

## مجموعة الرقابة الفلسطينية



## PALESTINIAN MONITORING GROUP

## SPECIAL REPORT

**COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT: ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON THE GAZA STRIP**

On 27 and 28 June 2006, the Israeli military attacked the Occupied Gaza Strip, bombing 3 bridges and its only domestic electricity source, the Gaza power plant, which provided approximately 50 per cent of the Gaza Strip's electricity.<sup>1</sup> Between 08:00 27 June and 08:00 08 July, Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip killed 39 Palestinians and injured 111. In the past several days, there has been **a dramatic increase in the death toll**, with 30 Palestinians, out of the total 39, killed in the 48-hour period between 08:00 06 July and 08:00 08 July.

In the days since Israel's massive military offensive began, the Israeli military has fired hundreds of artillery shells and tens of missiles into the Gaza Strip, causing widespread destruction of Palestinian property. Israeli F16 combat aircraft have repeatedly patrolled the skies over the Gaza Strip, carried out diversionary air raids, and broke the sound barrier, breaking the windows of many civilian houses and causing massive psychological damage to the civilian population – **some 1.4 million residents, of whom, approximately 50 per cent are under 15 years of age**. Israel's recent military attack has worsened the already severe humanitarian situation caused, primarily, by Israel's repeated closure of Gaza crossing points.

The Israeli military has characterized its actions as a response to an armed Palestinian group's 25 June capture of an Israeli soldier during an attack on an Israeli army post near Karm Abu Salim (Karem Shalom) Crossing, as well as due to Palestinian individuals' firing of mortars towards Israel. Yet, through its attack on the Gaza Strip, particularly its infrastructure, **Israel is collectively punishing the Palestinian civilian population**. Collective punishment on the part of an occupying power is prohibited by International Humanitarian Law, which stipulates that protected persons may not be punished for an offence that they did not personally commit.<sup>2</sup> All collective penalties and all measures of intimidation against this population are therefore illegal and prohibited.

**Moreover, Israel's military attacks and related recent actions in the Gaza Strip have been grossly disproportionate.**<sup>3</sup> State practice prohibits the launching of an attack that may cause incidental injury or damage to civilians that would be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage. In this case, the degree of harm inflicted on the Palestinian civilian population is manifestly disproportionate to the threat posed by the attacks carried out by Palestinian individuals, the overwhelming majority of which result in no Israeli casualties<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This Special Report is based on Daily Situation Reports of the Palestinian Monitoring Group, along with information from the Palestinian Water Authority, the Palestinian Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and PMG fieldwork. The reporting period for Daily Situation Reports is 08:00 to 08:00. The information reported through the PMG process only represents data available at the time of distribution.

<sup>2</sup> See Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The status of the civilian population of Gaza falls within the definition of 'protected persons' (Article 4, Fourth Geneva Convention).

<sup>3</sup> See the 'proportionality in attack' rule as stated in Article 50(5)(b) of Additional Protocol I.

<sup>4</sup> From 08:00 27 June – 08:00 08 July 2006, there were a total of 70 Palestinian attacks, including the firing of 105 unidentified mortars towards Israel. Of these, 9 mortars landed or exploded on Palestinian territory.

## Summary of Events

At 06:35 on 25 June, an armed Palestinian group attacked an Israeli army post near Karm Abu Salim (Karem Shalom) Crossing and captured an Israeli soldier. Immediately following the attack, the Israeli army reinforced the pre-existing concentration of its armed forces along the northern and eastern borders of the Gaza Strip; carried out a limited incursion into the eastern Rafah district; imposed a sea blockade that has prevented Palestinian fishing boats from sailing; and closed crossings into the Gaza Strip. Of 7 total crossings, 6 were closed and 1 was partially open, as of 08:00 08 July.<sup>5</sup>

On 27 and 28 June, the Israeli military expanded the scope of its military operation by attacking infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, including bombing the Gaza power station and 3 bridges, thereby dividing the Gaza Strip into 3 isolated units. On the morning of 03 July, the Israeli army invaded an area 700 metres inside Palestinian territory located north and east of the town of Beit Hanun in the district of Northern Gaza. At 22:00 on 05 July, the Israeli army again expanded the scope of its incursion by taking control of the debris of the evacuated settlements of Eli Sinai and Dugit north of the town of Beit Lahiya (where the Israeli army has imposed a free fire zone through open fire as well as artillery and air attacks since 28 December 2005). In addition, the Israeli army re-captured the areas of Al 'Atatira and Al Waha, north and northwest of the town of Beit Lahiya, and levelled agricultural land.

