



Gaza Strip Situation Report 13 December 2006

THREE CHILDREN AMONG LATEST VICTIMS OF INTERNAL VIOLENCE; CEASEFIRE HOLDS DESPITE VIOLATIONS; EXTENSIVE DAMAGE REMAINS

- Overview of the humanitarian situation
- Key developments/trends analysis
- Assessment of damages

Overview of the humanitarian situation

The ceasefire between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Government of Israel (GoI) in the Gaza Strip on 26 November is largely holding despite sporadic violations by both sides. However, internal violence continues unabated, with three children aged seven, eight and nine among the latest casualties. They were shot dead inside the vehicle in which they were travelling, along with a 25 year-old man, in an attack by unknown gunmen in Gaza City on 11 December.

Over the last five months, the Gaza Strip has borne a heavy price for the continued Israel Defense Forces (IDF) military operations. The extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure including roads, bridges, electricity network and water pipes together with the continued access restrictions faced by the population, increasing internal violence and already high poverty and unemployment rates raises serious humanitarian concerns.

Nevertheless, in the last six weeks there has been a significant increase in the operation of the principal Karni crossing point allowing better flow of goods into and out of the Gaza Strip, which is a positive step towards alleviating some effects of the crisis.

Key developments/trends analysis:

- The latest killings resulting from internal violence are indicative of the lawlessness and breakdown in security that now pervades large areas of the Gaza Strip. A total of 104 Palestinians have died, including seven children, in Palestinian internal violence in the Gaza Strip between 1 January and 30 November this year with a further 666 injured, predominantly in inter-factional violence or armed family disputes.
- Since the beginning of the ceasefire 33 homemade rockets have been fired by Palestinian militants towards Israel.
- Fourteen violations of the ceasefire by the IDF have also been reported, typically involving IDF soldiers firing at Palestinians in close proximity to the eastern border of the Strip which have injured 13 Palestinians. Israeli naval vessels also have fired shots at Palestinian fishing boats off the Gaza Strip coastline. On 10 December, two IDF combat bulldozers and a tank conducted a 90-minute land levelling operation in the Al Qurara area, north-east of Khan Younis.



- Since the ceasefire began, there have been no IAF air-to-ground missile strikes. IDF artillery shelling into northern and eastern Gaza was suspended on 8 November after 19 Palestinian civilians were killed and 54 injured in Beit Hanoun when a barrage of artillery shells struck six Palestinian houses.
- In the five months since the IDF military operations inside the Gaza Strip on 28 June, 807 homemade rockets were fired towards Israel by Palestinian militants. The IDF fired 5,750 artillery shells into Gaza and 434 air-to-ground missiles were launched by the Israeli Air Force (IAF) at targets throughout the Gaza Strip.
- In this same period (28 June and 28 November), 417 Palestinians died as a result of Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip and a further 1,287 were injured. At least 98 Palestinian children were among the dead. Throughout 2005, a total of 112 Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip and another 215 were injured indicating a significant increase in violence in the preceding months.
- During the same period, five Israelis were killed (two Israeli civilians killed by homemade rockets in Israel and three IDF soldiers), while 57 Israelis were injured, including 27 soldiers inside the Gaza Strip.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the movement of goods through Karni crossing since the last Situation Report on 9 November. In the two weeks to 12 December an average of 46 trucks were exported per day (63% of them containing agricultural produce). This compares to an average of 11 trucks per day over the year to 9 November. The average number of trucks being imported each day has risen to 369 (from a yearly average (1 Jan - 9 Nov 06) of 135).

Assessment of damages

Substantial damage has been caused throughout all areas of the Gaza Strip during the last five months. A UNDP assessment report between 28 June and 27 August, estimated a total of \$46 million worth of damage to municipal infrastructure, housing, public

buildings, agricultural lands, energy and industry during that period alone. More than 50% of the total losses related to the agricultural sector with damage to olive and citrus orchards, greenhouses, poultry and livestock farms, water wells and irrigation networks estimated at \$23.5 million.

Severe destruction and pillage of Gaza International Airport

Following the withdrawal of the IDF from the Gaza Strip on 26 November, extensive damage was discovered in and around Gaza International Airport. The IDF had used the airport as a base during their operations and Palestinian airport staff were denied access to the airport buildings during this period.

While the airport was the scene of armed clashes with Palestinian militants, the internal destruction to the main terminal appears not to have been caused by cross fire, but by the IDF soldiers occupying it. Roofing tiles torn down from the ceiling, water pipes dug up, airport authority papers are discarded everywhere and broken glass covers the floor. Hebrew graffiti was also observed by the United Nations field teams at the airport.

While the airport had not operated since 8 October 2000, when the Israeli government closed the Gaza Strip's air space, up to 450 employees continued to turn up for work each day prior to the IDF operations and the terminal had been kept in pristine and full operational condition.

A key provision of the Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) signed by the PA and Gol on 15 November 2005 noted the importance of the Gaza Strip airport. It added that "discussions will continue on the issues of security arrangements, construction and operation". The opening of an airport in the Gaza Strip could have alleviated the humanitarian and economic hardships caused by the continued closure of the Gaza Strip and "promote peaceful economic development" as envisaged by the AMA. The extensive destruction of the airport over the last few months has destroyed this option at least in the foreseeable future.



