



FIELD UPDATE ON GAZA FROM THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR

10 - 16 February 2009, 1700 hours

Violent incidents continue to undermine the Gaza cease-fire. On 14 February, a 13 year-old Palestinian boy was killed when Israeli troops opened fire from the border east of Jabalia. On the same day, an alleged militant was killed, and three other people were injured, when the Israeli Air Force targeted a motorcycle with air-to-ground missiles east of Abassan, and six people were injured when Israeli missile fire hit a wood-work factory in Jabalia Camp. Militants in Gaza fired rockets or mortars towards Israel daily during the reporting period, targeting both Israeli bases along the border and towns inside Israel. The Israeli Air Force also conducted airstrikes daily during the reporting period, except on 11 February. On 13 February, Israeli patrol boats opened fire on Palestinian fishing boats, and Israeli troops opened fire on a group of Palestinian farmers working close to the border area on the same day. On 15 February, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered Gaza and leveled land south-east of Maghazi Camp. On 16 February, one person was killed and four wounded by an unexploded ordnance in Beit Lahia.

On 12 February, the UN Secretary-General announced that the UN Board of Inquiry into incidents in Gaza had commenced its work in New York earlier that day; it is expected to travel soon to the region. The Board of Inquiry will 'review and investigate a number of specific incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 27 December 2008 and 19 January 2009 and in which death or injuries occurred at, and/or damage was done to, United Nations premises or in the course of United Nations operations'.

MINE ACTION

Disposal of explosive ordnance is ongoing. Mines Advisory Group (MAG) has conducted reconnaissance of a number of sites in the Gaza and Rafah areas which were believed to be contaminated with unexploded ordnance. Items found will be removed or destroyed as soon as a suitable storage/demolition site has been identified and approved by the Israeli and Gazan authorities. On 9 February, teams also removed and destroyed white phosphorus wedges discovered by pupils in a school in Tal El Hawa, Gaza.

The identification of a suitable area to which unexploded ordnance can be stored and/or demolished remains a major constraint, as is the inability to bring in any of the materials and equipment needed to destroy or isolate the ordnance.

SHELTER

As of 16 February, three non-school UNRWA emergency shelters remain open in Jabalia, Beach Camp and Deir Al Balah, hosting 359 people. The total number of displaced persons remains unknown. As the need for non-food items remains high, the distribution of such items (mostly consumable) as well as cash to conflict-affected areas is ongoing. Priority needs include kitchen sets, hygiene kits, blankets, mattresses and plastic sheeting.

HEALTH

According to the Health Cluster, full stocks of drugs have been in place in most hospital facilities since the first week of the cease-fire. Distribution of drugs from the central drug store to primary health care (PHC) centres has been on-going during the last two weeks to re-stock the PHC centre stores, which were incomplete during the first week after the cease-fire. Psychotropic drugs have been allowed into the Gaza Strip, although they are not yet available in health facilities. Some medical equipment and spare parts have been received, and the situation of health equipment has improved compared to the pre-crisis situation.

An MoH/UNRWA-implemented MMR vaccination campaign (which protects against measles, mumps and rubella) targeting 120,000 students in grades 8 and 9 began on 14 February at government and UNRWA schools. The campaign also includes awareness sessions about infectious diseases, and each student will receive a dose of Vitamin A.

A UNFPA assessment of reproductive health services during the 22 days of bombardment shows an increase in miscarriages and neonatal deaths. UNFPA remains concerned about neonatal care post-crisis as many women who delivered their babies in hospitals during the crisis were sent home as early as 30 minutes after giving birth.

WATER AND SANITATION

As of 16 February, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), Gaza's water utility, reports that 50,000 people still do not have access to piped water and an additional 100,000 receive water every 7-10 days. Locations affected include parts of Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Gaza City and Rafah. Oxfam, ACF, PHG and CARE continue to distribute water to the population, focusing on communities in northern Gaza and around Gaza City.

On 13 February, PHG reported that 3,000 litres of fuel had leaked into the wastewater infiltration basin of the Beit Lahia Emergency Wastewater Treatment Plant, posing a risk for chemical contamination of the aquifer by hydrocarbons.

As of 5 February, the CMWU reported that it had spent over \$335,000 on emergency repairs. The majority of the repairs have been to water wells and network facilities and the areas with the most completed repairs are Gaza, Beit Hanoun and Khan Yunis. Although emergency repairs are still ongoing, major repairs can not take place without the entry of needed spare parts into Gaza, which remains problematic.

FOOD SECURITY

According to findings from WFP's market survey dated 15 February, while fresh and dry foods are available, accessibility of red meat, poultry meat and eggs remains an issue due to high prices resulting from shortages of animal feed. Vegetables are available and prices are stable.

A crucial factor influencing food security in the weeks and months to come is the resumption of the cash economy and employment, without which most Gazan households will continue to depend on food aid, cash assistance and emergency temporary job creation schemes.

