

Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt Information Note

29 January 2009, 8:00PM

General overview

- Per the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Field Update of 24-26 January, 1,314 Palestinians were killed during the 22-day Israeli military offensive in Gaza, including 412 children and 110 women, as at 19 January. The number has increased, as rescue services continue to recover the dead from under the rubble. Total number of injuries was 5,300, including 1855 children and 795 women. Handicap International estimates that up to 50 per cent of people injured, including some 430 children, have sustained severe injuries that – without proper rehabilitation – could result in permanent disability.
- Unexploded ordnance (UXO) poses a significant threat to the Gaza population and to the work of humanitarian organizations. On 20 January two children were killed by UXOs in Az-Zaitoun, and one child was shot and injured east of Gaza City near the border.
- All closings into Gaza closed on 27 January following an attack on an Israeli patrol, including Erez. Kerem Shalom and Karni crossings resumed operating on 28 January.
- Thousands remain homeless though exact figures are unknown. As at 25 January, fewer than 500 displaced people were seeking refuge in three UNRWA emergency shelters, compared to 51,000 people, including 28,560 children, during the peak of displacement (OCHA). Since the resumption of schools on 24 January, the shelters are now in youth centres and other non-school facilities. Most of the displaced are staying with host families, many of whom are overstretched and face shortages of food, non-food items, such as mattresses and blankets, as well as water and electricity.
- Preliminary estimates by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicate the complete destruction of over 4,000 residences and partial destruction to 17,000 others. As reported by the World Health Organisation (WHO), 34 health facilities were damaged or destroyed.
- The number of people in Gaza dependent on food assistance is now at 1.3 million or 91 per cent of the population, including 714,168 children (OCHA).
- While the water and sanitation situation has improved, thousands of people in Gaza still have no access to piped water. The continued shortage of drinking water and overflowing of sewage in some residential areas poses serious public health risks.
- Most of the Gaza Strip receives only intermittent electricity. Fuel is required to run generators in hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, and cooking gas is needed for households and bakeries.
- According to a recent report by Near East Consulting, about 96 per cent of Gazans feel depressed and disheartened, with depression levels most acute in North Gaza and Rafah.
- The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict will visit Israel and oPt, specifically Gaza, from 2-6 February to assess the impact of the recent conflict on children in southern Israel and Gaza. UNICEF is leading on planning and organization of the visit, with support from the UN Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East (UNSCO) support.
- An inter-agency appeal for Gaza will be launched in Geneva on 2 February. The total amount required for all of the UN and NGO projects is expected to be over half a billion dollars for humanitarian and recovery needs.

Of note in the media

- On 27 January, Qatar launched a new TV station named al-Fakhura, with the goal of raising funds for education and reconstruction efforts. Al-Fakhura is the name of the UNRWA school in Jabalia that was hit by shelling and resulted in the killing of over 40 Palestinians seeking shelter inside the school.

Education

- According to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) statistics, 164 students and 12 teachers from Palestinian Authority (PA) schools were killed during the 3 weeks of the war on Gaza; 98 of these students are from north Gaza. Moreover, 454 students and 5 teachers were injured.
- UNICEF is conducting a rapid assessment of damages in PA schools as well as private schools.
- UNICEF is the focal point for providing information to the inter-agency education coordination group on damages to the education sector in Gaza.
- UNICEF has completed the distribution of 130 school-in-a-box kits targeting 10,400 students, 84 recreational kits for 6,720 students, 42 maths and 42 science kits targeting 4,200 students, and 6 tents for temporary learning spaces in the northern directorate. UNICEF is moving forward in preparation to distribute the same items to the 5 remaining directorates.

WASH

- UNICEF held a coordination meeting with the main water and sanitation actors, during which the full damage assessment report conducted by Gaza's water utility CMWU was distributed. The report indicated that damages to the water and sanitation sector in the Gaza Strip as a result of the conflict amounts to almost \$6 million.
- UNICEF, through the non-governmental organisation Accion Contra el Hambre, distributed 150 hygiene kits in Jabalia. Each hygiene kit is sufficient for one family of six and contains soap, tooth brushes, shampoo, detergent, disinfectant, sanitary napkins, towels, combs, zinc ointment, clothes liner, garbage bags and washing bowl.
- UNICEF has provided bottled drinking water, family water kits and hygiene kits, as well as financial support to the CMWU for urgent repairs of water networks.

Child Protection / Adolescent Development/Participation (ADAP)

- UNICEF distributed 176 recreational kits to its ADAP partners in Gaza, including 56 for the Tamer institute and 120 to Ma'an Development center for use in their adolescent-friendly learning centers.
- 21 adolescent-friendly centres are now operational, focusing on outreach and home visits. Five family centres offering a broad range of support should be operational by early next week.
- UNICEF has been raising awareness of the danger posed by UXOs, and has distributed 75,000 leaflets and aired two radio spots on four different radio stations on protection from UXOs.

Supplies

- One truck entered Gaza on 28 January containing 224,000 student profile forms and 33 packages of printed health material (awareness-raising on flour fortification and salt iodisation); and three pallets of safety boxes for disposables in health facilities.