Interior of terminal building, Gaza International Airport, 4 December 2006 (OCHA)

The Palestinian Civil Aviation Authority estimates the cost of the recent damage to the terminal, hangars and surrounding buildings at more than \$6.4 million and expects this figure to rise significantly when more comprehensive assessments have been carried out. The latest destruction comes in the wake of damages worth \$24.3 million to the airport during IDF incursions between 4 and 15 December 2001.

Infrastructure damage to Beit Hanoun

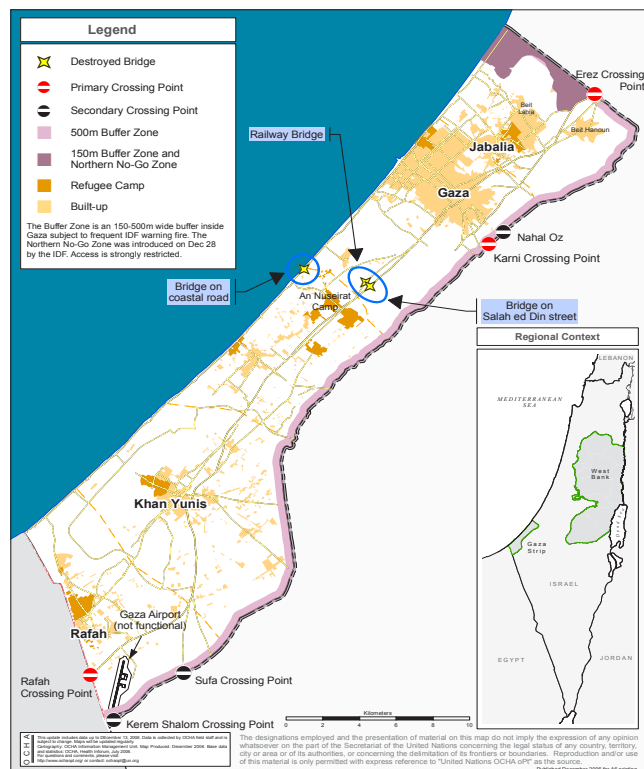
On 1 November the IDF launched operation “Autumn Clouds” in Beit Hanoun in response to the continued firing of homemade rockets towards the Israeli town of Sderot. Between 1 and 8 November, 82 Palestinians were killed and more than 260 injured in northern Gaza. During the six-day long incursion extensive infrastructure damage, particularly to roads was reported. Following the withdrawal of the IDF from Beit Hanoun on 7 November, a number of damage assessments have been carried out:

Agency	Sectoral Damage	Cost US\$
UNDP	Emergency rehabilitation of damaged municipal infrastructure in Beit Hanoun including 28 streets, 8 public buildings, water, waste water, storm water and electrical networks works related to the roads.	3,299,302
UNRWA	Emergency shelter repair and reconstruction in Beit Hanoun. Reconstruction of 48 housing units and repairs to 983 units.	2,329,000
CMWU	Damage to the water network and replacement water lines, pumps and equipment. Damage to the sewage network and replacement manholes, covers and pipes.	571,000
IMG-EC	Damage to roads (882,000), homes (2,193,320), electrical grid (270,386), telephone network (219,920) public buildings (1,584,500) and agricultural areas (12,000,000)	17,150,126
Total		23,349,428



Destruction of Bridges in the Gaza Strip

Three bridges were destroyed by the IAF on 28 June. One of the bridges was located on Salah ed Din street. The other on the coastal road. The third bridge was an old railway bridge, dating back 80 years to the British mandate, which served as an important link between a Bedouin community in an isolated area of Mughraqa.



Following the destruction of the bridges, alternative gravel routes were laid next to the damaged structures on Salah ed Din and the coastal road to provide a passage for vehicles traveling between the Gaza Strip's middle area, Gaza City and beyond. While these alternative routes proved satisfactory during the hot dry summer, there are concerns that winter rains may cause flooding on these alternative routes, both of which are located at sea level on the floor of Wadi Gaza.

UNDP estimates the total damage to the three bridges at \$ 5.4 million. Work has recently begun on the coastal road bridge with funding from the Brazilian government. UNRWA has raised tenders for the contract to rebuild the bridge on Salah ed Din Street and work began 10 December, lasting for up to 12 weeks.

Update on electricity supply

Electrical capacity in the Gaza Strip remains insufficient despite the installation of seven new transformers between 1 and 15 November. On 28 June Israeli planes systematically fired missiles into and destroyed all six transformers of Gaza's only power station. Leaving most of the 1.4 million population without electricity for up to 18 hours per day, and without water for more than 20 hours per day.

The current demand in the Gaza Strip, according to the President's Office and the Gaza Power Generating Company (GPGC) is 215 Mega Watts (MW) but this is expected to increase to 225 MW during the winter months.

The current supply available to Gaza, which totals 184 MW, originates from three sources:

Gaza Power Generating Company (GPGC) ¹	60 MW (maximum)
Israel Electrical Company (IEC)	107 MW
Egypt	17 MW
Total	184 MW

1. The Gaza Power Generating Company (GPGC) estimate that the maximum power now being generated from the power station does not exceed 60 Mega Watts (MW) while the potential of the original transformers was up to 140 MW, although this was never realised.

The extensive damage to civilian property in Gaza as well as the firing into civilian populated areas of homemade rockets and Israeli artillery and airstrikes raises the issue of whether international humanitarian law has been violated. For example, under Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, "extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly" is considered a grave breach. The Convention states that no party "shall be allowed to absolve itself or any other ... party of any liability" for such a grave breach.