



الأمم المتحدة  
UNRWA

providing humanitarian assistance  
to palestine refugees since 1950

# Beit Hanoun Flash Appeal

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# F o r e w o r d

By Karen AbuZayd, UNRWA Commissioner-General

It is with a heavy heart that I present to you this Flash Appeal for Beit Hanoun. The optimistic predictions of late last year, following the disengagement of Israeli troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip, are already a distant memory. They only serve to provide a cruel contrast between the hopes, then, that 2006 would prove to be a better year for the Palestine refugees, and the harsh reality with which they have since been confronted.

The staggering decline of the economy and of the physical, humanitarian and social conditions in Gaza are, alas, not a recent phenomenon. The downturn started in 2000, when over a hundred thousand Palestinians lost their livelihoods because of the impossibility to work in Israel. It continued with major military operations in many of the cities of the Gaza Strip, the large-scale destruction of houses, agricultural land, and infrastructure. It worsened dramatically with the sanctions regime imposed upon the Palestinian Authority following the results of the Palestinian Legislative Council elections earlier this year, when both foreign economic aid and Palestinian public income were summarily withheld. And finally, it culminates today with the humanitarian disaster brought about by Israeli military assault on the town of Beit Hanoun, leaving 82 Palestinians dead, including 39 women and children, 260 wounded and more wanton destruction. I fully recognize the right and responsibility of Israel to protect its citizens, and its legitimate concern about the home-made rockets fired from Gaza, but for humanitarian agencies such as UNRWA it is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with the aftermath of such military operations without questioning their justification, their proportionality and their effects.

The tragic events in Beit Hanoun have provided the clearest proof yet that the vicious circle of violence must be brought to an end.

In Beit Hanoun, and in concert with other agencies, UNRWA stepped in immediately with a rapid response programme to ameliorate the situation of the beleaguered civilian population, providing water, food, medical assistance and temporary shelter. We now face the challenge of repairing damages to over one thousand houses and shelters, meanwhile ensuring that the distressed homeless refugees have a roof over their heads.

UNRWA cannot undertake this additional task without your support. We are grateful for the encouragement we have received to launch this appeal, and we sincerely hope that the international community will once again choose to demonstrate to a despairing and increasingly angry Palestine refugee population that the world continues to care.



# The Assault on Beit Hanoun

## November 2006

### Overview of Events

On 1 November, approximately 70 Israeli armoured vehicles entered Beit Hanoun in north eastern Gaza marking the start of an operation codenamed Autumn Clouds, the stated aim of which was to counter the firing of home-made rockets into southern Israel.

Between the 1st and 8th November, the Israeli army killed 82 Palestinians and injured more than 260 in northern Gaza. At least 39 of these fatalities were civilians, including 18 children and ten women. During the operation, one Israeli soldier was killed in Beit Hanoun and one wounded. Israeli troops pulled back from the town on 7th November leaving a trail of devastation in their wake.

The most tragic incident occurred in the early morning of 8th November, 24 hours after Israeli forces had withdrawn from the area. Reports indicate that at 5.30 a.m., Israeli tanks began a bombardment which continued for up to 30 minutes. During this incident, tanks fired 12 shells hitting five homes, leaving 18 Palestinian civilians dead and 55 injured. All but one of the fatalities were members of the same family.

During the six-day incursion, the Israeli army tightly controlled all movement in and out of the town and imposed a strict curfew on the entire population of 35,000 Palestinians. This curfew was lifted every second day for three to four hours, effectively confining the population to their homes for the duration of the assault as Israeli troops carried out search and arrest operations in the area. For these six days, most of Beit Hanoun was left without electricity or water as supplies were cut by military activity. Primary health care services in the town ceased to operate as health staff were unable to leave their homes due to the curfew. Likewise, education services were shut down for one week, including UNRWA schools serving 10,500 students.



