



Home in the herding community of Al Hadidiya demolished due to lack of building permits, 26 November 2015.

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In this issue

- Sharp increase in exports and transfers from Gaza during 2015 3
- Sardine season in the Gaza Strip ends with average yield 4
- Heightened pressure on herding communities across Area C 6
- Emergency coordination and response systems reviewed and upgraded..... 9

HIGHLIGHTS

- Israeli measures in November and December target twelve vulnerable Palestinian herding communities in Area C of the West Bank.
- The volume of goods marketed outside Gaza in 2015 (Jan-Nov) increased more than five-fold compared with 2014.
- The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan for the oPt requests US\$571 million for a range of interventions, 19 per cent lower than that of 2015.

DECEMBER FIGURES*

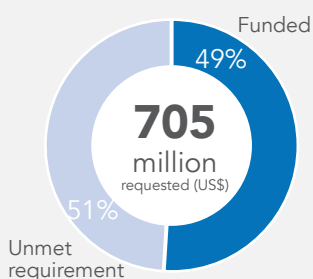
| | |
|--|-------|
| Palestinian killed (direct conflict) | 37 |
| Palestinian injured (direct conflict) | 2,154 |
| Israelis killed (direct conflict) | 2 |
| Israelis injured (direct conflict) | 41 |
| Structures demolished in the West Bank | 13 |
| People displaced in the West Bank | 61 |

*Updated through 28th December

STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLAN 2015

705 million requested (US\$)

49% funded



Overview

Attacks and clashes must not be treated as “the new normal”

By the end of 2015, 136 Palestinian deaths and nearly 14,000 injuries had been recorded in the West Bank and Israel in the context of attacks and clashes, the largest yearly figure since OCHA began its records in 2005. Figures for Israeli casualties resulting from Palestinian attacks were also some of the highest since 2008 (24 deaths and 350 injuries). The bulk of the casualties were recorded in the last quarter of the year, in a wave of violence characterized by almost daily stabbing and ramming attacks by non-affiliated Palestinians, and widespread protests and clashes. The targeting of Israeli civilians and the excessive use of force by Israeli military and police have remained major concerns throughout this period.

In the context of the continuing unrest, during December the Israeli authorities intensified restrictions on Palestinian movement throughout the West Bank. The Hebron governorate has been particularly affected: people moving between the main urban centers in the area, including to and from Hebron city, are forced to take long detours and cross checkpoints, where inspections and searches by Israeli soldiers are carried out, impacting access to services and livelihoods.

Recently, the Israeli authorities released for burial the bodies of a number of Palestinian perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks, which it has withheld, some for over two months, triggering protests and clashes demanding their return; eleven bodies (all residents of East Jerusalem) were still withheld as of 6 January. The Israeli authorities also continued the renewed policy of punitive demolitions of the family homes of Palestinian attackers, citing the need for deterrence: two demolitions in December displaced an additional 37 people.

During November and December, Israeli measures targeting vulnerable Palestinian herding communities in Area C also intensified, including the destruction or confiscation of property, issuance of demolition orders, and the temporary eviction of residents during military training exercises. In his December briefing to the Security Council, the Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs,



Miroslav Jenca, referred to one of these incidents in the northern Jordan Valley (al Hadidiya) as “troubling - all the more so as the relief provided to these households has been repeatedly seized by the Israeli security forces despite the onset of winter.”

Mr. Jenca also cautioned against treating the current upsurge in violence as “the new normal: Israelis and Palestinians should not be resigned to living under the threat of violence. However, a comprehensive strategy to limit that threat cannot rely uniquely on enhanced security measures. It must also address the primary elements motivating Palestinian anger.”

In contrast to the West Bank, the 24 fatalities recorded in Gaza in 2015 was the second lowest figure recorded since the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, indicating that the 2014 ceasefire has largely held. There was also some progress recorded in 2015 in the exit of goods from Gaza to Israel and the West Bank; the volume of goods marketed outside Gaza increased more than five-fold compared with 2014. The unemployment rate in Gaza also improved slightly in the third quarter of 2015, dropping five percentage points from the figure recorded in the equivalent quarter of 2014. However, unemployment in Gaza remains one of the highest figures in the world at 42.7 per cent, and commercial exports and transfers still constitute only 10 per cent of the volume recorded in 2007, prior to the imposition of the blockade.

