

## GAZA SITUATION REPORT 224

27 May 2018



The Commissioner-General a press conference, highlighting that “the direct consequence of the number of injured and nature of wounds, has been to bring the health-care system in Gaza to a breaking point” © 2018 UNRWA Photo by Mohammed Hinnawi .

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report of 22 May, 117 people have been killed since the “Great March of Return” demonstrations began on 30 March. Seven children between the age of 14 and 16 who attended UNRWA schools are among the fatalities. The total number of people injured amidst ongoing demonstrations is 13,190, including 1,136 children. Out of this total number, 3,630 were injured by live ammunition and 332 remain in critical condition. As reported by WHO, the consequences of the injuries led to five upper limb amputations and 27 lower limb amputations.

During demonstrations in Gaza on 14 and 15 May alone, 62 Palestinians were killed, including one health worker, and 3,414 were injured by Israeli forces, including 271 children. The 3,414 injured who required hospitalization include 147 individuals in critically life-threatening condition.

The health sector in Gaza is already suffering from electricity cuts, severe shortages of supplies and understaffing, and can hardly deal with such a significant number of casualties. The caseload has caused further depletion of medical supplies and has also compromised access to healthcare for non-trauma cases, as thousands of previously appointed elective surgeries have been postponed until further notice.

Since 30 March, about 1,600 people have been treated at UNRWA health centers across the Gaza Strip. Most of the patients approach UNRWA health centres for post-operative care. However, a number of patients seeking UNRWA medical care actually require hospitalization which could not be continued or ensured, as people were discharged early or not admitted due to the overstretched capacity of hospitals.

Based on the nature of injuries seen until now, UNRWA expects that a substantial number of patients will suffer from long-term physical disabilities and require extensive physiotherapy management over the coming months. The needs include assistance in the form of artificial limbs and other physical appliances, as well as psychosocial support. UNRWA appeals to its partners to step forward to support Gaza's health system and enable UNRWA to provide immediate and adequate follow-up care to released patients, as well as to meet medium and longer term needs. UNRWA calls for respect of the right of Palestinians in Gaza to peaceful assembly and expression, and prevention of further injury and loss of life.

Following weeks of protests and violence near the perimeter fence separating Israel and the Gaza Strip in which 117 Palestinians were killed and over 13,000 injured, UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl visited the Gaza Strip.

- From 20 to 22 May. During his stay, he visited the UNRWA Khan Younis Health Centre to receive a first-hand account of how the events since 30 March have impacted primary healthcare and physiotherapy services and to meet with Palestine refugees seeking post-operative care from UNRWA. He also visited the Deir El-Balah Rehabilitation Centre, which provides vital health and livelihood support to persons with disabilities, and subsequently Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza city to be briefed on the state of the public health sector.

On 22 May, the Commissioner-General gave a press conference, highlighting that “the direct consequence of the number of injured and nature of wounds, has been to bring the health-care system in Gaza to a breaking point” and the need for UNRWA “to prepare for a major upsurge in terms of post-operative care, in particular with physical rehabilitation needs.” Mr. Krähenbühl concluded his remarks by saying that “dehumanizing or wishing away an entire community will bring no peace to the region” and that it is essential to recognize that “Palestine refugees have the same rights and aspirations as everyone on this planet, that they have the right to live safely, in freedom, with adequate services and opportunities.”

- UNRWA celebrated the graduation ceremony of the Leadership across Borders Training Programme (LAB) 2016/2017 on 7 May 2018 at the UNRWA Gaza Training Centre. Through the LAB, which this time involved 100 managers from various Departments and Programmes, UNRWA seeks to build capacity, strengthen leadership communication skills of its local staff and to establish a more consistent teamwork approach among UNRWA staff. At the end of the theoretical part of the training programme, participants were divided into 11 teams to prepare and present their final projects. The winning teams were announced at the graduation ceremony and were awarded letters of appreciation: a) the Best Overall Project: “Critical Analysis of UNRWA Staff Performance Management Policy” led by Mr. Imad Bader; b) the Best Presentation: “HR Career Development Path Strategy” led by Ms. Isra' Abu Shuaib; and c) the Best Team: “Staff Care and its Effect on Wellbeing”, led by Mr. Mohammad Abu Yusuf.
- From 24 to 27 May, UNRWA distributes Suhour food parcels to 6,161 Palestine refugee families (43,127 persons) in 12 distribution centres in all areas of the Gaza Strip. Suhour is the last meal Muslims consume in the early morning hours before the start of the daily fasting. Food parcels include items ranging from halva, jam, and canned bean to packages of tea, yellow and white cheese and dried dates. Families receiving this food assistance are classified by UNRWA as being “abject poor”, which means they have an income below US\$ 1.74 per person a day. Through its Social Safety Net and emergency food assistance programmes, UNRWA seeks to relieve food insecurity in the Gaza Strip by distributing food baskets to almost one million Palestine refugees who are classified as poor or abject poor. According to OCHA, 40 per cent of households in Gaza were estimated to be severely or moderately food insecure in 2017. The most important factor in driving poverty, food insecurity and unemployment (reportedly at 49.1 percent in Q1/2018) is the Israeli blockade on Gaza which will enter its twelfth year in June and continues to have a devastating impact on people and the local economy.

## **OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

- Between 9 and 21 May, Israeli patrol boats opened fire towards Palestinian boats off the coast of the Gaza Strip on 11 occasions, forcing them ashore. No injuries were reported.

