



GAZA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT 15-23 AUGUST 2007

SUMMARY POINTS

1. In the last 72 hours, 12 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in the Gaza Strip, including two children.
2. Fuel supplies resumed on 22 August to the Gaza Power Station for the first time since 15 August. However, power cuts are still expected due to a continuing lack of capacity.
3. Continuing strikes by the Gaza city municipality have led to thousands of tons of solid waste piling up on street corners, posing public health concerns to those living in surrounding areas.
4. Karni, Gaza's principal crossing point, remains closed. Basic humanitarian supplies from the private sector and humanitarian agencies are entering through Sufa and Kerem Shalom.
5. All Gazan exports have been blocked since mid-June. Raw materials essential for Gazan businesses and industry have not been allowed to enter Gaza, preventing production of basic supplies. For example, more than 350,000 UNRWA textbooks cannot be printed because Gazan printing shops lack the requisite raw materials.
6. Paltrade reports that as of 14 August, the direct and indirect potential losses from the closures have reached an estimated at \$8 million for the furniture sector, \$15 million for garments and textiles and \$3 million for processed food. The agriculture sector has estimated export losses at \$16 million. 85% of manufacturing businesses have now temporarily shut down, with over 35,000 workers laid off. An additional 35,000 workers have been laid from other sectors including construction, trade and the service sector.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

In the last week, a total of 13 Palestinians were killed and 13 injured by the IDF. The majority of casualties were Palestinian militants belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, however, two children were killed on 21 August in Beit Hanoun. The children, aged 9 and 12, were reportedly playing near a rocket launcher when they were targeted by an Israeli tank on the Gaza-Israel border. One other child was injured in the same incident.

The IDF currently has a presence in two areas of the Gaza Strip; on the evening of 22 August five tanks and three bulldozers entered to the area east of the Islamic cemetery in north eastern Gaza to conduct a land leveling operation while at 2 am this morning the IDF moved into the Khuzza area to the east of Khan Younis.

Palestinian militants continue to fire Qassam rockets and mortars from the Gaza Strip towards Israel. In the last week, a total of 15 rockets and 49 mortar shells were launched, with one rocket hitting a factory and another hitting an empty kindergarten in Sderot on 21 August, both of which resulted in damaged buildings but no injuries. On 15 August one Israeli woman was injured by a rocket fired from Beit Hanoun. In addition, the IDF uncovered a tunnel in the northern Gaza Strip, 700 meters from the Gaza-Israel border.

While relative calm prevails in Gaza in the absence of factional clashes, Palestinian human rights organizations continue to express concerns over human rights infringements, the absence of a formal legal system and reported injuries to detainees.

ELECTRICITY

Fuel supplies were provisionally resumed to the Gaza power station on 22 August after being cut-off for a week. A total of 360,000 litres of diesel were delivered to the power station which had shut down its two remaining turbines at 11 am on 19 August due to a lack of fuel.

The Nahal Oz fuel pipelines situated on the Gaza-Israel border were closed on 16 and 17 August by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) due to a security alert. Nahal Oz is the only crossing point into Gaza for petrol, diesel and cooking gas. The IDF reopened the crossing on 19 August but fuel supplies were subsequently suspended from 19-21 August due to concerns by the European Commission (EC) - which supplies fuel to the power station via the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM)- over the diversion of “revenues deriving from the production of electricity in Gaza” to Hamas.

Before 16 August, Gazans were experiencing power cuts as a result of the peak seasonal demand caused by the summer temperatures. Typically households could expect power cuts of up to five hours per day on two days per week. As of 19 August, most of Gaza’s 1.4 million population faced power cuts of up to 12 hours per day, while the shutdown of motor pumps rationed water at 2-3 hours per day.

While fuel supplies have been resumed, power cuts can still be expected because of the continued lack of capacity of the Gaza Power Plant. Of the four turbines at the power station, only two are functioning. One additional turbine was transferred to Israel on 7 August for maintenance and is not due to return to Gaza until at least 27 August, while a fourth turbine lies idle waiting for immediate service and maintenance.

