



Gaza Strip Situation Report **10 October 2006**

Continued Palestinian casualties and access restrictions three months on from the start of Operation Summer Rains

The IDF military operation, codenamed Operation Summer Rains, continues inside the Gaza Strip for over three months. Constant IDF military activity coupled with continued significant restrictions on Palestinian movement in and out of the Gaza Strip and the explosive internal security situation is taking a heavy toll on all Palestinians inside the Gaza Strip. The UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, has recently compared the Gaza Strip to a ticking time bomb and called for immediate action on the humanitarian, political and economic fronts.

Key developments:

- Two hundred and fifty-six (256) Palestinians, including 60 children have now been killed in the continued conflict since 28 June, when Operation Summer Rains commenced. During the same period 848 Palestinians have been wounded. This represents a massive increase in Palestinian casualties compared to the first half of 2006 - in the first six months of the year, approximately 109 Palestinians were killed and 225 wounded in the continuing conflict in the Gaza Strip.
- Two IDF soldiers have been killed and 31 Israelis injured, including 15 Israelis injured by homemade rockets fired by Palestinian militants into Israel. An estimated 465 homemade rockets have been fired by Palestinians since the start of the operation.
- More than 300 missiles were fired by the IAF in air strikes conducted since 28 June. However, generally, the intensity of IDF operations including artillery shelling, air strikes and ground incursions have declined since the last OCHA Situation Report in late August.
- More than 150 Palestinian structures including houses, workshops and greenhouses have been destroyed, and another 170 damaged by the IDF since the beginning of the current operation. As of 31st August 1,438 dunums of agricultural land have been levelled. UNDP has estimated that the total cost of damages caused in the first two months of the IDF operation at approximately US \$46million to key sectors.
- Destruction of civilian infrastructure, including the Gaza Power Plant, remains un-repaired though replacement transformers have arrived. Electricity continues to enter the Gaza Strip from Israel and has been rationed and redistributed to the rest of the Gaza Strip, providing the Gazan population with 6-8 hours of electricity each day. The city of Rafah has been connected to the Egyptian electricity network, providing residents with 24 hours of electricity every day 24 hours.
- Palestinian movement continues to be heavily restricted from the Gaza Strip with Erez remaining closed to workers and traders and Rafah closed for regular movement. The IDF continues to restrict by force Palestinian access to fishing grounds off the Gaza Strip since 25 June. Approximately 3,000 licensed fishermen have lost their income.
- Internal Palestinian fighting on Gazan streets escalated dramatically in the last week. Altogether, 64 Palestinians have been killed and 363 injured in armed disputes and inter-factional fighting between principally the Fatah and Hamas members and security forces since the beginning of the operation.
- The PA staff strike over the non-payment of salaries is not as widespread or as strong in Gaza as in the WB, affecting only about 5% of operations.

Military operations

- IDF military incursions into the Gaza Strip continue with Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip and the area around the Gaza International Airport in particular affected. During the incursions Palestinian houses have been destroyed and agricultural land levelled. For example, during a 3-day campaign in Khuza'a, eastern Khan Younis, over 200 dunums of olive trees and agricultural land were bulldozed.
- In one particularly bloody incursion, between 25 and 30 August IDF tanks and bulldozers, backed by IAF helicopters entered the Al Shija'ia neighbourhood of Gaza City near Karni Crossing. Twenty Palestinians were

reported killed during the five days of fighting. Roads, houses and infrastructure were damaged in connection with the operation.

- IDF artillery shelling into open areas, as well as IAF air strikes on houses belonging to alleged militants continues. The IDF has fired 508 artillery shells since 24 August, compared to 185 fired in the period between 7 - 24 August. The IDF has continued the practice of warning families by telephone to evacuate their residence prior to an air strike. This practice continues to result in the repeated evacuation of entire neighbourhoods, forcing Palestinian residents to abandon their property and personal belongings in panic; in some cases, strikes never take place.
- Since 24 August, 82 homemade rockets have been fired from the Gaza Strip towards targets in Sderot, Ashkelon and Western Negev, an average of two rockets per day. The number of homemade rockets decreased in September but has increased again over the last week (24). Two Israeli civilians, one IDF soldier, as well as two Palestinian schoolgirls were injured as a result of the homemade rockets.

Crossing points and humanitarian access

The ongoing access restrictions continue to exacerbate the situation in the Gaza Strip by affecting access to livelihoods and education and creating a climate of uncertainty. Prior to June 2006 there had been some progress on Palestinian access as measured against the indicators in the Agreement on Access and Movement (AMA). However since the capture of an Israeli soldier on 25 June and the launch of Operation Summer Rains on 28 June movement has been further restricted.

