

# OCHA

## occupied Palestinian territory

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# humanitarian UPDATE

19-30 JANUARY 2004



[www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt](http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt) ▪ [ochaopt@un.org](mailto:ochaopt@un.org)

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### **Suicide attack, Jerusalem, 29 January 2004**

10 Israelis were killed and 50 injured in a suicide attack in a bus in Gaza Street, West Jerusalem, on 29 January.

### **IDF operations in Rafah – southern Gaza, January 2004**

The Israeli Defence Forces have carried out a campaign of demolition and land leveling in Rafah, in the southern Gaza strip. During its three most recent incursions, between 16 and 22 January, a 31 year old Palestinian woman was killed and 8 other Palestinians were injured.

Since the beginning of January, the IDF has totally or partially demolished 72 homes making 584 people homeless.

The IDF states that these operations were undertaken following the “discovery of a weapons smuggling tunnel (as well as a tunnel filled with explosives)”. IDF forces “demolished a number of abandoned structures concealing tunnel entry shafts along the Israel-Egypt border, in the Rafah area. The abandoned structures were demolished to halt weapon smuggling and terrorist activity against IDF forces and Israeli civilians.”<sup>1</sup>

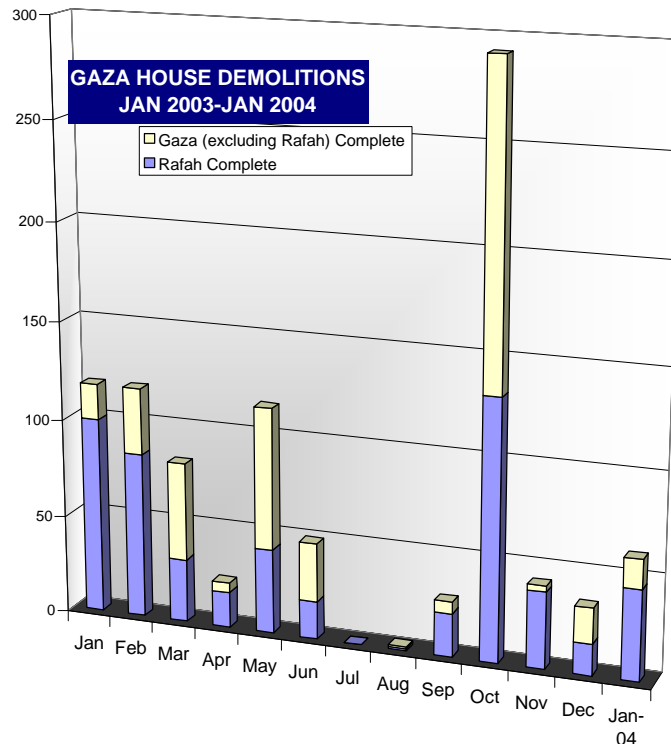
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<sup>1</sup> IDF weekly summary of events, 22 January 2004, available at:  
<http://www.idf.il/english/announcements/2004/january/22.stm>

## The context: IDF operations in Gaza since October 2000

The result of the house demolitions has been to create a buffer zone that stretches from Rafah passenger terminal in the east down to the Mediterranean coast. It is several kilometers in length and in places up to 200 metres deep. (See map, page 4).

UNRWA calculates that of 14,852 people made homeless since October 2000 by IDF house demolition, two-thirds are from Rafah. In October 2003 alone, the IDF demolished 189 homes in Rafah camp. Fifteen people were killed and 1780 individuals were made homeless in the October operation.



## Options for those made homeless by IDF action

Some of those made homeless by IDF operations move into smaller units, which in most cases are insufficient for the size of the family. Others have migrated northwards in search of accommodation, or – in exceptional cases - moved into abandoned dwellings adjacent to the buffer zone that were left by other families fearful that their homes would be targeted.

An increasing number of families whose homes were destroyed are relying on tents for shelter. Tents are being provided by UNRWA and ICRC. In the month from 21 December, the ICRC supplied 243 families in Rafah with tents.

These families are also increasingly dependent on aid agencies for food. Because of growing needs in Rafah, the World Food Programme has increased its programme of assistance to provide food for 5026 families in Rafah, compared with 3472 in August 2003.

## UNRWA appeal for immediate assistance

UNRWA will be unable to re-build on the sites where the original homes have been destroyed; and available land is scarce. It has launched an appeal for funds to enable it to build new shelters for homeless refugees in Gaza. Before the latest round of demolitions, UNRWA

estimated that it would cost US\$25 million to re-house all the refugees who have lost their homes.<sup>2</sup>

On 22 January, Peter Hansen, Commissioner General of UNRWA, described the latest demolitions as “a hugely disproportionate military response”. He said that Palestinians affected by the demolition policy could “hardly be blamed if they have come to believe that they are the victims of collective punishment.”<sup>3</sup>



Demolished building in south west Nablus – OCHA Jan 2004

### Further demolitions in Nablus

The IDF has continued military operations in Nablus. On 22 January, the IDF entered Abu Ubaida Street and called for Imad Akouba (27), a wanted member of Fatah, to surrender. At 5pm the IDF demolished the four storey building with explosives and arrested Yahia Akouba, the brother of Imad Akouba.

The Akouba building housed 5 families (35 to 40 persons). The explosion caused severe damage to several other houses in the area, including the Imam Ali primary school for girls.

### Statistics

16 – 30 January 2003		
Number of Palestinian Deaths	18	
Number of Palestinian Injuries	92	
Number of Israeli Deaths	10	
Number of Israeli Injuries ( <i>approximately</i> )	54	
<b>Ambulance incidents</b>		
Delay 1 – 2 hrs	12	(In one incident the ambulance was denied access at Beit Iba checkpoint when it was transporting a child who suffered from epilepsy).
Denial of access	4	
Verbal/Physical Abuse on medical crew	1	
Shooting at ambulance	1	The ambulance was shot at by Israeli tank fire, shattering the front windshield and causing injury to the medic's right eye. The medic was immediately transported to hospital in Gaza for treatment. It is important to mention that during the Israeli Army incursion, ambulances attempting to rescue the injured were threatened by tank fire and also denied access.
Use of ambulance and medical crew as a shield	1	

<sup>2</sup> UNRWA Press Release, 22 January 2004

<sup>3</sup> UNRWA Press Release, 22 January 2004

