

Humanitarian Bulletin

occupied Palestinian territory

AUGUST 2016



HIGHLIGHTS

- Two years after latest hostilities, one in four children in Gaza need psycho-social support
- Decline in number of businesspeople, medical patients and humanitarian workers allowed to leave Gaza
- Sharp rise in the number of Palestinian structures in the West Bank, particularly East Jerusalem.
- Only one third of this year's Humanitarian Response Plan funded.



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Overview

In his monthly briefing to the Security Council on 29 August, the UN Special Coordinator observed, on the occasion of the two-year anniversary of the Gaza ceasefire, that “while progress has been made on reconstructing the physical damage, sadly we are miles away from repairing the psychological damage of the conflict.” This month’s Bulletin highlights the psycho-social impact on children in Gaza, with one out of four children (225, 000) still requiring psychosocial support and 33,000 needing specific case management. By end-June, over 63,008 children had been provided with psychosocial support and counselling services and 1,542 children with case management.

As part of a ‘separation policy’ to divide West Bank Palestinians from Palestinians in Gaza¹, the Israeli authorities prohibit the passage of Palestinians into and out of Gaza, with exceptions mainly made for businesspeople and traders, medical patients and their companions, and employees of international organizations. In July there was a 15 per cent decline in exits from Gaza compared to the monthly average for the first half of 2016, with a 27 per cent decline in the number of exits for businesspeople and traders. This year has also shown a decline in the approval rate for permit applications for medical patients and their companions to travel via the Erez crossing to more advanced health facilities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel.

There has also been a decline in the approval rate of permits for national staff working with international organizations in Gaza, with rejections increasing from three per cent in January to 21 per cent in June, and over one hundred permit applications denied. There are concerns that the recent Israeli indictment of two local Gaza-based employees of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Vision International, who have been accused of diverting funds and material to Hamas, may lead to further restrictions on humanitarian space in Gaza, and negatively impact the ability of aid organizations to respond to critical needs, particularly through the national staff.

In the West Bank, following a significant decline in May and June, demolitions increased significantly in July and August. Of the structures targeted, 94 were located in vulnerable Bedouin and herding communities in Area C and

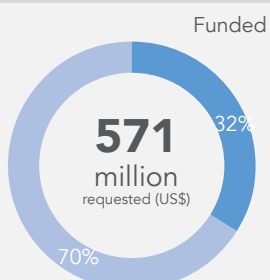
AUGUST FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	1
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	261
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	0
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	2
Structures demolished in the West Bank	120
People displaced in the West Bank	187

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2016

571 million requested (US\$)

32% funded



In September 2014, UNICEF estimated that the conflict had left 373,000 Palestinian children in need of direct psychosocial support.

demolished or confiscated on the grounds of lack of permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain. Most of the approximately 30,000 Palestinians living in such communities are at risk of forcible transfer due to the coercive environment generated by Israeli policies. There is also renewed concern for the community of Susiya in the southern West Bank, where over 170 civilian structures are under threat of demolition and where the Israeli authorities abruptly ended negotiations with community representatives last month. In his monthly briefing, the UN Special Coordinator warned that “the demolition of this community would set a dangerous precedent for displacement and feed the perception that Israel aims at a de facto annexation of Area C.”

According to the UN Special Coordinator, “international funding and an uninterrupted flow of aid are a lifeline to over one million Palestinians in the Strip, who are struggling to survive within a dire humanitarian situation.” In Cairo in October 2014, donors pledged US\$ 3.5 billion for Gaza: according to the World Bank, only an estimated 46 per cent had been disbursed by end-August. The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the oPt, which plans to support one in three Palestinians with some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016, is likewise severely underfunded, at 32 per cent as of mid-August. Decreased funding for the oPt HRP has reduced the humanitarian community’s ability to implement a number of critical interventions and to respond to humanitarian needs, which – given the ongoing occupation and political stalemate – remain critical. In the absence of additional pledges, organizations will be forced to scale back activities in the second half of 2016, with the impact felt across all humanitarian sectors across the oPt, but particularly in Gaza.

