



The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt  
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**GAZA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT**  
**6 - 13 July 2007**

**SUMMARY POINTS**

1. Humanitarian and commercial imports (through Kerem Shalom and Sufa) into the Gaza Strip continued to meet most of the basic food needs of the population, despite difficulties encountered at the crossings. However, shortages of a broader range of food commodities continued.
2. Critically, the inability to import raw materials to support Gaza's industrial and construction sectors, compounded by the abrupt loss of export outlets, has caused some Gaza 65,000 workers to be laid off (with up to 450,000 dependants affected as well). The combined value of UN and private sector construction projects that have come to standstill due to lack of supplies is estimated at over \$370 million.
3. A conveyor belt/chute at Karni has been open periodically for the import of grains and animal feed.
4. Rafah crossing has now been closed for 33 days with thousands of Palestinians remaining stranded south of the border. Senior Palestinian traders have continued to enter Israel via Erez crossing.
5. Power outages have continued over the course of the last week and are now affecting most areas of the Gaza Strip. These cuts are expected to worsen unless there is resolution to the capacity deficits at the Gaza power station. Efforts are underway to deploy a technical maintenance team to service turbines at the power station.
6. Kerem Shalom has been subject to regular attack by Qassam rockets and mortars fired by Palestinian militias which resulted in the crossing being closed. Six rockets and 22 mortars were fired towards the crossing, including 10 mortars on 10 July.
7. 22 rockets and 22 mortars have been fired by Palestinian militants towards Israeli targets with five landing in Sderot on 8 July. No injuries or damage were reported.
8. There has been a sharp reduction in Israeli-Palestinian conflict related deaths and injuries in the last week however one IDF soldier was killed and two injured during an IDF operation into Brej refugee camp in central Gaza on 12 July. Two Palestinians were injured in the same area when a missile was fired from an Israeli drone. No Palestinians have been killed in Israeli-Palestinian conflict related violence between 6 – 13 July.

## ACCESS AND CROSSINGS

- **Kerem Shalom:** The crossing did not open on 6, 12 and 13 July while on 10 July it was closed prematurely due to the firing of mortars towards the crossing by Palestinian militants. Two truckloads were able to cross on 10 July before the incidents and the remaining 14 truckloads that were scheduled to cross were diverted by the IDF to Sufa. On 9 July three truckloads of fruit destined to enter Gaza via Kerem Shalom were turned back by Hamas.



- **Sufa:** The crossing remains the main entry point for humanitarian supplies entering the Gaza Strip. Sufa crossing was open daily (except for the Israeli weekend when all crossings are closed). On 9 July a total of 120 truckloads entered. Ninety percent of World Bank financed pipes, fittings and equipment for the Northern Gaza Emergency Sewage problem were permitted to enter Gaza during the week through Sufa crossing.

- **Karni:** A single-lane conveyor belt/chute at Karni was open on 10 and 11 July for importing barley, wheat grains, animal feed, soya, corn and bringing into Gaza 1,680 tons of wheat. Karni crossing remains closed for import of all other items and all exports.
- **Erez:** The crossing has been open since 4 July for the passage of senior Palestinian traders into Israel. Erez crossing continues to remain open for international agencies and health cases referrals to Israel. Coordination is required with the Israeli DCL for those national and international staff departing Gaza.



- **Rafah:** The crossing has now been closed since 10 June effectively preventing all movement in and out of Gaza for the 1.5 million people in Gaza. Approximately 6,000 Palestinians remain stranded in Al Arish and Sheikh Zouaid towns with a further 400-700 Palestinians estimated to be at the border itself.

A UN assessment team comprising UNICEF, WFP, WHO and UNHCR visited the area between 3 and 4 July and concluded that no immediate humanitarian assistance is needed. The situation continues to be monitored by UNHCR and the ICRC, and a second mission will likely be deployed next week. The North Sinai Governorate is working on a contingency plan in the event that the border closure continues and people's coping mechanisms further erode. Most of the Palestinians are relying on savings to cover daily accommodation and food costs, raising concerns about the need for assistance in the coming weeks.

The Egyptian Red Crescent provided food parcels and hygiene kits to over 100 Palestinians who have been staying at Al Arish airport on 11 July.