- Erez crossing has remained closed since 12 March for workers and traders. At the start of 2006 some 2,500 to 3,000 workers and traders crossed Erez daily to access employment and business opportunities.
- Rafah crossing has been closed for regular movement since 25 June. The crossing has been opened for a total of 12 days (13%) for limited movement: an average of 1,450 people crossed each way on each of these days.
- In September the operation of Karni crossing returned to its pre Operation Summer Rains level, having been open every scheduled working day since 3 September although for only 45% of the working hours (as scheduled in the AMA). However, the number of trucks able to export goods is still well below the target which was 150 per day by the end of 2005 rising to 400 per day by the end of 2006. Since 1 September the average of 16 trucks exported per day is only 11% of the minimum target.
- Karni has been closed to container traffic the whole of September to allow for maintenance on the bays. Following coordination with the IDF and 91 containers entered through Sofa between 13 - 15 September. The planned export of empty containers through Karni has been prevented due to a combination of logistical and security reasons: as of 26 September there are 184 empty containers in Gaza.
- Both Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossing points have been open during September, although not consistently. Sufa is the primary entry point for aggregates but was only open for the import of aggregates on 11 of the 25 scheduled work days (44%).

Electricity

- Three step-down transformers have arrived in Gaza from Egypt to repair the Gaza Power Plant. The Gaza Power Generating Company has stated that two transformers have been already installed and the third one is in process. Two more arrived in Gaza on 4 October and another two are expected for 16 October. It is estimated that it will take 3-4 weeks to install them and have them all functioning to generate about 60 MWh of electricity. Combined with the 17MWh supply from Egypt via Rafah, this will restore 100% of the electricity lost as a result of the destruction of the Gaza Power Plant by the IAF on 28 June.
- Currently, the remaining electricity available from Israel (approximately 57% of daily supply) is being shared among the 1.4 million people of the Gaza Strip. Gazans receive on average between six and eight hours of electricity per day
- Lack of electricity has forced UNRWA to rely on generators, and thus fuel, in order to maintain the operation. Since 28 June, UNRWA has spent an extra \$100,000 per month on fuel.

Water and sanitation

There is sufficient drinking water but the distribution is not reliable due to the rationing of electricity which prevents water being pumped and the breaking of distribution pipes by IDF heavy vehicles during incursions. Sanitation continues to be dependent on humanitarian agencies working well in the refugee camps but less well outside.

- The emergency water and sanitation program (EWAS), implemented by the American Near East Refugee Aid agency (ANERA), is making emergency water and sanitation repairs in the Gaza Strip. ANERA has completed emergency repairs to the water and sewage network in Abasan al Kabira in Khan Yunis governorate. The \$11,215 program has restored water and sewage services to approximately 3,000 people, and has generated 57 workdays by utilising local contractors to implement works. Three projects costing an estimated \$225,000 will focus on repairing water and sewage networks in Wadi as Salqa, al Mughazi, and Beit Lahiya. Once complete it will provide 24,000 people with restored drinking water and sewage systems
- Save the Children is to repair 300m of mains water pipe Trunk Line and provide a mobile water tank for 14,000 residents of Gaza during October.
- UNDP has committed \$80,000 to procure spare parts for the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) which reports a general shortage in spare parts due to the closure of Karni.
- ICRC has procured 14 generators of different sizes to be used in the water and wastewater sector based on needs assessed by the CMWU.
- UNRWA is in the fourth round of dispensing fuel for solid waste disposal across the Gaza Strip.
- The construction of the short-term emergency effluent pond at the Beit Lahia Waste Water Treatment Plant is now completed following coordination between the IDF, contractors and OCHA. Waste water will be pumped into the new infiltration pond to relieve the critical situation which had developed at the original site. This measure is only temporary and is expected to provide additional sewage storage capacity until April 2007.

Fuel

- **The Nahal Oz energy pipelines remained partially open for imports of fuel.** A dispute between the PA and its main fuel supplier in Israel disrupted imports temporarily but the situation has been resolved.
- Fuel for generators in Gaza Strip is available, although power supply continues to be a main concerning issue. In all hospitals a stock of fuel for 4 - 7 weeks is available, while in the PHC facilities the stock is of 1 -2 weeks.
- 922,426 litres of fuel was provided under the TIM window II during September.

