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© Photo Credit: Rehab Bannay/OCHA/AM 2018

Palestinian boy after swimming in a polluted beach in Deir al Balah Camp, Gaza.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Israel's blockade on Gaza tightened: further import restrictions, a suspension of exports, and a reduction of the accessible fishing area.
- The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan is only 24 per cent funded, an all-time low, forcing agencies to scale down interventions.
- Over 100 million litres of poorly-treated sewage discharged into the sea every day, posing serious health and environmental hazards for Gaza's population.
- Herding communities in, or next to, a "firing zone" in eastern Nablus governorate face an increasingly coercive environment due to various Israeli practices.

## JULY FIGURES

Palestinians killed (direct conflict)	23
Palestinians injured (direct conflict)	1,604
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	1
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	9
Structures demolished in the West Bank	54
People displaced in the West Bank	97

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2018

540 million (US\$)  
Requested

24% funded\*



\*As of 31 July 2018

## OVERVIEW

In July, Israel tightened its longstanding blockade on the Gaza Strip, worsening the already desperate humanitarian situation. Measures adopted by the Israeli authorities included restricting imports to mainly food and medicine; a complete halt to the exit of all goods; and a reduction of the fishing area from six to three nautical miles from Gaza's coast. The entry of fuel and cooking gas was also suspended during July for over one week, and again since 2 August (ongoing as of the time of writing). By the end of the month, the Palestinian Federation of Industries in Gaza indicated that over 4,000 workers in the construction sector had been temporarily laid off, primarily due to the shortage of construction materials.

These restrictions were reportedly imposed in response to the continuous launching of incendiary kites and balloons from Gaza towards Israel that have resulted in some 1,200 fires to date on agricultural land and nature reserves. This practice, along with the ongoing demonstrations and clashes at the perimeter fence and several limited military escalations, have brought Israel and Hamas to the brink of a new round of full-scale hostilities. In July alone, 21 Palestinians, of them 14 civilians, including seven children, as well as one Israeli soldier, were killed (or died of wounds sustained earlier), in conflict-related incidents in the Gaza Strip and Israel. While a major escalation was averted following ad hoc ceasefires brokered by the UN and Egypt, tensions remain high.

In the meantime, living conditions in Gaza continue to deteriorate under the impact of the severe electricity shortage that causes an average of 20 hours of blackout daily. This Bulletin highlights the effect on already overloaded and poorly maintained wastewater treatment plants: over 100 million litres of poorly treated sewage are discharged into the sea every day, posing serious health and environmental hazards. This is of particular concern during the summer when swimming in the sea is one of the few recreational activities available to the population of Gaza.

To avert the collapse of essential services in Gaza, including hospitals, water and sewage treatment facilities, the UN has been providing some 250 critical facilities with emergency fuel to operate backup generators. However, funds



for fuel purchases are depleted and without new donations, distributions will be halted by mid-August: US\$4.5 million are required to cover the purchase of fuel through the end of 2018. As highlighted by the Humanitarian Coordinator, Jamie McGoldrick, in his 7 August statement: “Gaza desperately needs longer-term solutions so we can move past this cycle of repeated or worsening crises, including that Palestinian authorities prioritize provision of fuel for essential services. Until that happens, Israel must reverse the recent restrictions, including on the entry of emergency fuel, and donors must step in and fund emergency fuel, in order to avoid a disease outbreak or other major public health concern.”

As described later in this Bulletin, this is just one of the many existing and potential impacts of the severe underfunding of humanitarian operations across the oPt: at the end of July, only 24 per cent of the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) requirements had been funded, well below the global average of 36 per cent. The decline in funding for UNRWA has been the largest factor behind the overall drop in HRP funding. The Agency has been forced to discontinue a number of programs in the West Bank and to adjust key interventions in Gaza, including food and cash assistance for over one million refugees. A number of other UN agencies and international NGOs also face critical shortfalls in funding that leave humanitarian partners ill-positioned to meet emerging needs or respond to any deterioration.

In recent months, humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip have also faced tightening restrictions on the movement of humanitarian staff by the Israeli authorities, citing security concerns and, to a lesser extent, Hamas. This Bulletin describes how the Israeli authorities have extended the processing period for exit permits, increased denials and one-year bans, placed restrictions on the items allowed to be taken out of Gaza and introduced new crossing procedures at the vehicle terminal.

Two announcements during the month have shed some positive light on the otherwise grim situation prevailing in Gaza. UNDP announced initiatives aimed at creating over 2,500 immediate and short-term job opportunities in Gaza over a 12-month period, particularly benefitting youth and women. Also, the World Bank’s Board recommended an increase from \$55 to \$90 million in its allocation for development interventions in Gaza, with focus on job creation in the private sector.

In his briefing to the Security Council on 24 July, the UN Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, stressed that in Gaza: “Unless we begin in earnest the crucial work required to change the current deteriorating dynamics, another explosion is almost a certainty... The human dimension must be at the forefront of all our efforts. Gazans deserve to live their lives in freedom and dignity. That is their right. It is not a privilege that can be taken hostage, that can be granted or withheld by others who have no regard for their suffering. Israelis living near Gaza also deserve to finally be free of indiscriminate attacks, be it by rockets, mortars or incendiary devices. Another missed opportunity could have disastrous consequences, including for reaching a broader Israeli-Palestinian peace on the basis of the two-state solution, in which Gaza is an integral part of the future Palestinian state.”

