

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bedouin community in the Hebron area is at heightened risk of forcible transfer.
- Cement imports resume to the private sector in Gaza after a 45-day suspension.
- Permit approval rates for national staff working with international organizations to exit and enter the Gaza Strip have decreased significantly in 2016.



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Overview

More needs to be done to prevent another escalation in Gaza - UN Special Coordinator

The rate of demolitions across the West Bank slowed in May, following a sharp increase in the previous four months. However, the number of Palestinian structures destroyed since the beginning of 2016 has already exceeded the figures for all of 2015 (595 vs. 547). Referring to this year’s unprecedented figures, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, in his briefing to the Security Council, observed that “although many of the structures that have been demolished are not dwellings, the loss of water wells, solar panels and animal shelters has impacted the livelihoods of over 2,500 people.” Throughout the West Bank, demolitions generate a coercive environment that exacerbates the risk of forcible transfer of already vulnerable Palestinian communities.

The vast majority of demolitions occur in Area C, where the planning system makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain the requisite Israeli-issued building permits. One especially vulnerable community in the Nablus governorate, Khirbet Tana, experienced in April its fourth wave of demolitions so far this year. Dkaika, a Bedouin community in southern Hebron profiled in this month’s bulletin, came under heightened risk of forcible transfer following the Israeli authorities’ announcement of their intention to “relocate” it.

Developments in April led to a deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. On 8 April, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) shut down after exhausting its fuel reserves, prolonging the electricity outages and further undermining the delivery of services and the already limited economic activity. The functioning of the GPP has been significantly impaired over the past several years by multiple factors, including a longstanding dispute between Palestinian authorities in Gaza and Ramallah over the taxation of the fuel used to run the plant. A temporary agreement reached at the end of April allowed a return to the previous schedule of twelve hour rolling blackouts by mid- May.

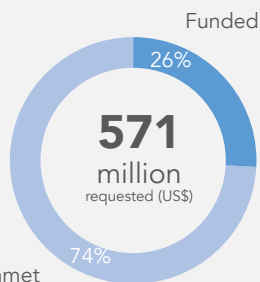
APRIL FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	3
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	286
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	0
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	21
Structures demolished in the West Bank	97
People displaced in the West Bank	199

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2016

571 million requested (US\$)

26% funded



On 23 May, the Israeli authorities resumed the import of cement for the private sector in Gaza, which had been suspended on 3 April, following a diversion of cement from the legitimate, intended beneficiaries. The situation was also resolved after 45 days of intense efforts by Palestinian and Israeli authorities and the United Nations. By the end of April 2016, about 23 per cent (4,064) of the approximately 18,000 homes destroyed or severely damaged in 2014 had been reconstructed or repaired, following cash assistance from UN agencies or other international support.

The situation of IDPs is also of concern due to the underfunding of humanitarian interventions aimed to address their immediate shelter needs: as of the end of March, only 12 per cent of the funding requested for the Shelter Cluster's projects for 2016 has been provided. This situation is not unique to the Shelter Cluster, with low funding levels affecting the majority of projects included in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the oPt, which aims to support one in three Palestinians in 2016. By the end of March, only 20.5 per cent of the \$571 million requested for 2016 was funded, compared to 36 per cent in the equivalent period in 2015.

"I once again encourage donors to fulfil their commitments to support Gaza's reconstruction, recovery and development."

UN Special Coordinator
Nickolay Mladenov

Following an escalation of violence in Gaza in early May, the UN Special Coordinator warned that "Recent events clearly demonstrate that the spectre of violence looms ominously over the territory. Unless radically more is done to address the chronic realities in Gaza, it is not a question of 'if', but rather of 'when' another escalation will take place. I once again encourage donors to fulfil their commitments to support Gaza's reconstruction, recovery and development."

