

Information Note – Wednesday 14 January 2009- 6:00PM Jerusalem /11:00AM US EST

Source: UNICEF oPT

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE – CRISIS IN GAZA

CASUALTIES

According to the Ministry of Health on 14 January, total of 992 people were killed and 4360 injured since the beginning of the Israel military operation in Gaza. According to MoH the number of children and women casualties since the beginning of the operation until 13 January were 311 children and 85 women killed and more than 1549 children and 626 women injured. Exact figures are not available due to insecurity, rising number of casualties, and difficulty in taking out the injured from collapsed buildings.

According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, total of 716 rockets and mortars have been fired at Israel since the beginning of the Israeli military operation on 27 December until 13 January. According to OCHA, nine Israeli soldiers have been killed since 27 December. According to the Israeli Police Spokesman, Israeli civilian casualties stand at four dead and 58 injured. These figures do not include the number of Palestinians or Israelis treated for shock.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS & IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON CIVILIANS

The Israeli military operation entered its 19th day with continuous bombing of civilian infrastructure and incursions into densely-populated areas.

On 13 January, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its deep concern 'at the devastating effects that the current military engagement in Gaza is having on children.'

The U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is due to visit Jerusalem tomorrow (15 January) to meet with UN agencies and continue to press forward for a cease-fire. The UNGA will hold an emergency session on Thursday (15 January) on Gaza crisis

Temporary humanitarian cease-fire was held today (1:00 -4:00PM oPT time) with violations. The needs of the population are so great at this time, that humanitarian assistance programmes need to operate round the clock.

UNRWA is operating 38 emergency shelters providing refuge to 35,520 people. This is an increase of 7,404 people since 11 January. The majority of shelters are located in Gaza City and North Gaza. There remains a shortage of NFIs in shelters in Gaza City and North Gaza. OCHA is developing a map of all shelters which would be ready for distribution this week.

Israeli human rights group B'Tselem joined Human Rights Watch in asking Israel to stop use white phosphorus in Gaza. The chemical can burn down houses and cause horrific burns when it touches the skin. The chemical is suspected in the cases of 10 burn victims who had skin peeling off their faces and bodies.

Two rockets were launched on northern Israel from the southern Lebanese border early this morning. The Israeli artillery is also shelling at Al-arqub area in southern Lebanon.

HEALTH- Security for health care workers and access to medical facilities continue to be extremely difficult. Thirteen medical personnel have been killed since 27 December until 12 January and attacks on medical personnel and ambulances have hampered organizations' ability to assist the injured. In addition, risks of epidemic outbreaks result from the disruption of vaccinations, uncollected rubbish piling up in the streets and unsafe drinking water increasing.

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WATER AND SANITATION- Many water wells and sewage pumps are still not functioning due to the lack of electricity, diminished fuel supplies to operate back-up generators and lack of spare parts. The damage to the water and wastewater networks has not been repaired because of the danger in reaching affected areas. 500,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip still do not have access to running water. Sewage continues to flow in the streets in Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya. UNRWA was unable to deliver fuel to the Beit Lahia Wastewater Treatment Plant to alleviate pressure on the banks of the sewage lake containing three million cubic metres of raw and partially treated wastewater due to the insecurity.

FOOD- Many food items remain unavailable. Bread is in short supply: only nine out of 47 bakeries are currently operational. On 12 January, UNRWA distributed food parcels to 1,916 refugee families throughout the Gaza Strip. Due to the security situation, WFP, who works through partners, has been unable to operate to its full capacity.

UNICEF ACTION

CHILD PROTECTION-- Youth & Adolescent Development - UNICEF has been informed by one of its counterparts in Gaza, Tamer Institute, that two of UNICEF supported adolescent centres in schools have been affected by the conflict. One school- TalAIRabei' girl school has been damaged by continuous shelling, the other Shuhada' Jabalia Boys school has been taken over by the Israeli military forces and is being used as a base for their tanks and ground forces.

As an initial and rapid response, 100,000 copies of a leaflet on Explosive Remnants of War(ERW) and UXO have been printed and currently being distributed in Gaza through UNICEF child protection partners: World Vision: 3000 copies; UNFPA: 2000 copies; CHF: 5000 copies; Handicap: 1000 copies. The rest of the leaflets are now in UNICEF Ashdod warehouse and will be delivered to Gaza.

Two radio spots for parents on how to protect children during bombardment and shelling as well as how to provide children with emotional support are being aired daily - 10 times /day on 4 radio stations in Gaza.

UNICEF provides support to a national NGO, Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict resolution (PCDCR), which runs a toll phone line providing one-on-one support to parents and children daily between 9:00AM-midnight.