*“Gazans deserve to live their lives in freedom and dignity. That is their right. It is not a privilege that can be taken hostage, that can be granted or withheld by others who have no regard for their suffering.”*

UN Special Coordinator  
Mladenov

## CRITICAL FUNDING SHORTAGES THREATEN ALL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES IN THE OPT

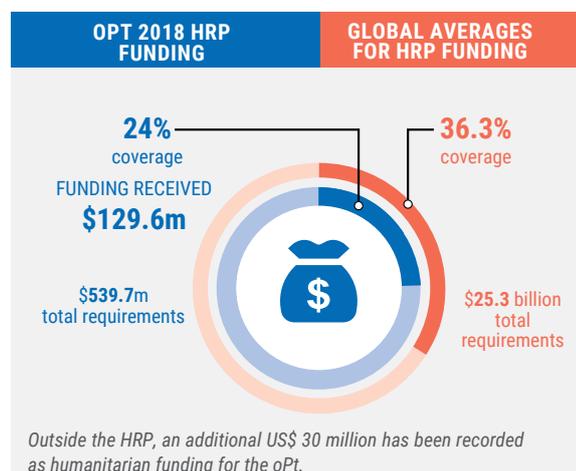
Funding for humanitarian activities is at an all-time low this year for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). At the end of July, the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) requirements were only 24 per cent funded; this is a significantly lower level of funding compared with the same period over the past eight years. Humanitarian financing to the oPt has typically fluctuated in response to significant shifts in the context, with notable peaks in financial contributions in response to active hostilities in Gaza. Following the last escalation of hostilities in 2014, humanitarian financing to the oPt has been gradually, but definitively, decreasing year on year.

Currently, \$132 million have been secured for the HRP of a requested \$539.7 million. To date, donors' generous contributions to the oPt Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF) have also increased the HF total budget for this year to \$19.9 million, of which \$12.4 million have already been allocated and disbursed to humanitarian partners. Despite these contributions, much more is needed to enable an effective humanitarian operation. Funding is decreasing although the number of people in need and targeted for humanitarian assistance in oPt remains fairly constant, and has even increased over the past year.

While global funding for the HRP is low for this time of year, humanitarian funding for the oPt is significantly lower than the global average, currently at 36 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

The decline in funding this year for UNRWA, the single largest humanitarian actor in the oPt, has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the overall drop in humanitarian funding for the oPt in 2018. On 23 July, a statement by the Agency noted that the \$446 million funding deficit in all five areas of operation had been "reduced to \$217 million – a monumental achievement". Despite this, UNRWA remains in deep crisis with the imminent discontinuation of the Cash for Work and Community Mental Health programmes in the West

*Despite a recent reduction in its deficit, UNRWA remains in deep financial crisis, resulting in the imminent discontinuation of the Cash for Work, Community Mental Health, and Mobile Health Clinics programmes in the West Bank.*



	2018 HRP requirements	Funded	BY CLUSTER AND LOCATION	
			Gaza	West Bank
Education	\$20.3m	15%	\$2m	\$1m
Food Security	\$288.8m	21%	\$48.3m	\$13.3m
Health and Nutrition	\$27m	37%	\$4.4m	\$2.2m
Protection	\$40.9m	28%	\$6m	\$5.2m
Shelter/NFIs	\$90m	3%	\$2.3m	\$0.5m
WASH	\$45.5m	10%	\$4m	\$0.7m

Bank, and a halt to mobile health clinics in the West Bank effective 31 October 2018. In Gaza, changes will have to be introduced to activities such as mental health, job creation and protection services to enable retention of the emergency food programme to nearly one million refugees and interventions such as Cash for Work.

In parallel to the unprecedented financial crisis faced by UNRWA, nearly all agencies in the HRP have received less funding in 2018 than in previous years.

The funding that has been secured has been a critical lifeline in response to the deteriorating conditions in the oPt during the first half of the year, particularly in Gaza. However, humanitarian partners continue to struggle to respond to needs because insufficient funding limits their operational capacities and ability to deliver services.

The impact of underfunding is being felt across the board for all clusters, with concrete examples of the impact in Gaza and the West Bank provided below.