In the period 13- 22 May, civilians, mostly youth, participated in protests under the slogan “Great Return March” near the perimeter fence in different areas of Gaza. Israeli forces responded with gunfire and teargas. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 63 Palestinians were killed and 3,414 were injured by Israeli forces, including 271 children.

Between 12 and 17 May Israeli Forces fired 26 missiles on six occasions targeting military sites. No injuries reported but one house sustained minor damage.

On 13 May, an explosive device exploded in open area. Three injuries were reported.

On 15 May, an unexploded ordinance (ERW) accidentally exploded in Jabalia. A 12-year-old boy was injured.

On 16 May troops positioned at the security fence, fired four shells on two occasions towards Palestinian area, reportedly targeting a military observation post. No injuries were reported.

## UNRWA'S RESPONSE

HAKMA ATALLAH, A NAKBA SURVIVOR SHARES HER STORY OF LOSS AND HOPE



105-YEAR-OLD HAKMA ATALLAH, A NAKBA SURVIVOR AND PALESTINE REFUGEE LIVING IN BEACH CAMP, WEST OF GAZA CITY. HAKMA FLED FROM HER ORIGINAL VILLAGE AL-SWAFEER IN 1948 WHEN SHE WAS 35 YEARS OLD. © 2018 UNRWA PHOTO BY MOHAMMED HINNAWI.

In Beach Camp, west of Gaza City, lives 105-year-old Hakma Atallah in her two-room house with her 65-year-old daughter Zainab. Hakma fled from her original village, Al-Swafeer, in 1948 when over 700,000 Palestinians were displaced during what is commonly referred to as *al-Nakba* (the Catastrophe).

“When I fled from Al-Swafeer, I was 35 years old, married and had five children. I remember my house very well, and I will never forget it. It was a big home with four rooms and we had a nice garden,” Hakma said.

With a gentle, melancholic tone, she recalls: “What I remember the most about these old days is how women used to gather around the fire, baking bread and then eating it with cheese,” and she adds that “sometimes I close my eyes and try to remember my last night in Al-Swafeer. I imagine myself with my husband and children sitting in the front of our home drinking tea and chit-chatting. I wish I could go back to that day.”

“Gaza, and particularly the Beach Camp, is where my family and I have been living for five generations. It is where all my grandchildren were born, got their degrees, married and had children. But it’s not like my original village, where I was born, spent my childhood and then got married. There, I had my own land where I used to plant grapes and raise cows and goats,” Hakma explains.



65-year-old Zainab Atallah, Hakma’s daughter (left), 105-year-old Hakma Atallah (middle) and 19-year-old Haneen Atallah, Hakma’s granddaughter (right) © 2018 UNRWA Photo by Mohammed Hinnawi.

19-year-old, Haneen Atallah, Hakma’s grandchild said: “Every day the family gathers around my grandmother and asks her to talk with us about Al-Swafeer. She used to tell us about the calm nights and nice weather there. She talks with us about the Nakba day and how the family fled from one village to another until they finally reached Gaza where they stayed in tents. I really can’t imagine how difficult these days must have been.

## **FUNDING NEEDS**

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs.

UNRWA’s emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals. Prioritised needs in Gaza in relation to the [2018 oPt Emergency Appeal](#) include US\$ 80 million for the distribution of emergency food parcels to almost 1 million people, at least US\$ 10 million for creating temporary cash-for-work opportunities through UNRWA’s Job Creation Programme as well as US\$ 7 million for the Agency’s Community Mental Health Programme. Furthermore, following the 2014 conflict, US\$ 316 million has been pledged in support of UNRWA’s emergency shelter programme, for which an estimated US\$ 720 million is required. This leaves a current shortfall of US\$ 404 million. UNRWA urgently appeals to donors to generously contribute to its emergency shelter programme to provide displaced Palestine refugees in Gaza with rental subsidies or cash assistance to undertake reconstruction of their demolished homes.

## CROSSINGS

Longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza have undermined the living conditions of approximately 1.9 million Palestinians in Gaza. [Israel prevents all access to and from the Gaza Strip by sea and air.](#) [Movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza](#) is restricted to three crossings: Rafah crossing, Erez crossing and Kerem Shalom crossing. Rafah crossing is controlled by the Egyptian authorities and technically allows for the movement of a number of authorized travelers, Palestinian medical and humanitarian cases only. Erez crossing is controlled by the Israeli authorities and technically allows for the movement of aid workers and a limited number of authorized travelers, including Palestinian medical and humanitarian cases. Kerem Shalom crossing, also controlled by Israeli authorities, technically allows for the movement of authorized goods only.

Kerem Shalom operations were interrupted for a few days as a result of serious destruction caused by “Great March of Return” demonstrators

Crossing	8 May	9 May	10 May	11 May	12 May	14 May	15 May	16 May	17 May	18 May	19 May	20 May	21 May
<b>Rafah</b>	Closed.	Closed.	Closed.	Closed.	Open.	Open.	Open.	Open.	Open.	Open.	Open.	Open.	Open.
<b>Erez</b>	Open.	Open.	Open.	Open for humanitarian and medical cases only	Closed.	Open.	crossing was closed due to the	Open.	Open.	Open for humanitarian and medical cases only	Closed.	Closed.	Open.

							security situation.						
<b>Kerem Shalom</b>	Open.	Open.	Open.	Closed.	Closed.	Closed.	Open.	Open.	Open.	Closed.	Closed.	Closed.	Open.