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), part of the Global Humanitarian Overview launched in Geneva in December, has been completed by the humanitarian community in the oPt. The HRP for the oPt requests US\$571 million for a range of interventions from legal assistance and the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance in Gaza, to the provision of basic services such as water and health. The appeal is 19 per cent lower than that of 2015, in the wake of the 2014 hostilities in Gaza, but at least 65 per cent of project requirements in the 2016 appeal are intended for Gaza.

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Palestinian fishermen handling fishing nets in Gaza harbour, December 2015

Sharp increase in exports and transfers from Gaza during 2015

During November 2015, a total of 150 truckloads of commercial goods left Gaza, the largest figure in a single month since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007. This brings the number of truckloads marketed outside Gaza between January and November 2015 to 1,138, a five-fold increase over all of 2014. The volume of imports into the Gaza Strip also increased significantly during 2015.¹

The growth in exports and transfers from Gaza started in November 2014 following the easing of longstanding Israeli restrictions. The lifting of the ban on the transfer of goods to the West Bank, and subsequently also to Israel, resulted in over three-quarters of the truckloads exiting Gaza in 2015 being delivered to these two destinations, compared with almost none in previous years. The ban on the exit of non-agricultural goods was also eased and 12 per cent of truckloads from Gaza in 2015 (mainly to the West Bank) contained furniture, clothes, stationery and scrap metal.

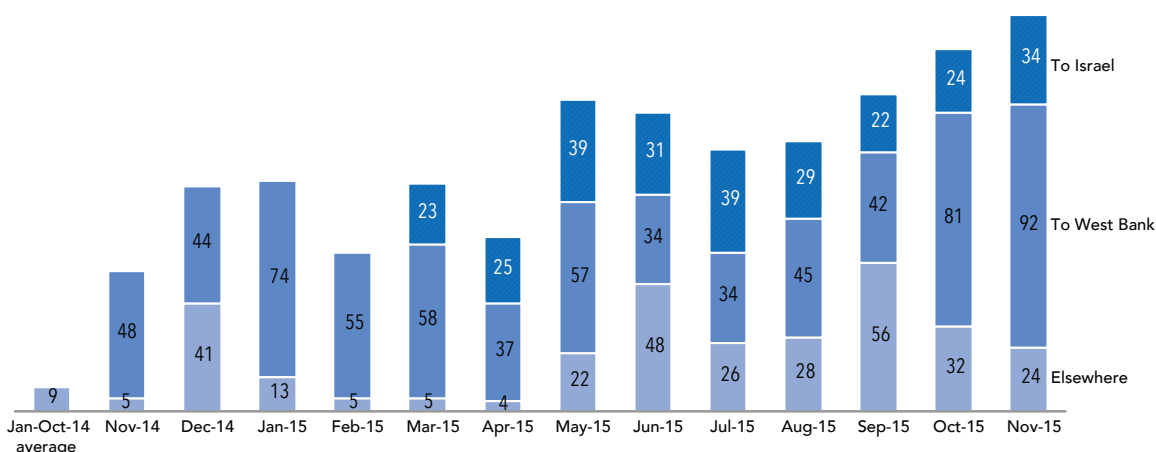
Volume of goods remains a fraction of pre-blockade figures

Despite the easing of restrictions, the average number of truckloads from Gaza in 2015 was less than 10 per cent of the equivalent figure during the first five months of 2007, prior to the imposition of the blockade. The limited progress can be attributed to a range of factors that undermine Gaza's productive capacity: previous and current Israeli restrictions on imports and exports, and their cumulative effect; the destruction of productive assets during multiple rounds of hostilities; the inadequate and unreliable electricity supply; and disputes related to the internal Palestinian divide.

