

GAZA SITUATION REPORT 76

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HIGHLIGHTS

- UNRWA spent its last available dollar on repairs and temporary shelter cash assistance (TSCA), with no new funding pledged or in the bank. USD 21.5 million in payments for repair and TSCA is ready to • UNRWA spent its last available dollar on repairs and temporary shelter cash assistance (TSCA), with no new funding pledged or in the bank. USD 21.5 million in payments for repair and TSCA disburse to almost 16,000 families but cannot be made because of a lack of funds.
- Most urgently, the Agency requires USD 100 million in the first quarter of 2015 to allow all affected families to finalize repairs to their homes and for TSCA for those with uninhabitable homes. In the current precarious political and security environment in Gaza, UNRWA and other partners have been playing a stabilizing role through the provision of shelter assistance. The current funding situation makes the continuation of that role impossible.
- As per the UNRWA assessment concluded in December, over 96,000 Palestine refugee dwellings were damaged or destroyed during this summer's conflict. Since the summer conflict, more than USD 77 million in payments has been made to Palestine refugee families found eligible for UNRWA shelter packages. Of these, over 8,000 received reintegration payments, almost 7,000 families received four months of TSCA and about 59,000 families received funding for repairs. This will have a disastrous impact on affected refugee families in the middle of winter and could see a flow back into UNRWA operated Collective Centres, which still shelter more than 12,000 internally displaced in 18 school buildings. The Agency estimates it needs USD 720 million for shelter repair and reconstruction and TSCA, of which only USD 135 million has so far been pledged, leaving an overall shortfall of USD 585 million.
- One of the challenges for the displaced in Gaza is a lack of available housing stock for rent. As an innovative measure to provide shelter to more displaced families and increase housing stock, UNRWA is close to concluding a pilot project that provides funding to homeowners to complete partially finished dwellings. Once the work is completed, the homeowner allows a displaced family eligible for UNRWA TSCA to move in for one year. The project can be extended for a second year, with additional support provided to improve the dwelling and the eligible family allowed to remain for another year. The initial pilot involves ten buildings and ten families in Beit Hanoun, one of the most heavily damaged areas in Gaza. The initiative creates jobs and serves to increase the current stock of housing units in Gaza, as well as reducing the number of IDP families remaining inside Collective Centres. Should additional funding be sourced, UNRWA hopes to expand the project.
- On 20 January, some twenty diplomats from nine countries visited the Gaza Strip to better understand the situation facing thousands of Palestinians this winter, particularly those who were displaced by the hostilities last summer. Led by the Humanitarian Coordinator of the occupied Palestinian territory, Mr James W. Rawley, and UNRWA's Director of Operations in Gaza, Mr Robert Turner, the diplomats met with displaced Palestinians and discussed the need for long-term solutions for the coastal enclave. In a [press release](#) issued about the visit, Mr Turner stressed the urgent funding requirements for shelter cash assistance and said "We also need to look beyond the immediate challenges. The escalation of hostilities may have ceased for now, but the blockade of Gaza continues to impact all aspects of daily Palestinian life and impedes the development of the Gaza Strip. Mr Rawley said: "The Gaza crisis did not start this summer. Seven years of blockade and the ongoing conflict have exhausted people's coping mechanisms and increased aid dependency and food insecurity." He reiterated the statements of UN Special Coordinator, Mr Robert Serry, emphasizing that the United Nations will continue to exert all efforts towards a lifting of the closures and acceleration of reconstruction and recovery efforts, alongside the consolidation of the current, fragile ceasefire and the strengthening of the Palestinian Government of National Consensus, which are essential to turn Gaza into a liveable place.
- As one of its ongoing construction projects, UNRWA has just broken ground on the third phase of the "Saudi Project to Rehouse Homeless Refugee Families", funded through a generous contribution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is expected that the project will be completed by March 2016, involving the construction of 220 new housing units worth \$14 million and benefiting approximately 250 Palestine refugee families in Rafah, southern Gaza. 760 housing units were completed under the second phase of the project in May 2014, whilst the first phase involved the construction of 752 housing units and was completed in 2012. The project has also the completion of a health centre, three schools, a mosque, a community centre and a market area. In addition to providing homes for Palestine refugees, the project is helping to alleviate some of the hardship being felt in the Gaza Strip by providing temporary employment for labourers, construction workers and tradesmen in an area where unemployment levels are alarmingly high.
- A challenge for UNRWA and everyone in Gaza is the extensive infestation of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). It is estimated that over 60,000 explosive projectiles including grenades and aerial bombs were fired into Gaza during the recent war – one for every six square meters – with a likely failure rate of at least 10 per cent. This poses a significant risk for the population, particularly children. UNRWA Security Services Division's (SSD) Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) programme commenced Risk Education training for teachers during the reporting week. The training is organized in coordination with the Gaza Field Education Department and runs from 18-29 January. This training will be delivered to approximately 1,008 teachers and deputy principals as a Training of Trainers (ToT) package. This will in turn empower teachers to deliver training to some 240,000 children attending UNRWA's 252 schools. Aspects of the ToT include raising awareness of the dangers of ERW and mines, the impact of ERW-related injuries on individuals and communities, recognizing risky behaviour and what to do if students encounter ERW.
- In January, the Logistics Office expanded a number of pre-located Non Food Items (NFI) Stores in the Gaza strip. The stores are holding items such as blankets, mattresses, cleaning supplies, toilet paper, which will be distributed to UNRWA Collective Centres and via the Agency's winterization plans as part of its ongoing emergency response to the summer 2014 conflict. Two new NFI Stores have been rented in Al Daraj (Gaza Area) (1,000 m³) and in Al Zaitoun (Gaza Area) (800 m³), bringing the total number of NFI Stores to 11 (seven of them are rented). Additionally, an NFI logistics hub is being established at the Khan Younis Training Centre (KYTC), in southern Gaza. Six tents erected on a paved area, are providing 1,440 m³ of storage space for NFIs.
- UNRWA is making good progress on its agency-wide education management information system (EMS). Within the framework of the UNRWA education reform, the Agency-wide Education Management Information System (EMIS) project will facilitate decision-making, monitoring and evaluation at all levels of the UNRWA education programme. The current plan is to have a pilot of the new UNRWA EMS in some Gaza schools by 1 July, 2015 and be ready for wider deployment in the Agency by September 2015.

