deaths and injuries (detailed later in this report), damage and destruction to property and infrastructure are primary humanitarian concerns resulting from the operation. Public and private property - homes, agricultural land, factories, educational facilities, roads, electricity, and water and sewerage networks - were damaged or destroyed in Beit Hanoun. For example, at least 17% of total arable land in Beit Hanoun was levelled. Homes, industrial facilities and agricultural land were also reported damaged or destroyed in Beit Lahia and Jabalia.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) deployed around Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip on 29 June, following the deaths of two Israelis in a rocket attack on the Israeli town of Sderot. Rocket attacks have continued intermittently during and after the period of the IDF deployment. Beit Hanoun and areas immediately bordering Beit Hanoun to the southeast and southwest were the main focus of operation "Forward Shield". The IDF expanded further west on 3 August moving tanks and other armoured vehicles to positions on high ground northeast of Jabalia camp and in eastern Beit Lahia. IDF redeployment from northern Gaza began at 1am on 5 August. Palestinian security positions were re-manned early the same day and have remained there since.

Since the redeployment, IDF bulldozers and tanks continue to operate in the northeast of the Gaza Strip up to approximately one kilometre west of the border with Israel. At two locations, (Abu Safia in northeastern Jabalia, approximately one kilometre from the border and As Shurrab in northeastern Beit Hanoun approximately 800m from the border) tanks and bulldozers are establishing large raised sand platforms, generally the foundation for IDF observation posts.

IDF operations are ongoing and access remains limited in some areas. Therefore, an exact assessment of the humanitarian impact of operation "Forward Shield" remains problematic. Figures included in this report are from various sources. Figures are those available to date that OCHA considers most accurately reflect the situation observed.

Casualties

Ministry of Health sources report that in the period 29 June to 5 August 2004, 19 Palestinians were killed and 154 were injured. Three IDF soldiers were reported injured during the same period.

Land Levelling

Beit Hanoun and surrounding areas form one of the main agricultural areas in the Gaza Strip, producing mainly citrus fruits and olives. Levelling of agricultural land by IDF bulldozers and tanks was one of the main components of operation “Forward Shield.” It will affect the availability of food and ability of residents to support themselves at a time when the cost of food in the area is rising.

Initial assessments indicate that approximately 2,891 dunums (289.1 hectares) of land in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia and Jabalia, were levelled during the IDF operation.

Beit Hanoun: According to the Beit Hanoun Municipality, the total area of Beit Hanoun is 18,000 dunums (1,800 hectares), of which 11,440 dunums (1,140 hectares) is registered agricultural land. More than 17% or 2,038 dunums (203.8 hectares) of agricultural land was levelled, according to the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights. The orchard area between Salah Ad Din Street and As Sika Street has been almost completely cleared of trees. Eastern areas of Beit Hanoun, including An Nazzaza, Al Farrata, As Shurrab, Al Masriin were also affected.

Jabalia: Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights reports that 706 dunums (70.6 hectares) of agricultural land located within the northeastern boundary of Jabalia municipal area was also levelled.

Beit Lahia: Al Mezan Centre also reports that 147.5 dunums (14.7 hectares) of agricultural land was levelled in Beit Lahia municipal area.

In addition, the centre reports that six livestock farms, including poultry pens and cattle sheds, were damaged or destroyed during IDF operations.

Property Destruction

Private Property: UNRWA reports that 24 families (145 people) are now homeless in Beit Hanoun, a result of 17 residential buildings being destroyed during IDF operations. Another 84 families (584 people) residing in 76 residential buildings had their properties damaged. The destroyed and damaged shelters were mainly located on Salah Ad Din Street, As Sika Street and Khalil Al Wazir Street in western Beit Hanoun and in Al Wazir Street, Al Farrata road and Fayez Hamad Street in eastern Beit Hanoun.

Two houses were destroyed and three were damaged in Beit Lahia and two houses were destroyed and eight were damaged in Jabalia, according to an assessment by Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights.

At least three dozen houses and buildings in and around Beit Hanoun were occupied by IDF soldiers for varying periods during operation “Forward Shield” many of which were damaged. In one example, a three-storey family home on As Sika Street was taken over by IDF soldiers for five days.

Commercial Property: At least 22 industrial facilities were reported destroyed or damaged during operation “Forward Shield.” This will have an impact on employment and livelihoods.

The Beit Hanoun Municipality reports that eight factories, including a tile factory, a paving stone factory and a cement block factory, were totally destroyed during the IDF operations. All of

these factories were located between As Sika Street and Salah Din Street. The Beit Hanoun Municipality also reports that a further nine industrial facilities were damaged. In addition, four industrial facilities and workshops were destroyed in Jabalia and one workshop was destroyed in Beit Lahia, according to the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights.

