

flash appeal

2014





Dear Colleagues,

The Gaza Strip is once again experiencing a dramatic upsurge in violence that we hoped would never happen again. As I write, the population of Gaza, including 1.2 million Palestine refugees, is enduring great suffering with many lives lost. Many more people have sustained serious injuries. I am deeply alarmed and affected by the escalation of violence and the devastating human and physical toll it is taking on civilians. Indeed, the hostilities have torn apart lives and hopes for the future.

UNRWA has made all possible efforts to continue delivering its regular services under these dramatic conditions, and to provide emergency assistance to those affected throughout the Gaza Strip.

UNRWA participated in the UN's "2014 Strategic Response Plan for the occupied Palestinian territory". In addition to the requirements presented through UNRWA's Emergency Appeal, the Agency now needs further resources on an urgent basis to address the new situation. The following Flash Appeal for Gaza is based on an initial estimate of needs in the key areas of food, non-food items, cash assistance, health, as well as the repair of refugee shelters and Agency installations including schools and health centres.

Although the immediate future remains uncertain, the extent of structural damage and human suffering to date and the potential for protracted hostilities require that the Agency be prepared to meet the needs of a growing number of affected civilians in the coming period.

This Flash Appeal amounts to 60 million US dollars for a one month emergency response phase. It will be updated once we are able to conduct more comprehensive and in situ assessments of the evolving emergency. 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.

Sincerely yours,

Pierre Krähenbühl
Commissioner-General, UNRWA



Due to the dramatic escalation in violence over the past few days and the massive assault on Gaza, UNRWA has declared an emergency in all five governorates of the Gaza Strip. The Agency is already responding to the humanitarian needs of the affected population, including the thousands of persons who have sought safety in UNRWA Designated Emergency Shelters (DES). In this Flash Appeal, UNRWA urgently seeks US\$ 60 million to respond to the immediate shelter, food, health, and psycho-social needs of affected families; to replenish emergency stocks; and to prepare for carrying out vital interventions that will be required immediately upon cessation of military activities. This appeal anticipates a one month emergency response phase, and a three-to-six month early recovery phase. UNRWA continues to monitor the situation, to update its needs assessment and to adjust its plans accordingly.

SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

The newest round of escalation in the Gaza Strip follows the build-up of tension between Israel and Palestine from early June 2014, which reached an initial peak when, between 8 and 9 July, more than 232 raids, 362 missiles and other shelling struck the Gaza Strip, and approximately 169 rockets and projectiles were fired at Israel from Gaza.

This is the third round of violence in six years and comes after a period of relative calm following the November 2012 escalation. However, that period of relative calm did not lead to an improvement in the day-to-day conditions of unemployment and poverty faced by the majority of Gaza's population as a consequence of the Israeli-imposed blockade, which entered its eighth year in June 2014.

The blockade continues to have a devastating impact on people's lives, as access to markets and people's movement to and from the Gaza Strip remain severely restricted. Most of the population is dependent on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs.

In the period following the November 2012 hostilities, Gaza saw the highest unemployment rates since 2009, increasing inflation, and the founding of a National Consensus Government that has yet to fully establish its authority in the Gaza Strip. Public services such as health, water and sanitation were in crisis mode, struggling to meet the basic needs of the population. The situation deteriorated further following the closure of the illegal tunnels with Egypt in June 2013. All of this has led to the depletion of the population's coping mechanisms and public services that are operating well below minimum standards.

UNRWA's core services are thus in high demand among the refugee population, and the Emergency Appeal activities saw increasing beneficiary numbers as UNRWA adapted to the growing needs arising from the near-collapse of the Gaza economy. The fourteenth year of protracted humanitarian crisis is now – and once again – exacerbated by the current escalation of violence.

UNRWA's declaration of emergency on 8 July 2014 launched a rapid response to address the additional humanitarian needs provoked by this escalation. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), by 15 July, Israeli military operations had caused the death of 194 Palestinians, including at least 149 civilians, of whom 38 were children. At least 1,390 persons have been injured. Additionally,



more than 1,370 housing units have been destroyed or severely damaged by Israeli airstrikes, and 58 UNRWA installations have been damaged. Violence and the threat of further strikes¹ have led tens of thousands of people to leave their homes.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

At the time of launching this appeal, more than 22,000 civilians have sought refuge in 24 DESs operated by UNRWA in Gaza City and in Northern Gaza, because of the destruction of their shelters and by the threat of conflict and destruction. Based on previous experience, it is expected that this number will grow to 50,000 individuals.