Exports of furniture to Israel, a significant component of pre-blockade exports, were reportedly approved by the Israeli authorities earlier this year. However, implementation remains stalled for a variety of reasons that include disagreement between the authorities in Gaza and Ramallah on the handling of Value Added Tax (VAT) invoice requirements,

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TRUCKLOADS EXITING GAZA BY DESTINATION



Source: Palestinian Ministry of National Economy

and the recent Israeli ban on imports of wood planks thicker than one centimetre, citing security reasons. According to the Wood Industry Union in Gaza, these new restrictions on wood imports have already caused shrinkage of over 30 per cent in furniture production and a rise in furniture prices.

Slight decline in unemployment

In the third quarter of 2015 (July-September), the unemployment rate in Gaza stood at 42.7 per cent.² While this remains one of the highest in the world, it represents a drop of five percentage points from the figure recorded in the equivalent quarter of 2014 (47.4 per cent), reflecting the generation of a total of 44,300 new jobs, mostly in the construction sector but also in export-related activities.

A more significant increase in economic activity requires the consistent exit of goods to all destinations. This must be supplemented by additional measures, including (but not limited to): the lifting of import restrictions on raw materials; the reconstruction of facilities and productive assets damaged during hostilities; an adequate electricity supply; and more efficient utilization of existing capacity at the Kerem Shalom crossing.



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In part, the decline in the sardine catch since 2006 can be attributed to the reduction by the Israeli military of the permitted fishing zone to a maximum of 3-6 nautical miles (NM) off the Gaza Strip coastline instead of 6-12 NM in previous years.

Sardine season in the Gaza Strip ends with average yield

Restrictions on access to the sea and on imports of equipment continue to undermine fishing livelihoods

Twice a year, from April to mid-June and from mid-September to November, the sardine season dominates the agenda of fishermen in the Gaza Strip. Sardines historically make up 60 percent of the total fish catch and form the bulk of the income of Gazan fishermen.

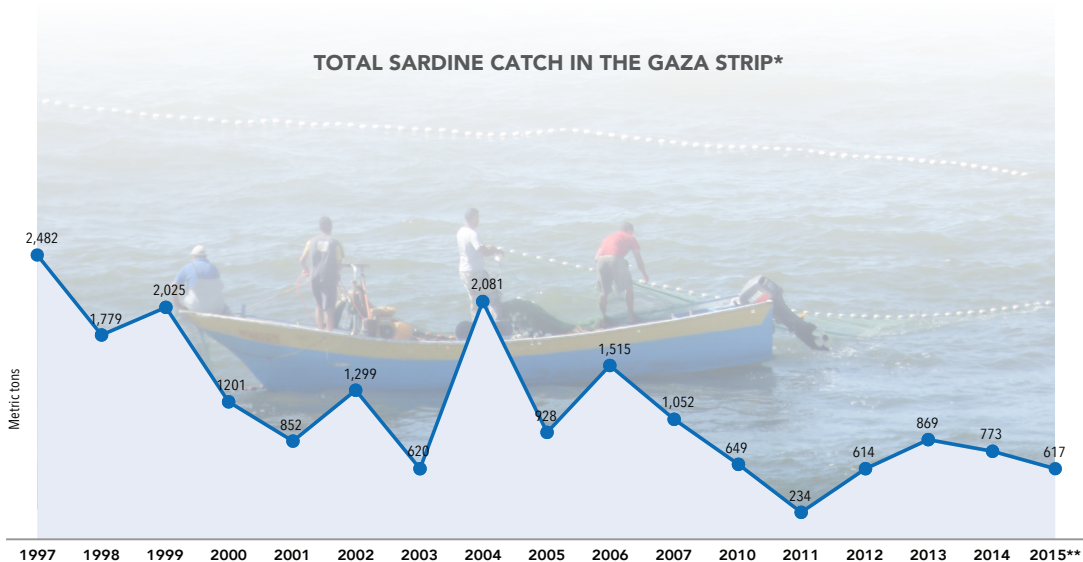
Fish, particularly sardines, is a major source of protein, micronutrients and essential

Omega 3 fatty acids for Palestinians in Gaza, and contributes to nutritional diversity.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture in Gaza, the total sardine catch from January to November 2015 was 617 tons. This is approximately the same as the average yield for the past five years (624 tons), but is less than half the average for the period between 1997 and 2005 (1,439 tons).

