



Gaza Strip Situation Report 6 July 2006, 9pm

Key developments in the last two days¹:

- In the last 24 hours (since 10pm on 5 July), at least 15 Palestinians have been killed and 66 injured in the Gaza Strip. The majority of these Palestinians have been killed and injured in confrontations with the IDF in Palestinian towns and villages, including Khan Younis in the south and Beit Lahia in the north. In Beit Lahia, one Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldier was killed and another injured and airlifted on Thursday.
- During the last 24 hours, the IDF expanded their military incursion into the Gaza Strip. The IDF moved additional troops and armour into the former northern settlement block. This follows the continued launching of homemade rockets by Palestinian militants, three of which landed near the centre of the Israeli town of Ashkelon on 4 and 5 July. The IDF remains present in the Palestinian area of At Tatra to the west of Beit Lahia, and in the south east corner of the Gaza Strip around Gaza International Airport.
- Palestinian households across the Gaza Strip are still experiencing major disruptions to their daily lives as a result of intermittent power supplies, caused by the IAF air strike on the Gaza power station on 28 June.
- The Nahal Oz energy pipelines have been closed for the last two days. UNRWA was able to bring in 30,000 litres of diesel Thursday via Karni crossing.
- WHO reports that hospitals and primary healthcare clinics have fuel stocks for one to two weeks, however operating theatres have reduced their functions due to the limited stocks of consumables and fluctuations in electricity supply.
- Due to the heavy fighting in civilians areas, UNICEF reports families in the Gaza Strip are afraid to send their children outdoors
- There is virtually no fish now available in local markets due to both the lack of access to the coast for Palestinian fishermen because of the presence of Israeli naval vessels and the loss of permanent refrigeration capacity. WFP estimates this impacts some 35,000 people who are directly and indirectly employed by the industry.

Protection of civilians

IDF presence on the ground²

- The IDF expanded its military incursion inside the Gaza Strip in the last 24 hours. The IDF have moved additional troops and armour into the former northern settlement block from 10pm on 5 July. This followed the launching of homemade rockets by Palestinian militants, three of which landed near the centre of Ashkelon on the nights of the 4 and 5 July.
- By Thursday morning, the majority of Israeli forces had pulled back to the northern border and away from the eastern fringes of Beit Hanoun town.
- The IDF remains present in the Palestinian village of At Tatra to the west of Beit Lahia and in the south east corner of the Gaza Strip around Gaza International Airport.

Casualties

- One Hamas member was killed by an air to ground missile fired from an Israeli drone while planting a roadside bomb in the northern Gaza Strip (5 July, 23:45).
- One Palestinian coastal officer was killed and nine injured when an Israeli naval vessel fired three shells into the PA naval base in northern Gaza Strip (5 July, 23:45).
- One Hamas member was killed west of Jabalia camp by a missile from an Israeli drone (6 July, 03:00).
- Two Palestinians were killed and six injured in confrontations during an IDF incursion in Abasan, east of Khan Younis (6 July, 13:15).
- Ten Palestinians were killed in confrontations during an IDF incursion in At Tatra, west of Beit Lahia (6 July, 15:30) and 51 injured during incursions in the northern Gaza Strip (6 July).
- One IDF soldier was killed and another injured during clashes and airlifted on Thursday in Beit Lahia during clashes.

¹ This is the fifth Situation Report issued by OCHA for the June/July 2006 period. The previous reports were published on 21, 27, 30 June and 4 July and are available on www.ochaopt.org.

² See situation map attached for general indications of IDF presence in and around the Gaza Strip.

Electricity

- Palestinian households across the Gaza Strip are still experiencing major disruptions to their daily lives as a result of intermittent power supplies caused by the IAF attack on the Gaza power station on 28 June.
- Large areas of Rafah have been without power from 11am on 5 July. The network is reported to have been overloaded. The circuit break cannot be repaired because of its proximity to IDF positions.
- Palestinian engineers who left the Gaza Strip via Erez crossing on 4 July to explore the possibility of procuring replacement transformers, have now arrived in Egypt.

Fuel

- While over 1.8 million litres of diesel entered the Gaza Strip through Nahal Oz pipelines between 2 and 4 July, the pipelines have remained closed for the last two days. The concern remains that the increased reliance on generators and the need for additional fuel will result in fuel shortages if the pipelines do not reopen. There is also concern of the high maintenance costs of large fleets of generators and the restrictions to import spare parts.
- UNRWA brought in 30,000 litres of diesel Thursday via Karni crossing.

Water and sanitation

- The limited generation of power via the national grid remains unsynchronised with the water distribution network, leading to water shortages in Palestinian households.
- When wells are utilising power from the national grid, fluctuations in power have led to malfunctions in the water pumping systems in parts of both Beit Hanoun (Abu Ghzalah well) and in the middle areas (Nuseirat wells). The increased demand on generators has resulted in temporary breakdowns of the 800 KvA at the main pumping station in Jabalia, northern Gaza.
- In response to concerns over increased IDF incursions into various parts of the Gaza Strip, the Coast Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) has pre-positioned the limited spare parts that it has at five separate locations in the governorates. Underground water pipes have been damaged by the weight of heavy tanks and APCs in prior incursions. In addition the CMWU has assigned contractors with local workshops in each location to provide assistance in the event of emergency repairs.
- A four-inch underground water pipe was temporarily damaged by the IDF movement in Beit Hanoun and led to brief water cuts for approximately 1,000 residents.