As of 08:00 08 July, the Israeli army was positioned in areas located north and east of the town of Beit Hanun, north and northwest of the town of Beit Lahiya, and east of the town of Jabalya.

From 08:00 27 June – 08:00 08 July, the **Israeli military carried out 227 attacks** on the Gaza Strip, including 81 air attacks by Israeli F16s, UAVs and helicopters **firing over 100 missiles** into the Gaza Strip. Additionally, the Israeli military **fired some 800 artillery and other shells** into the Gaza Strip and Israeli military aircraft, including F16s, have **carried out over 185 air patrols**. During this period, **Israeli military operations resulted in the deaths of 39 Palestinians** – including 30 civilians, 5 Palestinian security officers, 1 Palestinian Naval officer and 3 armed individuals. In addition to those killed, 111 Palestinians were injured.

### Israeli Military Activity in the Gaza Strip, 08:00 01 June – 08:00 27 June 2006

Israel's recent military activity is an escalation of Israel's ongoing siege of the Gaza Strip (*see graph in Annex*).

On 28 December 2005, the Israeli army began imposing a free-fire zone (through open fire as well as artillery and air attacks) in the northern area of the Gaza Strip, including the area of evacuated Israeli settlements.

From 08:00 01 June until 08:00 27 June, the Israeli army had carried out 113 attacks on the Gaza Strip, which included open fire as well as the firing of shells and flares by Israeli army troops or naval boats; 681 artillery and other shells were fired.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Israeli army had carried out 28 air attacks using Israeli army UAVs, F16 combat aircraft, or combat helicopters. Israeli F16 combat aircraft, combat helicopters, and reconnaissance aircraft had also patrolled the skies over the Gaza Strip districts on 56 occasions. In addition, Israeli troops had raided Palestinian territory 33 times and had levelled Palestinian land on 17 occasions.

Israeli military activity during the period 08:00 01 June until 08:00 27 June resulted in the killing of 45 Palestinians, of whom 8 were assassinated. Among those killed, there were 28 civilians, including 9 children

<sup>5</sup> Israel's complete control over all Gaza commercial crossings enables it to isolate the civilian population and control the flow of goods into and out of the Gaza Strip. Palestinians' ability to procure vital supplies – such as food stuffs, fuel, and medicine – is subject to the discretion of the Israeli authorities.

<sup>6</sup> Of these, 38 did not explode.

and 2 medics, 2 Palestinian National Security officers and 8 armed Palestinian individuals. During the same period, Israeli military activity resulted **in the injury of 122 civilians, including women, children, and medics**. Of those injured, 1 was a civilian bystander during 1 failed assassination attempt.

- At 16:40 on 09 June, Israeli naval ships fired 4 shells towards As Sudaniya beach northwest of the town of Beit Lahiya, where civilians were on a picnic, **killing 8 civilians, including 4 children from the same family, their sister, their father and mother, as well as another female civilian**. In addition, 40 other civilians, including children and female civilians were injured.
- At 11:45 on 13 June, an Israeli army UAV fired missiles towards a civilian vehicle travelling along As Sikka-Jabalya Street. After ambulances and civilians arrived to offer first aid to civilians who were in the vehicle, the Israeli army UAV fired more missiles. The Israeli army's air attacks resulted in: the **killing of 11 civilians, including 2 children, their father, and 2 medics; the injury of 32 civilians, including children and medics**; and the destruction of the targeted vehicle.

## Deaths<sup>7</sup>

*Civilian deaths have increased dramatically over the course of the past several days. From 08:00 27 June – 08:00 06 July, 9 Palestinians were killed, including 4 civilians. From 08:00 06 July – 08:00 08 July, 30 Palestinians were killed, including 25 civilians.*

- At 15:00 on 06 July, an Israeli combat helicopter fired missiles towards a gathering of civilians in the town of Beit Lahiya, killing 5 civilians and injuring 4 others.
- At 22:30 on 06 July, the Israeli army fired a number of tank shells from its locations on Palestinian territory towards the area of As Salatin, killing 7 civilians and 1 Palestinian National Security officer.
- Between 08:00 07 July and 08:00 08 July, the Israeli army opened intensive fire towards civilian houses in the area surrounding the town of Beit Hanun, killing 5 civilians, including 1 physically-disabled civilian, and 2 Palestinian National Security officers as well as injuring 7 civilians and 1 Palestinian journalist working with a Turkish media agency.