At risk of forcible transfer

The forcible transfer of protected persons from their normal place of residence is prohibited under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which also forbids deportations outside an occupied territory. Many Palestinian families and communities throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are at risk of forcible transfer because Israeli practices have created a coercive environment that puts pressure on them to move, mainly through the unavailability of building permits, which are almost impossible to acquire. Although Bedouin and herders in Area C bear the brunt of this pressure, forcible transfer also takes other forms. The article below is part of a series of articles in the Humanitarian Bulletin highlighting a range of situations across the oPt where Palestinians have been placed at heightened risk of forcible transfer.



The case of Dkaika in southern Hebron

In early April 2016, the Israeli authorities informed the Israeli Supreme Court of their intention to “relocate” Dkaika, a small Bedouin community entirely located in Area C in southern Hebron, to a nearby Bedouin community and immediately demolish over 30 structures installed during the past two years.

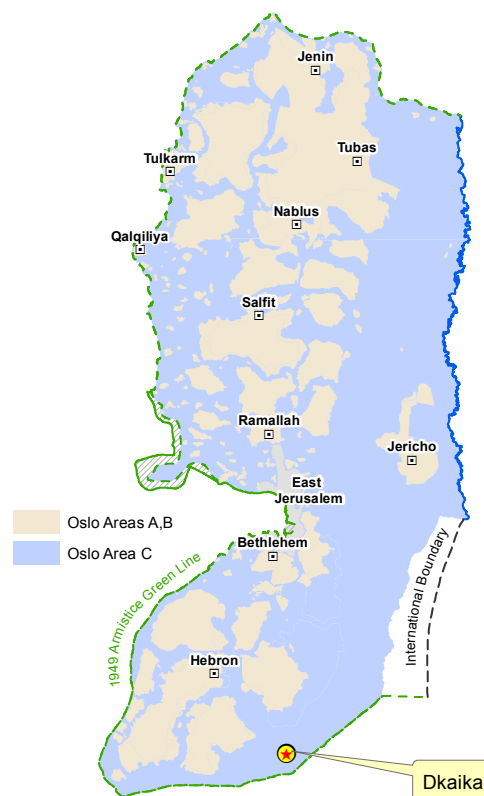
Dkaika is home to some 350 people, the majority of whom are UNRWA-registered refugees. During the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, the community was displaced from part of its ancestral lands just a few kilometres from the current site; this ancestral land became part of Israel and the community was never allowed to return by the Israeli authorities

Most of the community’s homes and other structures have outstanding demolition orders issued by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) on the grounds that they lack building permits. However, these permits are nearly impossible to obtain due to the absence of an approved planning scheme. The inability to build legally has rendered the community extremely vulnerable and dependent on humanitarian assistance.

A draft planning scheme submitted by the community in 2012 with the support of two Israeli organizations (Rabbis for Human Rights and Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights), was rejected in February 2014. According to the ICA planning committee, the existence of this “collection of structures” as a separate entity is “unsustainable” and residents should be relocated to another “residential fabric”.¹ The community challenged this decision in a petition to the Israeli Supreme Court and obtained an interim injunction freezing the demolition orders until a ruling is made on the case.

In Area C the planning system makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain the requisite Israeli-issued building permits.

In its response to this petition, the authorities informed the Court that they are currently processing a planning scheme for three nearby Bedouin communities, one of which (Hamayda) may serve for the relocation of Dkaika, despite the community rejecting the alternative location because, among other reasons, it is located several kilometres away. The authorities agreed to extend the freezing of the 101 demolition orders issued prior to the filing of the petition, but demanded an immediate execution of 27 other orders (affecting 33 structures, half of them donor-funded) that were allegedly installed at a later date. These include residential tents and shacks, solar panels, water cisterns, animal shelters and kitchens.² The petition is still pending.



The community strongly opposes “relocation” and has requested protection and assistance in their current location, including adequate planning and permits for their homes and livelihoods. In a hearing before the ICA, community representative Odeh Najada stated: “Part of the discussion has been around the land property issue. We know who owns every centimetre of land. As long as I remember, I have been living in this place. We do not have any other land. We refuse to move to someone else’s land, or allow the entry of others to our land”. It is anticipated that the proposed “relocation” would impede access to traditional grazing land and undermine herding livelihoods.