Public Property: The Beit Hanoun Municipality reports that damage to public property included:

- Beit Hanoun Girls Secondary School (governmental): destruction of a section of the boundary wall and paved courtyard – Khalil Al Wazir Street
- Municipality building: destruction of a large section of the boundary wall of the building – Khalil Al Wazir Street
- Union of Palestinian Agricultural Work Committees (UPAWC): destruction of a fence and a plant nursery, including agricultural refrigeration units – As Sika Street
- Two municipal sewerage pumps: damage to boundary wall and pipes –As Sika Street
- Force 17 and National Security posts: concrete security posts located on Khalil Al Wazir Street were destroyed – Khalil Al Wazir Street
- Beit Hanoun Farmers Association: damage to the boundary wall, storage sheds - As Sika Street
- Beit Hanoun Agricultural School: damage to the boundary wall – Khalil Al Wazir Street

Damage to Infrastructure

Frequent breaks in the water, power and sewerage networks, and damage to roads and other infrastructure resulted from movement of IDF heavy armoured vehicles. Further damage resulted from establishment of IDF positions, embedding tanks, construction of earth mounds and digging of trenches.

Roads: Damage to main and branch roads (both asphalt and non-asphalt roads) is estimated to be at least \$2 million, according to a compilation of sources. A more comprehensive assessment of the road network is likely to show that damage is far more extensive.

Main roads affected were:

- Khalil Al Wazir Street (asphalt), the main north-south road in Beit Hanoun
- As Sika Street (asphalt), running north-south in western Beit Hanoun
- As Sika Bridge (asphalt), located at the southern end of As Sika Street, just north of the junction with Salah Ad Din Street, also damaged twice during IDF operations in 2003
- Salah El Din Street (asphalt), damaged at several points: Beit Lahia/Jabalia junction, Al Wahd road junction, and the junction with the Beit Lahia bypass road
- Al Wahd road (non-asphalt), running across Salah Ad Din and As Sika Street
- Sultan Abdel Hamid road (asphalt), between As Sika and Salah Ad Din streets
- Basel Na'eem Street (asphalt), running east from Khalil Al Wazir Street
- Fayez Hamad Street (asphalt), running east from Khalil Al Wazir Street
- Al Basha road (asphalt), running east from Khalil Al Wazir Street

Damage to newly constructed asphalt roads also included breaks in the storm drain system. Several dirt roads leading from central Beit Hanoun to eastern areas (al Farrata, Al Masriin, An Nazzaza) also sustained damage resulting for similar reasons.

Water: Water networks sustained significant damage from digging trenches, embedding tanks, and by regular movement of IDF heavy armoured vehicles. The Beit Hanoun Municipality reported damage to main lines, pipes and manholes. International Management Group (IMG) estimates damage to be \$250,000. During the operation repairs were difficult to carry out due to intensified military activity, despite assistance by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) and OCHA.

In addition (and not included in the \$250,000 mentioned above), the Municipality stated that 17 privately-owned water wells were destroyed. They were located in eastern areas of Beit Hanoun and on As Sika Street and used for drinking water and/or agricultural use.

Sewerage: The municipal sewerage network was similarly damaged by IDF-established trenches and by regular movement of IDF armoured vehicles. According to IMG, damage is estimated at \$150,000. Municipal sources reported damage to septic tanks, main underground sewerage pipes, house connections, and man holes.

Electricity: Electrical networks throughout Beit Hanoun sustained substantial damage, estimated at \$150,000 by the IMG. During IDF operations, some temporary repairs were conducted by municipal engineering teams, following coordination with the IDF and facilitated by the ICRC and OCHA. Initial assessments indicate damage was sustained to the low and high voltage nets, including overhead and underground cables, columns and wood posts.

Solid Waste: A significant volume of solid waste (rubble from destroyed properties/infrastructure) resulted from IDF operations inside Beit Hanoun. In particular, Beit Hanoun valley, a small depression which runs between the Beit Hanoun Industrial Zone and under the bridge across the southern section of Khalil Wazir Street, was filled with solid waste by IDF bulldozers - and will need to be cleared. The Municipality has also reported a need for 100 garbage containers, as replacements for containers destroyed during IDF operations.

Humanitarian needs and response

For the facilitation of humanitarian assistance and accurate reporting, other international organisations need unrestricted access to the areas. Entry into Beit Hanoun during the operation was coordinated with the IDF. However, serious concerns remain about the safety and security of humanitarian staff following several incidents in which shooting continued near their work. It is clear that humanitarian assistance will be affected if better communication arrangements cannot be addressed by the IDF.

After Operation “Forward Shield”

Damage to agricultural land and other property has continued since 5 August. Reports continue to be received of land levelling, destruction of water wells, and damage to other property resulting from the ongoing IDF activity in areas in eastern Beit Hanoun and eastern Jabalia, including the consolidation of IDF positions in Abu Safia (north-eastern Jabalia) and As Shurrab (eastern Beit Hanoun). Access to these areas for verification is currently restricted.