In part, the decline in the sardine catch since 2006 can be attributed to the reduction by the Israeli military of the permitted fishing zone to a maximum of 3-6 nautical miles





*Disaggregated data for 2008 and 2009 are unavailable.

** January to November

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Gaza.

(NM) off the Gaza Strip coastline instead of 6-12 NM in previous years. The richest sardine shoals out to sea have, therefore, become inaccessible. The fish available in the area currently permitted (up to 6 NM) tend to be smaller in size, limiting the types of nets that can be used, reducing the value of the catch and undermining the sustainability of marine resources.

Fishing activities are also affected by import restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on items needed to maintain the fishing fleet, such as fibreglass and engine spare parts. These items are classified by Israel as “dual use items” for security reasons.

The easing of restrictions on imports of these materials, coupled with an extension of the accessible fishing zone from 6 to 12 NM, would significantly contribute to protecting and promoting the livelihoods of over 3,500 Palestinian families of fishermen in the Gaza Strip.

The easing of imports restrictions on fishing equipment, coupled with an extension of the accessible fishing zone to 12 NM, would significantly contribute to protecting and promoting the livelihoods of fishermen in the Gaza Strip.



Heightened pressure on herding communities across Area C

Slight decline in overall demolitions during 2015

In November and December 2015, Israeli measures increased against at least twelve vulnerable Palestinian herding communities in Area C, the majority of them in the Jordan Valley (see map). These measures included the destruction or confiscation of residential structures, animal shelters and basic infrastructure; the issuance of demolition orders; and the temporary eviction of residents for Israeli military training. Some of the structures and items targeted had been provided by international organizations as humanitarian assistance. Together with the severe restrictions on access to grazing land, a coercive environment has been created persuading residents to leave.

During 2015 the Israeli authorities demolished or dismantled a total of 539 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, the vast majority in Area C, on the grounds of lack of building permits. This figure was ten per cent lower than in 2014. Approximately 60 per cent of the structures targeted in both years were located in small herding communities in Area C, and some 20 per cent were provided as humanitarian assistance and funded by international donors.

Some 20 per cent of the structures destroyed in 2014 and 2015 were provided as humanitarian assistance and funded by international donors