# Immediate response

On 2 November, the Israeli army informed the UN that a 'humanitarian corridor' would be provided along Khalil Al Wazir Street, the main southern entrance to Beit Hanoun. All movement along the corridor, which became the only entry point for international agencies, required prior co-ordination with Israeli forces. The curfew left local people very reliant on international relief agencies for food, water, powdered milk, fuel and hygiene kits. These agencies were overwhelmed by the desperate need they found for supplies and experienced difficulties in distributing relief during the periods when the curfew was relaxed.



**Electricity:** Power outages occurred across the town during the initial incursion because of the destruction of the electricity grid electricity pylons in numerous locations. The ICRC facilitated the passage of engineers from Gaza City on 2 November to conduct repairs and was thus able to restore 40% of the network. Outages continued due to damage wrought by Israeli tanks and armoured personnel carriers patrolling the streets. Beit Hanoun hospital became reliant on its generator and fuel supplied by the ICRC. The electrical network was only fully restored on 9th November.

**Water:** There was insufficient water throughout the incursion to meet basic needs as a result of damage caused to the water network. The disruption to electricity supply rendered four out of the five main water wells inoperable and the population was therefore reliant on potable water provided by tankers from international agencies. The ICRC delivered 17,000 litres to six locations on 3 November, UNRWA delivered 30,000 litres of water in the same way, while NGOs provided bottled water. UNRWA also provided one week's supply of fuel to one of water wells serving 20% of the population. The water network is now restored across the town.

**Food:** Access to food quickly became a significant problem during the incursion since most families are too poor to hold sufficient reserve stocks of food. As the curfew was periodically lifted, families descended in large numbers on shops with available food supplies. Wholesale suppliers from other parts of Gaza were unwilling to enter Beit Hanoun to replenish the market, fearing that their goods would be seized by residents. International agencies, including UNRWA, faced logistical problems but devised an effective distribution mechanism through three humanitarian convoys which delivered supplies on 3, 4 and again on 6 November.



**Healthcare:** The primary health care system effectively ceased to function during the incursion as staff at the Ministry of Health, UNRWA and local NGO clinics were unable to reach their places of work. UNRWA facilities were closed from 31 October until the lifting of the curfew on 6 November, with the exception of the health clinic that opened briefly during breaks in the curfew. All medical transfers out of Beit Hanoun required co-ordination with the Israeli army and significant delays were reported in individual cases. There were shortages of specific medications particularly for treatment of chronic diseases - hypertension, diabetes, cardiac and renal conditions. Up to 1,500 people sought refuge in Beit Hanoun hospital on 3 November, putting excessive demands on the capacity there to provide food and sleeping facilities. There were also public health concerns arising from the damage caused to sewage and water networks, creating the potential for the spread of communicable disease.

**Protection:** During the incursion, Israeli snipers took over a number of homes where families were forced to stay in one room and were denied access to international agencies. In one case, a pregnant woman whose house was commandeered in this way went into labour and was forced to wait for five hours before she was finally allowed to walk the 350 metres from her home to the hospital. On 3 November, hundreds of Palestinian male residents aged between 16 and 40 were ordered from their homes and taken to an Israeli holding centre to the north of the town for questioning. By the fourth day of the incursion, up to 400 of these detainees were been released and, unable to return to their homes, were staying at a sports club near the Kamal Adwan hospital.

Following the departure of Israeli forces, UNRWA and UNDP initiated assessments in relation to the damage incurred and its impact during the six day incursion.

# Needs assessment summary

## Destruction of shelters

Between 7 and 13 November, UNRWA engineers conducted technical assessments of the damage caused to refugee homes during the military operation by both small arms and heavy weapons, as well as by armoured vehicles. The extent of the damage has been reported as follows:

Description of damage	Number of houses visited	Number of families impacted	Estimated Cost of Reconstruction and Repair (US\$)
Total demolition	48	48	766,000
Partial demolition	98	100	544,500
Minor/moderate damage	885	906	731,100
Total	1,031	1,054	2,041,600

## Destruction of infrastructure

There has been extensive infrastructure damage, particularly to roads and public buildings. UNDP has taken responsibility in this area.