For further information, contact:

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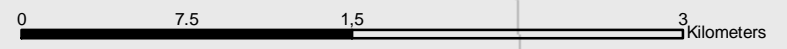
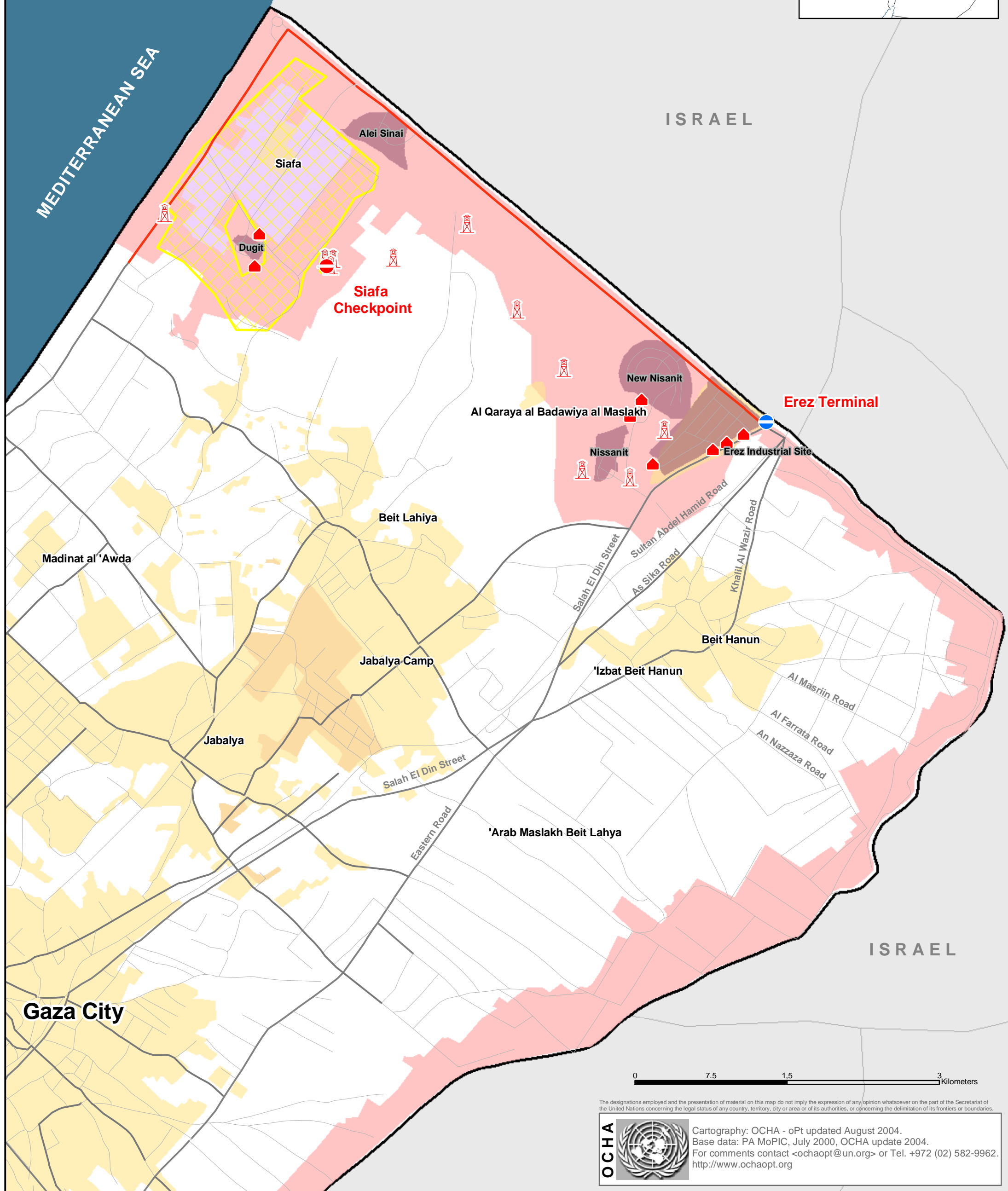
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UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
N O R T H G A Z A - Beit Hanoun
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- Closure**
- Checkpoint
 - Commercial Terminal
 - Road Gate
 - Military Post
 - Observation Tower
 - Roadblock
 - Earth Mound
 - City or Village
 - Refugee Camp
 - Yellow Area (Palestinian Areas Under Israeli Security Control)
 - Israeli Settlement
 - *Cleared Areas
 - Roads for Settlement/IDF Use Only
 - Main & Local Road
 - Urban & Dirt Road



The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



Cartography: OCHA - oPt updated August 2004.
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