



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

**17 - 23 February 2009, 1700 hours**

Violent incidents continue to undermine the Gaza cease-fire. A Palestinian farmer was reportedly injured by Israeli troops firing into the Khan Yunis area from the Gaza-Israeli border on 18 February. On 17 February, an Israeli foot patrol entered Gaza southeast of El Maghazi camp under cover of heavy fire. The incursion lasted three hours. Two Palestinian militants were injured during another Israeli army incursion on 19 February. On the same day, a Palestinian was injured along the Gaza-Israeli border fence. On 20 and 23 February, Gazan militants detonated improvised explosive devices near the border with Israel, resulting in armed clashes in both cases, and the injury of two Palestinians on 20 February. Israeli air forces, naval vessels and army troops conducted daily strikes on the Gaza Strip during the reporting period. Militants in Gaza fired rockets and mortars towards Israel daily during the reporting period, targeting both Israeli bases along the border and towns inside Israel.

### **MINE ACTION**

Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams from the Mines Advisory Group continued to conduct disposal tasks and verification of suspected UXO-contaminated sites at the request of agencies and NGOs. On 16 February, one Gazan was killed and four injured in Beit Lahia while melting scrap metal as unexploded ordnance was inadvertently thrown into the fire.

### **SHELTER**

As of 23 February, two non-school UNRWA emergency shelters remain open in Jabalia and Deir Al Balah, hosting 178 people. On 14 and 19 February respectively, UNDP and UNRWA began cash distribution to Gazans who have lost their homes or need to repair their damaged houses. To date, UNDP has distributed NIS 30 million to 3,800 families. Major repair of damaged houses cannot be done until construction materials are permitted into Gaza, which Israeli authorities have not allowed since 5 November 2008. Distribution of plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, blankets and mattresses to conflict affected areas is ongoing. Priority needs at the moment include kitchen sets and materials for repairing houses (concrete, cement).

### **HEALTH**

Monitoring of epidemic prone diseases is necessary to identify the possible impact of the conflict on epidemiology trends. According to UNRWA, watery diarrhoea and acute bloody diarrhoea remain the major causes of morbidity among reportable infectious diseases in the refugee population of the Gaza Strip. In its 19 February bulletin, UNRWA's Health Department highlighted the need to focus in the coming weeks on watery diarrhoea among children under three years of age, as the number of cases breached the alert threshold between weeks four and six of 2009. According to UNRWA, health education for the prevention of water and food borne diseases is now a priority in the Gaza Strip.

### **WATER AND SANITATION**

As of 23 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, including in parts of Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Gaza City and Rafah.

Between 1 and 21 February, the Public Health Lab collected 248 water samples from water wells, water networks and water treatment plants throughout the Gaza Strip. Of these, 45 samples were contaminated, mainly in North Gaza (notably in Salateen, Sayafa, Al Atatra, Muntaza and Izbet Abed Rabbo) and Gaza (notably in Sheikh Radwan, Beach Camp, Az Zaitoun, Tal el Hawa and Sheikh Ijleen).

NGOs continue to support the distribution of water and hygiene kits, repair of household connections, rehabilitation of internal water networks, cleaning of the Beit Lahia and Gaza City Wastewater Treatment

Plants, collection of solid waste, and removal of solid waste and rubble in conflict affected areas.

CMWU has confirmed commitments for \$2.5 million for repairs to damaged water and sanitation infrastructure. Other donors are currently finalising their commitments to ensure CMWU is fully funded for major infrastructure repairs. However, further funding is required for organisations working at the household level, including repairs to water storage tanks, small pumps, household connections and internal plumbing. Funds are also required for small neighbourhood desalination schemes to improve the quality of drinking water.

## **FOOD SECURITY**

Basic commodities and vegetables are available on the market at stable prices. WFP reports a severe shortage of sugar in the shops due to the price imposed by authorities; retailers consider the price to be too low and are therefore not selling the sugar they have on stock. Some fruits (bananas, apples, oranges and strawberries) are available on the market but at high prices. Most Gazans can no longer afford fresh meat and are substituting it with frozen meat.

Five out of the six mills in Gaza are open. Five bakeries in the middle and southern areas are now importing bread from other bakeries in the Gaza Strip because of a lack of cooking gas.

The Israeli navy continues to prevent Gazan fishermen from sailing and fishing further than 3 nautical miles from the shore, limiting the quantity and range of types of fish available. Only two types of fish are now sold on the market, at 25 NIS/kg and 40 NIS/kg.

## **EDUCATION**

Restrictions on the amount and type of materials being allowed into Gaza continue to hamper efforts to support education in Gaza, resulting in a continued shortage of textbooks and other materials for school children. Repairs to damaged schools are also not possible. Drinking water in schools is still lacking. Psychosocial support for children in schools and adolescents remains a priority.

## **ELECTRICITY / FUEL**

According to GEDCO, Gaza's power utility, the power deficit throughout the Gaza Strip as of 22 February remains at 19 percent, with the highest deficits reported in Khan Yunis (22.7%) and the Middle Area (21.2%). Ninety percent of the Gaza population receives intermittent electricity. 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 percent of the population does not receive electricity due to complete damage to the network in certain areas, including Izbet Abed Rabbo and Al Atatra in North Gaza; Qoraish area and Aljaro area in Gaza Governorate; Jahr Al Deek and Al Moghraga in the Middle Area; and Khoza'a in Khan Yunis. These areas will not receive electricity until GEDCO receives the needed materials.

No petrol or diesel was allowed into Gaza between 15 and 21 February, and most of the 240 gas stations in Gaza remain closed. Petrol and diesel were last allowed into Gaza for commercial use on 2 November 2008. On 18 February, Israel allowed 188 tonnes of cooking gas into Gaza. This is the first time since 5 February that Israel allows cooking gas into Gaza. Between 1 and 22 February, Israel allowed 1,355 tonnes of cooking gas into Gaza; according to the Gas Stations Owner Association, Gaza needs 250 tonnes of cooking gas per day.

## **CROSSINGS**

On 17-18 February, Kerem Shalom, Erez, the Nahal Oz fuel pipeline and the Karni conveyor belt were functional. On 19 February, Kerem Shalom, Erez and Nahal Oz were open, while only Kerem Shalom and Erez were open on 20 and 22 February. On 21 February, all crossings were closed due to the Jewish Sabbath. Rafah and Sufa crossing remained closed throughout the reporting period.

Between 17 and 22 February, 460 truckloads, including 207 for aid agencies, entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom crossing. 28 truckloads of grain were transferred into Gaza through the Karni conveyor belt. 1,780,010 litres of industrial fuel entered through the Nahal Oz pipeline.

The Logistic Cluster continues to negotiate with the Israeli authorities on behalf of the humanitarian community regarding transport of goods into Gaza. 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.

The Logistics Cluster continues to request the Israeli civil-military liaison body COGAT to grant clearance for cargo which has been refused entry to Gaza, including 30 metric tonnes of chickpeas, 43 pallets of macaroni, 137 pallets of wheat flour, 131 recreational kits, 68 pallets of stationary items for students, 150 school-in-a-box kits, 33 boxes of medicine, 22 freezer appliances, 3 generators and 4 water pumps.

## **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 needs to be granted 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.