## Damage to UNRWA installations

Moderate damage was sustained to four UNRWA schools in Beit Hanoun during the incursion and the Agency's Health Centre in the town. Boundary walls were demolished, locks and doors forced, windows broken and paving destroyed. Damage has been estimated at \$47,000 and will be repaired within the Agency's own resources.



# UNRWA's Proposed Response

## Justification

The purpose of the intervention is to implement an effective and timely housing reconstruction and repair response to the destruction resulting from the actions of the Israeli army during the course of the siege. As a result of the fiscal crisis and the corresponding increase in poverty, unemployment and dependency rates in the Gaza Strip, neither the Palestinian Authority, nor the refugees affected, have the financial capacity to repair and reconstruct these shelters as winter approaches.

## Objective

The aim of the intervention is to repair or reconstruct the 1,031 refugee housing units damaged or demolished and to provide relocation fees to source temporary accommodation pending the completion of these works within a three month period.

## Indicators of success

All affected refugee families will be returned to their homes within a period of three months of receipt of funding following the reconstruction of 48 refugee housing units and the completion of all necessary repairs on 983 refugee housing units.

## Proposed Activities

Proposed activities will be as follows

1. the distribution of emergency cash assistance to 885 refugee families to enable them to fund minor and medium repairs on the basis of UNRWA's technical assessments;
2. the repair of 98 refugee homes by third party contractors hired through under the Agency's emergency procurement procedures;
3. the reconstruction of 48 shelters again through third party contractors; and
4. the distribution of emergency cash assistance to approximately 300 refugee families to enable them to source and fund temporary alternative accommodation pending the completion of reconstruction and major repairs on their homes.

## Implementation Plan

"Minor damages" are categorised as broken glass, damage to windows and light damage to the external walls of the shelter. The estimated cost of repair in such cases is less than \$1,000 per shelter. For this category of intervention, it is proposed to provide each refugee family with a cash grant to implement the necessary repairs on the basis of the Field Engineer's assessment and estimate. Each beneficiary will sign an undertaking to complete the repairs within a specified time frame and a follow up assessment will be made and documented by UNRWA engineers upon completion.

"Moderate damages" are categorised as holes in the walls, broken roof sheets and damage to windows but where no structural defects have been identified. The estimated cost of repair in such cases will vary but will not exceed \$4,000. For this category of intervention, again the Field Engineer will assess damages and UNRWA will provide the family with cash

assistance, paid in instalments to implement the necessary repairs. As with the minor damage cases, each beneficiary will sign an undertaking to complete the repairs within a specified time frame and follow up assessments will be made and documented by an UNRWA Engineer to verify work-in-progress and completion.

"Major damage" is categorised as structural damage to a shelter. The estimated cost of repair of these 98 shelters will vary based on the most appropriate technical solution identified to repair the structural defect identified. For this category of intervention, the repair work will be implemented by the Agency through third party building companies. These repair works will be contracted through the Agency's emergency procurement procedures and under the technical supervision of its engineers who will verify satisfactory completion.

For those 48 shelters that have sustained damages beyond repair or have been totally demolished, the average cost of reconstruction will be \$15,960. Again for this category of intervention, the repair work will be implemented by the Agency through third party contractors. Again, these reconstruction works will be implemented under the Agency's emergency procurement procedures to ensure fast implementation and under the technical supervision of its engineers who will verify completion to Agency standards.

Pending the completion of these works, emergency cash assistance to fund temporary accommodation will be issued by Agency social workers to those refugee families whose shelters require reconstruction and major repair. Cash assistance will also be issued to those refugee households whose shelters require medium repair but are assessed as temporarily uninhabitable.

## Beit Hanoun Flash Appeal Summary Budget

Item	Cost
Minor and Moderate Damage Shelter Repair: Cash Assistance	731,100
Major Shelter Repair: Construction Works	544,500
Shelter Reconstruction: Construction Works	766,000
Temporary Rental Subsidies	135,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$2,176,600</b>
Project Support Costs (11%)	239,426
<b>Total Requirements</b>	<b>\$2,416,026</b>