

## GAZA SITUATION REPORT 130

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• Over the past months UNRWA has engaged in intensive efforts to review the content of its food assistance rations. This process is now complete and the Agency's nutritionally-improved baskets will be launched during the April-June food distribution round for all 960,000 beneficiaries who are scheduled to receive food assistance from UNRWA. The food baskets revision has been a highly participatory process and has mobilized a wide range of technical capacities existing in Gaza Field Office as well as nutritional expertise from the World Food Programme. In addition, the views of our beneficiaries were duly taken into account through ad hoc consultations, Relief and Social Services Programme (RSSP) focus groups, as well as periodic surveys conducted by the UNRWA Monitoring & Evaluation team. Three main criteria guided this reform: (i) health and nutritional values; (ii) public acceptance and local food habits; (iii) availability and logistics practicalities. An extensive outreach campaign on the new food baskets will be rolling out during February and March to ensure that all questions and concerns of beneficiaries will be addressed in a professional and pro-active way. For more information on the new UNRWA food baskets, please consult the attached fact sheets.

• On 4 February 2016, under the supervision of the UNRWA Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP), the casting work of the cement raft foundation of the two major buildings (Auditorium Building and Faculty of Arts & Human Sciences building) at the new Al-Azhar University campus in Gaza city started. The concrete raft is the largest ever constructed in Gaza to date. 4,600 cubic meters of concrete were used in the casting of the foundation of the auditorium, and another 2,700 cubic metres of concrete for the casting of the foundation of the Arts building; over 180 skilled and unskilled labourers were involved in the casting. A total of six concrete pumps were active simultaneously to make the casting possible, and the casting work lasted for 35 consecutive hours for the Auditorium Building and for 24 consecutive hours for the Faculty of Arts & Human Sciences building. The ICIP engineers took into consideration the expected stormy weather where the rainfall might affect the quality of the concrete. Four teams of engineers from the UNRWA ICIP were constantly monitoring the concrete pouring and the pumps, taking samples of concrete and monitoring the process of mixing concrete in the factories. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), generously contributed US\$24.1 million for the construction of these two buildings. Given its technical expertise, UNRWA is fulfilling a supervisory role throughout the construction which began in September 2015.

• The Shelter Cluster Palestine recently published an [analysis](#) of the import of dual use items into Gaza. Israel says it considers as "dual use" items materials which it believes could have a military purpose and has thus restricted the import of products such as steel bars, concrete, electrical material, pipes and, since August 2015, wood thicker than one centimetre into the Gaza Strip. These import restrictions hinder Gaza's construction and reconstruction efforts, particularly following the unparalleled devastation of homes and infrastructure during the summer 2014 conflict. According to the Shelter Cluster analysis, since October 2014 a total of 607,706 tons of BC materials (steel bar and cement) entered Gaza through the [Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism](#) (GRM), 93,215 tons through direct coordination between humanitarian organizations and the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) unit, and 5,280 tons through Qatari projects (road infrastructure and housing projects funded by Qatar). All this construction material entered through the Kerem Shalom Crossing, the only official crossing open for the transfer of goods into and out of the Gaza Strip. On 3 February, the Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza, Mr. Bo Schack, paid a visit to the Kerem Shalom crossing as part of his regular outreach activities in Gaza. (Re)construction needs in Gaza are not only related to the destruction of homes and infrastructure caused by repeated armed conflicts, but also due to natural population growth. According to the [Gaza 2020 report](#), from 2012, by 2020 the population of Gaza is expected to increase, adding 500,000 people to a living area which is restricted and already heavily urbanized. Basic infrastructure in electricity, water and sanitation and municipal and social services, are already struggling to keep pace with the needs of the current population. UNRWA has repeatedly stated that without drastic action, Gaza is at risk of being unliveable by 2020 and the daily lives of Palestine refugees will be dramatically worse.

