



Supplementary Appeal for Rafah



UNRWA
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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for
Palestine Refugees in the Near East



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During the month of May 2004, the Gaza Strip witnessed a shocking upsurge in the level of violence and destruction, with the IDF conducting large-scale incursions into densely populated areas of Rafah. Sixty Palestinians were reported killed and 221 wounded, including many civilians. Some 298 residential buildings housing 710 families were destroyed or damaged beyond repair. Apart from 47 buildings, all were occupied by Palestine refugees. They represent over 80% of the victims. Significant damage was also done to Rafah's infrastructure, agricultural land and other private and commercial properties.



In the wake of these events, the population in the areas affected find themselves in a dire humanitarian situation, one that is more bleak and precarious than at any time since the start of the Intifada. This is a society entrenched in poverty, with limited prospects of alleviation; over 75 percent of the population of Gaza is now living below the poverty line, and approximately 40 percent of the labour force is unemployed - almost double the pre-intifada level. Conditions are even more acute in Rafah, which is arguably the most deprived region in the Gaza Strip, yet has sustained the greatest share of destruction carried out by the IDF since the intifada began.

Those who have been left traumatized and homeless in Rafah are in need of immediate assistance. On the basis of detailed assessments of conditions on the ground, UNRWA is launching this Supplementary Appeal to provide a blend of emergency assistance to meet acute medical, public health, housing, and other immediate needs of those directly affected during the events in May. This Supplementary Appeal for Rafah does not absolve Israel of its responsibility to uphold international humanitarian law, and in particular its legal obligation to respect the human rights and protect the well-being of the population in the occupied territory. Nevertheless, the Agency calls on the international community to come to the immediate aid of a population that has been thrust into a humanitarian crisis not of its own making, or choice.

May 2004 in Rafah

Overview of events

The Israeli military has been engaged in the demolition of homes in the Gaza Strip since the early months of the intifada. Rafah has borne the brunt of these demolitions. At the beginning of May, there was a significant increase in the scale of the demolitions that took place there, particularly in the refugee camp and surrounding neighbourhoods including Brazil and As-salaam. As has so often been the case in Israeli operations of this nature, these demolitions occurred without prior warning for the families that lost their homes, and without prior indication that such an operation was imminent. Between 1 and 10 May, the Agency had recorded the destruction of 131 residential buildings housing 1,100 people, mostly Palestine refugees.

As it has throughout the crisis in the Gaza Strip, UNRWA provided emergency assistance to those rendered homeless and traumatized by these events. It also began assessing eligibility for assistance with re-housing, a process that was interrupted by a renewed Israeli military offensive on a much larger scale which began on 12 May.

On 12 May an IDF armoured vehicle was blown up near the border fence in Rafah, shortly after the Israeli army had launched a major incursion into the Zaitoun quarter of Gaza City. Subsequently, on 14 May, a large IDF force entered the Brazil area of Rafah. There was heavy fighting in the area during which 12 Palestinians were killed and 52 were injured. The IDF destroyed just over 100 houses during that particular incursion, which ended the next day.

On 17 May at 07:30hrs the IDF launched "Operation Rainbow." The goal was stated as being to locate and destroy tunnels through which weapons are allegedly smuggled into Gaza. Armoured vehicles, main battle tanks and armoured bulldozers entered Rafah from the east through the Sofa Crossing, effectively cutting off Rafah from the rest of the Gaza Strip. Extensive damage was caused to Palestinian agricultural property in the area.

On 18 May before dawn, 20 armoured vehicles and four bulldozers supported by helicopters entered the Tal Es-Sultan district of Rafah simultaneously from several directions; the troops established a cordon around the area and separated the area from the rest of Rafah. A number of armoured vehicles entered Tal Es-Sultan through UNRWA schools in the southeastern part, causing extensive damage to the school grounds. During the initial deployment, extensive damage was caused to Palestinian agricultural property. The Israeli troops were met with light resistance; however, in three separate incidents helicopters fired missiles at groups of Palestinians, inflicting a high number of casualties. Ambulances were prevented from evacuating the casualties.