Gaza two years on: the psychosocial impact on children

The 51-day conflict in the Gaza Strip and Israel in the summer of 2014 had a devastating impact on children. At least 551 Palestinian children and four Israeli children were killed; 2,956 Palestinian children and 22 Israeli children were reportedly injured.

After the 2014 conflict, the UNICEF-led Child Protection Working Group led a rapid assessment in the Gaza Strip in which 100 per cent of respondents confirmed that there had been changes in children’s behaviour as a result of the psychological distress they had suffered from the conflict. The most common changes included bedwetting, unusual crying/screaming and displays of aggressive behaviour, particularly in boys. Two years on, the consequences of the conflict are still being felt and continue to take a heavy toll on children and their well-being, including their mental health.

Eighty-eight per cent of respondents noted that children had engaged in acts of violence, including bullying, violence towards siblings and vandalism to infrastructure. The attitudes of carers were also found to have changed since the conflict and 54 per cent of respondents reported increased aggression (including physical and verbal abuse) towards children.



This section was contributed by UNICEF

In September 2014, UNICEF estimated that the conflict had left 373,000 Palestinian children in need of direct psychosocial support, based on the number of children affected by grave violations such as injury, killing or injury of a relative or other people, enduring airstrikes and shelling, and displacement.

By the end of 2015, the Child Protection Working Group and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Working Group (MHPSS) had reached 147,908 children – 40 per cent of all children originally identified as in need of support. Some youth were provided with support through centres that provide families with holistic protection services, and where counsellors organize life skills sessions and case managers can attend to children's specific needs.

To date, it is estimated that one in four children in Gaza still require psychosocial support (225 000 children) and 33 000 need specific case management.³ In the first six months of 2016, members of the MHPSS Working Group in Gaza reached 63,008 children with psychosocial support and counselling services, while members of the UNICEF-led Child Protection Working Group were able to reach out to 1,542 children (44 per cent girls) through case management.

In Gaza city, eight-year-old Iman² was suffering from distress-related symptoms, including a fear of sudden loud noises and planes, frequent nightmares about events related to the conflict and bedwetting. She was referred to a Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (PCDCR) counsellor who developed a comprehensive intervention plan to provide her with appropriate psychological support through expressive arts, relaxation techniques, positive stimulus family counselling sessions and individual counselling. As a result, Iman managed to overcome the memories and distress caused by the conflict. Her learning achievements improved, she became more sociable and was able to express her feelings freely with her family and peers.



As part of preparation for a new escalation of violence, and building on lessons learned from 2014-2015, Child Protection Working Group members have worked closely with the Protection Cluster, the Gender-Based Violence Working Group and other actors, to develop standard operating procedures and to review emergency contingency plans. These will be used for capacity building purposes, to guide the work of protection teams that will operate in government-run designated emergency shelters.

At the same time, as part of a joint strategy to link humanitarian and development programming, significant efforts are being made to strengthen child protection systems for the benefit of the most vulnerable children and families in Gaza.

Hebron has been one of the areas most affected by the escalation of violence which began in October 2015.

YMCA psychosocial project targets most vulnerable children in H2

Since 1997, Israel has exercised full control over 20 per cent of Hebron city, known as H2. The population of H2 includes approximately 40,000 Palestinians living alongside several hundred Israeli settlers, who reside in four separate settlements. Access restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities in H2, compounded by systematic harassment by Israeli settlers and, occasionally, by Israeli forces, have resulted in the displacement of thousands of Palestinians and a deterioration in the living conditions of those who remain.

