



## GAZA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT

2 January 2009 as of 14:30

The humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip is significant and cannot be understated. It follows what the UN had described as an 18 month long “human dignity crisis” in the Gaza Strip, entailing a massive destruction of livelihoods and a significant deterioration of infrastructure and basic services.

Elements of the current humanitarian crisis include:

- Seven days of uninterrupted bombardment on the entire Gaza Strip. Registered fatalities amount to 327 and injuries to over 1,100, however there are estimates of additional unregistered casualties up to 421 people killed and 2,100 injured. People are living in a state of fear and panic.
- 80% of the population cannot support themselves and are dependant on humanitarian assistance. This figure is increasing.
- According to WFP, the population is facing a food crisis. There are food shortages of flour, rice, sugar, dairy products, milk, canned foods and fresh meats.
- The imports entering are insufficient to support the population or to service infrastructure maintenance and repair needs.
- The health system is overwhelmed, having already been weakened by the 18- month blockade.
- The utilities are barely functioning: the only electric power plant has shut down. Some 250,000 people in central and northern Gaza do not have electricity at all due to the damage to fifteen electricity transformers during the air strikes. The water system provides running water once every 5-7 days and the sanitation system cannot treat the sewage and is dumping 40 million litres of raw sewage into the sea daily. Fuel for heating, needed due to the cold weather, and cooking gas, are no longer available in the market.
- There has been significant destruction in the Gaza Strip, over 600 targets hit, including roads, infrastructure, the Islamic university, government buildings, mosques and civil police stations.

### VIOLENCE

The main feature of the Israeli Air Force (AIF) attacks in the last 24 hours was the escalation in the targeting of residential houses belonging to Hamas leaders and militants. Some 25 such houses were attacked. Most of their residents received prior phone warnings by the IDF, informing them about the intention to bomb the house and advising their evacuation. In some cases the strike occurred only 5 minutes after the call. Additional people received similar warnings that did not materialize, thus leaving families in a state of panic and uncertainty. The estimate on the total number of Hamas leaders' houses targeted so far is 45. There has been extensive damage caused to thousands of houses all over the Gaza Strip.

Among the houses targeted yesterday was the house of Hamas leader Nizar Rayan in Jabaliya Refugee Camp, who refused to evacuate upon being warned of an imminent strike. As a result, Rayan and 13 of his family members, including 11 of his children, were killed and 12 were injured. According to the IDF the house served as an arms storage place.

Over 60 rockets and mortars were fired by Palestinian militants at Israeli towns and cities, including Ashkelon, Ashdod, Sderot and Beersheba over the last 24 hours. Two residential buildings were directly hit, however no casualties were reported.

## FOOD

Yesterday, UNRWA resumed its food distribution to 2,000-3,000 families. Six out of 10 distribution centers are functional today and will keep distributing food depending on the amount of flour they will receive.

Yesterday, WFP distributed 358 metric tones of food and basic commodities to 2,300 families in Khan Younis and middle areas and is continuing today. By contrast, no distribution could be conducted in Gaza City (due to the location of the storage close to the police HQ) and in the northern area (due to damages to the storage building). In addition, WFP provides each morning 362 packs of bread (each one contains 50 pieces) to MoH hospitals.

No wheat grain entered Gaza since the beginning of the hostilities resulting in the closure of all mills. Mill owners confirmed that the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza ordered them to allocate the available wheat flour to bakeries and distribute it under its supervision (instead of them selling it on the market). As of today, fewer than 20 bakeries throughout the Gaza Strip are operational, due to lack of flour and cooking gas.

Some shop owners were reportedly hiding food items, in anticipation of further scarcity. An increased presence of blue police was observed in some areas, warning shop owners not to hide commodities or increase prices.

## HEALTH

According to various sources in the MoH and ICRC, while conditions at hospitals are extremely precarious, the situation has stabilized, following the large volume of medical supplies received and about to arrive. Overall, more than 30 truckloads with medical supplies have arrived to Gaza since Sunday. Yesterday four sophisticated generators have been brought in through Rafah crossing and distributed to Gaza MoH hospitals as an additional power backup.

The main challenge is the shortage of adequate medical equipment and spare parts, compounded by the 18 month long blockade. According to WHO, there are at least 1,000 medical machines out of order. Hospitals suffer also a severe shortage of cooking gas in hospitals, which is expected to be totally depleted in the coming days. As a result, WFP has distributed canned meat and high energy biscuits. The MoH reported a shortage of trucks to deliver medical supplies to the hospitals and of adequate storage capacity.