The UN Secretary-General pointed out in similar cases among Bedouin and herding communities in the central West Bank and in Massafer Yatta (Hebron), the relocation of communities against their will, including as a result of the creation of a coercive environment, may amount to individual and mass forcible transfer.

Demolitions continued during April

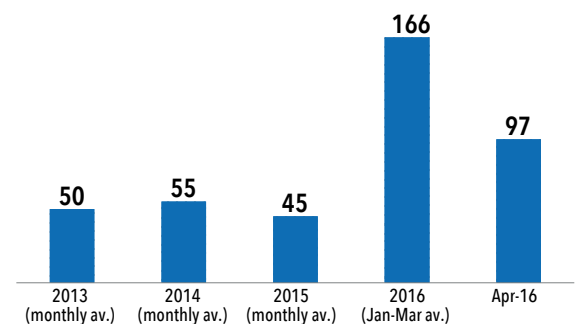
In April, the Israeli authorities demolished, dismantled or sealed 97 Palestinian structures across the West Bank, displacing nearly 200 people and otherwise affecting more than 570 people. Five of these structures were demolished on punitive grounds and the rest were demolished due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits. Ninety percent of the destruction in April occurred in Area C. The number of structures targeted in the first four months of the year (595) has already exceeded the figure for all of 2015 (547).

Almost a third of the structures demolished in April (30) had been previously provided as humanitarian assistance by aid organizations, including eight in the Bedouin communities referred to above in the E1 area, and worth more than 106,000 euros. This brings the number of aid structures demolished or confiscated in the first four months of 2016 to 170, an increase of almost 60 per cent compared to the figure for all of 2015.

Thirty-four (34) of the structures demolished in May, including 13 aid structures, were in the Area C herding community of Khirbet Tana (Nablus), which experienced its fourth wave of demolitions so far this year. The community, along with two Israeli settlement outposts, is located in an area designated as a “firing zone” for military training. Although these outposts have also been issued with demolition orders, very few have been executed in recent years.

Another 16 structures were demolished in five Palestinian Bedouin communities to the east of Jerusalem in Area C, located in an area planned for the expansion of the Ma’ale Adummim settlement (the E1 plan). These are part of 46 Bedouin communities in the central West Bank at risk of forcible transfer due to another “relocation” plan advanced by the Israeli authorities.

STRUCTURES DEMOLISHED IN THE WEST BANK
(MONTHLY AVERAGE)



30 of the structures demolished in April were provided as humanitarian assistance.

Cement imports resume to the private sector in Gaza

45-day restrictions had impeded private housing repair and

On 23 May, the Israeli authorities resumed the import of cement to the private sector in Gaza after a 45-day suspension. In a statement welcoming the resumption, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, stated that “all sides need to ensure that cement deliveries reach their intended beneficiaries and are used solely for civilian purposes.”

The Israeli authorities had suspended the import of cement for the private sector on 3 April, following a diversion of cement from the legitimate intended beneficiaries. These restrictions were reconfirmed on 18 April following the announcement of the discovery of a tunnel running from Gaza into Israel, the first found since the 2014 conflict. Although steps were taken to address these concerns, heightened tensions in Gaza and southern Israel, and the discovery of a second tunnel in early May, impeded negotiations.