### Impact of underfunding by cluster

Cluster	Gaza	West Bank
 Protection	Significant gaps in essential mental health and psychosocial services. Child protection services, notably those provided by family centres, have been scaled down and, in some cases, terminated.	Limited partners with the capacities and resources ready to respond to acute crises that arise in the context of a coercive environment, including increased settler violence and demolitions.
 Health	Chronic underlying factors severely restrict the capacity of the health sector and effectively cripple its response: lack of sufficient funding for medical supplies (essential drugs and disposables) and chronic lack of sustainable energy (e.g. solar panels) for health facilities.	The closure of mobile health clinics leaves over 40,000 people living in Area C, H2 and the Seam Zone facing severe limitations in access to basic healthcare.  No funding has been secured for any East Jerusalem HRP projects, leaving 36,000 people, particularly those living in Kafr Aqab and Shu'fat refugee camp, vulnerable.
 Food Security	Without additional funding, a food security partner will be forced to suspend food assistance as early as September 2018. This will impact the food security of 245,000 extremely poor and severely food-insecure people.	Due to lack of funding, a food security partner's Cash for Work activities will be discontinued from 31 July 2018. Another food security partner's cash-based transfers for 78,000 people in is also at risk if no funding is forthcoming.
 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	Limited operational and maintenance capacity of WASH service providers in Gaza, resulting in high vulnerability in access to and storage of the water supply.	Funding gaps have reduced the ability of cluster partners to reach beneficiaries with summarization responses e.g. water trucking for vulnerable communities during the dry season.
 Education	Gaps in funding for critical interventions and cluster priorities have affected the provision of quality education, including for school supplies, psychosocial (PSS) and emergency preparedness activities.	Lack of funding has impeded access by children to quality education in Area C and East Jerusalem. Infrastructure, supply support and the scale-up of PSS activities are required in the context of increased demolitions or threat of demolition.
 Shelter	Due to lack of funding, only 30 per cent of targeted substandard shelters will be upgraded. Partners are also challenged to provide temporary cash assistance in a regular and timely manner for 45 per cent of IDP families, with 55 per cent of the IDP families receiving it for three months only.	Due to lack of funds in the first half of 2018, no single residential shelter has been upgraded or rehabilitated to the minimum standards for those most in need in Area C. Thus, around 6,000 acutely vulnerable people are still living in sub-standard housing conditions.

## SEAWATER POLLUTION RAISES CONCERNS OF WATERBORNE DISEASES AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IN THE GAZA STRIP

The immense electricity deficit affecting the Gaza Strip, alongside the longstanding shortage of adequate sanitation infrastructure, continues to result in the discharge of 100-108 million litres of poorly treated sewage into the sea every day.<sup>2</sup> This situation poses serious health and environmental hazards, particularly during the summer when swimming in the sea is one of the few recreational activities available to the population of Gaza. According to WHO, water-related diseases account for over one quarter of illnesses and are the primary cause of child morbidity in the Gaza Strip.<sup>3</sup> The current operation of wastewater treatment plants may be undermined further in the near future due to the funding gaps facing the UN programme of emergency fuel to run backup generators at critical facilities, , as well as the recent tightening of the blockade.

The pollution levels of the wastewater discharged into the Mediterranean during the first half of 2018 declined by some 20 per cent compared with the April-December 2017 period, attributable primarily to increased emergency fuel support to the relevant facilities. However, current pollution levels remain nearly four times higher than the international environmental health standard (see chart).<sup>4</sup>

The indicator used to measure pollution (Biological Oxygen Demand) reflects the presence of pathogenic and non-pathogenic microbes derived from sewage, sewage effluent, industrial processes, farming activity and wildlife, and which can thrive in the human body and lead to disease.<sup>5</sup> Children, the elderly and people with weak immune systems are the most likely to develop illnesses or infections after coming into contact with polluted water.

The Environmental Quality Authority in Gaza declared the beaches of Gaza City, the main destination for internal tourism, and in Rafah governorates, as highly polluted. These beaches constitute 75 per cent of all Gaza beaches and swimming in these areas is strongly discouraged.<sup>6</sup>

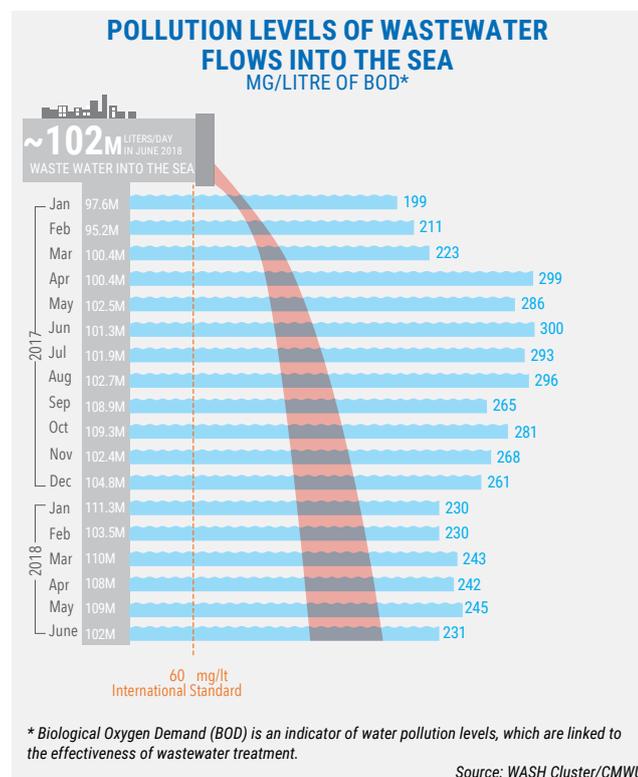
The electricity shortage is the main cause undermining the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene services. Since April



**OXFAM**

*This article was contributed by Oxfam with support from the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster*

*Water-related diseases account for over one-quarter of illnesses and are the primary cause of child morbidity in the Gaza Strip.*