Al Hadidiya herding community

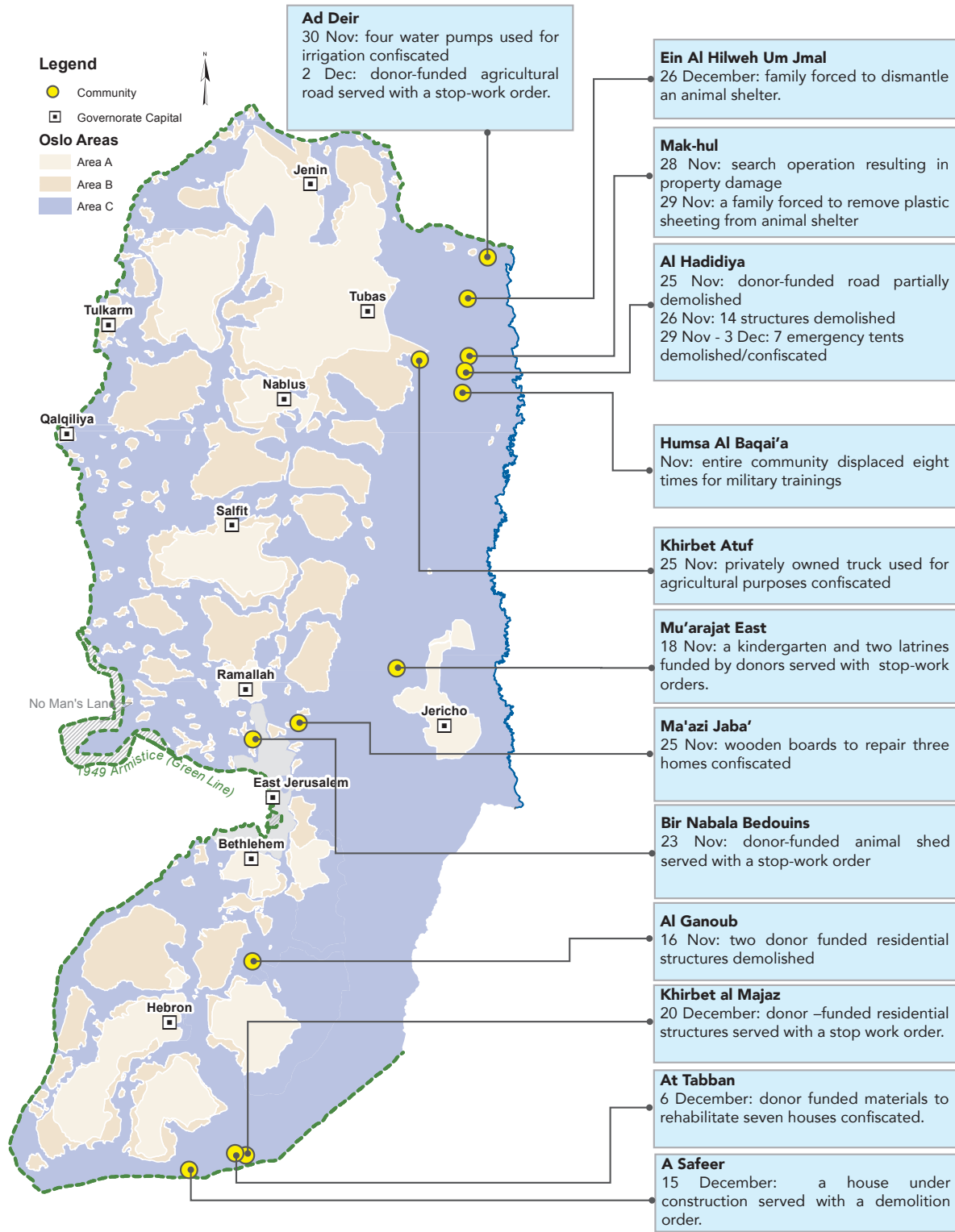
One of the communities most affected by the recent measures is al Hadidiya in the northern Jordan Valley (Tubas governorate). The Israeli army demolished and/or confiscated a total of 33 residential tents and animal shelters belonging to three households, comprising 19 people of whom six were children. One family has had their home demolished five times since 2000.

The majority of the structures destroyed or confiscated (25) in al Hadidiya had been provided as humanitarian assistance in response to previous demolitions. A one kilometer section of road serving the community and funded by an international donor was also destroyed in November, despite an injunction by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) freezing the demolition. Overall, the value of the assistance destroyed was over 30,200 Euros.



Al Hadidiya, which has approximately 100 residents, has undergone multiple demolitions and displacements and is not connected to water or electricity networks. Part of the land where the community is located has been allocated to the adjacent Israeli settlement of Ro'i and has been declared a closed military area by the ICA. Despite the recent incidents, these families remain in the community, albeit under extremely precarious conditions.

ISRAELI MEASURES AGAINST HERDING COMMUNITIES IN AREA C: NOV-DEC 2015 



Military training

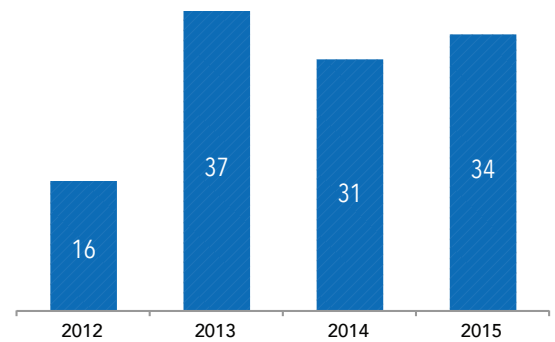
Another community in the same area, Humsa al Baqaia, comprising 86 people, has been temporarily displaced on eight occasions since the beginning of November 2015, for periods ranging from six to eighteen hours, to allow for Israeli military training, severely disrupting the community's livelihoods.

There are 38 herding communities located in West Bank areas designated by the Israeli authorities

as closed for military training ("firing zones"). Since the beginning of 2012, OCHA has recorded nearly 120 incidents of temporary displacement of entire communities in these circumstances, mostly in the northern Jordan Valley. Families often report property losses as a result of these exercises, including grazing and agricultural land set on fire by live ammunition and the deaths of animals that could not be evacuated or tended to.

