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# Gaza Flash Appeal

January 2009

Dear Donors,

As you are aware, the Gaza Strip has been under heavy military attack since the morning of Saturday, 27 December. Bombings have affected thousands of civilians including refugees, who represent over 70% of the population in Gaza. UNRWA has made all possible efforts to continue its activities, whenever possible, and to provide emergency assistance to those affected by the escalation of the conflict. Although the immediate future remains uncertain, the extent of structural damage and human suffering to date and the likelihood of protracted hostilities require that the Agency be prepared to meet the needs of a growing number of affected civilians in the days and weeks to come.

UNRWA participated in the 2009 UN funding appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory, launched in early December. In addition to the requirements presented through the Consolidated Appeal Process, the Agency now needs further resources to address the new situation. Attached therefore please find a Special Funding Appeal for Gaza based on an initial, rough estimate of needs in the key areas of food, cash and emergency shelter assistance.

This Special Appeal amounts to 34 million US dollars for four months. It will be updated once we will be able to conduct proper, detailed and *in situ* assessments of the situation. Given the need for resources to be immediately available to cover new needs, and while we hope that a ceasefire will be achieved as soon as possible, I trust that you will consider urgent funding of the appeal, so that at least the most pressing, life-saving humanitarian requirements can be met without delay.

With best regards,



**Karen Koning AbuZayd**  
UNRWA Commissioner-General



## Introduction

On 27 December, Israeli forces launched a massive military operation in the Gaza Strip codenamed “Cast Lead”, the stated aims of which were to end the firing of rockets into Southern Israel.

In the first three days of the operation, hundreds of air strikes took place against a range of targets, resulting in the death of well over 300 Palestinians, including 9 UNRWA students and 2 UNRWA staff, and the injuring of more than 800, among them a large number of civilians, women and children.

The bombing campaign has already wrought extensive damage to public infrastructure and hundreds of civilian homes and businesses. Coming in the wake of a year and a half of severe blockade that has brought the Gaza economy to the brink of collapse, the ongoing operation is dealing another severe blow to an already impoverished population whose coping mechanisms are nearly exhausted. It is destroying what remains of Gaza’s crumbling infrastructure and public service capacity.

After years of conflict, economic hardship and political upheaval, a protracted military confrontation will bring upon the population of Gaza devastation and hardship of a magnitude hitherto unseen, making the urgent delivery of humanitarian assistance essential for the majority of Gazans.

## Needs Assessment summary

### Food

By further reducing access to already scarce and expensive food commodities, the current crisis threatens dramatically to worsen an already dire food security situation for the entire population. Worsening food insecurity means further deterioration in the health and nutritional status of the majority of Gazans, in particular women and children, many of whom are already largely dependent on meager humanitarian assistance. It also means a further decline in livelihoods and living conditions.

An increase in humanitarian food assistance is the only way to mitigate this situation in the immediate and short term.

### Cash

In cash strapped, impoverished Gaza, there is an urgent and widespread need for cash to help displaced civilians to rent alternative shelters, defray the costs of necessary services and to purchase essentials such as food, basic household materials. These needs are set to grow as military operations continue to take their toll on civilian homes and infrastructure and as the death toll rises.

### Health

While the primary health care system, including UNRWA’s network of 19 clinics, has been able to cope under the present conditions, the sudden influx of hundreds of war injuries is stretching the capacity of the secondary and tertiary health system in Gaza, which had already been greatly undermined by the blockade and, more recently, the Palestinian political divide. A range of basic medical items and medications needed to save lives were already in short supply and what is available is being depleted by the massive casualty influx, while years of blockade have left much of the stock of life-saving equipment out of order, preventing the much needed expansion of ICU units in hospitals.

UNRWA is using its logistics pipeline to facilitate the entry and temporary storage of critical supplies from other Agencies, supplies that are needed to save lives and keep the secondary and tertiary health care system functioning.

### Destruction of shelter and infrastructure

In the first three days of the operation, hundreds of air strikes inflicted considerable damage on an already fragile public infrastructure and destroyed or damaged thousands of private homes and businesses. The full extent of actual damage will become clear once the security situation allows UNRWA to conduct thorough damage assessments. At the moment, however, informal monitoring and direct observations strongly indicate that there has been a massive degree of destruction which will be further aggravated by further bombardments.

Hundreds of displaced refugee families have already sought refuge in UNRWA installations as a result of the shelling and further significant displacement can be expected to take place as military operations continue. UNRWA must be prepared to respond as swiftly and as effectively as circumstances allow to the growing needs for emergency shelter and non-food items to thousands of displaced refugee families.