Many of those who have fled their homes have done so with limited possessions. Many have moved to areas outside their local neighbourhood and beyond normal support networks. Opportunities to source basic food, essential non-food items and needed medications are often extremely limited due to the security situation. In addition to those staying in the DES, there are also affected families staying with relatives, or remaining in their homes, due to personal insecurity or having suffered only relatively minor damage to their shelter. In both circumstances some families have lost household items and therefore are also in need of non-food items.

The cost of repairing damaged or completely destroyed shelters, the rental fees that are associated with alternative living arrangements, and the extraordinary costs to families as a consequence of injuries and deaths represent an unbearable additional burden given the already fragile finances and coping mechanisms of the Gaza population.

Inadequate public services are further strained by the escalation. Health services are receiving increasing numbers of injured, elements of an already dilapidated water and sanitation infrastructure have been either partially or entirely destroyed by the airstrikes, and the need for solid waste and debris removal is increasing. UNRWA's facilities have also been exposed to conflict-related damage thereby affecting some of the Agency's services.

Gazans' coping capacities have been overstretched as a result of years of uncertainty and volatility, and the incidence of psycho-social distress is likely to increase. The most common consequences of not being able to deal with the stress provoked by the current emergency are falling into depression, anxiety or violent behaviour—all responses that can lead to permanent and long-term mental health problems if not properly addressed. The trauma caused by chronic armed conflict and the short- to medium- term impact of that trauma is especially acute for children.

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Both those refugee families who are being hosted by relatives and those remaining in their own homes are assisted through Relief and Social Services (RSS), Distribution Centres, and Health Clinics. Extraordinary provision of non-food items (NFI), such as basic household kits, hygiene kits, and temporary shelter repair materials, is undertaken upon family request and after verification through RSS offices for needs arising directly from the current emergency.

Primary coordination and implementation at the governorate level is led by an Area Emergency Response Team through their Area Operations Rooms, with the Field Emergency Response Team and Central Operations Room leading the Gaza-wide needs overview, strategic decision making and allocation of resources to the area teams.

Early recovery efforts are undertaken through UNRWA's existing structure – Infrastructure and Camp Improvement, Education, Health, Community Mental Health, Gender Initiative, and Relief and Social Services.

UNRWA will continue to work with partners including, amongst others, the World Food Programme, OCHA, the World Health Organization, other UN partners and Non-Governmental Organizations.

OPERATIONAL APPROACH

UNRWA is responding to the most immediate emergency shelter and protection, food needs and non-food needs of the population affected by the current escalation. Furthermore, the Agency seeks to address those most crucial needs that will materialise immediately upon cessation of military activities. Security concerns permitting, UNRWA continues its protracted crisis and long-term activities, including, among others, health care, education, solid waste removal, and food distributions.

UNRWA's current emergency response directly contributes to the organisational strategic objective of mitigating the effects of emergencies on individuals. The response is structured to provide assistance to families in shelters, hosted with relatives, and affected but remaining in their homes.

Those displaced to UNRWA emergency shelters, regardless of their refugee status, are assisted by a team of UNRWA staff who are experienced in emergency response. Each team consists of staff with a variety of professional qualifications, including health professionals, teachers, social workers, psycho-social counsellors, engineers, security staff and operations managers. They are supported by community volunteers, cash for work beneficiaries, and shelter committees. UNRWA's staff are trained to ensure that installations are kept neutral and that only civilians gain access to shelters.



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RESPONSE

The following table provides a summary of the activities that UNRWA will undertake to meet emergency and recovery needs, the scope of each intervention, and the funding required in order to implement each intervention.