GENERAL

Operational environment: The security situation in Gaza remains unpredictable and politically unstable. The testing of rockets continued and there were a number of local protests and demonstrations reported. The cold weather is perpetuating the already difficult conditions faced by Palestine refugee families in Gaza. The challenges for the Palestinian government, formally in place since 2 June, remain huge, and include payments to former de facto government staff who have not seen full salaries for over one year. Whilst Palestinian Authority (PA) staff was regularly paid until November, it is reported that only sixty per cent of the December PA salaries were paid on 19 January, with 100 per cent of PA retirement salaries expected to be paid on the 20th.

Civil unrest and demonstrations involving extreme groups continue to be of concern in the Gaza Strip. On 19 January, a rally organized by Salafi Jihadist members "The Salafist Youth Al Mujahid" organized a march in support of the Prophet Mohammed. Reportedly, the aim of this activity was to march in solidarity and to condemn the recent cartoons which were published in France's Charlie Hebdo magazine, as well as condemning any other western journalists or publications that had published pictures portraying the Prophet. The march is understood to have been conducted with the approval of the Ministry of Interior, and finished at the French Cultural Centre (FCC) where there was a sit-in. During the march and also at the FCC, numerous ISIS flags were raised. At the FCC it is also reported that the French flag was burned and pro-ISIS slogans were chanted. Persons involved in the sit-in began throwing stones towards the FCC and police intervened, firing warning shots and making six arrests. The march followed the spraying of graffiti on the FCC external walls, in protest of the same cartoons.

