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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
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SITUATION REPORT Gaza Strip – 7 August, 3pm

The UN warns of “a sharp decline” in the humanitarian situation confronting 1.4 million Gazans as ‘Operation Summer Rains’ enters its sixth week.¹

Key developments since the last Situation Report on 27 July²:

- 39 Palestinians – including 9 children – have been killed; 134 injured. Of these casualties, 12 Palestinians (including 3 women and 6 children) were killed and 17 injured inside their homes from Israeli artillery shelling, air strikes or when Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers opened fire.
- Since the beginning of Operation Summer Rains – the IDF codename of the military operation which began on 28 June - 184 Palestinians, including 42 children, have been killed; 650 Palestinians injured. One IDF soldier was killed, 25 Israelis injured, including 11 by homemade rockets fired from the Gaza Strip.
- Up to 3,400 Palestinians have sought shelter in UNRWA installations as a result the IDF operation.
- UNDP initial estimates total \$15.5 million in damages to Gaza’s infrastructure from IDF incursions, artillery shelling and air strikes excluding the damage caused to the Gaza power plant.
- Six Palestinian populated houses were destroyed by Israeli air strikes, following telephone warnings by callers identifying themselves as the Israeli military. These calls have caused panic across Palestinian neighbourhoods. This brings to a total of 12 homes demolished by the Israel Air Force (IAF) following prior phone call warnings since 28 June.
- The capacity of the Beit Lahia waste water treatment plant (northern Gaza Strip) has reached a critical point and sewage ponds threaten to flood nearby populated areas. • The UNSCO compound and OCHA’s Gaza field office in Gaza City were substantially damaged on 30 July during a demonstration by an estimated 5,000 people in an anti-UN protest following the Qana bombing in Lebanon. UN cars were smashed and offices ransacked.

Developments in detail:

Military operations

- Initial assessments carried out by UNDP engineers have estimated the damage caused to Palestinian infrastructure by IDF incursions, shelling and rocket attacks to be USD 15.5 million. Infrastructure assessed included bridges, public and private buildings, roads, water supply, as well as sewage and electricity networks. This total does not include the USD 15 million in damage caused by the IAF air strike on the Gaza power plant on 28 June.
- Palestinian homemade rockets continue to be fired towards Israel at a rate of approximately eight or nine per day, while IDF artillery is firing a daily average of between 200 and 250 shells into the Gaza Strip. Since 28 June, the Israel Air Force (IAF) has conducted 246 air strikes.
- On 6 August the IDF withdrew from the As Shoka area (southern Gaza Strip) and are currently located 300m east of As Shoka near the border fence. In the early hours of 1 August, up to 50 armoured vehicles had entered this area and IDF soldiers conducted house-to-house searches in As Shoka. The IDF were reportedly looking for the tunnels used by Palestinian militants to enter Israel in June when Cpl. Gilad Shalit was captured. During the incursion, 17 Palestinians were killed, including five children, and 34 were injured.

- Civilian infrastructure was also damaged during this incursion (telephone lines, electricity and the water system) and the roads were bulldozed and blocked by sand barriers. Initial reports estimate that five houses and 50 greenhouses were demolished and 15 others damaged. There are also reports that approximately 1,500 dunums (150 hectares) of olive trees, grapes and almonds groves were uprooted.

- The IDF withdrew on 28 July from eastern Gaza City after an incursion which left numerous fatalities and injuries (see previous Situation Report) and caused extensive infrastructural damage to houses, the electricity grid and agricultural land.

Crossing points and humanitarian access

- OCHA remains concerned at the continued restriction of movement by the IDF from the Gaza Strip towards Israel, Egypt and the sea.

- Erez crossing was partially opened for the movement of diplomats and international humanitarian workers. Critical Palestinian medical cases are able to apply for permission to enter Israel and can cross only after coordination with the IDF during a limited number of hours of the day. Since 12 March, Erez has been closed to Palestinian workers and traders.

