



## **FIELD UPDATE ON GAZA FROM THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR**

**20-21 January 2009, 1700 hours**

The cease-fire, implemented unilaterally by Israel on 18 January, and later the same day by Hamas and other Palestinian factions, continues to hold. Israel withdrew the last of its forces in the early hours of 21 January. Israeli troops are now deployed along the Gaza Strip border. The cease-fire followed twenty-two days of bombardment by land, sea and air which left over 1,300 Palestinians dead and over 5,000 severely injured. Extensive destruction has been caused to homes and public infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip, with many families losing their entire possessions.

Needs and damage assessments are now a priority, as is the recovery of bodies previously inaccessible due to hostilities. At this stage, the initial response will focus on the re-establishment of basic services to the population of Gaza, including water, health, food, cash assistance, education and psychosocial support. This will include addressing safety of movement (e.g. marking and clearing unexploded ordnance), removing rubble, repairing priority infrastructure, and securing access to services.

### **PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS**

On 19 January, a Palestinian farmer was killed by Israeli gunfire east of Jabalia. The same day, Palestinian militants fired a number of mortars towards Israel and also shot at Israeli troops still inside the Gaza Strip. No injuries or damage were reported.

UNICEF and other organisations remain concerned of the dangers posed by landmines and unexploded remnants in the Gaza Strip. Two Palestinian children were killed on 20 January by unexploded ordnance in Az Zaitoun in Gaza Governorate.

Rescue services continue to recover the dead from under the rubble. Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) figures as of 1600 hours 19 January are 1,314 Palestinians dead, of whom 412 are children and 110 are women. The number of injuries stands at 5,300, of whom 1,855 are children and 795 are women. It is still not possible to determine the number of Palestinian male civilian casualties.

Nine Israeli soldiers were killed and 336 wounded during the course of the military operation, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the Magen David Adom national society, four Israelis were killed, four critically injured, 11 moderately injured and 167 lightly injured by rocket fire.

### **SHELTER**

Gazans displaced due to the military operation continue to make their way home. However, with the extensive destruction of homes, many people have found they are now homeless, and remain with host families or in UNRWA shelters. As of late 20 January, 18,035 people remained in 30 shelters, down from 29,421 people on 19 January and from a peak of nearly 51,000 people on 18 January. The majority of shelters still open are located in the north. The total number of people displaced by the military operation remains unknown.

On 19 and 20 January, ICRC distributed plastic sheeting and tarpaulins to 800 families in Tel al Hawa, Al Atatra, Az Zeitoun and Rafah. CHF International and Mercy Corps distributed plastic sheeting in Gaza City. Priority needs include plastic sheeting, tarpaulin, blankets and sleeping bags, mattresses, hygiene kits, diapers, sanitary napkins and clothing.

### **HEALTH**

Hospitals continue to function at full capacity as many injured patients remain hospitalized.

WHO reports that 34 health facilities (8 hospitals and 26 primary health care (PHC) clinics) were damaged or destroyed by direct or indirect shelling. Of the eight damaged hospitals, two were still not functioning as of 20 January. Twenty damaged PHC clinics were identified between 17 and 19 January following visits to previously inaccessible areas. This number may increase as all sites are visited.

Despite the damage, as of 20 January, 50 out of 56 PHC clinics were functional at 80 percent capacity. Of the six that remain closed, five were severely damaged and one was shut due to its close proximity to a high-risk area. Since the cease-fire, most health personnel have returned to work, with the exception of those still supporting hospitals. Immunization, antenatal care and management of chronic diseases services have been fully resumed in the 50 functioning MoH PHC clinics. Nutrition monitoring surveillance has resumed with fifty percent capacity, and laboratory and dental services have been partially resumed. Health education and promotion services have recommenced in all the functioning PHC clinics. Internal referrals between PHC clinics and hospitals have been resumed for only severe cases.

In addition, all of UNRWA's 18 PHC centers are fully functioning. Immunization services resumed on 19 January at the UNRWA emergency shelters. The MoH and UNRWA will start to immunize all children in Gaza as soon as schooling resumes.

Stocks of vaccines and drugs within each district are sufficient for one month. Vaccines at the MoH central stores are available for the next three months. The main MoH drugs and vaccines warehouse has sufficient fuel reserve sufficient for at least five days.

Electricity coverage for hospitals ranges between 8-18 hours per day.