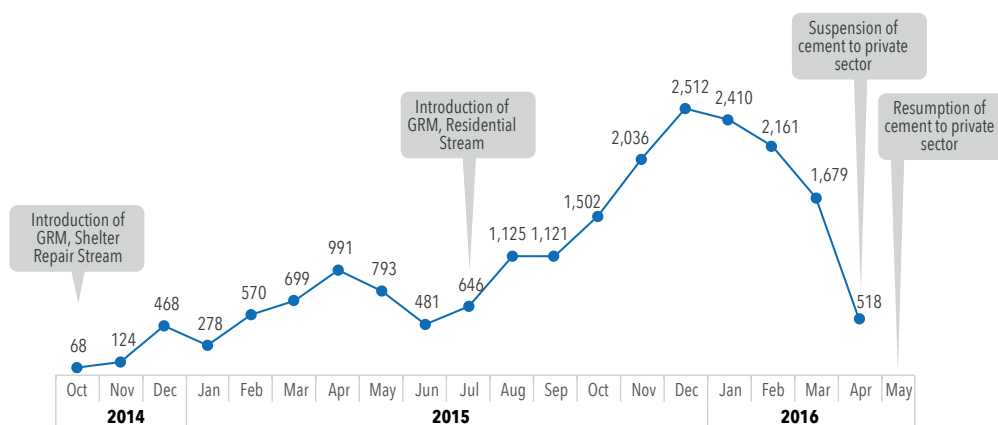
Following a sweeping ban imposed since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007, the controlled import of cement into Gaza for the private sector resumed in October 2014 as part of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM). The GRM is a temporary agreement between the Government of Palestine and the Government of Israel, brokered by the United Nations (See box). Over 680,000 tonnes of cement have since entered Gaza through the GRM. Of these, 66 per cent has entered since the introduction of the “residential stream” in July 2015, for the construction of totally destroyed homes and the construction of new housing.

A limited quantity of cement remained available, estimated at about a third of previous monthly imports. The GRM “shelter” and “residential” streams are essential for donor-funded projects that employ a self-help methodology, in which house owners and



This section is based on a contribution by the Shelter Cluster

CEMENT IMPORTS TO GAZA (TRUCKLOADS)



The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism

The UN continues to call for a full lifting of the blockade of Gaza within the framework of Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009). In the meantime, the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism serves as a temporary mechanism to enable the import of otherwise restricted materials, including for private individuals in Gaza without access to external markets. By the end of April 2016, close to 101,000 households had purchased materials through the GRM to repair houses damaged in the conflict, and 2,150 had purchased materials to rebuild homes that were completely destroyed. Unrelated to the 2014 conflict, some 8,100 households have purchased materials to build new houses or to finish the construction of houses begun before the 2014 conflict. The GRM also facilitates access to materials for larger projects, including schools, hospitals, roads, water infrastructure, private businesses, public service facilities and large-scale residential projects. To date, 870 such projects have been introduced into the GRM, of which 105 have been completed.

communities participate in the reconstruction of their own property, making use of contractors only for the construction of multiple owner multi-storey buildings or for infrastructure projects. The self-help approach is being utilised to repair almost all the damaged units and to reconstruct some 73 per cent (3,760 of 5,163) of the destroyed units that have already been completed, are in progress or have identified funding.

By the end of April 2016, about 23 per cent (4,065) of the approximately 18,000 homes destroyed or severely damaged during the 2014 hostilities had been reconstructed or repaired, following cash assistance from UN agencies or other international support.³ An estimated 70,000 people remain displaced. According to the Palestinian Contractors' Union, the shortage of cement had disrupted the jobs of 40,000 people working in the construction sector.