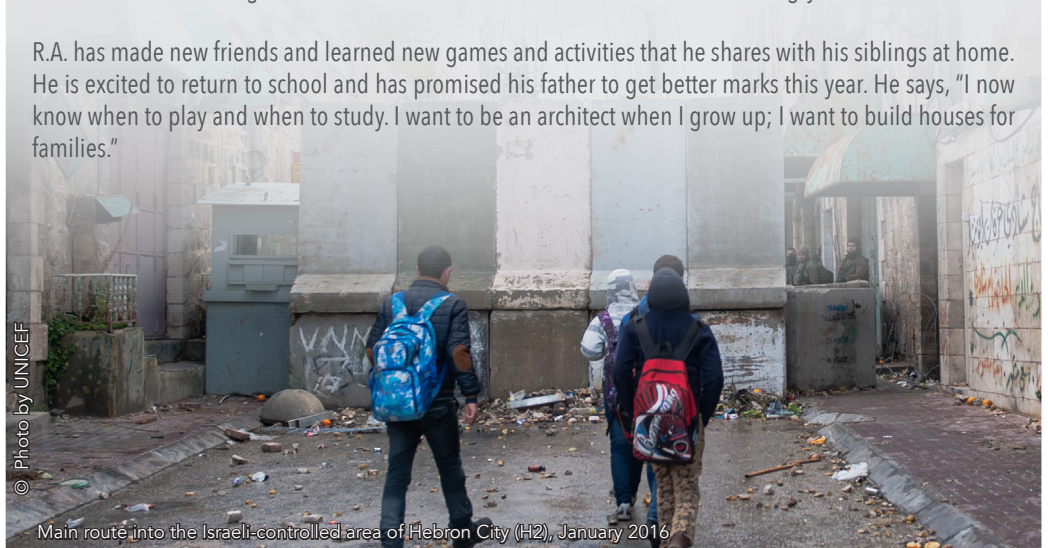
Hebron has been one of the areas most affected by the escalation of violence which began in October 2015. R.A. is a 12-year-old boy who lives in the H2 area of Hebron in very close proximity to checkpoint 160. The boy is the eldest of six siblings who have witnessed violent incidents.

R.A. attends the UNRWA Boys' School in H2 and has to pass through the checkpoint twice a day. During the most recent peak of violence, the family was exposed to tear gas fired at children who were throwing stones at the nearby checkpoint.

The continuous restrictions on access and movement in H2 have had a negative impact on the family and created an atmosphere of anxiety and fear. R.A.'s mother is afraid to send her children to school and has kept them at home on many occasions. The academic performance of R.A. and his younger brother, aged eight, has deteriorated significantly due to continuous skipping of classes, lack of concentration and stress.

In Hebron, the YMCA runs a project to provide rapid psychosocial support to conflict-affected children and adults. The project is targeting R.A. among its activities for the most traumatized children. Nominated by his school counsellor, R.A. has participated in debriefing sessions on a regular basis. R.A.'s mother said that his self-confidence had clearly improved and he had become less violent. "My son surprises me with his attitude towards dealing with stress. Now he calms me down when he sees me angry."

R.A. has made new friends and learned new games and activities that he shares with his siblings at home. He is excited to return to school and has promised his father to get better marks this year. He says, "I now know when to play and when to study. I want to be an architect when I grow up; I want to build houses for families."



© Photo by UNICEF

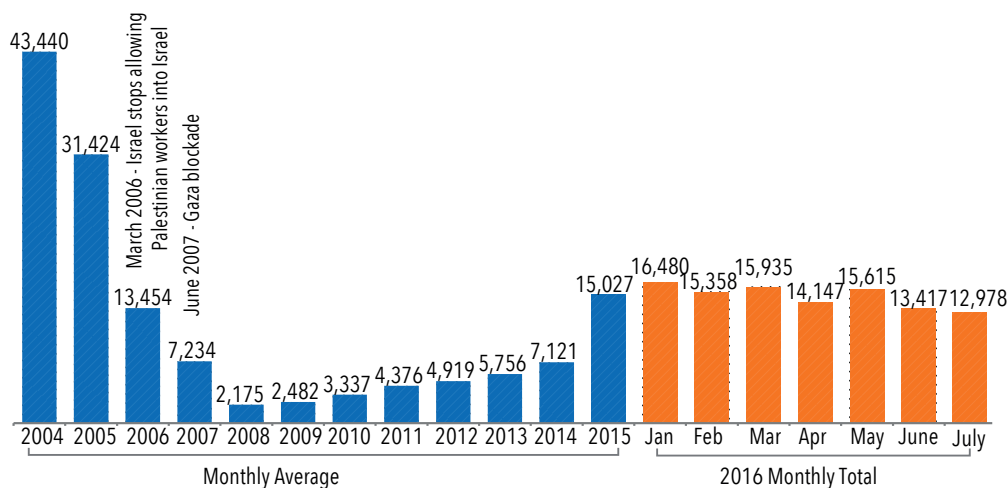
Main route into the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2), January 2016