Health

Hospital services

- Most of the casualties arising from Thursday's incursion into north western Gaza are being referred to Kamal Adwan and Al Awda hospitals for triage and then transferred to Shifa hospital in Gaza City.
- Due to the absence of power in Rafah since 11am on 5 July, Abu Yusef Najjar hospital has had to rely on two small generators to ensure service delivery. If the situation continues much longer the hospital is concerned that the generators will cease to function.
- According to WHO, hospitals have sufficient fuel stocks for one to two weeks. However, WHO reports that operating theatres reduced their functions due to the limited stocks of consumables and fluctuations in electricity supply.

Primary health care

- Due to the continued presence of the IDF around Gaza International Airport, the primary healthcare clinics (PHC) operated by the Ministry of Health (MoH) at the nearby Ashuka village has remained closed since 25 June. The MoH has made interim arrangements to relocate the health staff to temporary premises at Rafah municipality.
- The MoH PHC in At Tatra has remained closed Thursday due to the Israeli incursion into western Beit Lahia and the inability of health staff to reach the clinic.
- According to WHO, PHCs have sufficient fuel for one to two weeks. The MoH assigned in its emergency plan, 21 PHCs in the Gaza Strip to function as emergency centres. Currently, 12 of them are working 24 hours per day and the other four are working for 12 hours per day.
- All other PHC services including mother and child health, food inspection, health education and nutrition departments and the surveillance and epidemiology unit are functioning.

Psychosocial support

- There is an increase in the number of people seeking assistance from the three psychosocial centres operated by Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution and supported by UNICEF.

Food

- Most families are now buying foods, in particular dairy produce, on a daily basis due to the absence of continuous power for fridges and freezers.
- According to WFP, the continuing lack of access to the coast for Palestinian fishermen due to the presence of Israeli naval vessels and the loss of permanent refrigeration capacity means there is virtually no fish now available in local markets. WFP estimates this impacts some 35,000 people who are directly and indirectly employed by the industry.
- WFP has ceased all Food for Work Training until further notice due to the crisis in the Gaza Strip. Beneficiaries will however continue to receive food rations.

Crossing points and humanitarian access

- Erez crossing reopened Thursday morning in both directions for the movement of international staff working for humanitarian agencies following its closure at 11am on 4 July. Entry into the Gaza Strip is only possible for non-diplomats following prior coordination with the Israeli DCL.
- Karni crossing opened Thursday for imports only, between 9:30am and 2pm, after being closed on 3 and 5 July. The number of truckloads which entered on 4 and 6 July was 133 and 91 respectively. These are low numbers compared to the daily averages in excess of 200 trucks per day in May and June.
- UNRWA was able to transport eight of the 28 containers of humanitarian supplies on 6 July via Karni. All 24 containers scheduled to enter on 4 July crossed in.
- UNRWA was able to transport nine empty containers out of the Gaza Strip Thursday, with 226 now remaining inside Gaza.
- Rafah crossing was planned to open on 6 July between 10am and 2pm to allow Palestinians to cross back into the Gaza Strip from Egypt, including some who have been stuck there since the border closed on 25 June. The EUBAM estimates that approximately 250 passengers are waiting to cross. However, as of 6 pm Thursday, the crossing had not reopened.
- Rafah, Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossings have now been closed for 12 days.

Analysis of the current situation in the wider humanitarian context

The current escalation of Israeli – Palestinian violence comes on top of an already critical situation. Gazan households are suffering from a severe lack of cash. Unemployment has jumped to 40%, and for four months, PA salaries - relied upon by 43% of the Gazan population - have not been paid and workers have not been able to access Israel. With reductions in power and water supply and the prospect of food shortages, Gazan households' ability to secure basic survival and the cash-starved Palestinian Authority's role in welfare protection and service delivery and both are undermined. At the same time, the capacity of the private sector to create wealth and jobs is declining in light of the frequent closure of Karni commercial crossing coupled with increased operating costs for business in the current context.

In the longer-term, the damage caused by the current crisis will further the de-development of the Gaza Strip. The destruction of Gaza's power plant increases Gazan dependency on power provided from an outside source, the Israel Electric Company. Similarly, the reduction of exports from the Gaza Strip to Israel has undermined local productive capacity, cut revenues and increased dependence on Israeli-imported goods. In this context, the opening of access through Karni crossing for imports and humanitarian aid only provides a short-term relief to households struggling to survive.

A sustainable solution requires the unimpeded access and movement for Palestinian goods and labour out of the Gaza Strip and into Israel and abroad.

Humanitarian coordination

Since 25 June, UN agencies, the ICRC and humanitarian NGOs have been meeting on a regular basis to monitor and identify sectoral needs in relation to the current situation and coordinating the response as the recent escalation of the conflict evolves.

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