Humanitarian response impeded by underfunding

Only 20% of requested funding received during the first quarter of 2016

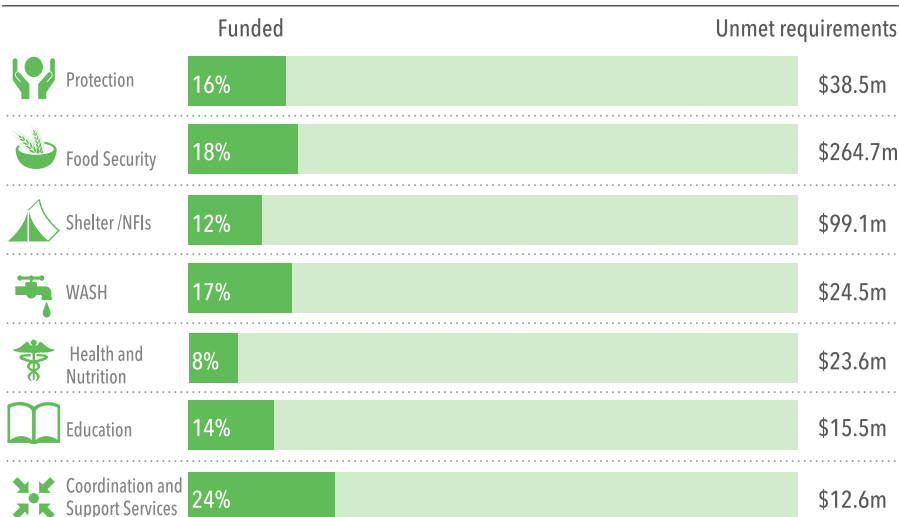
The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the oPt is part of the 2016 Global Humanitarian Overview, which is requesting a record US\$20.1 billion to fund humanitarian operations around the world this year. The oPt HRP was launched locally in February and plans to support one in three Palestinians with some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016.⁴ It includes 206 projects worth \$571 million, 19 per cent less than the sum requested in 2015. Seventy-nine organizations are participating: 12 UN agencies, 36 international NGOs and 31 national NGOs. Approximately one third of funds requested are designated as “top priority” to help guide where limited resources should be allocated first. Although the oPt HRP shares many of the features of other operations around the world, the context of the oPt is unique - a protracted protection crisis that stems from the impact of a military occupation approaching its 50th anniversary. Gender has been mainstreamed throughout all HRP objectives and all cluster strategies to ensure the protection of all members of the affected population and to guarantee effective and equitable delivery of humanitarian assistance.

An estimated 75,000 people remain displaced in Gaza

By the end of March, the 2016 HRP was 20.5 per cent funded compared to 36 per cent in the equivalent period in 2015. Only 11 per cent of the funds requested for “top priority” projects have been received while “other priority” projects have 19 per cent funding coverage, even though the requested amount for the projects in the first category are significantly lower than for the second.

Funding for the respective clusters has been relatively consistent. The Food Security Sector has received the most funds in absolute terms (\$58 million); however, \$264.5 million is still needed to implement partner activities in this sector for the rest of the year. Health and Nutrition remains significantly underfunded, having received just \$2.1

FUNDING PROGRESS



million, 8 per cent of the funding requested, which has impeded the Cluster's ability to implement some of its key activities. Gaza projects have received more funding than projects targeting the West Bank (\$53.4 million vs. \$30.2 million). Around 87 per cent of funds received have gone to UN agencies, with INGOs and NGOs remaining considerably underfunded.

Shelter Cluster targets 200,000 people in 2016

Access to shelter remains a key humanitarian concern

It is estimated that 990,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem need emergency and early recovery shelter support and essential non-food items (NFIs) in 2016. The Shelter Cluster response plan addresses the needs of the most vulnerable, some 200,000 people, who have been displaced or are at risk of displacement as a result of human made or natural disasters. Some \$112 million has been requested through the HRP.

As of the end of March, the Shelter Cluster had received 12 per cent of the funding requested, covering four of the 15 agencies (two UN and two INGO) and five of the 24 projects included in the 2016 HRP.⁵

This funding has enabled partners to provide winterization assistance, including the repair or upgrading of damaged or inadequate shelters, to over 7,500 families throughout the oPt, and to provide 1,370 vulnerable families in Gaza with emergency NFIs in the wake of winter floods. Some 1,100 families received transitional shelter cash assistance and 50 IDP families received transitional timber shelters. In the West Bank, 84 families were assisted after demolitions in the first quarter of 2016 and preparedness measures were taken to pre-position stocks for future response.

However, significant challenges remain. In the West Bank, the extremely high rate of demolitions experienced in Area C so far in 2016, including the demolition of structures provided as humanitarian aid, is placing considerable strain on the response system and on the funding requirements of the organisations providing assistance, should the current trend continue.⁶ The provision of such assistance is also becoming increasingly challenging as a result of the blockage, confiscation/seizure or detention of humanitarian goods and personnel engaged in the response. Measures to protect both communities and deliverers of aid and to prevent delays to communities in need of assistance, as well as to address the vulnerabilities that contribute to displacement, are urgently needed.

