



Gaza Strip Inter-Agency Humanitarian Fact Sheet

May 2008

Israeli restrictions on the amount of fuel and goods supplied to Gaza continued through May and led to fuel and electricity shortages that averaged three hours PER day. Hamas authorities took control of fuel supplies and distributed fuel to priority groups, such as health services and taxi drivers. The shortage of industrial diesel forced the Gaza power station to shut down May 17-19.

The reduced supply of cooking gas caused one poultry farmer to slaughter about 165,000 chicks, which were unable to survive without sufficient heating. The shortage of petrol and diesel impeded movement of traffic and the operation of power generators. As 70 per cent of Gaza's agricultural wells require diesel to power water pumps for irrigation, there was not sufficient water supply for irrigation. As a result, many farmers were forced to harvest their crops prematurely or lost them completely.

On May 22, a large truck bomb was detonated at Erez checkpoint. The driver of the truck was killed and there were no other reported casualties, although some of the surrounding protective walls were damaged. Following the incident, Israeli authorities closed the Erez crossing through May 26, including for international staff providing humanitarian relief in Gaza and Gazans with special permits to leave Gaza.

FIGURES FOR MAY 2008

	From Direct Conflict with Israel				Other (including Internal Violence)			
	Injuries	Deaths	Women Deaths	Child Deaths	Injuries	Deaths	Women Deaths	Child Deaths
Palestinian (Gaza Strip)	107	41	2	6	64	6	0	1
IDF (in Gaza Strip)	2	0	0	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Israeli (in Israel)	20	2	1	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Palestinian Rockets	172	IDF Searches	12
Palestinian Mortars towards Israel	133	IDF Arrests/Detentions	236
Palestinian Mortars against IDF inside the Gaza Strip	143	Israeli Airstrikes	23

FOOD (WFP, UNRWA)

- Food prices increased significantly in the month of May due to seasonal changes, global price rises prices and the influence of Israeli restrictions on the import of basic commodities. Lemon prices, for example, rose 60%, banana rose 25%; garlic rose 20%, fresh beef rose 7%, chicken rose 10% and frozen meat rose 11%.
- WFP collaborated with FAO and UNRWA to survey the food security situation IN GAZA. The study found that Gazans are eating less. Many parents have reduced their consumption in order to provide more food for their children. Half the surveyed population reduced their spending on food, 89 percent purchased lower quality of food and 75 percent buy smaller quantities of food since January 2008. Almost everyone reduced their consumption of fresh fruit, vegetables and animal protein to save money. Very few Palestinians now eat fresh red meat.

HEALTH (WHO)

- Ministry of Health (MoH) hospitals struggled to secure fuel to operate their emergency generators which are used every day. All hospitals had reserves of less than 30 per cent of their storage capacity.
- Khan Yunis District experienced power cuts for four hours each day.
- Only five out of ten clinics in Khan Yunis have electric generators, and three out of the five generators are out of order, while the other two cannot operate due to the shortage of fuel required to power them. As a result, all primary health care in Khan Yunis was severely disrupted.
- Gaza European Hospital and Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, suspended 50 percent of their elective or non-emergency surgeries, and limited the laundry and autoclave working hours. Four out of the 44 MoH ambulances were not functioning because they have no petrol and the remaining .40 had partially filled tanks.
- Out of 1,089 patients who applied for a permit to cross Erez Crossing for urgent medical treatment outside Gaza in May, 570 (52.34%) had their requests approved, 16 (1.47%) denied, 75 (6.89%) were still being processed, 385 (35.35%) were asked to supply more information 28 (2.57%) were asked to be interviewed by the Israeli General Security Service, and 15 (1.38%) had their applications returned as incomplete. 517 patients crossed Erez in May for medical treatment.

WATER AND SANITATION (UNICEF)

- Israeli fuel restrictions meant that the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) did not have enough fuel to pump sewage or water during power cuts. In April CMWU received 31 percent of its needs (45,990 liters) and five percent in May (8,350 liters).
- On May 25 Beit Lahia sewage lake level rose by 21 centimeters because the CMWU had no fuel to pump sewage to adjacent overflow lakes. A collapse of the banks of the lake could lead to a flood of 1.5 million cubic meters of sewage into surrounding areas, threatening the lives of 10,000 people, similar to the events at Um el Nasser in March 2007 which resulted in five deaths. UNRWA supplied 5,000 liters of fuel, enabling the pumps to resume operation and bring the sewage down to safe levels.
- As a result of the fuel shortage and power cuts, 15 per cent of the population had access to water for four to six hours per week, 25 per cent of the population had access to water every four days and 60 per cent of the population had access to water every other day.
- None of Gaza's three sewage treatment plants functions normally. The lack of spare parts and fuel currently force CMWU to release about 77 million litres of raw or poorly treated sewage into the sea per day.
- A study by the Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation found that sea water on 11 out of 30 beaches in Gaza were polluted with fecal bacteria.
- In May, Israeli authorities allowed a small number of spare parts and materials into Gaza. UNICEF coordinated for the entry of two water pumps and the World Bank organized the entry of one caustic soda tank, 278 generator spare parts, 160 tons of cement for the construction of manholes in the sewage networks and basins and one pressure switch for a pumping station.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL (UNRWA AND UNICEF)

- The UNRWA mental health programme reassessed students exposed to violent events during Al-Bureij Explosion in February 2008 and found out that 61 percent of the severely traumatized ones have shown more than 20 percent improvement after counseling interventions leaving 162 students in need of further interventions. In the north area; UNRWA counselors found that 70 percent of the students who showed significant post-traumatic reactions have shown more than a 20 percent improvement after counseling interventions leaving 211 students in need of further intervention. UNRWA counselors will continue to follow up the traumatized students during the summer holiday.
- In response to the deaths of two teachers and four pupils of UNRWA schools, UNRWA mental health counselors provided psychosocial support through visits to families of injured and deceased students and teachers, their communities and hospitals. Specific classroom based interventions were carried out in the classes of the dead children and teachers.
- In response to IDF incursions in the month of May, UNICEF's partner the Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution offered group counseling to 2,435 children and adolescents, individual counseling to 696 children and sensitization sessions to 1,555 caregivers.