During the reporting week, other demonstrations included the National Committee Against the Siege holding a sit-in inside Gaza Harbour, protesting against the closure of Rafah Crossing and requesting a waterway between Gaza and the outside world. A sit-on at the Harbour was also held on 15 January, with students protesting against the closure of Rafah crossing. On 19 January, unknown persons blew up a car parked in Gaza City allegedly belonging to a senior employee of the former de-facto government. Sporadic shooting was also heard nearby, however no injuries were reported. On the same day, Islamic and National factions held a sit-in out the front of ICRC Office in Gaza City, in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Demonstrations outside UNSCO were reported regarding reconstruction and distribution issues related to the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. A similar sit-in was reported at Kerem Shalom crossing. A small family sit-in regarding shelter payments was reported at the UNRWA RSSP office in Rafah, southern Gaza. Palestine refugee Hikmat Al Fayyumi could previously only feed her children with aid from UNRWA. Now she has a small income selling fine handmade embroidery and knitting products that allows her to buy basic necessities, thanks to support through UNRWA's Job Creation Programme (JCP). In addition to providing a source of income, the programme seeks to restore dignity, self-respect and some self-reliance to refugees in Gaza. By linking beneficiaries with employment

in Gaza's private sector, the programme contributes positively to a devastated Gaza economy.

Last month, the proud mother made US \$100 in embroidery sales. This is in addition to the JCP program finding her a three-month cleaning contract that enabled her to pay off family debts accrued when her husband Jamil's factory and their family home were destroyed during the 2014 summer conflict. Hikmat, her husband and children have since lived at the Collective Centre at Zaitoun Elementary School "B", in Gaza City.

Hikmat and Jamil's difficult financial conditions mean that assistance provided by UNRWA is an important lifeline for them, especially since the war and with their eight children now attending school. Hikmat's brothers are helping with some of the family's payments but with the seven-year Israeli-imposed blockade crippling local industry and means to make a living, the family now depend exclusively on UNRWA's programs to survive.

In October 2014, UNRWA engineers assessed the family's shelter as uninhabitable and they expect to receive an UNRWA shelter assistance payment soon. The family is eligible for a reintegration package of US \$500 and Transitional Shelter Cash Assistance of US \$ 1,000, which will enable them to move out of the Collective Centre and into a rented apartment. Hikmat wishes to have her home rebuilt and bring up her children in peace and security.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR INCIDENTS

During the reporting week, there were a number of incidences of the IDF opening fire towards Palestinians near the fence and at Palestinian boats. On 19 January, militants fired one rocket towards Israel. The rocket dropped short and landed in a Palestinian area. No injuries were reported. Also on 19 January, militants fired three test rockets towards the sea.

UNRWA INSTALLATIONS

The Agency has concluded assessments of its damaged UNRWA installations, with a total of 118. Repair work is ongoing.

FUNDING NEEDS

UNRWA is seeking USD 1.6 billion for emergency relief, early recovery and reconstruction priorities in the Gaza Strip. More information can be found [here](#).

On 9 December, UNRWA launched the oPt Emergency Appeal in Geneva. For its emergency operations in Gaza, the Agency is seeking USD 366.6 million, including USD 127 million for emergency shelter, repair and collective centre management, USD 105.6 million for emergency food assistance, and USD 68.6 million for emergency cash-for-work. More information can be found [here](#).

CROSSINGS

- The Rafah crossing remained closed between 14-19 January.
- Erez crossing was open for National ID holders (humanitarian cases, medical cases, merchants and UN staff) and for international staff from 15-16 January. On 14 January, Erez crossing was open for foreigners and humanitarian cases to exit from Gaza and for Palestinians to return to Gaza. The crossing was closed on 17 January and open 18-19 January.
- Kerem Shalom was open from 14-19 January.

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/gaza-situation-report-76>