### **Fuel**

The lack of industrial fuel for power generation as well as the chronic shortage of petrol and diesel has forced UNRWA to provide fuel to keep basic water and sanitation services running throughout the Gaza strip since June 2007. By disrupting Egyptian fuel supplies and destroying electrical and water supply infrastructure, the ongoing operation is likely to considerably increase the need for emergency fuel support to prevent a collapse of sanitation services as well as a possible environmental and public health disaster.

## **UNRWA's proposed response**

UNRWA's goal is to implement an effective and timely relief effort to mitigate the impact of ongoing military operations on the civilian population of Gaza, with a focus on the provision of emergency shelter support, cash assistance and food to affected families; and the provision of fuel to municipalities and utilities. UNRWA will respond to critical human needs in a manner consistent with the neutrality and integrity of its humanitarian mandate. This includes ensuring that the humanitarian assistance it provides does not go to individuals involved in militant activity.

Given the Palestinian political divide and the long blockade that Gaza has been subjected to in the last years, public services and refugees themselves lack the capacity to cope with the effect of the deepening humanitarian crisis.

### **Objective**

Mitigate the impact of the crisis and sustain the livelihoods of conflict-affected civilians in the Gaza strip by providing shelter, cash, and food assistance; and avoid a public health crisis and environmental catastrophe through the provision

of fuel assistance in support of essential public services.

### **Proposed activities**

Proposed activities will be as follows:

- Provide a basic food package to 550,000 conflict affected families (130,000 families).
- Provide temporary emergency shelter and non-food items to up to 5,000 displaced persons.
- Repair an estimated 5,000 shelters damaged or destroyed during the operation.
- Provide cash assistance to conflict affected families to
  - *Help 2,500 displaced families with the rent of temporary accommodation for four months pending the completion of repair or reconstruction works;*
  - *Support burial costs for family members;*
  - *Replace essential household items;*
  - *Support medical costs for injured family members, including referrals abroad.*
- Provide 500,000 liters of fuel to municipalities or utilities in support of basic public services.

## **Implementation plan**

### **Food**

UNRWA will distribute basic food packages composed of wheat flour, rice, sugar, vegetable oil; whole milk and luncheon meat, providing 60% of the daily caloric needs for 60 days to 550,000 conflict-affected refugees who have no income. This will be done through UNRWA's network of 10 distribution centers with mobile distribution centers being used whenever necessary.

In order to have a positive impact on food security and minimize food related costs to affected families, the food package will be provided in addition to the normal emergency food parcels which UNRWA will distribute as part of its Emergency Appeal as of 15 January 2009.

### **Temporary Shelter and Non-Food Items**

As part of its emergency response contingency planning, UNRWA Gaza has pre-identified 91 locations to be used as temporary shelters in built-up installations or open areas on which temporary shelters, with a maximum capacity estimated at 50,000 displaced persons. UNRWA

has also built up a stock of emergency non-food items to take care of the basic needs of 5,000 displaced people, and seeks to double that capacity in light of the present crisis.

Displaced populations in need of shelter will be provided with a space in the nearest temporary emergency shelter and a basic package of food and non-food items.

### **Shelter repair**

For shelters having suffered minor to moderate damage (normally not more than USD 5,000 – no structural damage to the shelter), it is proposed to provide each refugee family with a cash grant to implement the necessary repairs on the basis of UNRWA's technical assessments and estimates. Grants in excess of USD 1,000 will be disbursed in installments, with the second and subsequent installments contingent on the completion of a certain percentage of the repairs. Each beneficiary will sign an undertaking to complete the repairs within a specified timeframe and a follow-up assessment will be made and documented by UNRWA engineers upon completion.

For shelter having suffered serious damage but monitored by UNRWA engineers.

repairable (above USD 5,000 and/or structural damage to the shelter), UNRWA engineers will assess damages and the repair work will be implemented by the Agency through third party building companies. These repairs works will be contracted through the Agency's emergency procurement procedures and under the technical supervision of its engineers who will verify satisfactory completion.

### **Cash assistance**

Various types of emergency cash assistance will be issued upon the recommendation of UNRWA social workers on the basis of social studies (loss of family member/burial costs, replacement of household items), medical reports (medical costs, referrals) or engineers' assessments that the beneficiary's shelter is inhabitable (relocation fees).

### **Fuel support**

Amounts of fuel provided to utilities, and municipalities or other essential public services will be determined and provided on the basis of UNRWA's Special Environmental Health Program engineers' technical assessments. Once provided, fuel consumption will be regularly

## **Gaza Flash Appeal Summary Budget**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost - USD</b>
Food	10,010,000
Cash assistance	10,000,000
Shelter component	10,500,000
Fuel	500,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>31,010,000</b>
PSC (11%)	3,411,100
<b>Total requirements</b>	<b>34,421,100</b>