

PRESS RELEASE

Local Aid Co-ordination Committee Co-Chairs¹

United Nations  Nations Unies

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
SPECIAL CO-ORDINATOR



The World Bank
West Bank & Gaza Office

GOVERNMENT OF NORWAY

Representative Office in West
Bank and Gaza

Contact: Timothy Rothermel, UNDP
+972(2) 6268200
timothy.rothermel@undp.org

Contact: Ma'moon Sbeih
+972 (2) 236-6511
050(059) 549 644
msbeih@worldbank.org

Contact: Jens Mjaugeda
+972(2)2345050
jem@norad.no

DAMAGE TO CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE WEST BANK ESTIMATED AT US\$361 MILLION

Jerusalem, 15 May 2002—An assessment conducted by international donors estimated physical damage in the West Bank resulting from Israel's recent military incursions during March/April 2002 at US\$361 million.

The military incursions were launched in March 2002 following a series of suicide bombings inside Israel.

It should be emphasized that the figure of US\$361 million does not include income losses and social and humanitarian costs.

Areas – the Nablus region was hardest-hit, with repair costs estimated at US\$114 million, followed by the Jenin region (US\$83 million) and Ramallah (US\$51 million).

Sectors – the private sector suffered the most, with repairs estimated at a total of US\$97 million, of which US\$50 million consisted of damage to buildings and equipment and spoilage/loss of inventory. Significant damage also occurred to roads (US\$64 million), private housing (US\$66 million) and ancient cultural sites (US\$48 million), as well as to electricity and water networks, schools and clinics.

In Jenin refugee camp, where 800 families are now homeless, damage to housing amounts to US\$27 million.

Extensive damage was inflicted on sites of important cultural heritage in Nablus. This includes the destruction of the Jame' Al Khadra mosque, an ancient public bath, historic houses and soap factories. The total cost of restoring the old city of Nablus is estimated at US\$42.5 million.

Palestinian Authority ministries in Ramallah were also seriously damaged. The offices of PA ministries and agencies were entered and ransacked to varying degrees, with destruction focused particularly on office equipment, computers and data storage facilities. The estimated replacement and repair costs to PA office interiors in Ramallah is US\$9.5 million.

“This dollar amount does not account for the cost of disruption associated with losing valuable civilian records such as personnel data from the Ministry of Interior and tax record from the Ministry of Finance” said Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative of UNDP. “Some of this data is irreplaceable.”

¹ The Local Aid Coordination Committee includes all representatives of the donor community present in West Bank and Gaza.

“Serious as it is, the damage to infrastructure and institutions will be overshadowed by the economic losses that the new regime of tightened closures in the West Bank will bring” commented Nigel Roberts, Director of the World Bank. Roberts recalled that in the first 15 months of the *intifada*, physical damage from armed conflict amounted to US\$305 million while Palestinian income losses due to restrictions on the movement of people and goods totaled US\$2.4 billion. “Severe internal closure will shut down much of what remains of the Palestinian private sector and will cripple orderly governance and the delivery of education and health services” Roberts added.

United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNRWA, WFP, WHO, UNSCO and UNESCO), the World Bank, the European Union, USAID and the governments of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and Norway carried out the damage assessment, in close cooperation with the PA. The objective was to provide a sound basis for a credible donor response.

“One of the most heartening aspects of this effort has been the commitment of PA and local government institutions to this exercise” said Rothermel. “This shows that the Palestinian service delivery organizations which play such an important part in sustaining public welfare can still be effective if they are given the chance to work.”

Damage inventories were compiled on a regional basis by teams consisting of donor technical staff and Palestinian central and municipal personnel. Seven regional teams were formed: Jenin (led by Norway), Tulkarem (the World Bank), Qalquilya (UNDP and France), Nablus (Japan, UNDP and Germany), Ramallah (the Netherlands and the World Bank), Bethlehem (Italy) and Hebron (USAID). In a related exercise, thematic groups looked at damages and needs in the private sector (USAID), Non-Governmental Organizations (Canada) and public institutions (the European Commission and the World Bank). Needs have been prioritized by communities and local authorities at a regional level, and the PA is now determining the most appropriate allocation of available donor funds between identified priorities.

“The way in which the international community has worked together on meeting immediate humanitarian needs and carrying out this damage assessment is remarkable” said Geir Pedersen, Resident Representative of Norway in West Bank and Gaza. “The challenge now is to carry this unprecedented level of cooperation into the repair and reconstruction phase, and we and the PA are now determining which donor should tackle each aspect of the damage.”

Donors have already indicated that they will provide at least US\$150 million for priority repairs, on an urgent basis. This figure is likely to grow as the PA approaches donors for additional assistance. All parties have agreed on the need for speed in disbursement.

Continued closures and tightened restrictions on the movement of goods and people remain the biggest blockage to recovery. Unless these are eased, the Palestinian economy will not be able to recover and the aid community’s work will be seriously hampered. “Economic and social despair is in no-one’s interests. We need Israel’s cooperation to help improve economic conditions for the Palestinian civilian population and to help donors do their job” said Michael Keating, Director for Socio-Economic Affairs in UNSCO.

Attachment: Table1: Estimate of Physical/Institutional Damage, West Bank (March-April 2002).

-----end-----

