



GAZA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT 1 January 2009 as of 14:30

EXCERPTS FROM SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI MOON'S STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL (31 DECEMBER 2009)

"... conditions for 1.5 million people in Gaza today are nothing short of terrifying. The people of Gaza are living under heavy bombardment, which has targeted Hamas facilities, smuggling tunnels and other Hamas infrastructure as well as the former Palestinian Authority security structure, government buildings, residential homes, mosques and businesses."

"Schools have closed and daily life in southern Israel is extremely difficult as Israelis live in constant fear of rockets which have hit homes and schools."

"I condemn unequivocally and in the strongest possible terms the ongoing rocket and mortar attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian militants. But I also condemn the excessive use of force by Israel. All parties must fully uphold international humanitarian law."

"It is the civilian populations that are bearing the brunt of this escalation, and there must be swift and decisive action by the international community to bring to an end their suffering."

VIOLENCE

- Air strikes by the Israeli Air Force (IAF) continued with a frequency reaching one air strike approximately every 20 minutes. From yesterday evening until this morning, approximately 41 air and artillery strikes were reported. The targets included several homes of Hamas activists, governmental buildings and ministries, metal workshops and tunnels along the border with Egypt.
- The entire civilian population in the Gaza Strip remains vulnerable. There are no public warning systems or shelters. Homes are located next to potential targets.
- UNWRA reports that from yesterday evening until this afternoon, approximately 19 people were killed and 38 injured. The total number of fatalities since the beginning of the attacks on Gaza on Saturday, remains uncertain, with estimates ranging from 315 (Al Mezan human rights group, 31 December) to 395 (various media sources).
- From yesterday evening until this morning, Palestinian militants fired more than 15 mortar shells and 29 homemade and Grad-type rockets towards Israeli targets, resulting in no reported casualties. The number of Israelis killed as a result of rocket fire stands at four. IDF tanks and armored vehicles continue to amass near the Gaza border, awaiting a decision on a land invasion.

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT ON GAZA CIVILIANS

There is a sense of panic, fear and distress throughout the Gaza Strip. Civilians have implemented a self-imposed curfew and face insecurity in re-stocking basic food items, water and cooking gas. The lines in front of bakeries and supermarkets are extremely long. In Jabalia, for example, the queue in front of the only open bakery, reached up to 300 meters, according to eyewitnesses. People were standing under the heavy rain, in the hope of getting at least some bread. Supplies are running low. Most families are holed up in one to two rooms that are considered the safest in the home, without electricity for 16 hours a day and

barely running water. Children have no outlets. Families are moving to shelters or safer places at night to sleep.

PRIORITY IMPORTS NEEDED:

- **Fuel:** Industrial fuel is needed to power the only electric plant in Gaza which has shut down causing a 41% power deficit. The remaining electric supply from outside the Gaza Strip is insufficient. All the water, sanitation and other utilities, which provide basic services to the population, as well as hospitals and the general population are affected by the outages which are now averaging 16 hours a day. Hospitals have reverted to generators to support intensive care and operating room functions.
- **Wheat grain:** Essential to provide flour for local bakeries and UNRWA food distribution to hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries. There are long lines at bakeries and bread rationing has been implemented. The Karni conveyor belt is the best equipped mechanism to import the large amounts of wheat flour needed.
- **Cash:** UNRWA – the largest humanitarian assistance provider in the Gaza Strip - has suspended cash payments to its 49,000 “Special Hardship” families as well as its suppliers/contractors for critical programs including school feeding. Its staff has been able to receive only 50% of their salaries due to the cash shortage.
- **Medical equipment:** [see health section below]