In Gaza, nearly two years after the end of the 2014 hostilities and a second winter, over 75,000 people remain displaced. IDP vulnerability is exacerbated by the huge shortfall in assistance for temporary solutions, which are only nine per cent funded. There is a pressing need to provide ongoing support to the most vulnerable of these families and prioritize them in the reconstruction efforts: there is still a gap in funding for over 4,700 units. Displacement is also being prolonged by the slow disbursement of funding for reconstruction and by restrictions on materials, which had been compounded by the restrictions since early April on the import of cement to Gaza for the private sector (*see accompanying article*).

By the end of March, the 2016 HRP was 20.5 per cent funded compared to 36 per cent in the equivalent period in 2015

Decline in approval of permits for national staff working with international organizations to leave/enter Gaza.

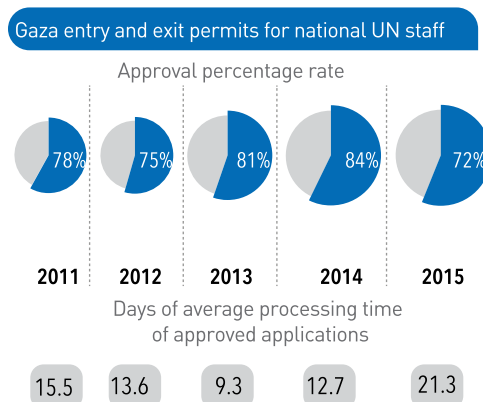
Constraints also imposed by the de facto authorities on these staff

Approval rates for permit applications for national staff working with international organizations (UN and INGO) to exit and enter the Gaza Strip have decreased significantly in 2016. Of the 128 local staff members (mostly UNRWA) who submitted an application in January, 119 permits were granted, an approval rate of 93 per cent. This declined to 83 per cent in February (53 approvals from 64 applications), to 57 per cent in March (35/62), before declining significantly to only 24 per cent in April (18/74). For the past five years, the annual approval rate has varied between 72 and 84 per cent.

Of additional concern, in April only 19 per cent (17/74) of total permit applications were approved for the length of time requested compared to 23 per cent in March. A further five per cent (4/74) of permits were approved for a shorter duration than requested, predominantly applications for three-month permits that were approved for only one month, or for as short a period as one week. Although significantly lower than the equivalent figure for March, 34 per cent (21/62), this is partly attributable to the significant increase in the rate of permits denied in April (35 per cent vs. 21 per cent in March). The number of permits still pending at the end of April, 39 per cent, is also higher than the equivalent for March which was 30 per cent. There were also 4 cases of approved permits being confiscated from staff while at the Erez crossing. No confiscations were reported in April; however this is partly a result of reduced permit approval rates and the resulting reduction in travel of UN Gaza national staff.

These restrictions on national staff hamper the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide assistance and protection to Palestinians in Gaza. Since July 2015, citing security reasons, the Israeli authorities have prohibited UN and INGO staff who are Palestinian citizens of Israel from entering Gaza, and only urgent cases of East Jerusalem residents have been approved.⁷ Prior to these restrictions, an average of 170 permit applications per year were submitted by UN agencies and INGOs for these two categories. The operating space for organizations providing assistance inside Gaza has also been under strain in recent months from the de facto authorities in Gaza who have limited the movement of staff and access to certain areas, citing security concerns.

Restrictions on national staff hamper the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide assistance and protection to Palestinians in Gaza.



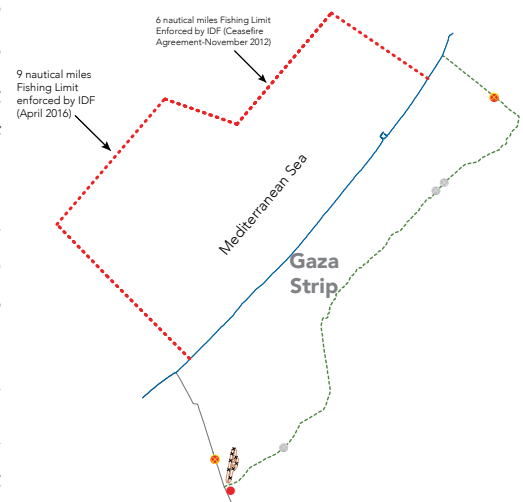
In brief

Expansion of the fishing zone results in significantly higher catch.

