



The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

GAZA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT
14 - 23 July 2007

SUMMARY POINTS

1. **Basic food commodities entered Gaza** primarily through Sufa crossing (76% of all truckloads) and also through Kerem Shalom. 92% of the total amount of supplies entering Gaza were commercial commodities¹; the rest were humanitarian supplies.²
2. Despite the flow of food commodities, **shortages remain** of rice, vegetable oil and baby milk. Rising market prices – notably for vegetables, fresh and frozen meat, and milk powder – have placed an additional strain on the ability of households to ensure a balanced diet.
3. The 6-week closure of Karni is causing significant economic damage to the Gazan economy. Effects on Gaza’s industrial and commercial sectors were reported in the last edition of this situation report. With the start of the planting season, the **agricultural sector** which employs 40,000 people and produces 300-500 tons of products daily in Gaza is in jeopardy. Since the closure, the sector has already lost an estimated \$4.5 million³. The fishing industry is also experiencing losses – fish prices have dropped by more than 50% due to the flooding of the market of fish designated for export.
4. **Rafah Crossing** has remained **closed for all Gazan residents for the last 44 days** – the longest period since the implementation of the Access and Movement Agreement (AMA) in November 2005. Between 4-6,000 Palestinians from Gaza remain in Egypt unable to return home. Many have run out of savings.
5. The closure of crossings has lead to **electricity shortages** due to the inability to receive spare parts and maintenance teams. 50% of production has been lost. In the past week, power outages occurred on two days for 4-5 hours.
6. **The internal security situation** in Gaza generally remains **calm**. Nonetheless, IDF military operations continue and there have been reports of three “honour” killings of women, a death in detention caused by torture and storming of a prominent Fatah official’s office in Gaza. Palestinian militants fired 29 Qassam rockets and 30 mortar shells from Gaza towards southern Israeli towns and Erez, Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossings.

¹ Commercial commodities include basic foods (e.g. wheat flour), daily essentials (i.e. soap, diapers) and other food stuffs (e.g. frozen meats, fresh dairy) all imported by the private sector. These commodities are distributed through commercial outlets on the open market.

² Humanitarian supplies consist of basic foods (e.g. wheat flour, rice, pulses, cooking oil) and animal feed delivered by UNWRA and the World Food Programme (WFP), and also medicines. These commodities are distributed to pre-identified beneficiaries of these organizations.

³ Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture

ACCESS AND CROSSINGS

Karni: The main crossing for commercial goods has been closed for six weeks (since 13 June) for all container imports and exports, severely impacting the Gazan economy.

1. In the **industrial sector**, 80% of all establishments are either temporarily shut down or running at below 20% capacity⁴. The sector is 95% dependant on imported raw materials and 80% dependant on the imports of machinery and maintenance parts. Over 66,000 workers have been temporarily laid off. If this situation is sustained, the unemployment rate in Gaza will rise to 44% by 2008.
2. **The agricultural sector** which employs 40,000 people and produces 300-500 tons of products daily in Gaza has been severely impacted by the six-week closure of the Karni crossing (since 13 June):
 - The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture in Gaza estimates losses of at least \$4.5 million since the closure.
 - 5,000 tons of potatoes and more than 10,000 tons of other crops ready for export are being stored in refrigerators awaiting export.
 - Gazan farmers cannot begin planting for the beginning of the agricultural season as they remain 100% dependent on the import through Karni of seedlings, fertilisers and pesticides in order to begin planting.
 - No preparation work has been carried out on the 3,500 dunums (350 ha) of green houses available in Gaza. The crops most impacted are export related, such as sweet peppers, cherry tomatoes and flowers. The Minister of Agriculture has announced this week that the green houses are now available for leasing, although only 50 have been leased so far.
 - As a result of the lack of raw materials, a project in conjunction with Israel to export 140,000 tons of crops during the Jewish agricultural sabbatical year (“*Shmita*”) is in jeopardy. This \$80-90 million project, which is due to begin this month, has the potential to create around 80,000 job opportunities.
3. Passage of wheat **grain and animal feed:** The single-lane conveyor belt/chute located outside the Karni crossing for grains and animal feed was closed for 8 days during the reporting period, reducing the stocks of wheat in the Gazan mills.

Rafah: The crossing has remained closed for the last 44 days. This is the longest period of continuous closure since the AMA was instituted in November 2005. Movement of the Gaza population including patients and students in and out of the Gaza Strip is completely restricted, except for an average of 20 critical patients per day who have coordinated exit through Erez.

- Approximately 6,000 Palestinians remain stranded in the northern Egyptian towns of Al Arish and Sheikh Zouaid, with a further 400-700 Palestinians estimated to be at the border itself. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, this number includes: at least 1,000 patients who had travelled to Egypt and/or overseas to receive medical treatment, hundreds of families who live abroad and arrived to Egypt to travel to Gaza, and university students.

