

gaza situation report



a bi-weekly update from unrwa

15 September 08:00hrs – 18 September 08:00hrs | issue 61

This will be the final bi-weekly issuance of the Gaza Situation Report. Gaza Situation Reports will now be issued by UNRWA on a weekly basis on Wednesdays. The next report will be issued on Wednesday 24th September.

Highlights

- 19 UNRWA school buildings continue to serve as Collective Centers for approximately 58,141 internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- On 16 September, 25 UNRWA projects (including one project with seven components) were approved or re-approved by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), including 23 new schools mainly reconstruction of old dilapidated buildings and one school that was re-approved, as well as seven (considered as one project by UNRWA) new infrastructure, sewage, drainage and water supply projects. The total value of these projects is USD 48,230,000. Four projects, with total value of over USD 25 million are still pending approval by COGAT, and two projects, valued at over USD 4 million are awaiting re-approval. Re-approval of projects refers to projects that had been approved prior to the freeze on importation of construction material in October 2013, and subsequently had to go through a re-approval process following the resumption of importation of construction material from December 2013.
- On 16 September COGAT advised that import of construction material to Gaza will be in accordance with the agreement of December 2013 and the recently established 'Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism'. UNRWA currently does not have further detailed information regarding the Mechanism. Robert Serry stated before the UN Security Council this week that this agreement between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the UN, will give a lead role in the reconstruction effort to the Palestinian Authority, and will involve the private sector in Gaza. Further, Mr. Serry further added that security assurance will be provided through UN monitoring that materials will not be diverted from their civilian purpose.

- For 241,000 children, their first week back at school is coming to an end. During this week, 252 schools in 130 UNRWA buildings and eight government buildings implemented psycho-social activities, which will be followed by several weeks of learning activities and then a transitional period into a resumption of the normal curriculum.
- UNRWA's shelter assessment of Palestinian homes continued and already almost 2,178 homes have been assessed across the Gaza Strip. It is expected that assistance packages for those with minor damage, who can use material available on the local market – such as window and doors – can be provided quickly.
- UNRWA is continuing assessments of its installations that were damaged during the 50 day war. UNRWA Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) teams have been visiting the damaged installations, assessing minor and severe damages since mid-July and as security permits. So far, an estimated 118 UNRWA installations have sustained damage during the conflict.
- As of 17 September, UNRWA's declaration of emergency in all five governorates of the Gaza Strip was suspended by the Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza. Area Operations Rooms in the five governorates of the Gaza Strip have effectively been disbanded. UNRWA's Collective Centre Management Unit (CCMU) continues to operate from Gaza City to coordinate assistance for the ongoing displacement emergency. CCMU comprises a Head of Unit and three CC (Collective Centre) Operations Officers, plus three support teams. In addition, Area Collective Centre Coordinators (senior UNRWA staff members) have been put in place in each governorate to coordinate requirements for each Collective Centre, such as registration; food and non-food item distribution; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and health-related issues. Within the Collective Centers, a team of staff employed under the Job Creation Programme (JCP) fulfill a range of functions, including food, NFIs, WASH and protection. These teams work under a CC Manager in each Centre, who is a full-time UNRWA staff member.

- On 15 September the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process issued a report for the upcoming meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC). The report expresses concern over the lack of a political horizon for the end of conflict, and calls for support for the Government of National Consensus (GNC) by regional stakeholders and the wider international community. Further, the report also expresses concern about socio economic trends in the West Bank and Gaza, stating that the status quo is not sustainable. Referring specifically to the situation in the Gaza Strip, the report calls for a lifting of the blockade, stating, “continued restrictions on the Strip- on exit and entry of goods and people- will fuel instability, development and conflict, and make the next escalation just a matter of time”.
- 504 Palestinian children are confirmed killed during the 50 day war. The cumulative death toll among Palestinians is at least 2,152, including 260 women, according to the continued collection of preliminary data by the Protection Cluster from various sources. It is reported that the cumulative Israeli fatality toll is 71, of whom 66 were soldiers and one civilian fatality was a child.

General

Operational Environment: The situation in Gaza remains tense. In addition to a projectile being fired towards Israel on 16 September, there have also been a number of incidents of Israeli Navy opening fire towards Palestinian fishing boats (on 15 and 17 September). Palestinians in Gaza continue to feel uncertain about the future, expressing concern about the unstable political and security environment and ongoing deterioration in the socioeconomic situation.

UNRWA's Response

UNRWA driver Abdul Rahman Tawfiq Al Jalis is 43 years old, married and has eleven children between the ages 3 and 11. During the recent hostilities, he and his family were forced to evacuate their house in Shajaiya and take refuge in an UNRWA school in Al Zaitoun area. Despite his own challenging situation, Abdul dedicated himself to working long days as an ambulance driver for those displaced in UNRWA shelters that urgently needed his help.

Abdul started his 25-year career with UNRWA as a labourer within the Relief and Social Services Programme before commencing his current role as a driver of a personnel bus for a health centre in Khan Younis. In order to advance his career, Abdul attended first aid training courses at the health centre. As a result of his ability to provide first aid, Abdul acted as an ambulance driver during times of conflict. He has worked as an ambulance driver during the 2008/09 and 2012 conflicts, in addition to the 2014 escalation.