• On 8 February a delegation from the Norwegian Representative Office in Palestine visited Gaza. The delegation, consisting of the Head of Cooperation and staff members at the Norwegian Representative Office in Palestine, accompanied by staff members of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Gaza office, paid a visit to the UNRWA Preparatory Boys A school in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza, where UNRWA, in cooperation with NRC, implements the Better Learning Programme (BLP). The delegation engaged with the School Principal as well as UNRWA school counsellors. The BLP has been developed by NRC in cooperation with the Institute of Education, University of Tromsø in Norway and the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) with the goal of improving learning conditions for adolescents exposed to traumatic stress due to war and conflict. NRC's first intervention under the BLP in Palestine was in 2012, and targeted eight UNRWA schools in Gaza, where teams found that students suffered from consistent trauma-induced nightmares or other symptoms of traumatic stress to such a degree that their ability to function in school was severely affected. The BLP is a classroom/school-based intervention combining psychosocial (trauma-focused) and educational approaches to help teachers, educational psychologists and parents cope with behavioural difficulties of children who have experienced trauma, while at the same time empowering schoolchildren with strategies for calming and self-regulation. The goal is not only to promote behavioural change in the classroom but also to regain lost learning capacity and strengthen resilience, concentration and learning in the school community.

• In the spirit of the World Volunteer Day, on 4 February 200 UNRWA students together with UNRWA counsellors, teachers, their parents and local community leaders, participated in a "volunteering day" activity in North Gaza to promote volunteerism among youths in Gaza. The volunteering day was a joint effort of different UNRWA programmes, including the Education Programme, Community Mental Health Programme and the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme. The event aimed to enhance the spirit of volunteerism among school children and maintain a cooperative relationship among the school and the students' families' by involving parents in activities organized by the schools. During the "volunteering day" activities included for example the joint cleaning of school surroundings or the painting and decorating of school walls.

• The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), [has donated US\\$ 59 million to UNRWA](#) for projects to be implemented in Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan. This contribution was confirmed through three agreements that were signed in London by SFD Vice-Chairman and Managing Director H.H. Eng. Yousef al-Bassam and UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl on 4 February 2016. The first agreement, valued at US\$43.5 million, will support ongoing projects in Gaza, including the repair of more than 7,500 shelters for Palestinians whose homes were damaged during the 2014 conflict and the maintenance of three UNRWA schools. The second agreement, valued at US\$ 8 million, will provide funds for much-needed maintenance on nine UNRWA schools and 10 health centres in Jordan. The third agreement, valued at US\$ 7.5 million, will provide funds

for the reconstruction, furnishing and equipping of three health centres in the West Bank. Saudi Arabia has contributed more than US\$ 500 million to UNRWA to date. Over the past three years, the Kingdom has become the Agency's third largest donor. It has also been a valued member of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, which advises and assists the Commissioner-General in carrying out the Agency's mandate, since 2005.

• UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl participated in a conference on the Syrian crisis held in London on 4 February, hosted by the United Nations, Germany, the UK, Kuwait and Norway. The Supporting Syria and the Region conference brought together world leaders from around the globe to rise to the challenge of raising the money needed to help millions of people whose lives have been torn apart by the devastating civil war. The conference raised over US\$ 11 billion in pledges – \$5.8 billion for 2016 and a further \$5.4 billion for 2017-20 to enable partners to plan ahead. Shortly before the conference, [UNRWA had launched its Syria Crisis Emergency Appeal 2016](#). Palestine refugees have been dramatically affected by the crisis due to their proximity to conflict areas inside Syria, high rates of poverty and the tenuous legal status of those forced to flee to Lebanon and Jordan – and some even to Gaza. Palestine refugees from Syria in Gaza are those persons for whom Syria was the place of former habitual residence. These persons have been registered with UNRWA (either in Syria or elsewhere within UNRWA's areas of operations), however, for differing reasons (flight from Syria, among other reasons), have left Syria and currently reside in Gaza and are unable or unwilling to return to Syria on account of the ongoing conflict in the country. These persons are entitled to all those UNRWA services that Gaza Palestine refugees / other persons of concern to UNRWA are also entitled to. This includes access to food assistance, as well as access to all UNRWA's health, education and any other services. They are furthermore entitled to Non-Food Items upon arrival. One exception that UNRWA extends to this group on humanitarian grounds is that all FRS in Gaza are eligible transitional cash assistance (for renting accommodation - subject to replenishment of funding). Other Palestine refugees in Gaza must establish eligibility for this entitlement. The Agency is supporting 216 Palestine refugee families from Syria, including 257 children, with shelter assistance.