On 19 May the IDF ordered all males aged 16 years and above to gather at an UNRWA school. Approximately 400 persons assembled. At 14:00hrs the same day residents of other areas of Rafah organized a demonstration. When they approached Tal Es-Sultan, an IDF tank fired several rounds into the crowd. Eight Palestinians were killed and 61

others injured in this single incident. Thirty seven of the injured were below 18 years of age. In total, 17 children under the age of 18 were killed by Israeli gunfire during "Operation Rainbow". No Israeli casualties were reported.

During the operation, ambulance services were interrupted by the Israeli forces and ambulances were prevented from evacuating casualties from Tal Es-Sultan area. Israeli troops also prevented people from accessing UNRWA's health clinic in the area. A 60-year old Palestinian died from kidney failure when Israeli troops refused to allow him to obtain medical care in the hospital located outside Tal Es-Sultan.

On 20 May the IDF entered the Brazil, As-Salam and Junena areas of eastern Rafah, sealed off the areas and cut off access to the UNRWA warehouse. Heavy destruction of houses was reported. Shortages of food and potable water in the targeted areas resulted from the destruction of water and electricity supplies. On 21 May, at 01:00hrs, the IDF withdrew their main forces, but maintained a presence around Tel Es-Sultan and the Brazil district. The curfew was lifted. Aid organisations were finally able to enter Tel Es-Sultan with food and water supplies through liaison with the IDF.

From 22-23 May, the IDF renewed their incursion into the Brazil district. During the early hours of 24 May, Israeli forces withdrew completely from Tel Es-Sultan, but maintained a presence in the Brazil area. This continued until the end of the month.

During "Operation Rainbow," extensive damage was caused to agricultural land and property. Crops, green houses, water irrigation systems and farm equipment were destroyed in several areas. Large farm areas east of Rafah along "Route 4" were leveled in the early stages of the operation, and green houses and irrigation systems destroyed in the area surrounding Tal Es-Sultan. Uprooting of citrus and olive trees was reported in all areas where the IDF deployed their troops. The destruction has affected several hundred dunums of farmland. (One dunum equals 1,000 square metres.)

Destruction of Shelters

During the course of May, as access by UNRWA staff to the affected area became increasingly possible, preliminary estimates of property damage could be firmed up. Thus, the Agency now possesses a near final picture of the premeditated demolitions, as well as wanton damage caused to residential and commercial property, enabling it to issue this Appeal to donors with a high degree of confidence.

As of 30 May, almost 3,800 residents of Rafah – 81 percent of them refugees – had been made homeless during the month, after their buildings were destroyed or damaged beyond repair by the IDF. In one month alone, another 33 percent has been added to those requiring aid from the international community, far outstripping UNRWA's conservative projections made when it prepared its 2004 Emergency Appeal.

Breaking down these figures further to demonstrate the additional burden that will fall on the Agency, the total number of refugee families in Rafah eligible for rehousing as a direct consequence of the IDF military action during May under UNRWA's strict criteria for assistance comes to 560. Thirty eight families have been deemed ineligible, mainly due to the fact that they own other properties where they could live.

A significant amount of lesser property damage has also been reported by UNRWA survey teams. A total of 264 residential buildings housing 496 families (2,931 individuals) suffered minor or major damage but are still habitable. Refugees comprise an even larger percentage (95 percent) of this category of affected persons.

Destruction of Infrastructure

During “Operation Rainbow” the Israeli forces caused extensive destruction to the district’s infrastructure, particularly in the Tal Es-Sultan area of Rafah. Roads were destroyed or badly damaged, including within UNRWA’s rehousing project. Water and sewage pipes were also damaged in several locations and the electricity network sustained extensive damage.

Damage to UNRWA Property

Damage was inflicted by the IDF on UNRWA’s school complex comprising Rafah Preparatory “C” Girls’ School and Tal Es-Sultan Elementary Co-educational School. IDF vehicles crashed through the gates and the outer boundary walls, demolished the internal boundary wall separating the two schools and caused major damage to the school yard pavements.

As noted above, at UNRWA’s re-housing project, inhabited by Palestinians whose homes had been demolished earlier in other parts of Rafah, damage was caused to roads, while the boundary walls of five houses were partially demolished.