Generally, UNRWA operates three ambulances which can be driven by one of its nine drivers throughout the Gaza Strip. During emergencies, the Agency increases its ambulance operation to eight ambulances and 16 drivers, serving the displaced in UNRWA shelters.



One of the ambulance drivers assigned to the Gaza area during the recent hostilities was Abdul. Abdul's work required him to be on stand-by in Gaza's operation room, for when an ambulance was required in one of the area's 29 shelters. During this time, Abdul often stayed overnight at the operations centre since he 'had no home to go to'. Looking back on the conflict, Abdul estimates he drove over 400 individuals to the hospital, including pregnant women who were close to delivery.

One of the most memorable cases that Abdul recalls is four year old Tamer, who was severely wounded by shrapnel. Tamer and his father had sought shelter in an UNRWA school close to the Islamic University in Gaza City, when the University was struck by shelling. Abdul says: "I managed to stop his bleeding resulting from shrapnel in his neck and then drove him to the hospital. Tamer spent two weeks in the hospital's intensive care unit. Upon his release, his father thanked me for my efforts towards his child."

Abdul faces a lot of difficulties when driving the ambulance during a conflict. In spite of these challenges, Abdul says he enjoys his work: "I am glad to help refugees because they are my people."

Since the announcement of the ceasefire, Abdul has returned to his regular job as a UNRWA driver of the Khan Younis health centre.



- Between Monday 15 September and Thursday 18 September, UNRWA continued to deliver truckloads of non food items and food to Collective Centers. This food support is provided in co-operation with WFP.
- UNRWA, in cooperation with partners and donors, continued daily water distribution to the Collective Centers. 768 cubic meters of potable water were trucked on 15, 16 and 17 September. In addition to potable water, 969 cubic meters of non-potable water were trucked by UNRWA, municipalities and contractors to the Collective Centers.
- As of 17 September, 36 Hygiene Committees, with 375 members, are active in the UNRWA Collective Centers. These Committees continue to conduct awareness sessions, focusing on cleanliness, usage of cleaning materials, best practices in water use, how to keep food from being contaminated, as well as how to treat lice and scabies and prevent diseases related to hygiene conditions.
- On 15, 16 and 17 September, all 21 Health Centers continued to serve refugees and non-refugees. A total of 62,511 people visited the doctor at UNRWA Health Clinics and 3,630 had appointments with the dentist.
- Between 15 and 16 September, a total of 496 tons of waste were removed from all of Gaza's 8 camps.
- Between 15 and 16 September, the 11 water wells in Jabalia Camp (6), Beach Camp (3), Khan Younis Camp (1) and Rafah (1) supplied 17,595 cubic meters of water.
- Maintenance and repair works continue on UNRWA installations across the Gaza Strip.

Summary of Major Incidents

- On the evening of 16 September, one projectile was fired towards Israel, in the first of such incidents since the start of the current ceasefire.

UNRWA Installations

- Data on damage to UNRWA installations is based on preliminary information and subject to change based on further verification. UNRWA estimates that 118 installations have been damaged since 8 July 2014.

Funding Needs

- The revised flash appeal can be downloaded from UNRWA's website: www.unrwa.org

Crossings

- Rafah crossing was open for humanitarian cases and international visa holders.
- Erez crossing was open for National ID holders (humanitarian cases, medical cases, merchants and UN staff) and for international staff.
- Kerem Shalom was open.

Background

Following the escalation in violence between Gaza and Israel in November 2012 an understanding was reached between Hamas and Israel, mediated by Egypt. 2013 was subsequently the quietest year in a decade, in terms of hostilities between Israel and Gaza. Events in 2014, however, have led to a profound deterioration in the situation.

On 8 July 2014, UNRWA declared an emergency in all five areas of the Gaza Strip in response to escalating violence between Israel and Hamas. Until the 26 August cease-fire, civilian displacement and fatalities reached unprecedented levels.

The Israeli blockade of Gaza entered its 8th year in June 2014 and continues to have a devastating effect as access to markets and people's movement to and from the Gaza Strip remain severely restricted. The economy and its capacity to create jobs has been devastated, with the majority of the population becoming dependent on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs. The number of Palestine refugees relying on UNRWA for food aid has increased from fewer than 80,000 in 2000 to over 830,000 today.

Gaza: Facts and Figures

- 1.2 million refugees out of 1.7 million total population
- 8 refugee camps
- Over 12,500 staff
- 252 schools in 156 school buildings for more than 240,000 students
- 21 health centers
- 16 relief and social services offices
- 12 food distribution centers for more than 830,000 refugees
- Living under a tightened land and sea blockade since 2007
- Shattered local economy
- Long standing restrictions on movement of people and goods led to a de-development of Gaza
- Potentially unlivable place by 2020



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

www.unrwa.org

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight.

UNRWA Field Office, Gaza | gazapio@unrwa.org