- Karni was closed on 28 and 29 July and partially open for imports in the remaining period, mostly for food stuff and humanitarian aid. No exported goods have crossed through Karni since 23 June.

- USD 70 million worth of infrastructure projects for UNDP are on hold due to the shortage of construction materials in the Gaza Strip resulting from the closure of Karni. According to UNDP, these projects would create 875,000 paid working days for Palestinians in a year.

- The movement of containers belonging to UNRWA and crossing Karni has improved since the end of July. There are at present 50 empty containers in Gaza waiting to be shipped out and 89 containers at Ashdod port in Israel destined for the Gaza Strip.

- The WFP was able to import 38 containers of wheat flour and 12 containers of chickpeas (a total of 1,075 Mt) through the Karni crossing during the reporting period. According WFP was able to meet one third of its monthly food aid requirement.

Electricity

- During the incursion in As Shoka, the IDF cut electricity cables supplying power to Rafah from Israel. To date, power supply has not been restored and households in Rafah are receiving only three hours of electricity per day as a result of load-sharing with Khan Younis.

- Palestinian households in the Gaza Strip continue to experience acute power shortages following the destruction of the Gaza power plant by the IAF on 28 June. Households are receiving as little as 6 - 8 hours of electricity per day. Most families in the urban areas have only 2 -3 hours of running water, as the water network remains unsynchronised with the electrical supply. Fuel donations from the international community are partially supporting the most critical services such as hospitals and sanitation collection.

- The Palestinian Energy Authority and Gaza Electricity distribution company have not received any reply from the Israeli Electricity Company to the request for the supply of an additional 30 MW for the Gaza Strip to respond to the shortage. Meanwhile, the President's Office is reported to have purchased in Egypt new transformers (capacity 60 - 70 MW) for the damaged power plant.

Water and sanitation

- Using a USD 1.1 million grant from Norway, UNDP will provide fuel to all the municipalities in the Gaza Strip for six months in order to collect solid waste and run refuse trucks. In a second project, UNDP will also boost the solid waste collection through hiring additional manpower among Gaza's unemployed, and the purchase of spare parts and tools. This project is funded by Japan for one year.

- In the interim, UNRWA has begun dispensing fuel for disposal trucks and solid waste collection throughout the Gaza Strip until UNDP projects are under way.

- The Coastal Municipal Water Utilities (CMWU) appealed to the international community for assistance in dealing with the threat of flooding from the Beit Lahia Waste Water Treatment Plant. The infiltration pools have now reached maximum capacity. These could breach the containment banks, and result in flooding large sections of Beit Lahia and Om El-Nasr with nearly 2 million m³ of sewage and affecting directly up to 800 houses. Continued IDF artillery shelling is both preventing CMWU maintenance teams from accessing the site and damaging to the pool's sand banks. On 5 August, OCHA began coordinating with the IDF for access for CMWU teams to the site for a more detailed risk assessment.

Fuel

- The Nahal Oz energy pipelines were closed on 28 and 29 July and partially opened thereafter for imports of fuel. Increases in both the amounts of fuel passing and the opening times (8am – 8pm) of the pipeline have been recorded since 30 July. .. Under "Window 2" of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM), the European Community (EC) is providing fuel for generators for water wells, booster stations, desalinisation plants and waste water treatment plants managed by the CMWU.

Health

- According to the WHO, the financial crisis facing the PA continues to impact negatively on the Ministry of Health (MoH). At the end of July, 80 of the 437 items on the essential drugs list have less than one month's stock and another 80 less than three months' stock.

- All MoH hospitals in the Gaza Strip are operational but have reduced some of the services provided including diagnostic and outpatient services; some cases of elective surgery are being referred to NGO hospitals according to WHO. All hospitals are relying on electricity from generators to operate the most critical departments and, according to WHO, have been able to secure a stock of fuel for 2 – 3 weeks. Increased absenteeism has been reported in three hospitals.