Since the beginning of 2012, OCHA has recorded nearly 120 incidents of temporary displacement of entire communities due to military training, mostly in the northern Jordan Valley.

INCIDENTS OF MILITARY TRAINING RESULTING IN TEMPORARILY DISPLACEMENT



Source: OCHA Protection of Civilians Database

Demolitions and displacement under international law

According to the Israeli authorities, these communities were established without the required permits and do not possess title over the land, therefore enforcement measures against these communities are consistent with Israel's obligation under international humanitarian law (IHL) to maintain law and order in an occupied territory (Article 43, Hague Regulations).

However, Article 43 must be interpreted and implemented in conjunction with other relevant provisions of IHL, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, including the prohibition on the destruction of private or public property unless absolutely necessary for military operations (Article 53), the prohibition on forcible transfers (Article 49), and the obligation to facilitate the rapid, unimpeded and impartial delivery of relief to civilians in need and assist personnel to the fullest extent practicable in carrying out their relief mission (Articles 59, 60).

Due to the lack of adequate planning and the discriminatory allocation of public land, it is nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits in most of Area C. Official data indicate that over 11,000 demolition orders - affecting an estimated 13,000 Palestinian-owned structures - were 'outstanding' in Area C by the end of 2014.³

Emergency coordination and response systems reviewed and upgraded

The online Winter Storm portal

In advance of the upcoming winter season, and for the third consecutive year, OCHA upgraded and relaunched the West Bank Winter Storm online system in December 2015. This was accomplished in close coordination with various governorates of the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Palestinian Civil Defense (PCD), and with the participation of humanitarian NGOs and UN agencies.

The system has been modified and updated based on the lessons learned from previous years, and was followed up with training provided by OCHA to PCD, PRCS and relevant staff in Palestinian governorates and municipalities. Presentations of the system have also been provided to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group and are planned for members of the National Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Team.

The system supports the documentation and tracking of needs emerging from emergencies by the relevant agencies in a timely manner, alongside the response provided and outstanding gaps. This approach to the management of emergencies allows Palestinian officials and humanitarian agencies to make efficient decisions based on the scope and severity of needs.

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Winter Storm Online System

OCHA, in coordination with Palestinian Authority Governorates, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and Palestinian Civil Defence, launched the West Bank Winter Storm online system. The system supports response agencies to report needs and provide prompt response. The online system allows users to make the right decisions which ultimately eliminate duplication of work and ensure that gaps are addressed in a timely manner. It allows both operational responders in the field as well as senior managers to access needs and response data concurrently. This approach of managing emergencies improve the ability of responders to reach out to people in need in a timely manner and allows Palestinian officials as well as humanitarian agencies to make efficient decisions based on needs and severity.

The Winter Storm is password-protected. To create an account, kindly send a request to Majed Abu Kubi at abukubi@un.org copying Mohammad Darawsheh at darawsheh@un.org.

Official data on winter storm

In Gaza, a system built on the same platform is used as an initial joint assessment tracking platform. The Inter-Cluster Coordination Group is planning to review and discuss potential expansion of use of the platform into a fully integrated incident tracking and response mechanism.

The Inter-Agency Contingency Plan

OCHA established a Working Group composed of representatives of the main agencies and clusters to review and update the current Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (IACP) for the oPt. The review is expected to integrate considerations stemming from the increase in confrontations and violence in the West Bank since October 2015, as well as lessons learned from seasonal hazards such as the winter storms and floods of recent years.

In addition to updating different planning scenarios, the emergency coordination structure and composition has been reviewed, including roles and responsibilities on national and local levels in the coordination and response strategy. The Working Group benefited considerably from lessons learned from the establishment of the Emergency Operation (EOC) Room operated in Gaza during the 2014 hostilities, and plan to replicate it in the West Bank, including on a local level, for possible emergency operations.

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Endnotes

1. For further details on import trends see: OCHA, Gaza Crossings Monthly Update, November 2015.
2. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.
3. See, OCHA, Under Threat, September 2015, at: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/demolition_orders_in_area_c_of_the_west_bank_en.pdf