



GAZA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT 01-31 October 2007

"The [UN] Secretary-General reiterates his call for the cessation of indiscriminate rocket attacks by Palestinian militants against Israel and strongly condemns these actions. However he also believes strongly that punitive measures taken by Israel which harm the well-being of the entire population of the Gaza Strip are unacceptable. The limitation of fuel and electricity supplies deepens the humanitarian distress of the 1.4 million residents of Gaza, as does the reduction of the supply of essential commodities and the tightening of restrictions on movement and access. The Secretary-General calls upon Israel to reconsider its actions and for all concerned to protect civilians and to meet their obligations under international law."

New York, 29 October 2007, Statement attributed to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

SUMMARY POINTS

1. Karni crossing, the main crossing for commercial goods, remains closed since 13 June. On 28 October, Israel announced the permanent closure of Sufa crossing. Kerem Shalom is now the only crossing open for the movement of goods into the Gaza Strip, and its limited capacity is likely to result in a further decrease in the import of goods and medicines into Gaza. The continuing closure of Gaza's borders is leading to a continuing contraction of the local economy, with private sector losses now reaching \$60 million in the last four months¹.
2. Rafah crossing, the principle entry/exit point for 1.48 million Gazans from/to the rest of the world, remains closed. Except for a limited number of medical cases, traders and aid workers, Gazans have been unable to leave for nearly five months.
3. The amount of goods entering Gaza has decreased by 71% since before the Karni closure, from an average of 253 truckloads per day in April to an average of 74 in October. Prices of commodities in the Gaza Strip continue to rise due to the limited quantity of imports and the associated decrease in the availability of certain goods.
4. An escalation in IDF activity in the Gaza Strip in the month of October resulted in an increase of conflict-related Palestinian casualties (28 deaths and 70 injuries).
5. The availability of drugs at central drug stores in the Gaza Strip has decreased. The number of drug items with zero stocks has increased in October to 91 drug items compared to 61 items in September. In local Primary Health Care (PHC) clinics, WHO has reported zero stocks of pediatric drugs, including antibiotics and Vitamin A and D supplements, and a shortage of chronic disease drugs.
6. During the month of October, 27 Palestinian patients out of 789 who previously received a permit from Israeli authorities for treatment in Israel and/or the West Bank were denied access at the Erez crossing.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

Violence has escalated in the Gaza Strip during the month of October. The Israeli Air Force conducted eleven air strikes in the Gaza Strip in October compared to 6 in September. On 29 October and 1

¹ Source: Paltrade



November, the air strikes missed their targets and damaged two schools in Beit Hanoun. An increase in flight time of Israeli jets over Gazan air space has also been reported. IDF tanks and bulldozers entered northern and eastern Gaza seven times in October to conduct levelling and excavation operations.

Twenty-eight Palestinians were killed by Israeli military air strikes and ground operations inside the Gaza Strip, including two children and one disabled man. Seventy others were injured, including three women and nine children. Two of the children were aged less than three years old. Thirty Palestinians were arrested by the IDF, including two women (15 were released the following day after security interrogations). Two IDF soldiers were killed and four injured during gun battles in Khan Younis and Beit Hanoun (17 and 29 October).

Mortars and rockets continue to be fired from Gaza towards Israeli towns bordering Gaza. Fifty Qassam rockets and 125 mortar shells were fired towards Israel during the month of October. At least two rockets landed in Sderot and one hit a building in the area. No Israeli injuries were reported.

Internal violence

Two Palestinians were killed (one Islamic Jihad member and one female bystander) and 37 injured during factional fights throughout the month of October. Another 22 Palestinians were killed in family disputes or as a result of the reckless use of weapons, including five children and two women (one of whom was a university student who was found dead on 25 October three days after her kidnapping). Eighty-five others were injured in internal violence during the same period, including two children and one woman.

ISRAELI SANCTIONS ON GAZA

Following proposals from the Vilnai committee and an Israeli cabinet decision, the Government of Israel started implementing part of a proposed series of economic sanctions on the Gaza Strip on 28 October. The decision to impose electricity sanctions was temporarily halted by Attorney General Mazuz pending further legal review.

Fuel supplies

On 28 October, Israel started to limit fuel supplies entering Gaza. A 47% decrease in regular diesel and a 9% decrease in industrial gasoline were reported in the quantities allowed into Gaza after the start of the sanctions. A total of 1,149,900 litres of diesel, 282,020 litres of benzene, 1,413 tonnes of cooking gas and 1,749,200 litres of industrial gasoline were allowed into Gaza from 28 October to 3 November, compared to 1,767,820 litres of diesel, 230,000 litres of benzene, 1,227 tonnes of cooking gas and 1,983,400 litres of industrial gasoline permitted to enter in the previous week (20-26 October). Diesel is used by ambulances and service vehicles, while industrial gas is needed for the Gaza Power Plant.

Though the fuel sanctions are not heavily felt by Gazans yet, any sustained and prolonged reductions will have severe implications for the lives of the civilian population as power outages ensue. Fuel is required for the provision of essential services including operating critical hospital activities; purifying and pumping drinking water; sterilizing and disposing of human residues; running garbage collection trucks and ambulances; and operating the generators that power hospitals and other public buildings.

