

gaza situation report



a daily update from unrwa

24-hour update as of 17 November 2012 at 15:00

gaza: facts and figures

- 1.2 million refugees
- 8 refugee camps
- 12,000 staff
- 245 schools for 225,000 students
- 21 health centres
- 12 food distribution centres for more than 800,000 refugees
- Living under a tightened land and sea blockade since 2007
- Shattered local economy

urgent funding need

- Food assistance: USD 4.8 million
- Cash assistance: USD 1.3 million
- Non-food items: USD 1 million
- **Total: USD 7.1 million**

situational overview

Continuous Israeli airstrikes have been ongoing for the third consecutive night, causing fear and panic among the civilian population as the Israeli military operation has entered its fourth calendar day. Heavy explosions have been heard all over the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours. Whereas targets during the first two days were mainly rocket launching sites, it seems that the operation has now entered a second phase, targeting infrastructure. A number of government buildings and security facilities in Gaza City were destroyed and there were intensive airstrikes in the tunnel area in Rafah during the night. A ground operation has not been launched.

There was a lull in rocket firing during the night, but militants have resumed activities since early morning. For the first time, a rocket was fired towards Jerusalem on Friday evening.

Despite the unchanged security situation, which makes every movement extremely dangerous, there were slightly more people in the street, mainly to get supplies.

Most of the shops remained closed with the exception of the fruit and vegetable markets, food stores, and the bakeries. Prices of fruits and vegetables have slightly risen as sellers have more difficulties finding supplies. Prices remained unchanged in food stores, but there are concerns about shortages should the current situation continue or worsen. Reports of a lack of cooking gas have been received.

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The tunnels at the Egyptian border were targeted by the Israeli Air Force last night. As a consequence, it is very difficult to find traders willing to co-ordinate goods into Gaza.

While the number of displaced families has increased, there hasn't been any need to provide emergency humanitarian assistance or to open UNRWA facilities as emergency shelters. Families who left their houses are hosted by friends and relatives. The primary reason for displacement is damage caused to homes by nearby airstrikes.

The Tunisian Foreign Minister Rafik Abdessalem visited Gaza today. This was the second high-level visit to Gaza since the Israeli operation began.

unrwa's response

On a normal day, students in Gaza would be back in school today. Unfortunately, the security situation does not allow UNRWA to open its schools. The UNRWA Satellite Channel is more important than ever in providing 12 hours of daily programming in maths, Arabic, and English-language lessons for Grades 4 to 9, based on the Palestinian Authority curriculum used by the Agency in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The UNRWA TV channel has a new week of lessons ready for broadcasting that will assist students in keeping up with their school work. UNRWA TV is also proving to be extremely useful in the dissemination of messages on UNRWA operations to Palestine refugees in Gaza.

As in the past, displaced refugees and other civilians in Gaza may seek shelter in UNRWA

schools across the Gaza Strip. The Agency and its staff are ready to provide assistance as required.

All UNRWA health centres are open today. UNRWA health staff have voluntarily reported to work in the health centre closest to their residence and all but one health centre are providing the usual range of services to refugees. Patients are reporting to health centres for all types of services, including non-communicable diseases and general illnesses. Only a small number of patients reported injuries related to airstrikes, as most patients visit hospitals for such care. Health centres reported a smaller number of patients today than on a normal day as it is not safe to move in Gaza. Despite the security situation, a significant number of women have reported to the health centres to ensure their babies receive their vaccinations as scheduled. UNRWA is very proud of its staff for their outstanding dedication and courage in such difficult times.

UNRWA is planning to open all food distribution centres tomorrow, security allowing. UNRWA distributes food aid on a quarterly basis to more than 800,000 refugees in Gaza and is currently in the middle of a food distribution cycle (October to December). UNRWA assessments show that the food assistance provided to refugees is generally not enough to cover family needs for the three months. The refugees that are scheduled to collect their food commodities will already have been waiting for three months and thus will be desperate for these supplies. UNRWA and its staff will do everything possible to ensure that the poorest of refugees receive a replenished amount of food as scheduled.

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If emergency food assistance becomes necessary, the food commodities will be taken from stock for the ongoing distribution. This will require urgent funding to replace these vital supplies.

Where possible, UNRWA will provide solid waste collection in the eight refugee camps across Gaza to mitigate any public health concerns.

UNRWA is currently recording the damage to its installations (see next page) and is trying to assess the damage to refugee shelters and infrastructure. It is still difficult to quantify the latter.

security

The security situation in Gaza remains unchanged and is critical. Widespread air bombardment from Israel across the Gaza Strip and large-scale rocket and mortar fire into Israeli territory are causing

Palestinian and Israeli civilian casualties. Rockets have reportedly been fired towards Tel Aviv again, and for the first time a rocket reached the outskirts of Jerusalem.

challenges encountered

Despite continuous co-ordination efforts, expatriate workers are still not able to exit the Gaza Strip due to closure of the crossing point on the Palestinian side (Arba Arba) by the *de facto* authorities.

unrwa casualties

An UNRWA locally-contracted guard was present at Al-Bureij Co-ed School B and D at the time of an airstrike that caused serious damage to the school. Mr. Sa'ad sustained minor injuries to his hand.

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unrwa installations

UNRWA installations continue to suffer collateral damage from the escalation of violence.

16 November, 21:00: Two Israeli airstrikes hit an open area near the Al Naser Health Centre, causing damage.

17 November, early morning: An Israeli airstrike hit the prime minister's office, causing minor damage to UNRWA's Rimal Health Centre on Naser Street.

17 November, 03:00: An Israeli air strike hit Al-Rahman Mosque, damaging nearby UNRWA schools in Al-Bureij area. Al-Bureij Co-ed School B and D sustained major damage (see pictures below). Al-Bureij Elementary Boys' School A had some broken windows.

17 November, 03:15: An Israeli airstrike hit the main police headquarters in Gaza City, causing minor damages to UNRWA's Rehabilitation Centre for the Visually Impaired (RCVI). Other UNRWA schools in the same location have also suffered minor damage.

17 November, afternoon: An Israeli airstrike hit a mosque by the Port of Gaza City, causing minor damage to Tiba 3 and Abu Ramadan Tower, which are security-cleared residences for UN international staff in Gaza.

crossings

- Rafah crossing is open per normal schedule.
- Kerem Shalom was closed per normal schedule.
- Erez crossing was closed per normal schedule.