Since September 2000, Israel has tightened restrictions on Palestinian access to the sea and to land located near the fence with Israel – Access Restricted Areas – citing security concerns. These restrictions have been enforced through the firing of live ammunition, destruction of property, arrests, and the confiscation of equipment. While sea restrictions have varied, for the most part since 2006 fishermen have been allowed to access less than one third of the fishing areas allocated to them under the Oslo Accords: six out of 20 nautical miles (NM). Fish, particularly sardines, is a major source of protein, micronutrients and essential Omega 3 fatty acids for Palestinians in Gaza and contributes to nutritional diversity. The fish available in the six NM area tend to be smaller in size, limiting the type of nets that can be used, reducing the value of the catch and undermining the sustainability of marine resources. Over 35,000 Palestinians depend on this industry for their livelihoods.

Over 35,000 Palestinians depend on the fishing industry for their livelihoods.

On 3 April 2016, the Israeli authorities expanded the fishing area along the southern Gaza coast to nine NM, while retaining the current six NM fishing limit along the northern coast. The volume of fish caught in April was 446.8 tonnes, a significant increase compared to 81.2 tonnes in April 2015. There was also a notable increase in the catch of four species of fish, such as white grouper, which are considered particularly profitable, with the catch increasing from one tonne in March 2016 to almost eight tonnes in April, following the expansion of the fishing zone.



Severe power cuts in Gaza

On 8 April, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) shut down completely after exhausting its fuel reserves due to a shortage of funds. This triggered electricity blackouts of 18-20 hours per day, up from 12 hours previously, further undermining the delivery of basic services, including the supply of water to households. The severe fuel shortages have caused the GPP to operate at approximately half of its capacity (60 out of 120 MW) or below since July 2013 and it has been forced to shut down on several occasions. In addition to the GPP, Gaza depends on the purchase of electricity from Israel (120 MW) and Egypt (30 MW). The electricity supply was further reduced in the first part of May when the two power lines from Egypt stopped functioning.

The capacity of the Energy Authority in Gaza to purchase fuel to run the plant has been further undermined since the beginning of 2016, following a change in the arrangement with the Ramallah-based Ministry of Finance, which provided the GPP with a total exemption on fuel taxes in 2015. The scope of this tax exemption has gradually been reduced since January, significantly increasing the cost of fuel. Emergency fuel distributions to critical water, sanitation, health and solid waste collection services, primarily to run backup generators, continued through coordination by OCHA.

At the end of April, a partial resolution was reached to the dispute on the GPP fuel taxes, with the announcement that Gaza would be partially exempted from paying fuel tax from this summer. On 16 May, it was announced that there would be a return to an electricity rationing schedule of eight-hour intervals followed by eight hours without power throughout Gaza. One of the power lines from Egypt has also resumed operations.



Endnotes

1. HCJ 2733/14, The Dkaika Village Council and others vs. Ministry of Defense and others, State Response, para. 24 [in Hebrew].
2. Ibid.
3. Shelter Cluster Palestine: Shelter Cluster Monthly Report, April 2016.
4. The full versions of the HRP and the underlying Humanitarian Needs Overview are available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org/page/humanitarian-response-plan-2016>.
5. Progress reported in Q1 2016 includes some contributions as a result of rollover funds or projects/INGOs in line with, but not included in, the HRP projects.
6. February 2016 is notable as having the highest number of structures demolished in a single month since OCHA began the documentation of demolitions systematically in 2009.
7. In July 2015, the Israeli Government revealed that two of its citizens had entered the Gaza Strip in two separate incidents since September 2014. According to the Israeli authorities both men, one of Ethiopian descent and the other a Bedouin, are civilians who suffer from psychological problems.