According to WFP and FAO, food consumption and nutritional status are also likely to deteriorate if urgent repairs of the water network and damaged housing units are not undertaken.

The Gaza Fishermen Syndicate reports that since the cease-fire, three fishermen have been injured and ten fishing boats have been damaged in incidents near Gaza City and the Middle Area.

EDUCATION

The education sector reports a continued shortage of drinking water in schools and textbooks for school children. Restrictions on the amount and type of materials being allowed into Gaza continue to hamper efforts to support education in Gaza. Psychosocial support for children in schools and adolescents remains a priority.

ELECTRICITY / FUEL

GEDCO, Gaza's power utility, reports a total power deficit of 19 percent throughout the Gaza Strip, out of a total current demand of 244 MW. The following scheduled power cuts remain in place, in addition to unscheduled power cuts: 8 hours three times per week in the Gaza and North Gaza governorates, 8 hours of power cuts every third day in the Middle Area and Khan Yunis, and 4-6 hours of power cuts every third day in Rafah. According to GEDCO, 10-15 percent of the electrical network is not yet functional. Due to localized damage, certain areas still do not receive electricity, notably Al Qurem, Izbet Abed Rabbo and Al Atatra.

No petrol, diesel or cooking gas was allowed into Gaza between 8 and 14 February. Petrol and diesel were last allowed into Gaza for public use on 2 November 2008 and cooking gas was last allowed in on

4 February. A total of 2,172,000 litres of industrial gas for the GPP was allowed into Gaza between 8-14 February, whereas the GPP needs 3,150,000 litres to operate to its full 80 MW capacity.

ACCESS INTO THE GAZA STRIP

Aid workers with NGOs continue to face difficulty in obtaining access to the Gaza Strip to carry out humanitarian work. Humanitarian personnel are only allowed to enter Gaza through Erez crossing after receiving prior clearance by the Israeli authorities. A key problem remains inconsistency and lack of clarity in the application process.

CROSSINGS

Kerem Shalom crossing was open on six out of seven scheduled days between 8-15 February. The Karni crossing remained closed, except for the grain conveyor belt which was operational on five days out of six and half scheduled. The Nahal Oz fuel pipelines were open on five out of seven scheduled days. Rafah border crossing was closed throughout the reporting period. Sufa crossing, which was last open on 12 September 2008, was closed on all scheduled days.

One truckload of cut flowers (nearly 50,000 flowers) was allowed out of Gaza on 12 February through Kerem Shalom crossing. This is first time since 18 January 2008 that Israel allows any exports from Gaza.

Between 9 and 15 February, 505 truckloads, including 252 for aid agencies, entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom crossing. 132 truckloads of grain were transferred into Gaza through the Karni conveyor belt. 1,814,230 litres of industrial fuel entered through Nahal Oz.

Between 8 and 14 February, 35 percent of goods allowed into Gaza were for aid agencies, and food supplies made up 83 percent of the supplies. No education/stationery material, livestock or construction materials were allowed into Gaza during the said period. Although the Israeli authorities have informed the humanitarian community that 150 trucks per day would be allowed into Gaza, for the most part capacity has not exceeded 120 truckloads. From 8 to 14 February, an average of 103 truckloads per day was allowed into Gaza. In addition, only a restricted list of items is being allowed into Gaza.

Five trucks containing 130 pallets of student folders supplied by UNICEF were refused entry to Gaza on 8 February.

COGAT has confirmed that there is as yet no intention to revise the policy prohibiting clearance of reconstruction materials which would enable aid agencies working in Gaza to transition to rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The Logistic Cluster is negotiating with the Israeli authorities on behalf of the humanitarian community regarding transport of goods into Gaza. All parties, including donors, are welcome to contact the Cluster if they have any queries. A Humanitarian Country Team list of priority items for transport into the Gaza Strip, which was consolidated based on input from sector/cluster leads to reflect humanitarian needs in Gaza, is being used as the basis for negotiations with the Israeli authorities.

PRIORITY NEEDS

Opening of crossings: All crossings into Gaza and Israel must be operational, and the number of trucks and range of commodities allowed into the Gaza Strip need to be increased. The following items in Gaza are critically needed:

- *Spare parts and fuel* for the power plant, hospitals and water and sewage treatment facilities;
- *Cement, sand and other construction materials* to rebuild destroyed schools, hospitals, clinics and homes.

Humanitarian Access to Gaza: In the aftermath of the Israeli military operation, it is critical that full and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza be granted by all parties to the conflict. International agencies have

faced unprecedented denial of access to Gaza since 5 November. Humanitarian access remains unreliable and needs to be granted every day without restriction.

Cash/liquidity: Although some cash has entered the Gaza Strip, more is needed to reactivate the private sector and prevent increasing dependence on aid.