Decline in the number of Palestinians leaving Gaza, including humanitarian staff and patients

Increased restrictions on commercial imports for companies

As part of a 'separation policy' to separate West Bank Palestinians from Palestinians in Gaza, the Israeli authorities prohibit the passage of Palestinians in and out of Gaza. Exceptions are made for certain categories, principally businesspeople and traders, medical patients and their companions, and employees of international organizations issued with Israeli permits. During the easing of access restrictions following the 2014 hostilities, the number of Palestinians from exceptional categories crossing through Erez more than doubled in 2015 compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, numbers remain significantly lower than at the start of the second intifada in 2000, when some 26,000 Palestinians crossed Erez daily for wider purposes. In 2016, data for July show a 15 per cent decline in exits from Gaza versus the monthly average for the first half of the year, with a 27 per cent decline in the number of exits for businesspeople and traders.⁴

EREZ: Crossings into Israel



In July there was a 15 per cent decline in exits from Gaza versus the monthly average for the first half of the year.

The decline in numbers follows a new policy introduced in June 2016 that largely limits residents of Gaza to four permits of one month duration per year, with a minority of residents entitled to apply for three-month permits; this is in contrast to the previous practice of unlimited permit applications for up to three months. Additionally, since March 2016, 1,545 of an estimated 3,200 to 3,500 businesspeople have had their permits cancelled or not renewed.⁵ There has also been a decline in the category of senior businesspeople who hold "BMC" permits, which facilitate easier access compared to the normal permits. The quota for this category was increased in early 2015 from 250 to 450 as part of the post-2014 easing measures, but since March 2016, some 150 BMC permits have been cancelled.⁶ This led to a demonstration by businesspeople on 16 July on the Palestinian side of the Erez crossing. In addition, the estimated 5,000+ companies that can be authorized to import goods into Gaza have been reduced by some two hundred.⁷ Businesspeople, medical patients and students with approved permits also face increased interrogation, detention and, in some cases, arrest by Israeli security authorities at the Erez crossing.

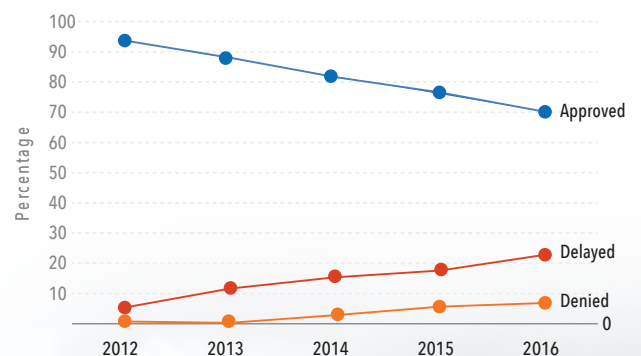
Decline in exits from Gaza for patients and their companions

As a result of the fragmented health-care system in Gaza, the Ministry of Health (MoH) frequently refers patients who need specialized health care to more advanced facilities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. Although there has been an increase in the absolute number of approvals since 2012, the rate of approval for patient permit applications to travel via Erez crossing has declined steadily and more patients have faced denied or delayed access.

As Chart 2 demonstrates, this trend has become more pronounced in 2016. In the first seven months, the Palestinian MoH district liaison office submitted 14,452 applications for Gaza patients requiring Israeli permits for advanced medical treatment outside Gaza. Only 70.4 per cent were approved, 6.8 per cent were denied and the remaining 22.8 per cent had no response, forcing patients to miss their appointments. Almost one-third of applicants were children under the age of 18 and 15.7 per cent were over 60 years of age. Some 45.6 per cent of all applicants were female.