- Power supply in the Gaza Strip is a major concern for primary health care facilities with shortages and a lack of generators reported in half of the clinics, according to WHO. Immunisation services have been reduced or suspended in three districts as vaccines are spoiling due to the interruption of the cold chain (two districts) and Israeli incursions leading to a temporary suspension (one district). The MoH is working on a list of clinics that could benefit from an additional five generators from UNICEF.

- WHO is providing drugs, medical disposables and laboratory reagents (chemicals) to the MoH. The European Commission through the TIM, has provided 300,000 litres of fuel to support health facilities in the Gaza Strip; the monthly requirement is estimated at 600,000 litres. The ICRC has delivered essential medicines and two medical kits to the MoH to treat war wounded. Medical disposables and drugs have also been supplied by the government of Qatar and by the Italian Cooperation (€20,000).

- Referral of patients abroad remains a serious problem. None of the 300 patients referred to Egypt and Jordan by the MoH have been able to leave due to the closure of Rafah crossing. Israel will accept only critical medical cases to cross through Erez, open a few hours every day following an attack on the checkpoint by Palestinian militants (23 July).

Food

- The food security situation in Gaza remains critical with more than 70% of the population unable to cover their daily food needs without assistance. According to the WFP, wheat flour and sugar remain in short supply, with prices 15% and 33% respectively higher than in January this year. As a result of the crisis, the WFP has increased its stock of food in Gaza to feed up to 220,000 non-refugees: food aid distributions for the July and August cycle are ongoing. UNRWA continues its food distributions to the refugee population.

- Israeli naval vessels continue to restrict access to fishing grounds in front of the Gaza Strip. Shelter and land

▪ For the third time since 28 June, Palestinian families have fled the village of As Shoka seeking refuge in Rafah as a result of IDF artillery shelling and incursions. UNRWA provided emergency accommodation and assistance (medical care, food parcels and water) to nearly 2,000 people at the peak of the crisis (5 August), opening an additional shelter to deal with the influx of those fleeing the area. Following the withdrawal of the IDF on 6 August, families have gradually returned home. One UNRWA shelter remains open for 450 people (67 families) who had not returned to As Shoka or have fled the shelling of the Al Tanour Quarters in Rafah.

▪ In the north, UNRWA has increased its emergency accommodation capacity to meet the increasing numbers of those fleeing the continued shelling east of Beit Hanoun and the area around the Al Nada housing estate in Beit Lahia, in the northern areas of the Gaza Strip. The number of Palestinians sheltered in four UNRWA schools in Jabalia has doubled to 1,405 people. ▪ In addition to UNRWA, support is being provided to the shelters by UNICEF (six recreational kits), ICRC (96 family hygienic kits) and by the NGO Gaza Gives (milk for children, diapers and water kits).

▪ An additional six houses have been destroyed by IAF strikes after their occupants were informed over the telephone by the IDF of the impending attack (bringing the total number to 12). This practice is causing panic among entire Palestinian neighbourhoods who fear extensive collateral damage due to the high density of populated areas.

Coordination

▪ Since 25 June, UN agencies, the ICRC and humanitarian NGOs have held regular coordination meetings. During the reporting period meetings took place for the water and sanitation sector (1 August) and on health (3 August). An interagency meeting is scheduled for 7 August.

1 Statement on Gaza by United Nations Humanitarian Agencies working in the occupied Palestinian territory, 3 August 2006, available at www.ochaopt.org.

2 This is the ninth Situation Report issued by OCHA since June 2006. The previous reports were published on 21, 27, 30 of June and 4, 6, 12, 18 and 27 July.

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P.O. Box 38712 Jerusalem | Phone: +972 (0)2 5829962 / 5825853 | Fax: +972 (0)2 5825841 | Email: ochaopt@un.org | Web: www.ochaopt.org