NEEDS	RESPONSE	SCOPE OF INTERVENTION	FUNDING REQUIRED (US\$)
Individuals staying at DES needing food assistance to meet their minimum caloric requirement	Food in Designated Emergency Shelter (DES)	Distribution of daily food rations for up to 50,000 pers. staying at DES, for up to four weeks	9,900,000
Families displaced by the emergency requiring hygiene and basic household items, including materials for emergency shelter repairs	Non Food Items (NFIs)	Distribution of NFIs up to 8,300 displaced families	3,600,000
Shelters damaged during the emergency are in need of minor to major repairs	Shelter Repair	Repair minor, major and total damages for up to 4,600 shelter (estimated figure, pending final assessment)	39,430,000
Palestine refugee families needing assistance covering the extraordinary expenses resulting from the emergency	Conditional Cash Assistance	Provision of cash assistance to about 2,800 households	2,000,000
Health services needing additional supplies for a timely response to an increasing number of injuries	Health	Equipping of first aid kits in activated DES and 21 primary health clinics with sufficient stock of essential drugs and medical supplies	2,000,000
Children and adults under strain as a result of the hostilities needing assistance rebuilding coping capacities	Psycho-Social Support (PSS)	Provision of psycho-social support at each DES during the emergency, and reinforced in schools and community-based organisations (CBO) for a four-month period after the end of the violence	1,100,000
Emergency response and early recovery operations requiring additional labour	Cash-for-Work	Engagement of unskilled and skilled labourers to support emergency response services (e.g. DES, local authorities, CBOs), and early recovery activities (e.g. rubble removal)	800,000
Damaged and non-functioning water and sanitation infra-structures in need of repair or replacement	Environmental Health (WASH)	Repairs to water supply and sanitation networks serving refugee camps	500,000
Damaged UNRWA installations needing minor to major repairs	UNRWA Installation Repair	Minor and major repairs implemented in at least 75 installations (estimated figure, pending final assessment)	670,000
Total Funding Required (US\$)			60,000,000

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Food in Designated Emergency Shelter (DES)

UNRWA provides basic food commodities including bread, corned beef or tuna, dairy products and fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as potable water, to all individuals staying at UNRWA's Designated Emergency Shelters. At a total cost of US\$ 6.6 per person per day, the daily distribution of basic food rations, including tomatoes, cucumbers and apples three times per week, allows families to cover their minimum caloric needs, as per World Health Organization (WHO) standards, as they provide sufficient proteins, fat, vitamins and minerals. Based on previous experience, UNRWA anticipates assisting up to 50,000 individuals – or 8,300 families – in shelters over a 30-day period. Additional in-kind assistance for other commodities to supplement the ration is being contributed by approved partners.

Non Food Items (NFIs)

In anticipation that up to 8,300 families will be displaced to the Designated Emergency Shelters (DES), UNRWA will distribute NFI to each family. The conditions, duration and needs influence which items are distributed. Families in shelters will receive items such as:

- blankets (one per person; two during winter), mattresses (one per adult and one between two children), and one thin mat (1 per family);
- kitchen set (plates, pan, bowls, utensils etc.) and one jerry can;
- Family hygiene kit (towels, soap, toothbrush, sanitary towels, shampoo, detergent, etc.);
- baby hygiene kits (baby soap, shampoo, wipes, blanket etc.) and baby diapers.

Refugee families staying with relatives will receive similar assistance on a needs basis upon approaching UNRWA area offices. Materials for emergency repair (nylon and tarpaulin), hygiene kits, blankets and mattresses have been pre-positioned across each of Gaza's five governorates to ensure a rapid response to all types of cases. An UNRWA social worker and/or engineer will assess the needs of the family and assistance will be provided accordingly.

The already pre-positioned supplies are, however, likely to be insufficient to meet these forecasted needs. At the

start of the emergency, UNRWA holds NFI stock for less than 35,000 individuals (approximately 5,800 families), as a consequence of the limited financial resources available to replenish the contingency supplies following the devastating flooding in December, 2013.

Shelter Repair

Shelters which have suffered minor damage are expected to constitute the majority of the caseload for shelter repair. In addition to the initial emergency repairs carried out by families with non-food items (nylon and tarpaulin sheets), households receive a cash grant to implement the necessary additional repairs, on the basis of UNRWA technical assessment and estimates. Grants in excess of USD \$1,000 are disbursed in instalments pending successful completion of the previous construction phase.

Implementation of major repairs or full reconstruction, as assessed by UNRWA's engineers (about 30 per cent of the caseload) will be carried out by the families through self-help where possible or through contractors. If the self-help approach using tranches of funding is chosen, UNRWA's engineers will verify completion of work prior to subsequent tranches of funding being released. This implementation modality is dependent on construction materials being available on the local market.

Damage assessments will be carried out in line with the assessment guidelines agreed with the Shelter Cluster. Similarly, the identification of beneficiary families and repairs to be done in their shelters will be closely coordinated with the cluster members to ensure an efficient use of all available resources. As the emergency is on-going, the scope of the repairs needed is currently estimated. Actual scope and cost can only be determined once a cessation of hostilities permits UNRWA engineers and social workers to visit the homes of affected families to conduct an onsite assessment.



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Conditional Cash Assistance

Transitional Shelter Cash Assistance (TSCA) is provided to those families whose shelters have been damaged significantly or destroyed and are uninhabitable until major repairs or reconstruction take place. Some families eligible for TSCA will be unable to return to their home and will be considered for re-housing projects in the long term. These rental subsidies, an average of US\$ 150 per month, are granted following the survey carried out by UNRWA engineers to assess whether the building is inhabitable or whether alternative shelter is necessary.