- **Nahal Oz:** The fuel pipelines have been open each day except Saturday supplying diesel, petrol and cooking gas into the Gaza Strip.

## INTERNAL FOOD AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The decision on what to import in the commercial sector is decided between Gazan and Israeli traders, based on the demands from the Palestinian side. Once agreement is reached between the traders, a list is sent to the Economic Section at the Erez District Coordination and Liaison (DCL) office which is then passed onto DCL representatives at the Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossings who oversee the passage of the supplies into Gaza.

On the basis of weekly import figures, WFP in its latest Food Security and Market Monitoring Report (11 July) reports shortages remain in relation to wheat flour, beans, Nido milk powder and baby milk, and vegetable oil. Shortages are also reported in relation to agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, spare parts and seeds as the planting season approaches for next year's harvest. The inability to obtain these items in conjunction with a closed export market, means that many farmers may not be able to plant crops for 2008 which will have an impact on both production and income.

Prices of vegetables remain high especially for lemons and cucumbers while the price of both fresh and frozen meat is increasing as no cattle are being imported. The price of animal feed has increased by 51% compared to pre-closure levels and poultry feed has increased by 17%. By contrast the price of tomatoes continues to fall – by 33% in southern, central and northern Gaza and 17% in Gaza city – due to the inability to export and thus excessive supply working its way into the local market.

In the course of the last week UNRWA has continued to bring in whole milk and received a total of 312 tons via Sufa. The three mills from which UNRWA purchases flour received 805 tons on 10 July.

UNRWA has serious concerns over its ability to bring in replacement stocks to Gaza before the next round of its food distribution cycle that is scheduled to begin on September 1<sup>st</sup>. Over the course of the last three weeks, UNRWA has brought in approximately 15% of its food requirements but this has been time-consuming and costly because of the need to palletise all supplies entering through Sufa crossing.

In the event that Karni crossing remains closed for containers, UNRWA is concerned as to how it will be able to receive all of its necessary supplies via the alternative crossing arrangements before the September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.

## PRIVATE SECTOR

The continued absence of raw materials, an export market and the inability to meet contractual obligations is forcing companies to lay off tens of thousands of employees in the industrial and construction sectors.

According to the Palestinian Industrial Associations (PIA) only 780 **industrial** firms are now working, out of a total of 3900 that were operating in June 2005. The number of employees has dropped from 35,000 to 4,200 and covers those working in furniture manufacturing, textiles and garments and the food sector. 76% of furniture production is for export and 90% for the garment sector.

In the **construction** sector, 50 firms are currently operating compared to 120 in January 2007, according to the Palestinian Contractors Union. In all, 35,000 construction sector employees have been laid off out of a total of 42,000. The construction sector is not export dominated to the extent of the industrial sector. The current retraction in operations is due to the inability to import raw material.

Over 65,000 people are now unemployed between the industrial and construction sectors affecting an estimated 450,000 dependants as well. In a highly competitive sector like industry, there is concern that the inability to fulfill contractual obligations will cause long standing damage to a firm's reputation. The continued closure of Gaza's borders could lead to capital flight of those companies that are able to relocate to Egypt or elsewhere, and further undermine an extremely fragile economic base.

## HEALTH

Ministry of Health (MoH) staff in Gaza remain concerned about the official working days and weekend. The emergency government under President Abbas has decreed the weekend as Friday and Saturday while the authorities in Gaza have stipulated that the working week is six days and only Friday is weekend.

MoH primary and secondary health care facilities in the Gaza Strip are functioning with no major disruptions. Seven clinics run by the Military Health Services that were originally set up for members of the PA security forces have remained closed since the end of the factional violence. WHO has also reported that the health services available for prisoners are currently being covered by one doctor alone. Shortages of medical supplies are still reported by the MoH with approximately 20% shortfall in the essential drug list supplies at the Central Drug Stores in Gaza city.

A visiting ICRC surgical team has expressed concerns at the state of the available surgical equipment in Gaza's hospitals and the necessity to repair and replace existing equipment.

