

Occupied Palestinian Territory: Escalation in hostilities

Gaza and southern Israel

Situation Report (as of 26 November 2012, 1500 hrs)



This report is produced by OCHA oPt in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 22 November (1500 hrs) to 26 November (1500 hrs).

Highlights

- The Egyptian-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas appears to be holding.
- Normal activities in Gaza resumed on Saturday (24 Nov), including schools, crossing for goods and passengers, trade and public administration.
- Following the ceasefire, Palestinians have been able to access farming areas next to the perimeter fence, as well as fishing areas up to six nautical miles from shore.
- An inter agency rapid humanitarian needs assessment is currently underway by the UN and partners, in coordination with the local authorities.
- Initial priority needs identified include psychosocial support; basic repair for damaged homes, schools and clinics; non-food items for the displaced; and mitigation of ERW risks.



1,600,000 Affected people in the Gaza Strip during the hostilities (approx.)	1,000,000 Affected people in southern Israel during the hostilities (approx.)	158 Palestinians killed 1,269 Palestinians injured (14-21 November)	6 Israelis killed 224 Israelis injured (14-21 November)	298 Houses destroyed or severely damaged in Gaza	80 Houses in Israel destroyed or severely damaged
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Situation Overview

The Egyptian-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which entered into force on 21 November at 21 hrs, appears to be holding. This is despite a shooting incident near Gaza's perimeter fence on Friday 23 November, which resulted in one Palestinian fatality and 19 injuries, as well as the firing of a number of rockets at southern Israel in the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire agreement, resulting in no casualties or property damage.

Many in Gaza have spent the days since the ceasefire mourning the loss of family members and friends. The first storm this winter on 23-24 November compounded the difficult conditions of those living in homes damaged in air-strikes. However, after an official holiday on Friday, most commercial activities resumed as of Saturday. The vast majority of schools also reopened Saturday, following clean-up and initial repairs for broken windows and other blast damage, and counseling sessions were held in UNRWA schools. The Rafah, Kerem Shalom and Erez Crossings have also returned to their previous opening arrangements. Despite heavy damage by the Israeli Air Force to the tunnels under the border with Egypt, tunnel activity has resumed with goods, including fuel, construction materials and food, being transferred through. Rubble collection by the local authorities has also started in most municipalities.

+ For more information, see "background on the crisis" at the end of the report

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Coordination Saves Lives



Since the ceasefire came into effect an initial rapid assessment of humanitarian needs by the UN and its partners has been underway. The exact number of families displaced due to the destruction/damage sustained by their homes, who are being hosted by relatives, is unknown; estimates range between 350 and 700 families. Public infrastructure - schools, health clinics, hospitals, roads and bridges - also suffered damage that will require immediate repairs. Water and sanitation (WASH) needs appear to be moderate, requiring repairs to water networks and repair and cleaning of some solid waste vehicles. A number of UNRWA and government schools are also in need of repair. There are no significant increases in food and health needs recorded post-ceasefire, over and above those that were already prevalent prior to 14 November. The clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW), already begun by local police. An additional priority is providing psycho-social support to traumatized children and families.

While the ceasefire understanding makes reference to an easing of access restrictions, the precise type and scope of such measures remains unclear. So far, Gaza fishermen report being able to reach up to six nautical miles into the Mediterranean, as was the case prior to the 'Cast Lead' military offensive in December 2008, after which the Israeli Navy began restricting access to three miles. Additionally, for the past few days, farmers have been allowed to access, with their equipment and vehicles, agricultural land located as close as 100 meters from Gaza's perimeter fence in some areas. Prior to the recent events, farmers had been prevented from accessing land within 500 meters from the fence, while access to areas up to 1,000-1,500 metres has been limited. If these measures are sustained, the renewed access to fishing and farming areas which were previously off-limits could have a significant impact on the livelihoods of many Gazans.

Humanitarian needs and response



Protection

Protection Cluster members have continued to monitor and document incidents that resulted in civilian casualties, in addition to identifying mechanisms for accountability for violations of international law.

A psychosocial assessment targeting children is underway. On 25 November, members of the Child Protection Working Group reached 500 children living in the most affected localities, villages, refugee camps and neighborhoods. Initial findings indicate that a significant number of children are suffering from extreme fear and demonstrating symptoms of distress, including excessive crying, bed-wetting and screaming.

Upon the declaration of the cease-fire the local police already began removing large quantities of explosive remnants of war (ERW) in urban areas. Consequently, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) estimates that the remaining risk is now mostly related to ERW located under the rubble of damaged/destroyed buildings and in rural areas and farmland in the vicinity of Gaza's perimeter fence.

33

Palestinian children killed
(14-21 Nov)



Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)

It is estimated that between 350 and 700 families displaced as a result of the damage sustained by their homes are still being hosted by relatives and friends, some in very precarious conditions. An assessment of the scope of damage to residential property, involving UNRWA and UNDP, in coordination with the local Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MoPWH), is currently underway and expected to be completed within two weeks. Prior to this assessment, the shelter cluster estimated that at least 298 houses (many of which included multiple housing units) sustained major damage or have been demolished. Distribution of plastic sheets and tarpaulin to families living in homes that sustained minor damages, including broken windows and doors, is ongoing.

+350

Families displaced
following damages to
their homes



Food Assistance

Delivery of food assistance among displaced families staying with relatives has been ongoing, alongside regular food distribution cycles. Since 22 November, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed 8,000 bread parcels for displaced families, including both refugees and non-refugees, and is continuously assessing the need to extend such assistance over the coming days. Distribution of date bars at schools resumed as of Saturday (24 Nov). An interagency food security assessment is planned to take place during the first two weeks of December.