Health

- The PA employees strike, initially limited to three hours a day, no longer seems to be affecting health clinics but is slowing down the development and implementation of projects in partnership with MoH.
- According to WHO, diarrhoea in Gaza Strip is going back to normal seasonal levels. An increased access to clean water could be assumed from the fact that during the last two months the daily number of hours of electricity at household level increased, hence more regular functioning of water pumps. Therefore, most houses have partially restored their capacity to receive safe water from the network. Also, during the last two months a restoration of the sewage network - strongly damaged by Israeli operations in June and July - has been almost completed by the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility.
- The Emergency Medical Assistance program (EMAP III) Implemented by Care International, distributed \$11,427 worth of pharmaceuticals to ten NGO clinics; provided \$ 25,427 of emergency medical supplies for eight NGO clinics; delivered \$1,825 of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies to the St. John's Centre; delivered \$18,432 of medical supplies and disposables to three NGO hospitals, and delivered and installed 13 generators valued at 150,375 to 13 NGO clinics.
- UNICEF continues to work in partnership with MoH, WHO and UNFPA to improve the drug management system at the ministry level: 39 health awareness sessions on food, water preservation and environmental health, reaching 2,089 persons were conducted with MoH and NGOs clinics throughout the whole Gaza Strip

- UNICEF distributed 16 Family Hygiene Kits and 16 Baby Hygiene Kits and 3 Family Water Kits (pre-positioned with PRCS) to 16 homeless families from Om Al Nasr Area, North Rafah, who lost their homes during an IDF incursion in mid September.
- UNRWA clinics have noticed an increase in the number of consultations. In August 2005, there were 289,354 consultations. In August 2006, there were 320,745 consultations, a 10.8 percent increase over the year prior.

Food

- WFP transported a total of 4,541Mt of food into Gaza Strip since 25 August; 2,401Mt through Sufa, 1,631Mt through Karni and 509Mt through Kerem Shalom. WFP remains extremely concerned about the closure of the fishing areas which is having a very serious impact on the fishing industry and the diet of the 1.4 million Gazans. USAID has recently provided WFP with \$24.6 million to provide emergency food assistance to the poor and needy Palestinian families.
- All food commodities are available in the market except for milk powder - which is available in very limited quantities in the south and middle areas of the Gaza Strip - due to the closure. This is reflected in prices of both liquid and powdered milk. The prices of candles and batteries have increased four-fold. Frozen food is in short supply owing to continuous closure and electricity shortages. The price of sugar has fallen due to the decline in the ice-cream industry (affected by power cuts). The prices of vegetables are still high.
- On 10 September, UNRWA began its latest round of emergency food distribution. It started one week late due to the closure of Karni in August. In the deteriorating economic situation resulting in increased needs, UNRWA has increased its food package for emergency food distribution. This distribution round - lasting for two months - has more than 1,100 additional tonnes of food. Large families will in particular be affected by larger food packages, receiving approximately double their previous food allocation in order to help meet the increased reliance on emergency food handouts.

Shelter and land

- UNRWA continues to provide assistance to displaced persons. Over 800 families displaced from the north and south received a relocation allowance to help cover the cost of alternate accommodation in a safer area. Approximately 1,000 people from the As Shouka area have still not returned to their homes due to continued insecurity, and remain in the fields east of Rafah with their livestock. UNRWA, in cooperation with ICRC and other UN Agencies, has been providing assistance to these displaced persons. UNRWA built toilet and shower facilities, provided sanitation workers to keep the area and facilities clean, and delivered drinking water on a daily basis.
- Construction projects are underway in the Gaza Strip after lengthy closure of key crossing points for construction materials led to long delays. The closures affected construction and repairs to schools that were supposed to be carried out during the summer. For example, the start dates of seven courses at the Gaza Training Centre have had to be postponed due to a lack of supplies on the market which delayed the construction of facilities.

Education

- UNRWA estimates that 197,252 students are back in UNRWA since the start of the 2006-07 school year. On 10 September, each UNRWA pupil received 100 NIS to help cover back to school costs, such as uniforms and stationary. All refugee pupils in grades 1-9 of the government schools in the Gaza Strip will also receive the 100 NIS payment from UNRWA.
- Students in the no go zone around the Al Seafa area still face security problems accessing schools as the IDF artillery continues to enforce the zone by firing into the area.

Coordination

- UN agencies, the ICRC and humanitarian NGOs have continued to hold regular coordination meetings. During the reporting, sectors coordination groups continued to meet with two coordination meetings on food, one on water and sanitation and another on health. A general UN and NGO coordination meeting in which UNSCO gave a brief on Stockholm Donor Meeting took place on 13 September.

- OCHA continued to ensure active coordination between the PWA and CMWU and the IDF to ensure the finalisation of the additional capacity for the Beit Lahia Waste Water Treatment Plant. A follow up coordination meeting is expected to take place shortly.