The current power supply available to Gaza originates from three sources:

Gaza Power Generating Company (GPGC)	55 MW
Israel Electrical Company (IEC)	120 MW
Egypt	17 MW
Total	192 MW
Current Demand	210-220 MW
DEFICIT	18-28 MW

MUNICIPAL AND HEALTH STRIKES

Strikes are spreading among the workers of several municipalities in the Gaza Strip. Employees at the Gaza City municipality have been on strike since 11 August. Since then, employees in the Khan Younis and Jabalia municipalities have gone on strike. A total of 2,635 employees from the three municipalities are participating in the strike.

These strikes are in protest to the non-payment of salaries - some unpaid since the end of last year. Municipal revenues have declined in recent years due to the inability of many Gazans to pay service charges including water fees, property and business charges, waste collection and vehicle licensing registration. As a result, the municipalities have not had the income to pay the wages of their employees and no other regular, alternative source of funds has so far been identified. As the strike in Gaza City proceeds into its second week, thousands of tons of solid waste garbage continue to pile up on street corners posing public health concerns to those living in the surrounding areas.

Since 20 August, the Union of Medical Professions (UMP) has also called for work stoppages. It has requested its members to abide by a “work to rule” at all public health institutions in the Gaza Strip by working only between 8 am and 11 am. This decree does not extend to emergency services and is not applicable to nurses. WHO estimates that approximately 70% of health professionals, including doctors, laboratory technicians and administrators, are complying with the request from the UMP. The strike was called by the UMP in protest to the imposition and replacement of health professionals by the respective Health Ministries in Ramallah and Gaza.

GAZA CROSSINGS AND THE ECONOMY

Since 19 June, a total of 5,377 truckloads have been allowed through the Gaza crossings, including 535 from humanitarian agencies compared to 20,016 truckloads including 8,730 truckloads of aggregates allowed through Karni during April and May before the full closure was imposed. These numbers represent a current daily average of 105 truckloads compared to an average of 264 truckloads per day in April 2007. Food supplies represent 87% of the total current commercial supplies transported into Gaza.

Karni crossing, the main commercial crossing for the Gaza Strip, has been closed since 13 June totaling 73 days as of 22 August. One conveyor belt is in operation outside the main crossing twice a week for the transfer of wheat grain and animal feed into Gaza. 535 truckloads of grains and animal feed have entered Gaza this way since 19 June. No other type of produce or materials has been allowed to enter Gaza through Karni and no exports from Gaza have been allowed out through the crossing.

Rafah Crossing (the sole crossing for residents of Gaza), has been closed for 74 days. Between 29 July and 12 August, Israel allowed 6,374 Palestinians stranded in Egypt due to the closure of the Rafah crossing to return to Gaza. They went through Israel via the Nitzana crossing on the Israel-Egypt border and then by bus (taking 1.5 hours) north to the Erez crossing and into Gaza. No resident of Gaza has been able to depart Gaza from Rafah since 9 June. This is particularly affecting students who would normally leave at this time of year for studies overseas.

As a result of the Karni closure, Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossings continue to function as the principal alternative entry points for commercial and humanitarian supplies. Between 19 June and 21 August, 195 truckloads of commodities from humanitarian agencies and 473 commercial truckloads entered through Kerem Shalom; 331 from humanitarian agencies and 3,834 commercial truckloads entered through Sufa. Nine humanitarian agency truckloads, carrying mostly medical supplies, entered through Erez.

A recent report released by Paltrade on 14 August confirms the continuing contraction of the private sector in Gaza:

- 85% of manufacturing businesses have now temporarily shut down, with over 35,000 workers laid off. An additional 35,000 workers have been laid from other sectors including from the construction, trade and the service sectors.
- Direct and indirect potential losses are estimated at \$8 million for the furniture sector, \$15 million for garments and textiles and \$3 million for processed food. The agriculture sector has estimated export losses at \$16 million.
- Due to the lack of necessary raw materials, 95% of construction projects have been halted at a value of \$160 million including UNRWA projects totaling \$93 million.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Nearly 200,000 children in grades 1 to 9 are due to return to UNRWA schools on 1 September. Many, however, will be without books as a result of the lack of raw materials to print the books as a result of the continuing closure of Karni crossing. One print shop used by UNRWA for 72,600 school books has no paper. Another supplier has paper but is without the printing plates, textbook covers and printer toner needed for 300,000 books for UNRWA pupils. Printing such quantities of books takes between 20 and 25 days, assuming the electricity is functioning normally.