1,085,000

receive food aid (regular
caseload)

Education

All but three of the 688 schools across Gaza reopened on Saturday (24 Nov). One school run by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Gaza City and two UNRWA schools were unable to open due to serious damage but their students were temporarily accommodated in nearby schools. Initial findings indicate that at least 136 schools and educational facilities sustained some kind of damage, mostly to windows and doors.

136

Schools sustained damages
(14-21 Nov)



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Since the ceasefire, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) has been able to repair most of the damage to water lines and networks across the Gaza Strip. However, extensive damage to the main water line supplying Nusseirat refugee camp (Middle area) during an airstrike is still affecting some 20,000 people. Repairs are underway and in the meantime people are supplied by water tankering. Private water vendors, who regularly distributed desalinated water, are operating as normal.

20,000

People without water supply
due to a damaged pipeline

Fuel shortages remains a concern since it is hampering the ability of municipalities to remove solid waste, including the build of solid waste during the period of intensified hostilities. UNDP will support the Gaza Municipality by providing 100,000 litres of fuel through an HRF funded project.

General Coordination

OCHA has been leading the inter Cluster/Sector rapid needs assessment in Gaza. The assessment is designed to gain an overall picture of the humanitarian situation following the escalation in hostilities, guide an immediate humanitarian response and, where appropriate, inform more in-depth assessments. A joint methodology and questionnaire was agreed upon beforehand to ensure a uniform approach.

The assessment involved up to 40 humanitarian workers from UN agencies and NGOs representing all the humanitarian clusters and sectors active in the oPt. The teams visited the 21 most affected municipalities in Gaza, where, together with the local authorities, they identified the most urgent needs. The absence of household data disaggregated by sex and age has been a constraint in the identification of needs. To address potential gaps, initial assessments will be followed by focus groups discussions at the community level targeting particularly vulnerable groups.

Preliminary analysis of the results indicates that priority needs include psychosocial support (particularly for children); basic repair for damaged homes, health clinics and schools; non food items for the displaced living with host families; and ERW risk education.

Funding

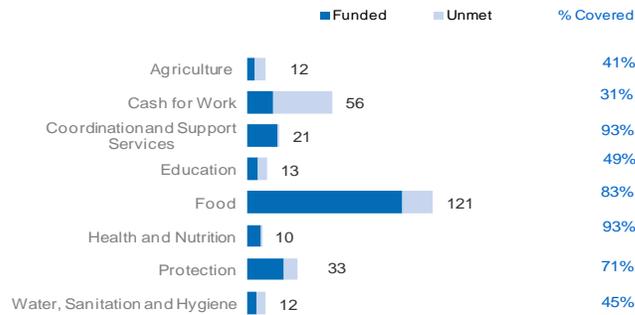
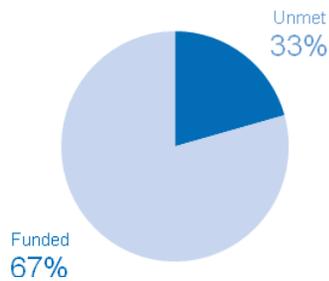
The specific timing of the recent escalation in hostilities poses a challenge in terms of financing the humanitarian response; the 2012 CAP is about to expire and the 2013 CAP is finalized and due to be published in the coming week. To address this situation OCHA has conducted a rapid review of the 2012 CAP and identified specific projects relevant to the expected response that are currently unfunded or only partially funded. These projects will be presented to donors as a priority for funding. Additionally, OCHA, together with the clusters, is coordinating a review of the draft 2013 CAP to identify any relevant Gaza projects that will need a cost revision due to the projected increase in caseload or other parameters.

To date, funding for projects in the 2012 CAP focusing on Gaza and joint West Bank and Gaza projects together received a total of \$186.4 million out of \$277.2million requested;67% of requested funds, representing a shortfall of \$ 90.7 million. The average funding level overall for clusters is 63%. with only four clusters more than 50% funded; Coordination and Support Services (93%), Food (82%), Health and Nutrition (93%) and Protection (71%). Cash-for-Work, the second-biggest sector after Food, appealed for \$56 million in total but received only 35% of the requested funds for Gaza and joint West Bank and Gaza projects. Together with the Agriculture Sector, Cash-for-Work is the least funded sector in 2012.

Additionally, OCHA has encouraged partners to consider applying to the Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF). The HRF is designed to provide rapid allocation and disbursement of funds to NGOs and UN agencies to support humanitarian activities in emergencies. The HRF has already approved a project for the WASH cluster, while four others are currently under review.

Overview of oPt Consolidated Appeal 2012 Funding by sector (in million US\$)

US\$ 416 million requested

**Background on the crisis**

On 14 November at approximately 1545 hrs, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) launched an airstrike that targeted and killed the acting chief of Hamas' armed wing, marking the start of the current military offensive ("Operation Defensive Pillar"). This event followed several weeks of intermittent escalations in violence, during which Palestinian armed groups indiscriminately fired rockets into southern Israel, and the IAF attacked various targets inside Gaza.

The last Israeli full-scale offensive in Gaza, which took place between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009 ("Operation Cast Lead") had a devastating impact on the civilian population, resulting in thousands of deaths and injuries, and massive destruction of homes, infrastructure and livelihoods. Since then, limited escalations in violence affecting civilians in Gaza and southern Israel have taken place every few weeks.

The vulnerability of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip has been exacerbated by the intensification of the land, air and sea blockade imposed by Israel following the Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007. Despite some easing measures implemented since mid 2010, the blockade is still ongoing.

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