

GAZA SITUATION REPORT 158

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"I was rising and growing, but now the time came to fall down and present myself to the world. I am very excited; I wonder, am I soft and does everyone love me? My grandmother told me that all the people on the ground will love me. I am a drop of water." From the story "I am a Drop of Water" written by Ruba Al Hour. Read more [here](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

- As part of ongoing efforts to listen to the voices of young Palestine refugee students in Gaza and encourage creativity, the UNRWA Gaza Communications Office implemented a "story-writing workshop" with interested UNRWA students to encourage them to express themselves by using their imagination and to explore different ways of thinking and writing by adopting unusual and new perspectives. Do you want to read about the journey of a raindrop? Or about how chocolate houses melt or what the relation is between hope and a plastic leaf stuck to a tree? A selection of the students' stories are now published in English and Arabic and can be read [here](#).
- On 17 August, UNRWA celebrated its final closing ceremony of the Gaza Summer Fun Weeks (SFWs) in Al Amal Preparatory Girls school in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza. As the main theme during SFWs in Khan Younis had been "discovering cultural roots", the closing ceremony was organized as a "community tale festival". The participating children set up a traditional Palestinian village inside the school, including traditional Palestinian food, dresses and the show-casing of traditional dances and customs, for the visitors that came to the site. The Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza, Mr. [Bo Schack](#), participated in this and many other SFWs events. The SFWs ran from 23 July to 11 August with the participation of over 165,000 refugee children in arts, drawing, sports and cultural activities. For the first time, each of the five areas focused on a special theme. In the northern area of the Gaza Strip, around Beit Hanoun and Jabalia, the focus was on mental health in children's overall well-being, since this area was one of the most affected by the 2014 hostilities. Gaza city's theme was Reduce, Reuse, Recycle to raise awareness about the value of natural resources. In the Middle Area, the spotlight was on democracy and child parliaments. Khan Younis explored traditional Palestinian food and dabkah and in Rafah, southern Gaza, children celebrated their summer fun activities in English.
- UNRWA aims at ensuring the safety and security of Palestine refugee children in Gaza throughout its services. The issue of violence involving and affecting children in UNRWA installations will be one of the priorities for the forthcoming rollout of the UNRWA Child Protection Framework finalized in March 2016. To ensure a coherent way of addressing violence in all of its installations a working group, led by the Education Department and the Protection Division, and comprising representatives from other relevant programmes and departments, has been working since the beginning of 2016 on how to strengthen efforts towards addressing violence involving and affecting children in UNRWA installations. This is in line with the Agency's policy of zero tolerance to violence. For a comprehensive action plan, consultations at field level are an integral part. The consultation exercise in Gaza started recently and involves 47 consultations with staff, parents as well as children in health centres, schools, distribution centres and Community-Based Rehabilitation Centres. The main focus area of the consultations are the scale and nature of violence in UNRWA installations, challenges, opportunities and actions to address violence in UNRWA installations as well as Communication for Development (C4D) methods against violence in UNRWA installations. Consultations will be completed by the end of September, leading to a report that includes recommendations on how to address the challenges identified. During the reporting week, the Deputy Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza, Mr. David De Bold, together with other representatives from humanitarian organizations, briefed the US Senator Cory Booker on the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The UNRWA briefing focused on services like education, health, infrastructure and camp improvement, relief and social services provided by the Agency to refugees which comprise 70 per cent of the Gaza population. Additionally, UNRWA's substantial efforts in reconstruction after the 2014 conflict, challenges associated with import and export restrictions, movement and access issues, as well as the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the opportunities available to improve the situation through the continued support of the United States.
- "One Humanity" was the theme of this year's [annual World Humanitarian Day \(WHD\)](#), commemorated on 19 August. The day recognizes aid workers who risk their lives in humanitarian service, and mobilizes people to advocate for humanitarian action. "World Humanitarian Day is an annual reminder of the need to act to alleviate the suffering. It is also an occasion to honour the humanitarian workers and volunteers toiling on the frontlines of crises," said UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. UNRWA Goodwill Ambassador Mohammad Assaf – a Palestine refugee from Gaza – participated as a special guest at the WHD event in New York. [In his speech](#), he urged attendees to support humanitarian organizations working with refugees and displaced peoples. During the summer 2014 conflict, [11 brave UNRWA personnel were killed](#). 26 August marks the two-year anniversary of the ceasefire following the [50 days of hostilities](#). While most of the rubble from the destroyed and damaged homes and infrastructure has been removed, Gaza is still devastated. Of the approximately 100,000 Palestinians who had their homes destroyed or severely damaged during the 2014 hostilities (18,000 homes), [65,000 remain displaced as of mid-2016 – approximately 70 per cent of them Palestine refugees](#). In addition, according to the [Children's Right and Emergency Relief Organization \(UNICEF\)](#), more than 300,000 children in Gaza are still in need of psycho-social support to cope with their experiences.

• The recent months saw a reduction of movement of goods and persons in and out of the Gaza Strip: from May to July 2016, 453 truckloads of goods exited Gaza – 30 per cent less than in quarter one of 2016, reports the [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA). This is the first time UNRWA observed a reduction in export trends since the start of relaxing measures by Israel in the aftermath of the devastating 2014 conflict, in November that year. In 2000, an average of 1,271 truckloads exited Gaza per month; in 2006, before the imposition of the blockade on land, air and sea, this number had decreased to 441 per month. [OCHA](#) also reports that in July the number of persons crossing Erez decreased significantly, with the biggest drop – 27 per cent – recorded among traders. As the Israeli organization [Gisha](#) reports Israel restrained the mobility of Gaza merchants withdrawing about 1,500 trader permits (about a third of the total), stifling the activity of Gaza businesses and damaging the overall economy. Further, in quarter two of 2016, female unemployment reached the highest rate ever recorded (65.3 per cent), following a 2.1 per cent rise from quarter one, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

THE UNRWA SHELTER UPDATE

A shelter update will be provided in the next Gaza situation report.