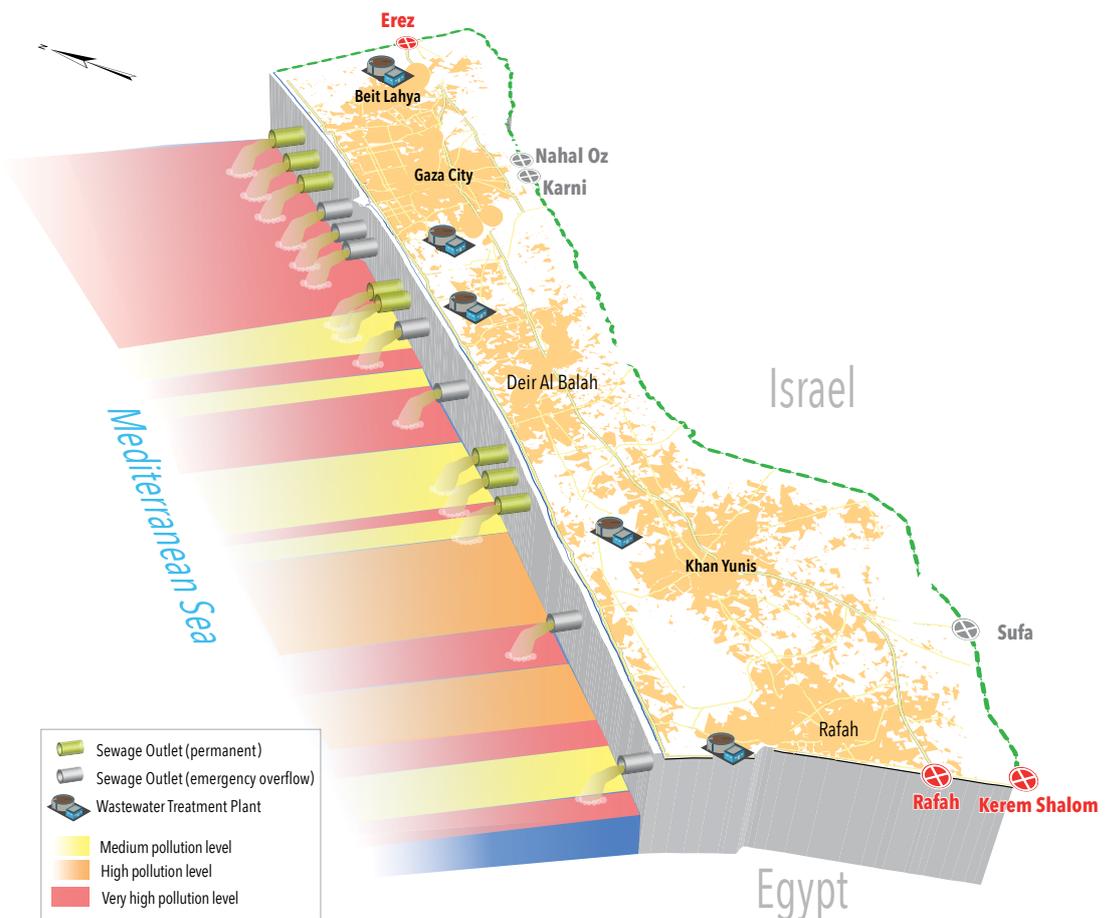
2017, following a deterioration in the intra-Palestinian political divide, Gaza has been supplied with only 4-5 hours of electricity a day, down from 8-12 hours previously. Over 85 per cent of the electricity currently available is purchased from Israel; the remainder is produced locally by the Gaza Power Plant (GPP), but only one of its four turbines is in operation due to lack of funds to purchase fuel. Supplies from Egypt have largely come to a halt in 2018 because of failure to repair feeder lines.

### Treatment plants: overloaded, under-powered and poorly maintained

Until recently, there were four wastewater treatment plants in the Gaza Strip. Some of these have dealt with volumes of sewage well beyond their planned capacity. For example, the Wadi Gaza plant in the Middle Governorate was designed to process up to 14,000 cubic meters of sewage a day but currently receives some 17,000 cubic meters. Due to the huge electricity deficit, these plants rely heavily on back-up generators run on fuel to operate at a limited capacity. Poor maintenance due to funding shortages, and the shortage of spare parts that are prevented or delayed entrance under the blockade, have also undermined operations. Up to 23 essential WASH items are classified by Israel as “dual-use”; while these items can be imported via the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, the process is long and difficult.<sup>7</sup>

*Due to the huge electricity deficit, wastewater treatment plants rely heavily on back-up generators to operate at a limited capacity. Poor maintenance due to funding shortages, and the shortage of spare parts that are prevented or delayed entrance under the blockade, have also undermined operations.*

### GAZA STRIP: SEAWATER POLLUTION, AUGUST 2018



Source: Palestinian Environment Quality Authority

As a result, poorly treated wastewater from substandard plants is discharged directly into the sea every day, causing extensive contamination of the beaches. The precarious nature of these facilities also generates a constant threat of sewage flooding in areas adjacent to reservoirs and pumping stations. This threat materialized on 4 May 2016, when one of the retention walls of a sewage lagoon in Gaza City's treatment plant (Sheikh Ejleen) collapsed following a prolonged power cut, releasing 15,000 cubic meters of raw sewage into a nearby farming area.

## "I CAN'T PREVENT MY CHILDREN SWIMMING IN THE SEA"

Summer comes with the promise of bathing away the heat and humidity by swimming, and spending long nights sipping coffee and chatting at the beach. The Gaza beach has become more than an escape from summer heat and also provides a means to cope with the long hours of electricity cuts. Families relaxing and children running around is a common sight along Gaza's coast throughout summer but this activity is increasingly under threat from rising pollution of the sea. Swimming pools can provide a healthier alternative but they are few in number and are not affordable for the majority of families.