The MoH's epidemiology department collected water samples on 20 January that were sent to Gaza's central Public Health Lab for analysis of water quality. The department is also strengthening the communicable diseases surveillance system in PHC clinics to avoid any communicable disease outbreak.

## **WATER AND SANITATION**

The CMWU, Gaza's water utility, continues to work on urgent maintenance of the water and wastewater networks. On 20 January, UNICEF disbursed \$50,000 to CMWU for rapid repair of the water network. On the same day, ICRC accompanied CMWU engineers to the Sheikh Ajleen / Gaza City Wastewater Treatment Plant to carry out repairs.

On 20 January, UNICEF delivered 650 family hygiene kits (each kit is for a family of six for two to three months) to families staying at two UNRWA emergency shelters in Rafah and Khan Yunis. On 21 January, UNICEF distributed an additional 1,000 kits via NGO partners in Beit Hanoun and Gaza City. Since 17 January, Oxfam has distributed an average of 10 litres of chlorinated drinking water to approximately 30-40,000 people per day, mainly in Gaza City and North Gaza. Between 12 and 20 January, ACF has distributed 25 litres of water per person per day for a period of five days to 6,988 people in Gaza City, Beach Refugee Camp and Jabalia Refugee Camp.

## **FOOD**

The Gaza population continues to face difficulties accessing food due to price increases and the lack of banknotes. In addition to the shortage of basic food items on the market, the destruction to agricultural fields has added to a shortage of locally-produced foods. The majority of mills and bakeries remain closed due to the shortage of wheat flour and cooking gas, resulting in an acute shortage of bread.

On 20 January, UNRWA distributed food parcels to 2,913 families as part of its regular programming. WFP distributed approximately 40 metric tonnes (Mt) of food to 500 families in Gaza City and 235 Mt of food to 1,130 families in the Middle Area.

## **EDUCATION**

The second school semester, which should have started on 17 January, was interrupted due to the military operation, affecting more than 440,000 government and UNRWA school students. Schools are set to resume on Saturday 24 January. The final exams of the first semester were also disrupted and have been postponed.

## **ELECTRICITY / FUEL**

According to GEDCO, Gaza's power utility, 40 percent of the population remains without electricity. The remaining 60 percent receive only intermittent supply. The need for spare parts and other equipment remains a priority in order to allow GEDCO to repair damage.

Diesel was last allowed into the Gaza Strip on 7 January.

## **CROSSINGS**

The Kerem Shalom, Nahal Oz, Rafah, Erez and Karni crossings were open on 20 January.

On 20 January, 120 truckloads, including 87 for aid agencies, entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom crossing. 443,000 litres of industrial fuel for the power plant and 199 tonnes of cooking gas were transferred through the Nahal Oz pipeline. 80 truckloads entered Gaza via the Karni conveyor belt. 213 tonnes of medical supplies and three ambulances entered through the Rafah crossing.

On 19 January, 125 truckloads, including 115 for aid agencies, entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom crossing. 537,000 litres of industrial fuel and 206 tonnes of cooking gas were transferred through the Nahal Oz pipeline. 71 truckloads entered Gaza via the Karni conveyor belt.

## **FUNDING**

For the list of immediate funding needs, visit:

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_gaza\\_crisis\\_cap\\_funding\\_2009\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_crisis_cap_funding_2009_english.pdf)

## **PRIORITY NEEDS**

*Opening of crossings:* The number of trucks allowed into the Gaza Strip needs to be increased, including those for the private sector. Additional crossings must be opened urgently, including Karni for the provision of bulk grain and Sufa for construction materials. Basic construction materials need to be allowed into the Gaza Strip to allow repair of public infrastructure and of private homes.

*Cash/liquidity:* Cash has still not entered the Gaza Strip and is urgently needed to reactivate the private sector and prevent increasing dependence on aid. A system must be established that ensures the regular and predictable monthly transfer of the necessary cash. Without a functioning bank system in Gaza, recovery efforts will be undermined.

*Supply of fuel:* Nahal Oz crossing must remain open as it is the only crossing which can facilitate the transfer of sufficient amounts of fuel to restart and maintain operation of the power plant, and restock other types of fuel needed in the Gaza Strip.

*Operational security for humanitarian agencies working in Gaza:* Explosive remnants of war are limiting the access of humanitarian workers to certain areas. Security, including the marking and clearance of UXOs, is essential to ensure efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance to the population.