UNICEF Child Protection and partners are planning for the following activities: establishing 30 family centers where women, children and youth can benefit from. It will be a one stop shop to provide psychosocial support; where supplies such as mother and baby kits, family hygiene kits, recreational and early childhood development kits, blankets, winter clothes and shoes for children can be distributed as well as mine risk education activities can take place.

EDUCATION- UNICEF has met with MoE to discuss early recovery. The schools are scheduled to start on 17 January. The recent military operation and shelling in Gaza has resulted in significant damage to schools' infrastructure and loss of equipment and stationary. UNICEF and partners are discussing interventions to assure that children can start school by early February. It is impossible to currently assess the situation due to continuous fighting in Gaza.

Health and Nutrition- UNICEF is working with WFP, FAO and partners on food security and nutrition sector coordination . Plans are being made to conduct Rapid Nutrition survey and scale-up response with a focus on infant and young child nutrition, the needs of pregnant and lactating women, treatment of severe acute malnutrition and micronutrient supplementation.

UNICEF also plans to bring emergency health supplies from West Bank to Gaza – for more than 30,000 populations for 3 months UNICEF warehouse in Gaza does have supplies to meet first 8 weeks needs - including first aid kits, family water kits, and collapsible water tanks, however distribution will take place as soon as security is assured.

There has been coordination between UNRWA and MOH to restart immunization programmes, interrupted since 27 December. UNICEF will continue to provide all the required vaccines for the immunization in oPT.

Supplies in the pipeline As of January 12, more than USD 1.3 million worth of supplies was ordered including interagency emergency health kits, obstetric surgical kits including drugs, midwifery kits, resuscitation kits, first aid kits, surgical instruments (basic surgery, dressing sets, suture sets, micronutrient film coated tabs, high energy biscuits, F-100 and F-75 therapeutic diet, and other supplies. Essential drugs, nutrients, consumables and some intensive care equipments have also been ordered after harmonization with the submitted MOH list of needs and partner contributions.

WASH- The WASH Cluster Coordinator (UNICEF) has arrived today and will lead coordination for the next two months. The Global Cluster Coordinator- New York has also arrived to support and initiate the cluster approach.

SUPPLIES - No truck crossed to Gaza today as we are expecting customs release at Tel Aviv airport and at Jordanian border (Allenby bridge)

Delivered to Gaza: **13 January**-6346 bottles of 1.5 litres were given to Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) for distribution to conflict affected population; **11 & 12 January**-59904 bottles of 1.5 litres were given to PRCS for distribution and 500 family water kits for 5000 families of 6 people delivered to PRCS for distribution; **10 January**-Two 12KVA generators given to UNRWA to support the blood bank preservation; **8 January**-PRCS collected 56 water family kits (3360 persons) and 5 first aid kits for immediate distribution to hospitals, schools and IDPs; **7 January**- PRCS distributed 50 water family kits (60 persons or 10 families sufficient for 6,000 persons). These kits were pre-positioned with the PRCS previously; **28 December**- 350 First aid kits (for 3500 persons) and 20 Resuscitation kits (each 10-15 persons) distributed.

Custom Clearance

Twelve trucks, from UNICEF Zarka warehouse, are at Allenby bridge for custom clearance . Supplies include: Manuals in Arabic for helping children cope with stress of war are meant for teachers and parents as a guide how to support their children; The three different recreation items (creative, playing and education)-- collectively represent one kit/total of 41, each kit will help around 200 children. In addition 4343 hygiene kits each for family of 7 persons/ one month from UNICEF Syria. In addition the following items, safety boxes, basic family water kits, obstetric kits, resuscitation kits, midwifery kits, IEH kits, have been cleared in Tel Aviv airport- more info to come

COMMUNICATION - Daily - Inputs are given to OCHA after receiving updates from programmes. This week's upcoming stories for the global website will be on Education and WASH issues in Gaza. UNICEF is also working with the Ministry of Health to issue a press statement on the importance of meeting the nutrition of infants and young children. UNICEF footage and photos are continued to be used by UN agencies, partners as well regional and international media outlets. Daily media/ interview logs, directly or via Natcoms, with oPT and MENARO are available upon request. ****Please note and inform Natcoms and partners that UNICEF oPT shares new photos and videos of the Gaza emergency regularly with HQ- all available via DoC/New York**

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CHALLENGES

- Impossible to conduct rapid needs assessments due to insecurity
- Israeli military inability to provide safe routes for the UN/ UNICEF to deliver urgently needed supplies, ultimately impacting UN response to the crisis in Gaza.
- Security and lack of access to UNICEF warehouse due to ongoing fighting on the ground

STAFF UPDATE

- UNICEF currently has ten national staff members present in Gaza city.
- All Staff are safe but there are delays and at times inability to communicate and locate staff as they move from one place to another due to the ongoing bombardment.
- All staff are stressed and have limited electricity, water and no access to any basic facilities.