
In Brief: Gaza operation over, but emergency remains

DUBAI, 10 December 2012 (IRIN) - Despite the end of an Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip, the humanitarian situation there remains dire, says the representative of the World Food Programme (WFP) in the occupied Palestinian territory.

"There is a misconception that because there is a period of calm, we can start thinking about a development process, which is very difficult to do when they are under occupation," Pablo Recalde said at a press conference in Dubai on 9 December.

"This latest operation has brought back to [people's consciousness] that we need to be ready and we need to maintain assistance," he told IRIN separately. "These kinds of flare-ups of violence... are now systemic. Up until there is a permanent solution to the problem of the Palestinian people, you will have these ups and downs."

While around 1,000 families lost their homes during eight days of air strikes on Gaza in November, Recalde said there had been no major decrease in food security in Gaza. Even in normal times, 40 percent of Gazans do not have regular access to food and are dependent on aid to survive, he said. Entrance to and exit from Gaza - for its 1.6 million inhabitants, as well as for trade and aid - are controlled by neighbours Egypt and Israel.

WFP requires US\$2 million a month for its food programmes in Gaza; but its funding has dropped by around one-third since last year.

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