#### SHELTER UPDATE

##### THIS WEEK

• During the reporting week, UNRWA was able to disburse approximately US\$ 7.1 million in funding available for reconstruction (US\$ 2.8 million) and severe repair works (US\$ 4.3 million). The funds will reach a total of 1,842 refugee families across the Gaza Strip. The families will be able to access this assistance through local banks next week.

##### OVERVIEW OF ASSISTANCE DISBURSED

- The UNRWA shelter assessment confirmed 141,559 Palestine refugee houses as impacted during the 2014 conflict; 9,117 of them are considered totally demolished. 5,355 shelters have suffered severe, 3,700 major and 123,387 minor damages.
- Since the start of the 2014 emergency shelter response, the Agency has distributed over US\$ 151.4 million (excluding Programme Support Costs) to Palestine refugee families whose homes were damaged or demolished during the 2014 summer conflict.
- UNRWA has completed the payments to over 66,300 Palestine refugee families – more than half of the caseload – for minor repair works, to 1,515 families to repair their severely damaged shelters, to 12 families for major repair works and to 41 families for reconstruction. Payment transfers for over 12,380 refugee families to continue repair works of their shelters and for 483 families to continue the reconstruction of their shelters are ongoing.
- 13,250 families have received a rental subsidy payment to cover the period from September to December 2014. Disbursement of subsequent instalments entailed further eligibility checks through which over 9,900 families have received the relevant rental subsidy payments during the period from January to December 2015.

##### FUNDING GAPS AND NEEDS

- Due to lack of funding, as of 10 February 2016, over 60,300 refugee families have not received any payments to undertake repair works for their minor damaged homes (total estimate repair costs: US\$ 68.2 million). Further, 3,200 families have not received any payments to repair or start repairing their major damaged homes (total estimate repair costs: US\$ 28.8 million), 1,850 families have not received payments to repair or start repairing their severely damaged homes (total estimate costs: US\$ 16.6 million). Out of these, UNRWA has processed the documents of over 45,500 families with damaged shelters and could disburse payments to these families immediately upon receipt of funding.
- Over 17 months after the ceasefire, 6,876 refugee families have not received any payments to start repairing their totally demolished homes; the total costs of reconstructing their homes amounts to approximately US\$309.42 million.
- Due to lack of sufficient funding also approximately 8,000 refugee families displaced by the 2014 conflict have not received transitional shelter cash assistance (TSCA) in 2016. The US\$ 23.3 million in TSCA needed to assist the 2014 conflict emergency caseload in 2016 has been included in the oPT Emergency Appeal 2016.
- In January, UNRWA completed four infrastructure projects: two L-type schools - one in Rafah and one in Khan Younis - which will benefit approximately 1,070 students in total, and two maintenance projects, including one for the maintenance of three schools. As of 31 January 2016, 35 infrastructure projects worth US\$ 78.5 million were under implementation as well as 3 components of a large infrastructure project implemented in all camps around the Gaza Strip (total value US\$ 8.6 million). As of 31 January 2015, the total value of UNRWA projects approved by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) is US\$ 215.1 million. For more details, please see the attached January 2016 UNRWA Construction Update.