Gaza's municipalities need around 154,500 litres of fuel per month while the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) needs a total of 150,000 litres of fuel per month to run 165 water wells and three waste water treatment plants. The Ministry of Health also requires 118,000 litres of fuel per month to maintain Gaza's 12 hospitals and 56 Primary Health Care clinics. In the event of any prolonged power cuts, the



monthly fuel needs could rise to three times more than the normal monthly consumption due to the increased reliance on generators to meet basic obligations to the Gaza population.

Humanitarian and commercial trucks inflow

The quantity of commercial and humanitarian goods allowed into the Gaza Strip continues to decline. Only 1,494 truckloads entered Gaza during the month of October, compared to 1,508 in September and 2,468 in August. The amount of goods entering Gaza has decreased by 71% since before the Karni closure, from an average of 253 truckloads per day in April to an average of 74 in October.



On 28 October, Israel officially announced the permanent closure of Sufa crossing which had been used as the principal temporary alternative crossing (accounting for 76% of the inflow of supplies into Gaza) since the closure of the Karni crossing in mid-June. The only crossing point remaining open for humanitarian aid and commercial supplies is Kerem Shalom, the only Gazan border crossing that is fully controlled by Israel.

Kerem Shalom currently lacks the capacity to meet Gaza's needs. While Karni had the capacity to process over 750 truckloads per day, Kerem Shalom currently has the capacity to process only approximately 50 truckloads per day.

The Israeli Civil Liaison Administration (CLA) confirmed to OCHA that Kerem Shalom crossing is currently being expanded. The prospective capacity of the crossing is 100 truckloads per day and the expansion is expected to be completed by the end of next week. The crossing is scheduled to be open 5 days per week, from 8:00 am to 16:00 pm.

In addition to reducing the influx of goods into the Gaza Strip, the use of Kerem Shalom as the only crossing point for goods will have significant cost repercussions. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), logistic and supply arrangements cost three times as much through Kerem Shalom than through Karni. While Karni cost \$25 per ton, Sufa cost \$50 per ton and Kerem Shalom costs \$75 per ton. Most of these increases arise from the need to palletize all provisions entering Gaza as opposed to the former container procedures that operated at Karni.

HEALTH

During the month of October, 27 Palestinian patients out of 789 who previously received a permit from Israeli authorities for treatment in Israel and/or the West Bank were denied access at the Erez crossing.



A 77 year-old Palestinian patient died while waiting to cross to Israel through Erez crossing on 23 October.

The availability of drugs at central drug stores in the Gaza Strip has decreased. The number of drug items with zero stocks has increased in October to 91 drug items compared to 61 items in September. However, the number of drug items at a stock of one to three months has improved and reached 48 items compared to 64 items in September.

Local Primary Health Care (PHC) clinics report zero stocks of pediatric drugs, including antibiotics and Vitamin A and D supplements, and a shortage of chronic disease drugs.

At the hospital level, certain shortages include oncology drugs for cancer patients and certain kidney dialysis drugs and medical supplies needed for kidney dialyses. Zero stocks remain of other items including IV glucose solution and orthopedic plaster.

The status of medical supplies in central drug stores in the Gaza Strip has not changed significantly in October. The number of medical supplies with zero stocks reached 188 items in October compared to 181 in September whilst the number of medical supplies at a stock level of 1-3 months is 114 compared to 113 items in September.

These shortages are partly due to delays leaving Beituniya checkpoint of 2-3 days imposed in the last four weeks on truckloads from WHO carrying medicines into the Gaza Strip. WHO imports an average of 1-2 truckloads of drugs every week.

CASH AVAILABILITY

The Israeli decision to declare Gaza “hostile territory” has already had repercussions on the monetary transfer process, and accordingly the availability of cash and the ability to invest. The Israeli government has formed a “ministerial committee” under the direct supervision of Prime Minister Olmert which will approve any money transferred into Gaza, based on details given about the use of the money.

Following the initial announcement by the Israeli Discount and Hapoalim banks to cut off ties with Gazan banks, both banks have agreed to postpone the cut until 15 November and 23 November respectively. The Israeli Postal Bank (a governmental institution with immunity from prosecution) is under consideration to become the alternative bank to clear financial transactions with Gazan banks, including money transfers. However, it will require time to expand its capacity.

If the monetary transfer process is interrupted during this time, shortages of cash will quickly ensue. Cash assistance, remittances and the payment of salaries will not be possible. Over the long run, banks will have to shut down and no imports will take place (not counting exports which are not permitted since mid-June). The Bank of Palestine, Islamic Bank and Al-Quds Bank for Development and Investment will be most affected as they either have their headquarters or registration in Gaza, and their branches in the West Bank will thus also be affected.

Currently, cash is being allowed into Gaza but only the New Israeli Shekel (NIS). Since the beginning of September 2007, United States dollars (\$) and Jordanian dinars (JD) have not been allowed into Gaza, both of which are used for investment purposes. Gazan banks need at least JD 6-8 million and \$13-18 million per day to meet the demands of the Gaza market. Currently, about JD 2.5 million and \$7 million remain in the banks.