

P.O. Box 38712 East Jerusalem
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Beit Lahia Waste Water Treatment Plant

Humanitarian Situation Report #2

29 March 2007 – 2pm



Photos: OCHA

1. Overview

At 9.30 am on 27 March a large wave of effluence from an emergency filtration basin at the waste water treatment plant in Beit Lahia in north western Gaza flooded into the nearby bedouin village of Um Al Nasser. Two children and three women were killed and a further 18 were injured.

The response from humanitarian organisations and the Palestinian Department of Civil Defence was swift with assessment teams on site within two hours. Over 100 homes were destroyed and damaged by the flooding and the **immediate priority** was to move the homeless to a secure location on higher ground. A camp has been established to north east of the Bedouin village (see map) by UNRWA with over 250 families receiving assistance from a number of national and international agencies. Latrines have been constructed by UNRWA and psychosocial support is in place for those most affected by the recent disaster. Ongoing humanitarian needs are being met.

The **second priority** is to ensure there is no recurrence of the flooding. The level of wastewater has to be reduced urgently while the banks of the existing basins have to be simultaneously reinforced. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and Coastal Water Municipalities Union (CMWU) state that the waste water level has to be reduced by one metre if future flooding is to be avoided. An intensive clean up campaign is required for those homes that were flooded to ensure there is no break out of communicable diseases. The only way to reduce the current waste water levels is to drain off the excess which is not possible with the current capacity of the pumps at the treatment plant. The PWA/CMWU state that 800 m3 of waste water must be drained off each hour over a 10 day period to be reduced to safer levels. The effluence will be directed through a pipe network and disposed in sand dunes inside the former northern Israeli settlement block. The Israeli District, Coordination and Liason office at Erez facilitated the passage of two pumps into Gaza from Israel on 28 March however it is believed that additional units will be required.

Estimated Casualties / Damage

Deaths:	5
Injuries:	18
Houses destroyed/damaged:	103
People in tent camp:	1450

Source: Palestinian Ministry of Health / UNRWA

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2. Relief Provision – Current Status - Updated

SECTOR	AGENCY	ITEM	STATUS
Shelter	UNRWA	248 tents - 217 families (1450 people)	Distributed
	ICRC	10 tents	Distributed
Drinking Water	UNRWA	6 water tanks (1,000 litres each)	Installed
	MSF	*3 water tanks (2000, 1500, 1000 litre) & water truck five times daily * Providing water to Medical Relief Services (MRS) clinic * Donated 1 water tank (500 litres) * 300 jerry cans	Current
	Islamic Relief	500 jerrycans (20l)	Distributed
	UNICEF/PRCS	100 family water kits	Distributed
Food	UNRWA	*One-off provision of tinned meat and bread to displaced families on arrival at camp	Distributed
	WFP	Willing to supplement ongoing food baskets with fresh food including vegetables	Pending
	ICRC	100 family food parcels (one month)	Distributed
	Islamic Relief	500 food parcels	Distributed
	MAP-UK	700 hot lunch time meals for one week	Current
	Welfare Association	600 hot meals	27 March
	CARE International	280 family food parcels for one week	Current
Sanitation	Save the Children (SCFUS)	200 food parcels	Pending
	UNICEF/PRCS	100 hygiene kits	Distributed
	ICRC	2 hygiene kits to each family	Distributed
	UNRWA	* 8 basic latrines * 2 additional latrines and 8 showers	Constructed To be completed today
	Islamic Relief	500 hygiene kits	Distributed
	MSF	300 bars of soap and washing powder	Distributed
NFIs	SCF US	100 household supplementary kits including hygiene items	Current
	UNRWA	* 149 families received 1 blanket, 1 mattress per person and 1 mat per family * 1 x kerosene lamp per family	Distributed
	Islamic Relief	500 blankets	Distributed
	SCF US	Clothes to 600 children and 200 adults	Pending consultations with UNRWA
	Rafeed	* Clothes to 250 families * Cooking and gas stoves to 250 families	Current
	ICRC	* Cooking gas bottles to each family in the camp	Distributed

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Health	Medical Relief Services (MRS)	Mobile clinic serving the camp (with support from MSF)	Current
	PRCS	Erection of triage tent to provide PHC services	Current
	WHO	Provision of technical assistance in relation to surveillance systems and health education	Current
Psychosocial	UNRWA	15 Counsellors on site	Current
	MSF	3 Counsellors on site	Current
Infrastructure	UNRWA	* Relief teams and engineers on site * Erection of camp lighting system * Ongoing assessment of damaged homes. 112 assessed to date of which 7 destroyed	Current
	Gaza Municipality	Provision of bulldozers, tractors and water tankers	
	UNDP	30 engineers on standby	
	Civil Defense	Mobilisation of all CD forces to northern Gaza with the exception of Rafah staff	
Coordination	UNRWA (lead) OCHA / UNSCO (support)	Sitreps Relief coordination matrix Media	Gaza / Jerusalem

3. Coordination

- An emergency water-sanitation meeting including the PWA, CMWU, UN and NGOs took place at UNICEF on 28 March.
- An emergency coordination meeting to assess the current humanitarian needs took place at UNSCO on 28 March with UN agencies, NGOs and and PA civil defence.
- A UN inter agency coordination meeting took place at 2 pm on 28 March the Gaza UNRWA field office.
- **Next** on SUNDAY 1 April: A **health** coordination meeting will take place at 10am, WHO Gaza.
- **Next** on MONDAY 2 April: An **inter-agency** coordination meeting will take place at 2 pm, UNSCO Gaza.
- **Next** on WEDNESDAY 4 April: A **psychosocial** meeting will take place at 1pm, UNICEF Gaza.