Medicines, consumables and equipment continue to enter Gaza via Kerem Shalom and Erez. Since the 17 June, WHO has coordinated three medical consignments into Gaza on behalf of the MoH via Kerem Shalom. MSF (France) brought in over 300 kg of medical supplies via Erez on 10 July.

Media reports on 8 July stated that 28 Palestinians had died in Egypt while waiting to re-enter Gaza through Rafah crossing. These reports were not accurate. WHO has confirmed that 24 Palestinians have died since the closure took effect in June; three died in a car accident, 20 died in hospitals in Egypt and one at the border. Most of those who died in the hospitals were patients who had been referred to Egypt in the first place for specialist treatment. All the bodies have been returned to Gaza via Kerem Shalom in coordination with the Erez DCL. ICRC in conjunction with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society continues to monitor the situation on the Egyptian side of the border.

ICRC continues to facilitate health referrals into Israel from Gaza via the Erez crossing. Between 19 June and 8 July it arranged the transfer of more than 250 patients and 60 ambulances.

## PSYCHOSOCIAL

UNICEF has highlighted the psychosocial impact of the recent factional fighting on children in the Gaza Strip. On the basis of information received from three centres run by a local implementing partner, 178 cases were dealt with in June, twice the May figure. Additionally, 305 people called a toll free line for assistance in June, more than four times the May figure.

UNICEF reports that care providers and professionals have seen significant signs of distress and exhaustion among children, including nightmares, hyper-activity, passive-aggressive behaviours and unreasoned fears. One NGO supported by UNICEF, registered four cases of children between 12 and 13 years old, who had temporarily lost their ability to speak. Professionals found out that these children had witnessed a number of public executions in Beit Lahia, and concluded that this could have caused the state of mutism.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

**Gaza Power Plant.** The lack of capacity at the Gaza power plant has resulted in increasing power cuts throughout the Gaza Strip over the last week. Outages of 3-5 hours on a daily basis are now being experienced. This situation has arisen from the increased seasonal demand and insufficient supply. One transformer that would add up to an extra 15 MW is presently located in Egypt, another turbine has shut down and another turbine could shut down next month if maintenance does not take place. Efforts are now underway to deploy a technical team to Gaza.

**Beit Lahia Waste Water Treatment Plant.** All activities at the treatment plant – installation of the pressure line and ongoing reinforcement of the embankments – ceased on 2 May, with the exception of the pumping of the large effluent lake. The halt in activities resulted from protests by the local community at not being allocated alternative land as had been promised by the PA after the recent flooding.

Pumping from the large lake to the new emergency lagoons continues with emergency support from UNICEF, with waste water pumped at a rate of 14,000 m<sup>3</sup> per day. The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) is proposing to install mobile pumps that could increase the pumping rate to 24,000 m<sup>3</sup> per day.

On the basis of a recent report by a team of consultants, the effluent lake's embankments are safe during the summer with the exception of a 300 metres section. If work does not resume however, the consultants fear that the embankments could collapse during the winter with flooding of the surrounding areas.

The World Bank and the CMWU were able to import into Gaza through Sufa, supplies for the new treatment plant.

**Fuel Shortages.** The CMWU is unable to obtain fuel from its regular suppliers since previous bills for March and April have yet to be paid by the Ministry of Finance and the President's Office. This impacts directly on the operation of wells that require back up generators due to insufficient electricity from the power plant. International agencies have had to intervene to support the operations of the CMWU with ICRC providing 20,000 litres of fuel, UNICEF 50,000 litres and OXFAM 40,000 litres. The CMWU normally receives its supplies via the ESSP programme and requires 250,000 litres a month.

**UNRWA** announced on 9 July that construction has come to a halt on all of its building projects due to the lack of basic building supplies. The suspension of \$93 million worth of projects will impact on the proposed repair and reconstruction of refugee shelters, schools, community centres, water and sanitation works as well as medical facilities. Certain projects are time sensitive and thus the inability to build new schools will lead to continued overcrowding in UNRWA's existing class rooms.

**United Nations - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

occupied Palestinian territory P.O. Box 38712 East Jerusalem Phone: (972) 2 – 5829962 / 5825853,  
[www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org) Fax: (972) 2 – 5825841 Email: ochaopt @un.org