For Ahlam Sharaf, a 38-year-old mother with eight children aged between 12 and three years of age, the sea is part of her life and that of her children. They live in a small house in Deir al Balah camp, right next to the Mediterranean. With few supported recreational opportunities in the area, playing at the beach is the children's first option, especially during the summer holiday. "I can't prevent the children from going there," said Ahlam. "They love to swim and spend their time at the beach. We have been neighbours with the sea for many years."

She explained how the wastewater pipe located near the beach discharges wastewater on a daily basis, turning the colour of the sea dark black. She believes that her children suffer from many skin diseases as a result of swimming in the sea. For the children, the beach is essential and denying them the option to swim is beyond discussion. As Ahlam's son, 11-year-old Ismail said: "I am just in love with the sea." Ahlam's husband suffers from ill health and works as a cleaner for few days a month, making around 10-15 ILS per day. Their desperate economic situation does not allow Ahlam's family to afford the use of private swimming pools and the sea is the only option for the children to escape long summer days.

*The wastewater pipe located near the beach discharges wastewater on a daily basis, turning the colour of the sea dark black. Ahlam believes that her children suffer from skin diseases as a result of swimming in the sea.*



Ahlam joining her children in swimming at the beach. Deir al Balah camp.

In April 2018, a new large and modern plant (North Gaza Emergency Sewage Treatment), which has been under construction for about a decade, came into operation with a maximum capacity of 35,600 cubic meters per day. Unlike the other plants, it benefits from a dedicated electricity line from Israel, allowing it to operate almost continuously. The treated wastewater, which meets international standards, is recharged into the aquifer rather than discharged into the sea.<sup>8</sup>

## Emergency fuel

Supported by donors, the UN has been coordinating the delivery of emergency fuel to run back-up generators in the Gaza Strip since 2013. This has ensured that a minimal level of lifesaving health, water and sanitation services are maintained despite the severe energy crisis. The number of critical facilities requiring fuel support has increased from 189 in April 2017 to 249 at present, including the four sewage treatment plants and related pumping stations.

The list of selected facilities is revised on a monthly basis by the relevant clusters and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on the basis of the availability of electricity, and changing needs and priorities. To enable stakeholders to trace and analyze the evolution of the electricity supply and the emergency fuel programme, and to identify gaps easily, OCHA developed a dynamic, user-friendly dashboard, [available online](#).

The emergency fuel mechanism faces a severe funding shortage and unless new funding is urgently provided, distributions may halt by mid-August, risking a sharp reduction or even a collapse of the supported facilities. Of the WASH facilities relying on emergency fuel, wastewater treatment plants are likely to be the first affected because water wells and water pumps used for water supply are usually prioritized. An additional \$4.5 million are urgently required to ensure that distributions continue through to the end of 2018. On 17 July 2018 Israel banned the entry of fuel and cooking gas, items used in power-starved Gaza to compensate for the chronic lack of electricity. On 24 July 2018, the partial entry of fuel and gas to Gaza was permitted.<sup>9</sup>

*The emergency fuel mechanism faces a severe funding shortage and unless new funding is urgently provided, distributions may halt by mid-August, risking a sharp reduction or even a collapse of the supported facilities*



Fuel pipeline at Kerem Shalom crossing

## INCREASED RESTRICTIONS ON THE MOVEMENT OF HUMANITARIAN STAFF OUT OF GAZA

In recent months, citing security concerns, the Israeli authorities, and to a lesser extent Hamas, have tightened restrictions on the movement of Palestinian humanitarian staff out of Gaza. Measures by the Israeli authorities include an increase in the processing time for exit permits, a rise in denials and one-year bans, restrictions on the type of items allowed to be taken out of Gaza, and new crossing procedures at the vehicle terminal. The Hamas authorities have established a new registration point at the entrance to Gaza. These measures have increased uncertainty, delays and logistical impediments, and have a negative impact on humanitarian operations. The UN continues to conduct negotiations with all relevant actors in Israel and Gaza to alleviate these challenges.

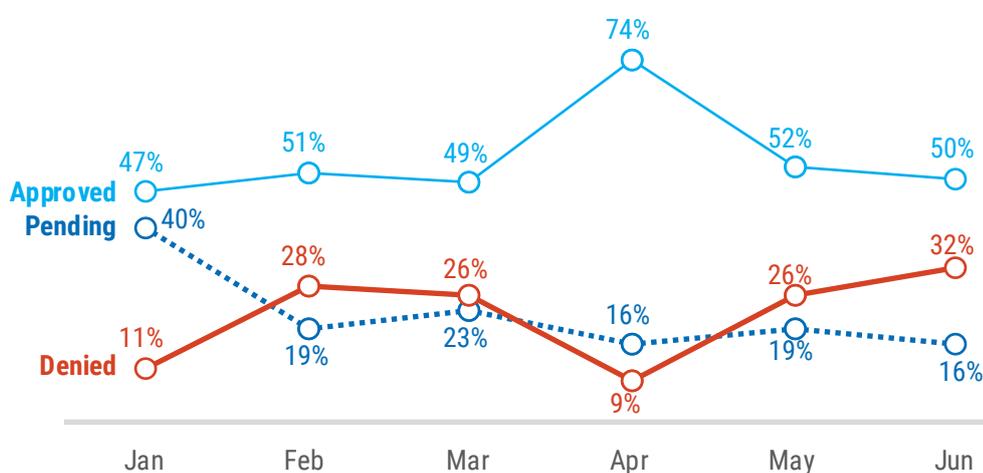
### Permit processing

Israeli-issued permits have long posed a key challenge for Gaza-based staff of both international NGOs and UN agencies. Over the past 12 months, there has been a dramatic increase in the processing time for permit applications to exit Gaza to Israel and the West Bank from 14 to 55 working days. The processing time for applications for a one-day permit to travel to Jordan via Israel is now 70 working days. Along with this negative trend, the duration of security clearance necessary to access approved permits has been extended from six to nine months.

