



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS UPDATE ESCALATION IN HOSTILITIES IN GAZA AND SOUTHERN ISRAEL

17 NOVEMBER 2012 (AS OF 1500 HRS)

Key issues

- ❖ At least 16 Palestinian civilians, including 6 children, have been killed, and over 380 Palestinians, mostly civilians, including at least 105 children, were injured, since the beginning of the hostilities
- ❖ Three Israeli civilians have been killed and another 58, including many children, were injured, in the past four days.
- ❖ Many families in Gaza and southern Israel have reportedly relocated with relatives and friends in areas considered safer, after their homes sustained damages, or due to fear.
- ❖ The pre-existing shortages of drug and medical supplies in Gaza will be compounded by any additional demands on medical services relating to the current escalation.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel are ongoing for the fourth consecutive day, with almost continuous Israeli airstrikes and Palestinian rocket firing over the past 24 hours.

Since the beginning of the offensive, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) has targeted over 830 sites across Gaza, according to an IDF official. Overnight, airstrikes targeted and destroyed the government's headquarters in Gaza City, the Ministry of Interior and a police compound, as well as multiple military training and storage facilities and rocket launching sites. In the past 24 hours, the IAF also conducted some 20 airstrikes targeting tunnels under the border with Egypt, destroying many of them and bringing tunnel operations largely to a halt. Airstrikes have also targeted the residences of alleged Hamas militants. In one such incident this morning in the Jabalia refugee camp, a two-storey house allegedly belonging to a Hamas militant was

targeted, injuring 33 civilians, including 13 children.

Initial information collected by members of the Protection Cluster,¹ indicates that since the beginning of the offensive, 37 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire (primarily air strikes), of whom at least 16 are reported to be civilians, including at least six children. Another two Palestinian civilians, including a child, are reported to have been killed by rockets fired by Palestinian militants falling inside Gaza. At least 380 Palestinians are reported to have been injured, the large majority of whom are believed to be civilians, including at least 105 children and over 60 women. The Shelter Sector reports that at least 37 houses have been destroyed or severely damaged, and approximately 400 sustained light damage during airstrikes.

Reports indicate that Palestinian armed groups have fired more than 650 rockets and

1. Information is being collected by OHCHR, PCHR, Al Mezan and B'Tselem, with reference to MoH data.



mortars into Israel since the beginning of the operation, with more than 120 in the last 24 hours. According to the IDF spokesperson, the Iron Dome missile system intercepted about 85 percent of the rockets that would otherwise reach population centers. During the reporting period, one rocket hit Tel Aviv and another targeted Jerusalem (activating the alarm system) and landed in the Gush Etzion settlement area in the West Bank, none of which resulted in casualties or damage.

The number of Israeli fatalities since the beginning of the escalation remains three civilians, with no additional fatalities reported in the last 24 hours. The total number of Israelis injured is estimated at 67, of whom 58 are reportedly civilians. Substantial property damage has been also reported. Anecdotal information indicates that due to the fear from the rocket fire, many families in southern Israel are relocating to areas further to the centre and north of the country where they feel the situation is more secure.

THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN GAZA – UPDATES BY CLUSTERS

The state of fear remains very high, particularly among children. People are limiting their movement to a minimum and avoiding locations that have been targeted in Israeli airstrikes. Most shops are closed with the exception of some food stores, and bakeries are crowded with people stocking up on supplies in advance of a further escalation. Waiting time at bakeries is up to one hour. Shortages of fuel and other items, including some food items, are a major concern for the population, as transfers through the tunnels has been severely disrupted due to airstrikes and the closure of some of the fuel transferring tunnels by the Egyptian police. Most of the 180 fuel stations in Gaza are either closed or only partly functioning. Due to insecurity and limited resources, thousands of tons of uncollected solid waste are accumulating in the streets.



Displacement (Protection)

Limited displacement has been observed so far. Some families whose homes have sustained damage or are located near to potential air or ground targets are relocating to the homes of friends and family in areas they consider safer. At least 22 families in the eastern neighborhoods

of Gaza City, for example, are reported to have left their homes for fear of a ground operation. As of now, displaced families are not seeking refuge in public buildings. UNRWA schools are ready to accommodate large numbers if and when needed.



Health

Coordination efforts are ongoing with the Israeli authorities to arrange the entry of trucks with 205 pallets of drugs and disposables to Gaza; delivery is expected in the next two days. Prior to this latest round of violence, there were already 192 essential drugs (40 percent of items in the essential drugs list) and more than 500 consumables (55 percent of essential items) out of stock.

Given the security situation, wherever possible UNRWA health centres will exceptionally operate as of Sunday morning. Health teams are ready to provide emergency assistance, including establishing temporary or mobile clinics in the eventuality of large-scale population displacement. UNRWA's main pharmacy and health centres currently have sufficient medicine and vaccinations in stock.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

So far, no major damage to WASH facilities or disruption in the provision of WASH services has been reported. Fuel stocks for emergency operation of facilities have been topped up prior to the escalation. Fuel stocks are expected to be sufficient for an additional two weeks, provided that the current electricity supply by the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) does not decline. Chlorine stocks for water disinfection are reported to be sufficient until end of the year.



Food assistance

UNRWA food distribution centres are expected to re-open tomorrow and continue to give food aid as per the normal schedule. In terms of stocks, UNRWA has 15 days of wheat flour and 25-30 days of commodity stocks in their warehouses to reach their caseload of 800,000 beneficiaries. The UN World Food Program (WFP) has sufficient food in three warehouses to reach its current caseload of 285,000 people for 34 days (3,500 MT).

The total stock of wheat grains available at Gaza mills as of 17 November is 6,090 MT, sufficient to cover the needs of the population for approximately 10 days. Given that the current stocks of grains will require intense milling, further shortages of fuel and electricity are of concern.

All bakeries continue to operate as usual and local authorities transferred 800 MT of wheat flour from the mills to the bakeries, which would be sufficient to cover requirements for 5-6 days. In case bakeries run out of wheat flour, a request has been made to WFP to provide wheat flour as was the case during the last crisis ('Cast Lead').



Education

All schools in Gaza remain closed for the time being. According to the Gaza-based Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 25 schools have sustained some type of damage, including three UNRWA schools. One UNRWA teacher is among the fatalities.



Electricity

The Gaza Power Plant (GPP) received around 300,000 liters of fuel yesterday allowing it to keep one turbine running (35MWs) for the next 3-4 days. Scheduled blackouts across Gaza remain at 8-12 hours per day. The electricity network sustained only minor damage, which did not result in disruptions in electricity supply. One of the Israeli feeder lines, which supplies Khan Younis has been non-functioning for the last two days and coordination efforts are ongoing with the Israeli authorities to repair it. Humanitarian stakeholders are looking into ways to expedite the delivery of 23 million liters of fuel that were donated previously by Qatar for the GPP and are currently stored in Egypt.



Coordination

OCHA is continuing to coordinate clusters in Gaza. Efforts are focused on information gathering, identification of stocks and potential response in the event of increased needs. The Inter-Agency Contingency Plan will be fully activated in the event of any substantial deterioration in the situation on the ground.