Reimbursement of total or partial costs for accessing medical care (either at primary, secondary or tertiary levels), or covering burial costs are available to Palestine refugee families in need as a result of this emergency. Based on the eligibility and priority criteria set by the Agency, and upon submission of relevant documentation, UNRWA's social workers determine the amount reimbursed.

Health

Medicines and other medical supplies used at UNRWA's primary health centres are purchased to ensure first aid and emergencies are treated in a timely manner. Items include disinfectants, syringes, bandages, and anti-inflammatories, among others. UNRWA will procure safety boxes and incineration containers to ensure proper disposal of medical waste generated by the increased demand on the health system.

Psycho-Social Support (PSS)

The initial phase of the intervention is designed to assist children and adults staying in DES to mitigate the impact of the current military escalation, through short-term activities aimed at strengthening their psycho-social resilience, coping capacities and mental well-being. Psycho-social support is provided by a trained counsellor assigned to the DES, who organises both collective activities and individual or family sessions. Child Friendly Spaces are created in the DES to provide children with an atmosphere of safety and security, and to engage them in creative play and learning activities.

Once the emergency has ended and the school year is able to resume, further psycho-social support will be provided in UNRWA schools and through CBOs over the course of four months. Refugee children attending school in Gaza

City and Northern Gaza will be supported by an assistant counsellor assigned to bolster the capacity of their school counsellor. This is part of UNRWA's on-going Community Mental Health Programme (CMHP). In addition, selected CBOs already partnering with UNRWA in its Gender Initiative will be supported to provide extended PSS care (counselling and activities) for mothers to address their needs and equip them with strategies for supporting their children.

Cash-for-Work

UNRWA utilises the existing Job Creation Programme (JCP) to implement an emergency cash-for-work mechanism to support the response interventions. This includes assigning unskilled individuals to take on tasks such as guarding or cleaning the DES, supplementing existing resources for emergency NFI and food distribution, and other basic functions.

In the wake of the escalation, UNRWA will provide skilled and unskilled workers during a period of three months to supplement the community services provided by local utilities, CBOs and municipalities which, it is expected, will be unable to respond adequately to increasing demands. UNRWA will revisit the needs to determine whether a longer recovery period is required, along with potential support through an additional rotation of contractors to our partners.

Cash-for-work is also a mechanism by which UNRWA hires from the community to take on rubble collection and removal inside the refugee camps. While cash-for-work hiring during the emergency phase is based on physical presence, need and capacity (e.g. people staying at the DES will be hired for tasks at the same facility), cash-for-work contracts initiated at the recovery phase will be based on poverty targeting for beneficiaries, as per JCP policy.

Environmental Health (WASH)

UNRWA will ensure that the environment at the DES is consistent with health standards; that sufficient points for garbage collection, and solid waste disposal mechanisms, are available in each facility; and that families are briefed about them on their arrival. Water provided to the emergency shelters will be tested to ensure it meets WHO standards, and an emergency stock of bottled water will be available in case delivered tanked water does not meet the minimum requirements.

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As the security situation permits, UNRWA will, in collaboration with the WASH cluster and relevant stakeholders, assess damages to the water and sanitation networks within the camps and those serving them, giving priority to those interventions that affect the services directly provided to the refugee population and those representing a higher health hazard. Typical WASH infrastructure repairs will include works on water wells, water supply pipelines, sewerage systems, storm pools and water drainages systems.

UNRWA Installations Repair

Maintenance and repairs will be undertaken to ensure that UNRWA's installations, including the schools used as DES, continue operating during and immediately following the cessation of current military activities.

UNRWA is currently recording and assessing the damage

inflicted to its facilities and carrying out emergency repairs needed in essential services, including health facilities and Designated Emergency Shelters. As soon as the hostilities have ended, the UNRWA Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) will produce an overview of the repairs and refurbishment needed. This list will facilitate establishment of priority levels according to damage and functionality of the building, and whether alternative spaces for the service provided are available.

As noted above, 58 UNRWA installations have already been damaged and, depending on the duration of hostilities, the figure is very likely to increase. From previous conflicts, it is foreseen that approximately 80 per cent of the facilities affected will have minor damages, and around 20 per cent will be in need of major repair or reconstruction. However, the final scope of damages and works to be done will only be available once the emergency has ended and a thorough assessment has been conducted.





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