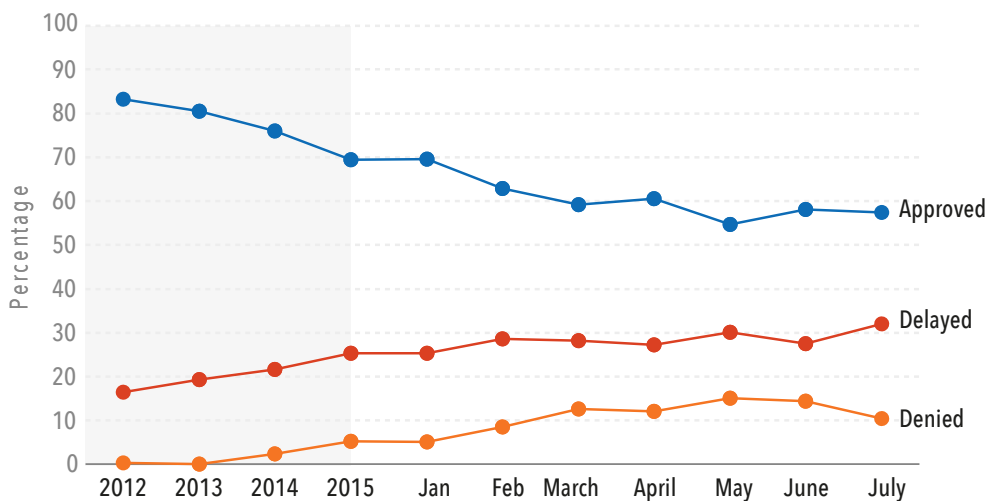
Restrictions on companions have also increased in 2016 after the Israeli authorities required strict security clearance for adult companions up to the age of 55, rather than up to 35 years old as previously. This has increased difficulties, especially if the patient is a young child, in finding a first degree relative required as a companion. Of the 15,434 applications for patient companions submitted in 2016, only 60.4 per cent were approved, 11.2 per cent were denied and 28.5 per cent were pending.

ISRAELI RESPONSE TO PATIENT PERMIT APPLICATIONS (PERCENTAGE)



ISRAELI RESPONSES TO PATIENT COMPANION APPLICATIONS

January to July 2016 versus previous four years



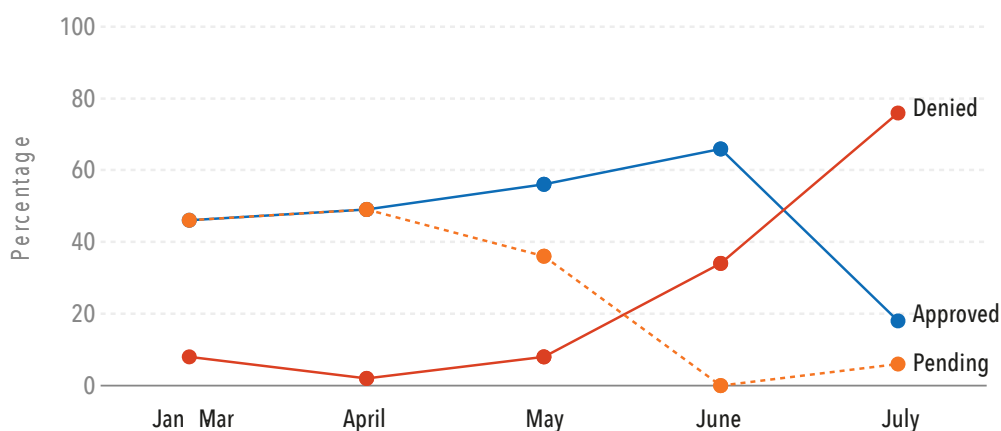
When a companion is rejected and patients have to find an alternative companion, the security process can take up to three weeks. In May the Israeli authorities lowered the restriction on female companions to those aged 45. However, data from the past two months do not show a significant improvement in access for companions (Chart 3).

Access for humanitarian health staff should be facilitated as a basic human right under international law. The World Health Organization (WHO) plays an important role in facilitating permit applications for health staff who need to cross Erez, including applications for WHO staff, MoH staff and international health organizations. Access by humanitarian health staff through Erez has declined recently (Chart 4). While fewer requests are pending, denials of access for health staff have risen sharply since May to almost eight in 10 requests. There has been no explanation from Israeli authorities regarding the deterioration.

The Israeli authorities now require strict security clearance for male companions up to the age of 55, rather than up to 35 years old as previously.