GENERAL

Operational environment:

• Regular protests took place during the reporting week, predominantly in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. While social tensions remain high, during the week no major incidents were reported.

UNRWA'S RESPONSE

Communications with communities: Hearing voices, ensuring accountability and transparency



27-years old Haneen Atallah is speaking to an UNRWA beneficiary in her home in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza. Photo credit: © UNRWA Gaza 2016. Photo by Rushdi Al-Saraj.

[Communications with Communities \(OwC\)](#) is an approach within the field of humanitarian response that helps to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by crisis. Through OwC, organizations provide people greater access to the information they need and ensure that the voices of affected persons are heard and taken into account in decision-making processes related to the provision of humanitarian services.

Building on existing community engagement practices within its programmes, and OwC work through the 2014 conflict, approximately one and a half years ago the UNRWA Communications Office in Gaza established a designated Outreach and OwC team. The team has piloted various projects related to OwC, advocacy, awareness, and outreach campaigns. For example, the planning and supervision of the [UNRWA food basket](#) outreach campaign - including information sessions for and with front line staff and the production of communications material such as an [animation video](#) that explains the food basket and a [cooking show](#) with healthy recipes based on the ingredients of the food parcels, both targeting the refugee community. To listen to and promote the voices of Palestine refugees, the team also implemented a [story writing workshop](#) with selected UNRWA students in an established journalism club, encouraging them to express themselves using their imagination. Additionally, the team recently launched the “[real lives, real stories](#)” advocacy campaign against the blockade on Gaza, and its [50 voices for 50 days campaign](#) in 2015 – both of which help to amplify the voices of the community. Through consultation processes such as focus groups, interviews and surveys, the outreach team ensures that beneficiaries are involved in the development of all of its communications products, e.g. through inputs in scripts, testing of fact sheets, and feedback to video productions, among others.

27-year old Haneen Atallah works as an UNRWA OwC officer in Gaza. She believes that an essential element and the main goal of OwC is to ensure accountability and transparency in services, and to hear and respect the voices and opinions of Palestine refugees in Gaza. Recently Haneen participated in the “lifecycle communications training” with [BBC Media Action](#) - organized by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) - which helped her to further build her skills in understanding and implementing OwC projects in cooperation with Gaza media outlets, especially through radio programmes, which allow for two-way dialogue, and which UNRWA has utilized during times of emergency. “It is important to understand that people have a right to accessible and concise information, and that the timing and channel of this information can save lives,” she further explained. “OwC is communications for people, not about people; it is different from traditional humanitarian communications such as visibility or public information, because it’s also about listening and two-way communication,” she added.

While many humanitarian organizations try to apply OwC only during crises, the UNRWA team includes OwC elements in projects and programmes at all times – before, during, and after emergencies.

“Our work is very versatile; it ranges from focus groups and community outreach meetings, to the production of videos and printed material with community input, to the organization of story-telling workshops to amplify voices; for our activities, we work together with various different UNRWA programmes and front line staff,” Haneen said.

To combine forces and share experience and expertise, the UNRWA OwC team also co-chairs together with Oxfam the first Gaza-based OwC/accountability working group – involving different other local and international organizations – with a strong focus on internally displaced persons and their information and communications needs.

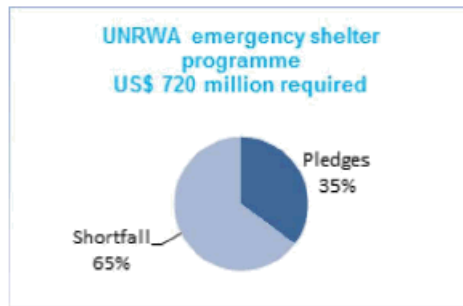
SUMMARY OF MAJOR INCIDENTS

• On 21 August, militants fired two rockets from Gaza towards Israel. No injuries were reported. On the same day, Israeli forces fired approximately 23 missiles at various targets in neighbourhoods in northern Gaza, ranging from a central water tank, military training sites and sites in the vicinity of the Agriculture College. In addition, Israeli forces fired approximately 37 tank shells at targets in the same neighbourhoods. A total of four injuries were reported.

• During the reporting week, Israeli forces also fired towards Palestinian areas along the perimeter fence and towards Palestinian boats on a regular basis. Israeli forces arrested seven fishermen and four Palestinians who attempted to cross into Israel through the perimeter fence. Further, civilians, mostly youth, continued to protest near the perimeter fence expressing their eagerness to defend Al Aqsa Mosque and in solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank. When some of them approached the perimeter fence and threw stones towards Israeli observation posts, Israeli forces responded with gun fire and tear gas; four injuries were reported. Four Israeli bulldozers reportedly entered approximately 50 metres into southern Gaza to conduct a clearing and excavation operation. They withdrew on the same day.

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\$ 96.5 million. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the Agency's Programme Budget. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.



Following the 2014 conflict, US\$ 257 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\$ 463 million. UNRWA urgently appeals to donors to generously contribute to its emergency shelter programme to provide displaced Palestine refugees in Gaza with rental subsidies or cash assistance to undertake repair works and reconstruction of their damaged homes.

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. More information can be found [here](#).

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 was closed during the reporting week.
- Erez crossing is usually open six days a week. This week it was open for National ID holders (humanitarian cases, medical cases, merchants and UN staff) and international staff from 16 to 18 August and 21 to 23 August. On 19 August it was open for pedestrians only. It was closed on 20 August.
- 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 from 16 to 18 August and from 21 to 23 August. It was closed on 19 and 20 August.

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/gaza-situation-report-158>