During 2018, there has been an unprecedented spike in the number of UN and INGO staff banned from reapplying for a period of one year following rejection of their initial application. Approximately 40 UN national staff received a ban in 2017, but during the first six months of 2018 an additional 70 UN staff and a similar number of INGO staff were banned, effectively preventing these staff from implementing any mission outside

*During 2018, there has been an unprecedented spike in the number of UN and INGO staff banned from reapplying for a period of one year following rejection of their initial application.*

### PERCENTAGE OF PERMITS STATUS BY MONTH OF TRAVEL 2018 GAZA ID HOLDERS



of Gaza for a year. Following UN requests to the Israeli authorities, the bans on 15 UN staff members and three INGO personnel were subsequently removed. As the reason for the imposition or lifting of these bans is rarely stated, the process is perceived as arbitrary. At the time of writing, a total of 82 UN staff members and 67 INGO personnel are banned from reapplying for a permit to exit Gaza.

The extended processing times and increased bans generate planning and logistical challenges, including senior national staff being unable to attend donor meetings in East Jerusalem or the rest of the West Bank, and undermining critical fundraising efforts.

### **Crossing restrictions**

Since August 2017, the authorities at the Erez crossing have introduced new restrictions on items that Palestinians, including UN and INGO national staff, are allowed to carry when they exit Gaza through the pedestrian terminal. These include a ban on reinforced luggage (luggage with wheels or a frame), toiletries, and laptops and other electronic equipment, except for mobile phones.

The restrictions on laptops and electronic devices are especially problematic and create logistical challenges, particularly for senior staff engaged in finance, IT and programme monitoring activities in Gaza as they have to find alternative equipment to work with once they arrive at their destination.

### **New vehicle crossing procedures**

New security measures introduced at the end of March 2018 by the Israeli authorities at the vehicle terminal of Erez crossing have increased delays and waiting times. These include searches of UN and diplomatic vehicles by opening all the doors for sniffer dog inspections; the removal, scanning and search of UN property; and the introduction of a body x-ray scanner.

These measures deviate from a protocol agreed upon in 2016 and are largely incompatible with the 1946 Convention on the Privileges & Immunities of the United Nations, to which Israel is a party without reservation.

Following recent negotiations, the Israeli authorities allowed properly marked UN pouches to leave Gaza without being removed from the UN vehicles or being subject to x-ray or search. The UN is continuing to conduct negotiations regarding the remaining problematic procedures.

*New restrictions on the ability of UN and INGO national staff to carry laptops and electronic devices through the Erez crossing are especially problematic and create logistical challenges.*



## Hamas registration point

Until November 2017 Hamas maintained a checkpoint on the road leading to the Erez crossing (known as Arba-arba) where individuals were stopped and checked when entering or departing Gaza. Following a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement, management of this checkpoint was transferred to the Palestinian Authority to allow for easier movement in and out of Gaza.

In recent months, Hamas has returned to the area and established a new checkpoint south of Arba-arba, gradually reinstating the procedures and restrictions implemented prior to November 2017. Hamas currently requires staff from international organizations to register prior to and upon entry to Gaza, imposes restrictions on the use of INGO vehicles and sporadically questions staff. These challenges are compounded by lack of clarity on the requirements and procedures, which generates uncertainty.

## PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES AT RISK OF FORCIBLE TRANSFER: THE CASE OF EASTERN NABLUS “FIRING ZONE”

Recent developments have exacerbated the vulnerability of Palestinians living in, or dependent on access to, an area in eastern Nablus governorate designated in the 1970s as closed for Israeli military training: “Firing Zone 904A”. These developments have included military exercises involving temporary displacement, property damage, disruption to life and new access restrictions. In recent years this area has witnessed increasing settlement activities, including violence and intimidation, alongside a reduced Palestinian presence.

*In recent years, the eastern Nablus “Firing Zone” has witnessed increasing settlement activities, including violence and intimidation, alongside a reduced Palestinian presence.*

The situation of Firing Zone 904A is not unique: about 18 per cent of the West Bank, or nearly 30 per cent of Area C, is designated by the Israeli authorities as firing zones for military training. These areas are home to 6,200 Palestinians living in 38 small Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities, including those in the eastern Nablus area. To different degrees, these communities have been affected by a coercive environment generated by a range of Israeli policies and practices that place residents at risk of forcible transfer.<sup>10</sup>

### Tell al Khashabeh

Between 17 and 24 June 2018, Israeli forces carried out a large military exercise in the area that disrupted the lives of approximately 250 residents of Tell al Khashabeh, a herding community on the southern edge of the firing zone.<sup>11</sup>

Two families living in the outskirts of the community, including 11 adults and four children, were ordered to evacuate their homes for three days. One of the residents reported that he had to move with his 200 sheep to Aqraba village, resulting in additional expenses for the purchase of fodder. No damage to the two homes or to animal structures was reported.