#### GENERAL

**Operational environment:** The weekly demonstrations across Gaza and in the vicinity of the perimeter fence involving hundreds of participants, mostly youths, in support of developments in the West Bank and at Al Aqsa Mosque have now gone on for 18 consecutive weeks. This has reportedly resulted in at least 16 fatalities and over 600 injuries since the first incident back in October 2015 (see also Summary of Major Incidents).

High socio-economic instability, the lack of prospects particularly among youths, damaged infrastructure and heavily impaired service delivery (water, electricity) together with an (initially) slow reconstruction process exacerbates anger and frustration among the people of Gaza. The reconstruction process of Gaza is hindered not only by the Israeli blockade on Gaza, but also by donor reluctance to invest in the large infrastructure needed in Gaza. According to the [Washington Institute](#), the possibility for renewed conflict between Hamas and Israel – and the past destruction of billions of dollars of infrastructure and housing in Gaza by Israel – allow donors to shy away from investing into large-scale development projects that are needed to improve the situation in Gaza; instead, donors focus mostly on managing the current living conditions – which are already unbearable for the vast majority of the population.

A number of protests took place during the reporting week, which were mainly associated in solidarity with Palestinian journalist Mohammad Al Qeeq who continues his hunger strike whilst in Israeli detention since the end of November 2015. Popular Refugee Committees held a protest in front UNRWA Field Office in solidarity with Palestine refugees in Lebanon. Hamas also organized protests in solidarity with the four Hamas militants killed in a tunnel collapse on 2 February (see below), and for the release of four Hamas members allegedly kidnapped in the Sinai, Egypt.

On 2 February, two militants of Al Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Hamas movement, died due to a tunnel collapse in the Gaza Middle Area.

On 2 February, one Palestinian was arrested at Erez Crossing by Israeli forces.

On 8 February, a tunnel collapsed in Rafah area under the border between Gaza and Egypt, which resulted in the death of one Palestinian.

According to [media reports](#), on 8 February the armed wing of the Hamas movement delivered the death penalty against its member Mahmoud Eshtawi, who was executed the same day. According to the [Palestinian Centre for Human Rights](#), in 2015 nine death sentences were issued in Gaza; in addition, since the start of 2016, four Palestinians in Gaza were sentenced to death after being accused of spying for Israel.

#### UNRWA RESPONSE

##### FOOTBALL, FRIENDSHIP AND TEAM SPIRIT: THE REAL MADRID SPORTS PROJECT IN UNRWA SCHOOLS



13-year old Yousef Sali is playing football with his friends during a break at the UNRWA Khan Younis

Since 2012 UNRWA has implemented the Real Madrid Foundation sports project for football in various UNRWA schools across Gaza. The Real Madrid project is a social and educational sports project aiming at enhancing refugee children's sports skills and team spirit, and providing them with a safe space for recreational activities.

"Our goal is to foster social interaction between children through sport and to provide them with opportunities to fill their free time and create new friendships," explained Jamal Nateel, the sports projects coordinator of the UNRWA Education Programme in Gaza, enthusiastically.

13-year old Yousef Safi who attends the Khan Younis Preparatory Boys C school in southern Gaza has been participating in the Real Madrid project for one year. Besides enjoying training twice a week through the Real Madrid project, he also plays football outside school in a playground near his home in the Khan Younis refugee camp.

"I want to be a famous football player in the future, I want to be a team player; I love to be involved in a team" Yousef said. "Participating in this project helped me to better organize my time between school and homework; my family supports me a lot and is very proud of me. They even buy some sports clothes for me!" he added with a big smile on his face.

Yousef lives with his 5 brothers and sisters and parents in the Khan Younis refugee camp. While the family receives UNRWA food assistance on a quarterly basis and benefits from other UNRWA services such as health and education, their socio-economic situation remains difficult. Even more so the family is happy and proud that their son can participate in the Real Madrid sports project which provides him with a safe space to do what he loves most: playing football with his friends.

