



United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator says continued halt in violence essential to humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip

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“The 72-hour-ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian factions that entered into force on 5 August must continue to hold,” said the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Mr. James W. Rawley. “I welcome the halt in violence and echo the call of the Secretary-General that parties reach a durable ceasefire. We cannot go back to the status-quo ante,” he said.

“After four weeks of intense hostilities, the scale of needs is unprecedented in the Gaza Strip. Teams are on the ground assessing needs and providing relief,” said Mr Rawley. In the last 48 hours, humanitarian workers have been able to deliver food rations to hundreds of thousands of people. Vital repairs to water and sanitation infrastructure are underway and hundreds of tons of refuse have been removed from Gaza’s refugee camps. Medical supplies are being re-stocked and more clinics are open. Mine risk education is targeting families in areas with highest contamination of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and emergency psychosocial support is being provided to thousands of children. Search and rescue workers have been retrieving bodies from under the rubble in areas that were previously inaccessible.

“We need to rapidly scale-up our response to address the needs of the people in Gaza now and in the longer-term” said Mr. Rawley, “but to do that, we need a sustained halt to the violence.” Since the conflict began on 7 July 2014, at least 1,380 Palestinians civilians identified have been killed, including 423 children and 224 women, and over 9,000 people have been injured. Three civilians in Israel were killed. Some of the 520,000 Palestinians who were displaced have returned to their homes. However, preliminary estimates indicate over 10,000 housing units have been destroyed or severely damaged, leaving 65,000 with no home to go back to. Initial assessments indicate widespread damage and destruction to basic infrastructure, including water and sanitation networks, electricity supply lines and the Gaza Power Plant, as well as damage to tens of medical facilities and schools.

A political agreement must also bring about a fundamental shift in the situation. With due regard to security concerns, an agreement to lift the restrictions on movement of people and goods that Israel has put in place for the last seven years is critical to address people’s needs in the short and longer-term. “Without the full lifting of the blockade of the Gaza Strip, Palestinians in Gaza will continue to be deprived of any sense of a normal life and the massive reconstruction effort now required will be impossible,” said Mr. Rawley.

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