During the training, tanks and military jeeps drove over approximately 170 dunums of

agricultural land planted with wheat and barley, owned by residents of the community, and damaged an agricultural water well, affecting 15 families. During the night, soldiers trained within the built-up area of the community, without opening fire, but causing fear among the residents.

Many of the structures in the community have demolition orders pending from the Israeli authorities on grounds of lack of building permits. The last demolition occurred in January 2017 when six structures were targeted, half of them provided previously as humanitarian assistance.

### Ad Dawa

During another military exercise in October 2017, without prior warning or military order, Israeli forces destroyed a building in ad Dawa that had previously been used as a home and then turned into an agricultural storage facility. The owner of the building (see case study below) reported that among the rubble he had found the remains of wired explosives in the walls.

Located in the middle of the firing zone, ad-Dawa is a farming and herding area owned by five extended families comprising around 100 people. It was also used as a residential area on a seasonal basis. It is cultivated with citrus and olive trees, irrigated with water from a nearby spring, as well as a range of rain-fed crops. In the past, it also served as a grazing area.

*“On a good year we used to produce up to 250 kilograms of dry almonds, compared with less than 30 kilograms last year.”*

Nour Ghnaim, farmer

### “IT’S SO FRUSTRATING TO ASK PERMISSION TO GO TO MY LAND!”

Nour Ghnaim and his three brothers inherited some 300 dunums of land in ad Dawa from their father. Part of the land is planted with olive and almond trees, and the rest used to be cultivated with wheat and barley. According to Nour, prior to 2013 the four families made over \$20,000 a year from the produce. The area was also used for grazing about 100 head of sheep, a source of additional income.

“Since 2013, we can only reach our land after coordination, for a few days in March for ploughing, and a few days in October-November for the harvest,” said Nour. “It’s so frustrating to ask permission to go to my land! Because of the lack of regular care, the productivity of the trees is very low. Many trees were damaged by the settlers’ cows and sheep. On a good year we used to produce up to 250 kilograms of dry almonds, compared with less than 30 kilograms last year. We stopped cultivating the rest of the land and are forced to keep the livestock indoors, and spend a lot of money to purchase fodder.”

Referring to the house that was recently destroyed, Nour said, “I was born and raised in the house; all my childhood memories, my teenage years were there. It feels like I lost a part of me.”



Following the establishment of a settlement outpost in this area in 2013 (see below), families have faced systematic attacks and harassment that discourage them from accessing the area and force them to stop their seasonal residence in the area. In January 2018, for example, settlers from the outpost released dozens of cows into one of the citrus orchards, damaging at least 15 trees. Since 2014, access to the area requires prior approval from the Israeli army.



## Yanoun

Although Yanoun is located just outside the firing zone, during the night of 14 June 2018, Israeli forces conducted military training within the built-up area of the community. According to eyewitnesses, soldiers opened fire at one uninhabited house. While the incident ended without injuries or additional damage (apart from the targeted house), it generated fear and anxiety among the residents, particularly children.

The community is encircled by settlement outposts on three sides (see map). Since the beginning of the second intifada in 2000, these outposts have been the source of constant violence and intimidation. Combined with severe access restrictions impeding access to services in Nablus city, Yanoun's population has declined from some 200 before the second Intifada to less than 40 currently.

## Lifjim

Like Yanoun, Lifjim, a herding community of about 100 people,<sup>12</sup> is located just on the boundary of the firing zone and is affected by settler intimidation and access restrictions. On 24 July 2018, a group of Israeli settlers, reportedly from one of the Itamar outposts, entered the village at night. They dismantled and stole two donor-funded tents that had been provided as humanitarian assistance and were used for agricultural storage and as an animal shelter. The owner filed a complaint with the Israeli police.

In October 2017, the Israeli military installed a new road gate on one of the dirt roads leading to the firing zone from the east, next to Lifjim. The gate is closed and opened intermittently, further disrupting access by herders and farmers from Lifjim and other communities to areas within the firing zone.

## Khirbet Tana

With some 200 residents, this is the second largest community within the firing zone. While no incidents have been recorded there in recent months, the majority of the community's structures are at risk of demolition on grounds of lack of building permits. In 2016, the community witnessed four waves of mass demolitions that targeted a total of 151 structures, including homes, a school, a mosque, animal shelters, water tanks, latrines and solar panels. The last demolition incident was recorded in January 2017. With the support of humanitarian agencies, residents have been able to rebuild some of

*Due to settler violence and severe access restrictions, Yanoun's population has declined from some 200 before the second Intifada in 2000, to less than 40 currently.*

their homes and sources of livelihood.