FOOD SITUATION

- This morning UNRWA resumed its food distribution program in six distribution centers throughout the Gaza Strip after a two weeks long suspension. Long queues, including large numbers of people not registered as beneficiaries, were reported at distribution centers. In one incident that occurred at the Beach Camp distribution center, two UNRWA vehicles were damaged when a person attacked these cars. Long queues, up to 300 meters long, continued to be reported at the few remaining open bakeries. Sacks of flour are reported as being sold for NIS 150 a sack, down from NIS 200 a sack a few days ago, reportedly due to price controlling mechanisms implemented by the Hamas authorities.
- Since the reopening of Kerem Shalom days before the bombing, WFP has been able to bring in 1,600 MT of food. As a result, the warehouse of its implementing partners- MSA and CHF- which constitutes 70% of WFP's storage capacity, has enough food to resume the distribution of the October-November- December cycle. WFP would be in a position to bring in more food to Gaza, if safe access to its warehouse in Karni (capacity 2,500 MT) was guaranteed. Loading and unloading at Karni is very difficult because of its proximity to the border, in a zone now declared a military zone.
- WFP's distribution to 265,000 beneficiaries is ongoing. As soon as food is distributed, the stock will be replenished. In addition, WFP began on 31 December a blanket emergency distribution of bread in Beit Hanoun for approximately 3,000 families. This area in the north of Gaza was chosen since it is one of the poorest areas in Gaza and it has been heavily affected by the current conflict. The bread distributed is produced by local bakeries with wheat flour provided by WFP. The distribution is organized by local committees under the supervision of CHF.
- As a result of an Italian donation, received in the aftermath of the crisis, WFP has started to distribute biscuits and canned meat to approximately 3,000 women and children patients in hospitals.

- WFP also reports shortages in some food items including flour, rice, sugar, dairy products, milk, canned foods and fresh meats. The availability of non-basic food items is affected not only by the closure but also by the recent destruction of many tunnels along the border with Egypt, through which these items were being imported.

HOSPITALS

- Hospitals continue to be overwhelmed by the large influx of injured people. Most of them are discharging patients as soon as possible in order to free beds for new casualties. This could affect patients who need proper medical follow-up. At least 1200 wounded are still hospitalized. Hospital capacity is approximately 2000 beds.
- Although the situation of drugs and medical consumables has been stabilized to cope with injuries for the coming few days, the biggest challenge in the health sector regarding supplies is the shortage of medical equipment and spare parts. Hospitals are relying almost entirely on back-up generators which are not always reliable, due to 16 hour (on average) power outages.
- At least 30 trucks of medical supplies have been delivered to Gaza since Sunday. Four truckloads arrived yesterday with supplies from CARE and UNFPA. ICRC is making further substantial deliveries over the next day or two and WHO is providing 50 surgical kits and 9 inter-agency emergency kits (funded by Norway and the Humanitarian Emergency Fund) due to arrive in the next few days. There are substantial volumes of supplies from other donors also in the pipeline.

FUEL/ELECTRICITY

The Gaza power plant has been shut down since 30 December due to the lack of fuel reserves causing a 41% power deficit. Power outages are now a daily average of 16 hours/day. Due to localized damage from the bombings, some electrical lines have been cut, causing some areas to have up to 48 hour continuous power cuts. GEDCO is facing trouble repairing due to the security situation and lack of spare parts.

WATER AND SANITATION

Since Tuesday, sewage water is pouring into the streets in Beit Hanoun, following damage to the main pipeline between Beit Hanoun and the Beit Lahiya wastewater treatment plant.

CROSSINGS

- Kerem Shalom crossing is partially open today and about 80 truckloads carrying mainly food and medical supplies are expected to enter Gaza. A total of 84 truckloads, including 34 for humanitarian aid agencies, entered yesterday through this crossing.
- The conveyor belt located at Karni crossing, used inter alia for the import of wheat grain, and Nahal Oz fuel pipelines will remain closed today for the sixth consecutive day exacerbating both the fuel and wheat shortages.
- Rafah crossing is today partially open and approximately 25 wounded persons are expected to be evacuated to Egypt, alongside the entry of limited amounts of medical supplies. Since the beginning of the military operation, about 70 Palestinians were evacuated to Egypt for medical treatment. Another 6 persons (1 wounded and 5 chronic cases), each with a family member or escort, were evacuated yesterday to Israeli hospitals through the Erez crossing.

CASH CRISIS

There appears to be progress on solving UNRWA outstanding and urgent cash requirements to pay their

staff, suppliers and contractors.

FUNDING

A number of pledges have been made in recent days to assist the emergency humanitarian response in Gaza, including \$10m from the UK government, \$10m from the Japanese government and \$1m from Norway. The Humanitarian Coordinator has indicated that CAP 2009 projects for Gaza cover many elements of the emergency but remain unfunded, i.e. WHO, WFP, Oxfam. He also has strongly recommended donors to consider contributing to the Humanitarian Emergency Response Fund (a CAP project) as well as the additional UNRWA's emergency appeal for \$34.4m.