4. Background Information

The Beit Lahia waste water treatment plant was built in 1976 and was originally designed to serve up to 50,000 habitants in north eastern Gaza. The total population of the area served by the plant is now over 200,000 and continues to rise.

The combination of an ever increasing volume of waste and insufficient capacity has led to effluence overflowing from filtration basins into the surrounding sand dunes creating a small lake that now covers over 110 acres. In 1995 the affected area was 13 acres. Previous flooding albeit not on the current scale occurred in 1989 and 1992.

In response to rising concerns by the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) at the expansion of the lake, an emergency filtration basin was dug out and completed in September 2006 in order to add additional capacity to the existing seven basins. The excavation of the additional filtration basin was seen as a temporary but

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necessary measure pending the building of a new waste water treatment plant near the Islamic cemetery in eastern Jabalia.

END



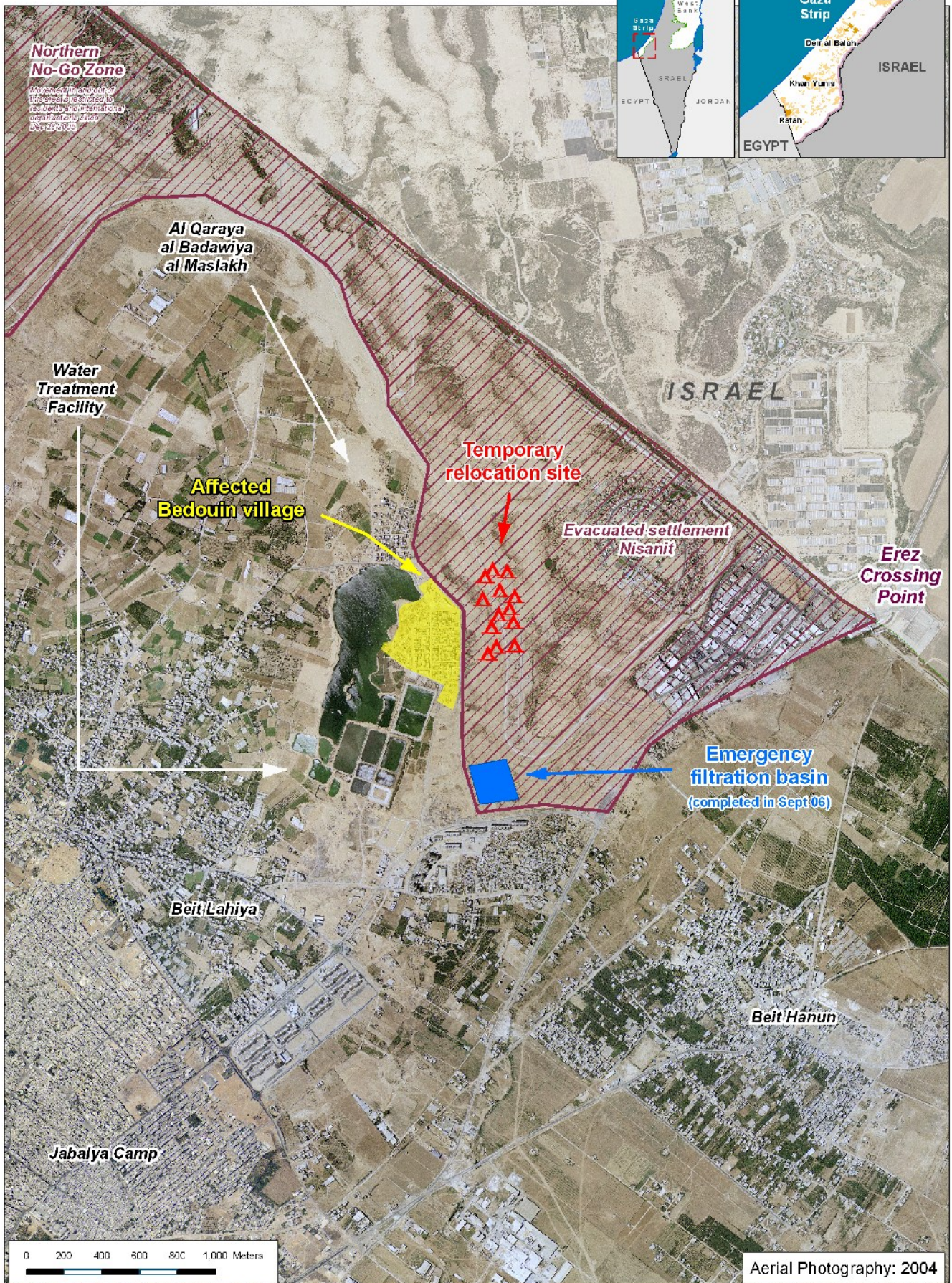
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The Gaza Strip

Beit Lahiya

27 March 2007

Waste water treatment plant flooding



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