## Settlement activities

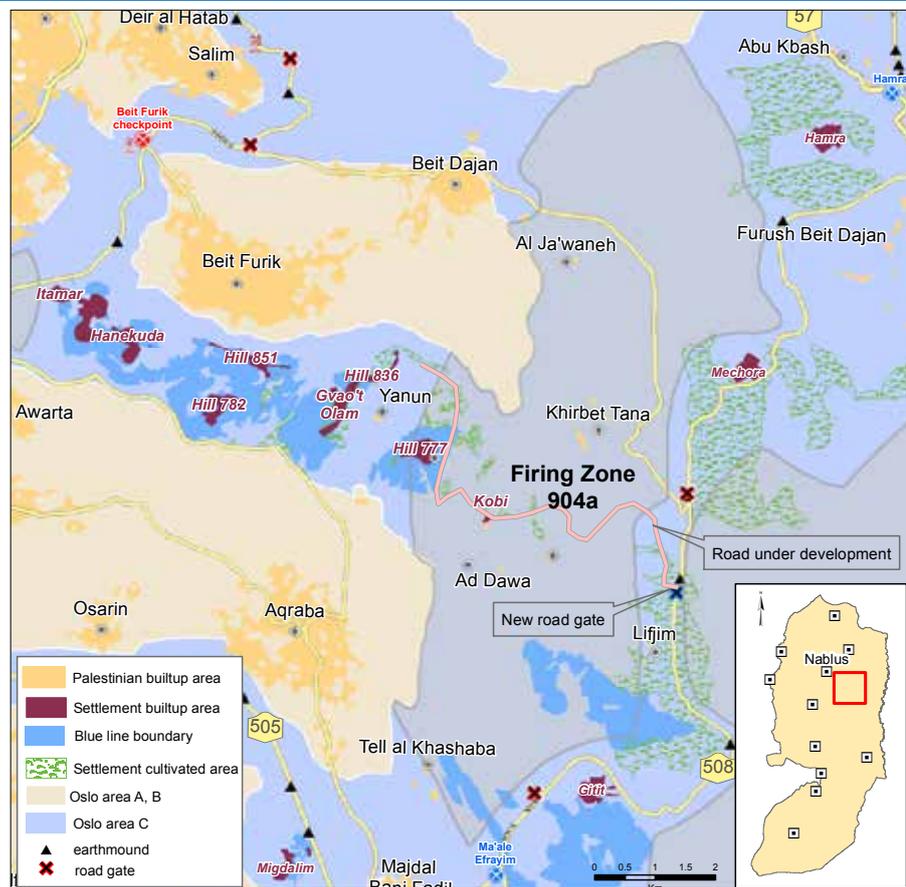
Currently, there are two unauthorized settlement outposts fully built within the boundaries of Firing Zone 904A as part of a chain of seven outposts extending from the settlement of Itamar eastwards. At the eastern end, built around 2013 as a residential site and cow farm, is an outpost known by Palestinians as “Kobi’s settlement”. According to Palestinians living and working in this area, this settlement has been a source of systematic violence and harassment.

Although the Israeli authorities have issued dozens of demolition orders against structures built in the two settlements, these orders have rarely been implemented. Despite being illegal under Israeli law, some of the seven settlement outposts have been connected to basic service infrastructure, including water and electricity. According to the Israeli NGO Kerem Navot, in recent months, settlers have been developing a series of dirt roads running across the firing zone (east-west) to link the chain of Itamar outposts with the “Allon Road” in the Jordan Valley (see Map).

Since 2012, the Israeli authorities have ratified declarations, originally made in the 1980s, that several land plots within the firing zone are “state land” (see map). Ratification by a body known as the Blue Line Team is a necessary step for the allocation of land for settlement expansion or for the retroactive “legalization” of unauthorized outposts.<sup>13</sup>

*Although the Israeli authorities have issued dozens of demolition orders against structures built in the two settlement outposts in the “Firing Zone”, these orders have rarely been implemented.*

## “FIRING ZONE” IN EASTERN NABLUS



## ENDNOTES

1. Figures are based on the data recorded on the Financial Tracking Service (FTS), as on 20 July 2018.
2. OCHA. United Nation-Assisted Emergency Fuel Distributions, 2013-2014. June 2018.
3. Report of a field assessment of health conditions in the oPt. WHO. February 2016. [http://apps.who.int/gb/Statements/Report\\_Palestinian\\_territory/Report\\_Palestinian\\_territory\\_en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/Statements/Report_Palestinian_territory/Report_Palestinian_territory_en.pdf)
4. <https://www.epa.gov/beaches/learn-human-health-beach>
5. [http://www.sld.cu/galerias/pdf/sitios/rehabilitacion-bal/bathing\\_water\\_quality\\_and\\_human\\_health.pdf](http://www.sld.cu/galerias/pdf/sitios/rehabilitacion-bal/bathing_water_quality_and_human_health.pdf)
6. Environmental Quality Authority. April 2016.
7. [https://www.unicef.org/wash/oPt\\_100684.html](https://www.unicef.org/wash/oPt_100684.html)
8. Prior to the launching of the new plant, sewage collected in northern Gaza was discharged in a number of lagoons.
9. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620527/mb-gaza-israel-blockade-civilians-270818-en.pdf>
10. On the risk of forcible transfer see, OCHA, Humanitarian Facts and Figures, December 2017, p. 18.
11. Due to their reliance on herding as a livelihood, a significant number of residents relocate to Aqraba village during summer.
12. Due to reliance on herding as a livelihood, most residents relocate to a higher altitude during the summer.
13. For further information about this procedure see: Kerem Navot, Blue and White make Black: The Blue Line Team in the West Bank, December 2016.