Emergency Assistance from UNRWA and other Humanitarian Organizations

In response to statements made by senior IDF officers declaring their intention to extend the buffer zone along the Egyptian border, UNRWA established emergency evacuation centers in three of its school buildings in the center of Rafah. Palestinians seeking shelter were provided with mattresses, blankets, kitchen kits and fresh food. During the course of events, the number of persons seeking shelter increased. By 23 May, UNRWA had accommodated and fed 2500 persons at the schools. A number of NGOs and charitable organizations also donated cash assistance, food, bottled water, blankets and clothes to the families accommodated there.



On 20 May, in liaison with the IDF, UNRWA Operation Support Officers (OSOs) facilitated access for three UNRWA food trucks, one UNRWA water truck, three WFP

food trucks and representatives from OCHA, UNICEF and WHO seeking entry into Rafah through the Morag-Sofa junction. UNRWA trucks unloaded fresh food as well as bottled water, mattresses and blankets into the three UNRWA schools in Rafah.

The next day, the Agency again in liaison with the IDF, was able to distribute 10,000 litres of water to the residents of Tal Es-Sultan area. The operation was coordinated with the ICRC, which facilitated access for Rafah Municipality water trucks, distributing 31,000 litres of water. UNRWA also arranged for seven days of water and food supplies to be delivered to the SOS Orphanage in Tal Es-Sultan. The Agency also supplied 3,000 litres of diesel fuel for Rafah Municipality water and sewage pumps in the area. On 22 May, the Agency distributed an additional 1,500 litres of potable water in the eastern part of Tal Es-Sultan.

The response to the crisis from various aid organisations, including UNRWA, was as swift and adequate as it could have been, in light of the many operational obstacles that were encountered. UNRWA also coordinated its responses with other international humanitarian organisations at a time when simultaneous interventions were underway.

The Agency established a forward operational response centre in its main warehouse in Rafah, enabling it to conduct direct coordination on the ground with other humanitarian organisations and local authorities and liaise with the IDF. The operational centre also enabled the Agency to conduct detailed assessments of the actual needs on the ground, and communicate requirements to the Field Office in Gaza for a population under siege. While UNRWA relied on its own resources, other organisations worked in close coordination with the Rafah Municipality or local committees, as when the ICRC assisted the Rafah Municipality in gaining access to Tal Es-Sultan of a number of water trucks.

Relief and Social Assistance

1. Cash Assistance

In an economically deprived region in which personal savings were long ago exhausted, families that have lost an income earner to death or injury, or that face immediate cash needs that they can not cover from their own resources, have only UNRWA to turn to for urgent assistance. Providing such assistance not only relieves immediate family insecurity and prevents a further deterioration in socio-economic conditions, but restores a measure of social stability at a time when high tension could lead to unrest. UNRWA is presently unable to meet the urgent financial needs of hundreds of destitute refugee families affected by the recent events in Rafah.

Through this Appeal, the Agency proposes to support 760 families directly affected by the latest IDF incursion in Rafah, with a one-time payment of US\$ 300 per family. This one-time payment is distinct from the relocation fees and the household/food supplies stipend described further below. The 760 are composed of the 560 eligible homeless families and an estimated 200 families who have either suffered deaths or injuries, or lost their livelihoods as a result of the violence.

Total required: **US\$ 228.000**

2. Temporary Accommodation

Relocation Fees

UNRWA will also help the 560 families made homeless by the latest IDF incursion to cover the cost of renting temporary accommodation for one year, until such time as the Agency is hopefully able to provide them with alternative housing. (Average US\$ 100 per family/month): US\$ 672,000

[N.B.: The Agency is currently providing relocation fees to over 2000 families whose shelters were previously demolished during Israeli military operations, and who are still waiting to be re-housed, at a cost of more than US\$ 200,000 per month. Under the 2004 appeal, the Agency has so far been able to allocate just over US\$ 2.1 million for cash assistance out of a total required amount of more than US\$ 8 million. Unless new pledges are received, available funds will last only until the end of July.

Household/Food Supplies

Approximately US\$ 392,000 is required to compensate partially the 560 families whose homes were demolished in the recent events in Rafah, with some furniture and other household supplies/equipment. Another US\$ 450,000 is required to provide daily meals, for an initial period of one month, to about 2,500 persons currently accommodated in UNRWA schools (average of US\$ 3 per day per person): US\$ 842,000

Total required: **US\$1,514,000**

Re-housing

The Agency proposes to re-house the 560 eligible families left homeless and to repair the 244 shelters, housing 476 families, under this Appeal.