## Attacking Infrastructure

- At 23:50 on 27 June, Israeli F16 combat aircraft fired missiles towards the old Wadi Gaza Bridge on the coastal road, damaging the bridge. As a result, civilian movement was denied along the coastal road that connects the district of Gaza to the southern districts of the Gaza Strip.
- Also, at 23:50 on 27 June, Israeli F16 combat aircraft fired missiles towards As Sikka Bridge north of An Nuseirat refugee camp, damaging the bridge. The air attack also caused damage to civilian houses near the targeted bridge as well as destroyed the main water pipeline that supplies the district of Central Gaza.
- At 01:45 on 28 June, Israeli F16 combat aircraft fired numerous missiles towards and destroyed the transformers of the Gaza power plant.
- At 02:30, and again at 03:10, on 28 June, Israeli F16 combat aircraft fired missiles towards the new Wadi Gaza Bridge on Salah ad Din road, damaging the bridge. As a result, civilian movement was denied along Salah ad Din road, which runs north-south through the Gaza Strip and connects all districts. The air attack also resulted in the injury of 3 female civilians.
- At 21:00 on 29 June, the Israeli army fired 1 artillery shell from its locations inside Israel towards an electricity generator near the area of Al Jamarik north of the town of Beit Hanun.

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<sup>7</sup> The events listed under “Deaths”, “Attacking Infrastructure” and “Attacking Palestinian Institutions” are not comprehensive. For complete details, see PMG Daily Situation Reports.

## Attacking Palestinian Institutions

- At 01:25 on 30 June, Israeli army combat helicopters fired 2 missiles towards and destroyed the Palestinian Minister of Interior's office in the building housing the Ministry of Interior in Gaza city. The air attack also caused damage to the building.
- At 01:45 on 02 July, an Israeli combat helicopter fired 1 missile towards the building housing the office of the Palestinian Prime Minister in the area of Tall al Hawa in Gaza city. The air attack resulted in the destruction of the Prime Minister's office and damage to the building.
- At 01:45 on 05 July, an Israeli F16 combat aircraft fired 1 missile towards and destroyed the building housing the Palestinian Ministry of Interior in Gaza city. The air attack also caused damage to neighbouring buildings and resulted in the injury of 5 civilians, including 3 children.
- At 01:45 on 05 July, an Israeli F16 combat aircraft fired 1 missile towards Dar al Arqam School in At Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza city, injuring 1 civilian and damaging the school.

## Electricity

**Israel's deliberate destruction of the substation of the Gaza power plant has had far reaching consequences for the civilian population.** The Gaza power plant is the only domestic source of electricity for the Gaza Strip. Prior to the attack, the plant supplied some 50 per cent of the Gaza Strip's electricity.

According to the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA), Israel's 28 June attack completely destroyed the 4 high voltage transformers of the generation station, and the 2 low voltage transformers of the west Gaza transformation station, among other damage. PENRA initially estimated that the cost of repairing the plant would reach US\$ 15 million and take some 8 months from the initiation of repairs.

**The absence of sufficient electricity has impacted all aspects of daily life,** from the carrying out of routine tasks to the running of institutions providing services to the public, such as hospitals, which are now forced to power life-saving equipment with diesel-fuelled electric generators during power outages caused by the attack on the power plant.

According to PENRA, in order to deal with the emergency situation, the electricity company in Gaza is implementing a "load management program," wherein priority for electricity distribution is given to hospitals and other important service establishments. Residential and commercial areas receive 6 hours of electricity per day. Despite these efforts, the amount of electricity provided in many cases is insufficient to prevent food and other perishables from spoiling.

## Fuel

Israel's bombing of the Gaza power plant resulted in a significant increase in the demand for diesel to power substitute electric generators. After barring any import of fuel in the days immediately following the capture of the Israeli soldier, Israel has since allowed only limited fuel supplies to enter the Gaza Strip.