Kerem Shalom: The crossing reopened on 22 July after nine days of closure due to the firing of mortar shells on the crossing by Palestinian militants. 11 truckloads of flour from WFP crossed on 22 July.

⁴ Source: Gaza Industrial Association

Sufa: The crossing remains the main entry point for humanitarian and commercial supplies entering the Gaza Strip.

- Since it first opened on 19 June for the passage of non-construction materials, Sufa has handled about 76% of the total number of truckloads entering the Gaza Strip.
- The crossing is a wide-open dirt field. Due to the lack of infrastructure and protection from heat and dust the Ministry of Agriculture has expressed concerns over the quality of sensitive food stuffs such as dairy products, fruits and vegetables, especially since it is not able to check the commodities before they enter through Sufa.

Erez: The crossing remains open for the passage of an average of 20 senior Palestinian traders per day into Israel and continues to remain open for international agencies and referrals of health cases to Israel. Coordination is required with the Israeli District Civil Liaison for national and international staff departing Gaza.

Nahal Oz: The fuel pipelines have been open each day except Saturday supplying diesel, petrol and cooking gas into the Gaza Strip.

INTERNAL FOOD AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The movement of commodities through Sufa and Kerem Shalom has made a variety of basic food items available on the market, with shortages of only a few essential commodities – notably powdered and baby milk, rice and vegetable oil. Additional food commodities (dairy products, fruit, spices, tea, canned food and pasta) are being imported in acceptable quantities to meet immediate commercial needs.

Rising market prices place a strain on the ability of households to ensure an adequate, healthy and balanced diet. None of the monitored food prices are down to pre-crisis levels, except for local cash crops for export (notably tomatoes, melons and apples) whose prices are decreasing. Prices of vegetables remain generally very high, especially for lemons, cucumbers and lentils. The high prices of animal fodder coupled with the shortage of cattle are generating a rise in the prices of related commodities (agricultural produce, fresh and frozen meat).

LIVESTOCK AND FISHING

The average monthly consumption of livestock feeds for small ruminants, poultry, and cattle is about 20,000 tons, while the total volume now in storage is estimated to be enough for 20 days only. A significant rise in the feed prices (typically from 1,700 to 2,100 NIS/ton for broiler feed and 1,400 to 1,650 NIS/ton for layer feed) has led to premature selling of broiler chickens (at lower weights) and to a higher price for table eggs (from 14 to 17 NIS/30 eggs).

There are 11 hatcheries in Gaza producing enough chicks to meet the local demand. These hatcheries usually import fertilised eggs from Israel. Currently, there are only about 200,000 broiler eggs in the Gaza Strip. If the crossings remain closed, these hatcheries will not be able to meet local demand and the supply of this main animal protein source will be jeopardised.

The availability of red meat and milk production (by cattle and small ruminants) have decreased, notably due to the shortage in feed both as concentrates and roughage.

Before the closure, approximately two tons of fish/day were exported from Gaza. With the closure, the flooding of the market of fish designated for export has resulted in a significant decline in fish prices, causing heavy losses to the fishing industry. The price of Locus fish (considered a delicacy) declined from 150 to 50 NIS/kg and Calamari went from 70 to 30 NIS/kg.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Gaza Power Generating Company, which provides 30% of electricity to Gaza, faces the prospect of major shutdowns. About 50% of the Gaza Power Plant's production capacity has been lost due to delays in maintenance. Remaining capacity will soon be further limited due to upcoming maintenance requirements. Efforts are underway to deploy a maintenance team that has been delayed due to security concerns. The step-down transformer meant to avoid shortages was scheduled to arrive in Gaza in early July but is still in Egypt waiting for approval from Egyptian and Israeli authorities to be moved into Gaza.

This week, power outages throughout the Gaza Strip are more noticeable with at least 4-5 hours cut occurring on two days per week, with shorter cuts on a daily basis. Longer hours of outages are expected with the increased demand during the next few months of summer.

Nearly 160,000 tons of concrete rubble and an additional 293,233 tons of non-concrete rubble have been removed from 19 evacuated settlements and transported to a crushing site. Work is nearly complete at 9 evacuated settlements.

HEALTH

The general situation in the health sector remains the same since last week. Primary and secondary health care facilities are functioning with no major disruptions, despite shortages of electricity and supplies. Shortages of supplies include X-ray film, laboratory kits, patient beds and examination tables. 80 items are below the one-month stock thresholds, including chronic disease drugs and anaesthetics. A considerable portion of equipment and machines are out of order, overloading the remaining capacity of hospitals.

No progress is reported with regards to referrals through Rafah crossing. Erez crossing remains open for critical patients, with about 20 patients crossing per day.

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