The Real Madrid project started in 2012 in 15 of 257 UNRWA schools across Gaza, targeting 580 female and male students. 8 of the 15 schools are girls schools and seven are boys schools. Since in Gaza the community does not encourage girls to play football in public places, social and educational sports projects have a particularly positive impact on female students, providing them with an opportunity to play football in a secure, gender-separated environment.

All students participating in the Real Madrid project are trained by 15 professional female and male sports teachers who work with the children twice a week throughout the school year.

#### **SUMMARY OF MAJOR INCIDENTS**

During the reporting week, Israeli forces fired towards Palestinian areas along the perimeter fence and towards Palestinian boats on a daily basis. On 3 February four Palestinians were detained and two boats were confiscated by Israeli forces. No injuries or damage were reported. On 2 and 8 February Egyptian patrol boats fired towards Palestinian boats. No injuries or damage were reported.

Regular protests in support of Al Aqsa mosque and the situation in the West Bank were held in the vicinity of the perimeter fence. Protests, involving approximately 300 persons, predominately youths, took place east of Bureij camp in central Gaza, east of Gaza city, in the vicinity of the Erez crossing and in Khan Younis. During these protests, some participants approached the perimeter fence and threw stones towards Israeli observation posts. Israeli security forces responded with gunfire and tear gas. The Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that a total of seven persons were injured due to Israeli gun fire and one suffered from gas inhalation.

On 3 February, two Israeli bulldozers and four tanks entered approximately one hundred meters east of Khan Younis area in southern Gaza to conduct a clearing and excavation operation. They withdrew on the same day.

On 3 February, militants fired one rocket from Maghazi area in central Gaza towards Israel. The rocket dropped short and landed near the perimeter fence in a Palestinian area. No injuries or damage were reported.

On 4 February, four Israeli bulldozers entered approximately 100 meters into Rafah area, southern Gaza, to conduct a clearing and excavation operation. They withdrew on the same day.

On 8 February, militants fired one test rocket from northern Gaza towards the sea.

#### **FUNDING NEEDS**

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA Programme Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall, projected for 2016 to stand at US\$ 81 million. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

Following the 2014 conflict, US\$ 247 million has been pledged in support of UNRWA's emergency shelter programme, for which an estimated US\$ 720 million is required. This leaves a current shortfall of US\$ 473 million.

As presented in UNRWA's occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) Emergency Appeal for 2016, the Agency is seeking US\$ 403 million to meet the minimum humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in the oPt. The Agency requires US\$ 355.95 million for programme interventions in Gaza, including US\$ 109.7 million for emergency food assistance, US\$ 142.3 million for emergency shelter assistance, US\$ 60.4 million for emergency cash-for-work assistance, US\$ 4.4 million for emergency health/mobile health clinics and US\$ 3.1 for education in emergencies.

Read more in the [2016 oPt emergency appeal](#).

#### **CROSSINGS**

Longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza have undermined the living conditions of 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza. **Israel prevents all access to and from the Gaza Strip by sea and air.** **Movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza** is restricted to three crossings: Rafah crossing, Erez crossing and Kerem Shalom crossing. Rafah crossing is controlled by the Egyptian authorities and technically allows for the movement of a number of authorized travelers, Palestinian medical and humanitarian cases only. Erez crossing is controlled by Israeli authorities and technically allows for the movement of aid workers and limited numbers of authorized travelers, including Palestinian medical and humanitarian cases. Kerem Shalom crossing, also controlled by Israeli authorities, technically allows for the movement of authorized goods only.

- Rafah crossing remained closed during the reporting week.

- Erez crossing is usually open six days a week. It was open for National ID holders (humanitarian cases, medical cases, merchants and UN staff) and international staff from 2 to 4 February and from 7 to 9 February. On 5 February it was open for pedestrians only. It was closed on 6 February.

v Kerem Shalom crossing is the only official crossing open for the transfer of goods into and out of the Strip and is usually open five days a week. It was open from 2 to 4 February and from 7 to 9 February. It was closed on 5 and 6 February.

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/gaza-situation-report-130>