HUMANITARIAN HEALTH STAFF ACCESS PERMITS IN/OUT OF GAZA

Comparison of April-July to Q1 2016



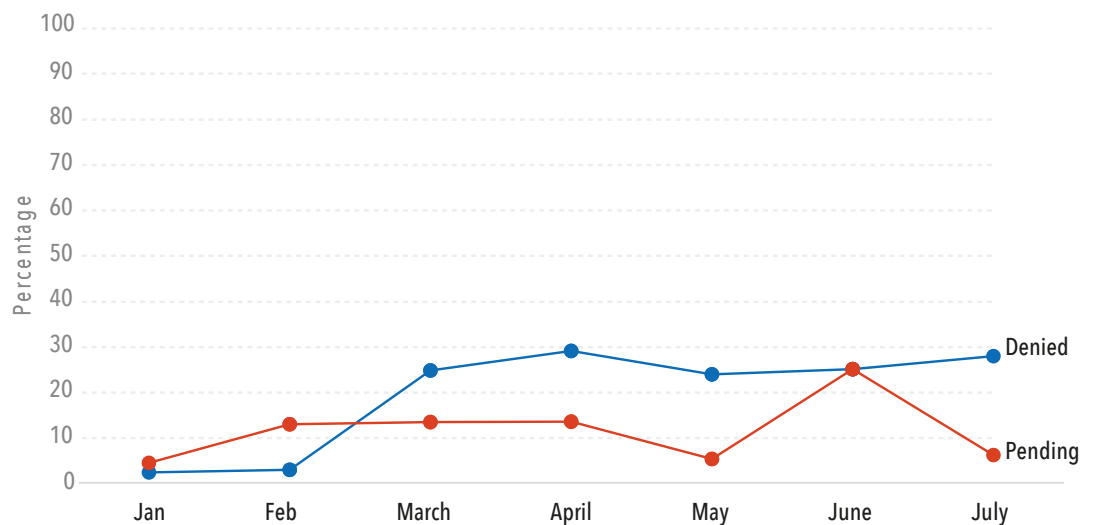
Decline in approval of permits for national staff working with international organizations

Since the 2014 hostilities, the approval rate for national UN and INGO staff wishing to travel in and out of Gaza on official business has remained low, while the ratio of unprocessed permits and the average processing time remain high. This is partly due to restrictions on access of East Jerusalem and Israeli ID holders into Gaza since July 2015, and also because of increased scrutiny of applications by Gaza ID holders in 2016. Despite compliance with the recent policy limiting the number and duration of permits (see above), humanitarian personnel continue to face great difficulties in obtaining a permit to exit Gaza, thereby hampering coordination.

Since the start of 2016, the denial of permits for UN national personnel based in Gaza has increased rapidly from three percent in January to 21 per cent in June. Over 100 permit applications have been denied; of these 32 UN and INGO personnel were prohibited from submitting a permit request again for another 12 months. The permit processing time has lengthened from an average of 20 days in 2015 to 25 days in 2016. Permit confiscation and denial of entry at Erez crossing has also increased. At least eight UN and INGO personnel have had their approved permits confiscated by security authorities so far in 2016, compared to two permits confiscated in all of 2015.

Since the start of 2016, the denial of permits for UN national personnel based in Gaza has increased rapidly from 3% in January to 21% in June.

DENIED AND PENDING PERMITS - UN AGENCIES 2016



Increase in West Bank demolitions during July-August

Demolitions across the West Bank surged in July and August 2016. The Israeli authorities demolished, forced people to demolish, or confiscated 177 Palestinian-owned structures, displacing 267 Palestinians and otherwise affecting the livelihoods of another 2,800 in the two-month period.

Eight of these structures were the family homes of Palestinians suspected of perpetrating or assisting the perpetration of attacks against Israelis, and demolished on punitive grounds. Another structure, a three-storey building, was shelled and then bulldozed by Israeli forces during an arrest operation in Surif village (Hebron). The remaining structures, located in Area C and East Jerusalem, were demolished or confiscated due to the lack of a building permit, which is nearly impossible to obtain. Overall a total of 42 communities and localities were affected.

These figures follow a significant decline in May and June, partially due to a halt announced during the month of Ramadan. The total number of structures targeted in the first eight months of the year was 821, up 50 per cent compared with all of 2015 (548).

