



Gaza Strip Inter-Agency Humanitarian Fact Sheet

March 2008

The first two days of March saw the intensification of ongoing Israeli army air and ground operations throughout the Gaza Strip. The Israeli code-named 'Hot Winter' operation which took place in northern and eastern Gaza between 28 February and 2 March resulted in a total of 107 killed and 250 injured. This was one of the most violent incursions in Gaza since the granting of limited autonomy to Gaza in 1994.

The Gaza Strip remains closed to the outside world, with the exception of limited humanitarian imports and the movement of a small number of international visitors, patients and Israeli-approved Palestinians. Fuel shortages have begun to have a more profound effect on all aspects of life in Gaza, as private reserves have been depleted and the needs of the harvest and fishing season have increased demand. In March, the supply of diesel and gasoline by Israel was 57% and 80% less, respectively, compared to one year ago. The limited supply led to diesel and gasoline selling for 48% and 70% more on the black market compared to the regular market

PROTECTION (UNRWA/OCHA)

	From Direct Conflict with Israel				Other (including internal violence)			
	Injuries	Deaths	Women deaths	Children deaths	Injuries	Deaths	Women deaths	Children deaths
Palestinian	215	104	6	26	91	15	1	7
Israeli	27*	3**	0	0	0	0	0	0

* 18 IDF soldiers injured in Gaza; 9 civilians injured in Israel by rockets or live ammunition

** All IDF soldiers killed in Gaza

- A total of 347 rockets and 234 mortars were fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israel and Israeli soldiers operating in Gaza. The Israeli air force conducted 91 air strikes on different targets within the Gaza Strip.
- The Israeli army conducted 12 searches and arrested 36 people.
- During the 'Hot Winter' incursion, 34 children lost a parent. Twenty-one homes were completely destroyed, leaving 147 people homeless. Eighty-eight homes were severely or partially damaged, affecting an additional 616 people.
- hospitals, 683 (65.9%) were approved, 33 (3.2%) were rejected and 320 (30.9%) were delayed.
- Following the complicated referral process, four patients died in March after being denied permits to cross Erez: a 12-month-old female with liver disease died on 2 March; a 54-year-old male with lung cancer died on 14 March; a 48-year-old male with cardiac problems died on 20 March; and a 58-year-old woman with liver cancer died on 22 March.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL (UNRWA/UNICEF)

- Availability of medical supplies at Ministry of Health (MoH) facilities: 55 of the 416 essential drugs (13.2%) and 142 of the 596 essential medical supplies (23.8%) were at zero availability in March due to the lack of financial resources.
- A total of 257 patients were evacuated through the Rafah border crossing between 1-12 March.
- Of the 1,036 patients who applied for permission to cross Erez either to Israeli or West Bank
- UNRWA's Community Mental Health Programme screened 39,000 students from UNRWA schools in the north of Gaza to determine the extent of exposure to and reaction to the 'Hot Winter' incursion. It found that 790 students were exposed to traumatic events, including 281 who had a relative killed, 199 who saw mutilated bodies and 101 students whose homes were damaged. UNRWA counselors provided group and individual counseling to the 790 children.

94% of these children showed significant post-traumatic reactions and potential for developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

- The NGO Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR) counseled 198 children in Jabalia. Some of the problems displayed by the children were behavioral (46%), PTSD symptoms (57%), fears (53%) and speech difficulties (11%).
- In February 2008, the Islamic University Psychology Department carried out a study on a representative sample of 244 families from the entire Gaza Strip. The results showed behavioral changes and increased psychosocial problems among children: no desire to engage in recreational or educational activities (51%), fears (61%), anxiety (63%), anger (45%), sleeping difficulties (43%), school absenteeism (40%), lack of concentration at school (50%) and difficulties completing homework (47%).

WATER AND SANITATION (UNICEF)

- In March, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) received 36% of its fuel needs (54,000 liters) compared to 13% in February (19,500 liters). No fuel had been received as of April 14.
- Fuel shortages and the absence of spare parts and equipment continue to paralyse the water and sewage network. Around 30% of Gazan households have access to water for only a few hours every second day. The Gaza coast continues to be polluted by 40 million liters of partially treated sewage and 16 million liters of raw sewage.
- On 11 March and 7 April, officials from UNICEF, the World Bank and the CMWU met with Israeli authorities who agreed to positively review the submitted lists of spare parts and equipment required to maintain Gaza's water and sewage network. To date, no further progress has been noted.
- The CMWU has run out of hydrochloric acid to operate its desalination plant in Deir al Balah which makes brackish water fit for consumption for 100,000 people. Until it is allowed new supplies by Israel, the CMWU is using citric acid which damages the plant's filters.
- Unpaid wages, the absence of spare parts and fuel shortages are also creating problems for the collection of solid waste of which Gaza produces

1,200 metric tones per day. UNRWA collected 200 tons of solid waste per day and provided 53,850 liters of fuel in March to municipalities to help their rubbish collection. Nonetheless, garbage is piling up in the streets, posing an increasing public health hazard.

- Essential spare parts meant for Deir El Balah landfill machinery (German Cooperation funded) have been denied entry into the Gaza Strip for more than 10 months. This particular landfill serves about 450,000 people and receives more than 300 tons of solid waste per day.

FOOD/FOOD SECURITY (WFP/UNRWA)

- Market prices: Wheat flour remained stable but high – NIS 135 per 50 kg bag. Vegetable prices increased steeply in the third week of March. Potatoes rose 41% to NIS 2 per kilo and tomatoes rose 89% to NIS 2 per kilo (2.5 and 3 in the West Bank respectively) due to increased demand because of the procurement of farmers' produce in the local market by aid organizations and the end of the harvesting season.
- The price of fresh beef decreased as a result of the import of 406 cattle at the end of the month. It is now NIS 47 per kilo (compared to NIS 40 in the West Bank in January 2008).
- The cost of a food basket (wheat flour, rice, pulses, vegetable oil, olive oil, sugar and milk powder) increased by 31% since last June and reached NIS 207.
- Most basic food commodities are available, but at high retail prices. Labneh (yoghurt), for example, is NIS 8 compared to NIS 6.2 in the West Bank.
- UNRWA's school feeding programme was further expanded to include almost half of the schools run by the agency in the Gaza Strip. Following this expansion, about 110,000 children will be fed daily, including all schools in Rafah governorate. Schools are selected according to their location in areas which are generally the poorest in the Gaza Strip and where students' achievement levels are the lowest.

18 April 2008