According to the Fuel Committee at the Palestinian Ministry of Finance, on an average day, the Gaza Strip consumes 600,000 litres of diesel; 200,000 litres of gasoline; 10,000 litres of kerosene; and 200 tons of butane gas. The Fuel Committee estimates that the current daily need has increased to some 1,000,000 litres of diesel.

## **Water and Wastewater**

Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip have had a wide-ranging impact on water and wastewater infrastructure and management. Israeli military operations have resulted in the destruction of main water pipelines and sewage networks. For example, according to the Palestinian Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), the 28 June Israeli air strike on the bridge between Nuseirat refugee camp and Moghraga village partially destroyed a water pipeline serving approximately 155,000 inhabitants of Nuseirat, Bureij and Maghazi refugee camps and Zuweida town. Water supply was completely cut and 2 sewage pipelines in Nuseirat refugee camp were partially destroyed. The Israeli army's incursion on 03 July 2006 in eastern Beit Hanun resulted in the partial destruction of a local network.

In addition to the direct, physical damage caused to water-related infrastructure is the severe impact Israel's destruction of the Gaza power plant has had on the water and wastewater sector. According to the Palestinian Water Authority, following the destruction of the Gaza power plant and the resultant electricity deficit, reserve electricity generators have been used to operate vital water installations, such as wells and pumps. However, the fuel necessary for operating these generators is lacking. According to the CMWU, some 18,000 litres of fuel are required each day to run the back-up generators that are now required to power regular water supplies, pump stations and wastewater treatment plants.

CMWU reports that most of the 120 water wells managed by it and used for domestic purposes, including drinking, were powered through the destroyed electricity grid. Generators are now being relied upon to power the wells. However, some households are unable to pump water to the upper levels of multi-story buildings. Additionally, 33 sewage pump stations managed by the CMWU were powered through the destroyed grid. Given the reduced electricity supply, there is now a risk of sewage flooding the low areas of the Gaza Strip. Moreover, 3 waste water treatment plants are not operating due to the shortage of electricity and fuel. Consequently, there is a growing possibility of pollution of the sandy, shallow aquifer that Gazans rely upon, the seashore, and the threatening of marine life.

Electrical fluctuation has resulted in water pump malfunctioning in Beit Hanun (Abu Ghazala well) and Nuseirat water well, while the increased demand on the usage of standby diesel generators has resulted in malfunctioning of the Jabalya main pump station.

The Gaza Strip is facing a water crisis in terms of both quality and quantity. If not addressed immediately, the impact of Israel's recent military activity may cause an unprecedented worsening of the humanitarian crisis. Further worsening the situation is that the CMWU's operation and maintenance teams are unable to reach all areas in need due to shortage of fuel for cars and inability to access certain areas due to Israeli military operations.

CMWU estimates that supplies urgently needed for water networks total US\$ 183,820, while urgent needs for water and wastewater sector fuel and generators reaches some US\$ 1,036,000. However, the CMWU is concerned that the materials needed to repair damages to pipe networks will not be available, as CMWU has had a number of containers with equipment, spare parts and materials sitting at Karnei Crossing for more than 3 months waiting to enter the Gaza Strip.

## **Palestinian Civilians Stranded at Rafah Crossing**

According to Palestinian civilians who are stranded on the Egyptian side of the Rafah Crossing, there are some 200 Palestinian civilians waiting in the transfer lounge of the crossing and approximately 500 Palestinians waiting in the departure lounge. Those in the transfer lounge are not allowed to leave the lounge. In addition, there are some 300 Palestinians who are sleeping outside, on the Egyptian side of Rafah Crossing, waiting for the Egyptians to begin facilitating their travel into Gaza. Although these civilians are technically allowed to travel within Egypt, they are sleeping at the crossing because they cannot afford to

stay anywhere else. One meal per day is being provided by charitable organizations. Water from bathroom taps is being used for drinking and personal needs.

There are many other Palestinian civilians who are stranded outside of Gaza, but who are staying at hotels in the area. However, the number of Palestinians outside the crossing is increasing as many civilians are running out of funds to stay elsewhere.

## ANNEX: Escalation of Israeli Military Activity in the Gaza Strip, 01 - 30 June 2006