Including essential supporting infrastructure, such as local water and sewage systems, UNRWA estimates that the average cost of a new dwelling unit in Gaza, for a family required to be re-housed, is US\$20,000. The average cost of repair is estimated at US\$1,200. On this basis, the total reconstruction cost comes to US\$11.2 million, while the total repair bill is US\$292,800.



Total required: **US\$11,492,800**

Unfunded Backlog

Since the start of the intifada, based on donor funds provided under its Emergency Appeals to date, the Agency has only been able to rebuild 30 percent of the 2,743 new dwelling units required in the Gaza Strip as a consequence of IDF demolitions. In Rafah, the 560 families eligible to be re-housed following the May 2004 violence form part of a larger group of almost 1,000 families whom the Agency has been unable to assist due to a serious lack of funds. (See attached table, shown as an annex to this Appeal.)

The gap between the funds previously made available and allotted to re-housing projects in Gaza (US\$18.1 million) and the total funds required to re-house all those refugees made homeless and who fulfill the Agency eligibility criteria (US\$56.6 million) comes to **US\$38.5 million**. This figure represents the cost of eliminating the backlog of families the Agency has regrettably been unable to accommodate permanently so far.

While not part of this Appeal, UNRWA nevertheless wishes to draw donors' attention to the implications of this unfunded backlog. It would be immoral to prioritize assistance to those most recently afflicted by involuntary homelessness, due to the worldwide attention paid to the past month's events in Rafah, when 1,784 families (corresponding to approximately 10,700 individuals) have been in a similar plight in Rafah and elsewhere in the Gaza Strip for periods of up to two years.

A further 1,784 shelters also require repairs that have not been possible so far, due to a lack of funds. The estimated cost of meeting this requirement is **US\$2.14 million**.

Total required to eliminate backlog: **US\$40.64 million**.

Medical Requirements

The Agency has included in this supplementary appeal additional quantities of medical supplies, including drugs and first-aid materials, and medical equipment and physiotherapy accessories and supplies, to replenish its stocks in Rafah.

- Medical Supplies/Equipment US\$ 80,000
- Prosthetic Devices and Appliances US\$ 30,000

Total amount required: **US \$110,000**

Environmental Health/Infrastructure Requirements

The Agency is appealing for funds to repair damage to, inter alia, roads and water networks only in the Tel El-Sultan area of Rafah. UNRWA is aware that repair of other damaged infrastructure, though urgently needed, could be a waste of donor funds at this time, if these areas will be affected by possible widening of the "Philadelphia corridor" along the Egyptian border.

1. Repair of Damage Caused by Incursion into Tel Es-Sultan Area of Rafah

Description	Cost (US\$)
Asphalt Re-pavement of Roads: Repair of damage caused to roads; two asphalt layers with total thickness of 8cm.	286,000
Interlock Block Re-pavement of Roads: Repair of damages caused to roads; interlock block pavers of 8cm thickness.	70,000
Interlock Block Re-pavement of Sidewalks: Repair of damage caused to sidewalks; interlock block pavers of 6cm thickness.	15,400
Base Course for Damaged Areas: Repair of damage caused to roads and sidewalks.	320,000
Pre-cast Curbstones for Roads: Repair of damage to curbstones.	26,400
Sewerage & Water Systems: Repair of damage caused to water and sewerage systems, including sewage pipes, water pipes, manholes and fittings.	200,000
UNRWA School Complex Repair of damage to UNRWA Preparatory "C" Girls School and Tel El-Sultan Elementary co-educational school	10,000
TOTAL	927,800

TOTAL BUDGET

Description	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (US\$)
Cash Assistance	760 families	228,000
Temporary Accommodation	560 displaced families	1,514,000
Re-housing and Shelter Repair	560 families (re-housing) + 476 families (shelter repair)	11,492,800
Medical	-	110,000
Infrastructure and Environmental Health	-	927,800
Programme Support Costs @ 11%	-	1,569,986
Total		15,842,586