## FUEL / ELECTRICITY

The Nahal Oz fuel pipelines remain closed since the beginning of hostilities resulting in no delivery of fuel. Fuel shortages are exacerbated by interruption in the import of fuel from Egypt through the tunnels, following the destruction of part of them and the high risk of using them.

The only power plant in Gaza is not operational due to the lack of industrial fuel. Power outages last a daily average of 16 hours. In addition, following the damages caused by the air strikes to 15 electrical transformers, as much as 250,000 people in central and northern Gaza have no electricity supply during the entire day and night. There are no transformers currently available in Gaza. Transformers which were already purchased are sitting in Israel or Tulkarem and need coordination to be brought into Gaza.

Moreover, due to localized damages following airstrikes, some electrical lines have been cut, causing some areas to suffer from power cuts lasting 24 hours or more. In addition, a 5 MW line from Egypt to Rafah was damaged yesterday, extending the power cuts also to Rafah, which has usually continuous supply. The Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) is facing difficulties in repairing the damages.

Petrol and cooking gas are no longer available on the open market and most of the 240 gas stations in Gaza City have closed.

## **WATER AND SANITATION**

Since Wednesday, the sewage and water systems in Beit Hanoun were hit at five locations, causing considerable damage to the main sewage pipeline between the city and the Beit Lahiya waste water treatment plant. This has resulted in sewage water pouring into the streets. In addition, the water network was hit at four locations and seven water wells were seriously damaged and cannot be repaired due to the bombardments. This situation has left up to 250,000 people in Gaza City and northern Gaza without water supply.

UNRWA has started today distributing diesel to Gaza's Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) in order to allow the functioning of water and waste water facilities. Yesterday, the CMWU received 24 tonnes of chlorine, used for water disinfection, which is sufficient for the next couple of weeks.

## **SHELTER**

Due to air strikes, some 250-300 people in Rafah spent last night at emergency shelters provided by UNRWA. Another 150 people are staying at the two other shelters in northern Gaza. UNRWA has distributed blankets and mattresses to these emergency centers. .

## **CROSSINGS**

The Kerem Shalom crossing is partially open today and 70 truckloads carrying mainly food and medical supplies are expected to arrive in. A total of 58 truckloads, including 30 for humanitarian aid agencies, entered yesterday through this crossing. The Karni grain conveyor belt and Nahal Oz fuel pipelines remain closed.

The Erez crossing is partially open today and two medical cases with two escorts are expected to be evacuated to Israeli hospitals. On Wednesday five chronic patients and one wounded person, together with six escorts crossed. Except for these cases, the PA MoH in Ramallah continues to refuse to authorize the referral of patients from Gaza to medical treatment in Israel as in the past, referring patients to Egyptian hospitals instead.

More than 400 foreign nationals, mainly spouses of Gazan residents and their children, are expected to leave Gaza through this crossing.

The Rafah crossing is partially open today as well for the evacuation of medical cases and the entry of few shipments of medical supplies. Yesterday, 17 wounded were evacuated to hospitals in Jordan, and 120 people stranded in Egypt were allowed entry to Gaza. In addition, six truckloads of medical supplies entered Gaza yesterday through Rafah crossing.

## **PRIORITY IMPORTS NEEDED:**

- Fuel and electrical transformers: Industrial fuel is needed to power the only electric plant in Gaza which has shut down. The remaining electric supply from outside the Gaza Strip is insufficient. Replacement of the ten transformers which were completely damaged is also urgently needed to restore electricity supply to 250,000 people in central and northern Gaza. 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 humanitarian 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 94,000 “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.

## **WEST BANK**

Israel imposed a 24 hour total closure on the West Bank, except for humanitarian cases. Access of men to prayers in Al-Aqsa was prohibited except for Israeli ID holders above 50 years of age. 12,000 police and border police are on alert. Multiple demonstrations against the Israeli military operation in Gaza took place following Friday prayers today throughout the central West Bank. Clashes erupted between the IDF and Israeli Border Police and Palestinian protestors in Jerusalem. Three Palestinian protestors were injured in Ni’lin by rubber-coated metal bullets fired by the IDF during the demonstration today.