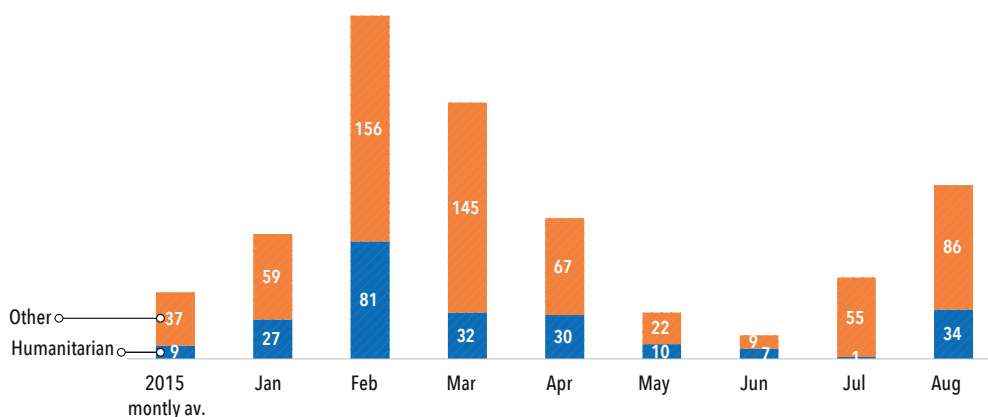
Tightening the coercive environment on herding communities

Of the structures targeted in July and August, 94 were located in vulnerable Bedouin and herding communities in Area C and were demolished or confiscated on the grounds of lack of a permit. Most of the approximately 30,000 Palestinians living in such communities are at risk of forcible transfer due to the coercive environment generated by Israeli policies. This includes denial of adequate planning to allow people to build legally in their current locations, and the related destruction and confiscation of homes and livelihood-related structures.

In one incident on 8 August, the Israeli authorities uprooted and confiscated 1,000 metres of a water pipeline and damaged an additional 2,500 metres, provided by UNICEF and funded by an international donor. The connection was intended to supply drinking water

The total number of structures targeted in the first eight months of 2016 was 821, compared to 548 in all of 2015.

STRUCTURES TARGETED IN 2016 BY TYPE



to nearly 1,000 people in five water-scarce communities (Khirbet Yarza and four nearby hamlets) located within a closed area for military training (“firing zone”) in the northern Jordan Valley. This is the third incident since January 2015 involving the targeting of water-related items in this area.

The cost of piped water supplied from networks is about five NIS per cubic metre (m³), while unserved communities pay between 20 to 50 NIS/m³ to private vendors for tankered water depending on the distance and access constraints. Water purchases can account for up to half of a family’s monthly expenses in the poorest communities.⁸

In another incident on 16 August, in the herding community of Jurat al Kheil (Hebron), the Israeli authorities demolished seven homes, eight latrines, an animal shelter, and confiscated a concrete mixer; three plastic water tanks (not included in the total) were also destroyed during the incident. Three of the latrines were funded by an international donor and provided by a humanitarian organization. Seven families, comprising 37 members including 16 children, were displaced.

Around 170 structures in Susiya, half of them provided as humanitarian assistance, have outstanding demolition orders.

The case of Susiya

The herding community of Susiya in Hebron governorate faces a heightened threat of mass demolitions and forcible transfer following a decision in July 2016 by the State of Israel to withdraw from negotiations with the community’s lawyer over the fate of the community.⁹ The case is pending before the Israeli High Court and the State will submit its position in December.

The village is sandwiched between the settlement of Susiya in the south and a settlement outpost in the north. Village residents have already experienced various waves of displacement. In 1986, Israel declared the village an archaeological site and evicted all of its residents, erecting the northern outpost on the same site some years later. Most of those who relocated to the current site experienced mass demolitions in 2001 and in 2011 on the grounds of lack of a building permit.

At present, around 170 structures in the current village, half of them provided as humanitarian assistance, have outstanding demolition orders. Planning schemes submitted by residents to the Israeli authorities, which would allow building permits to be issued, have been repeatedly rejected. In recent years, a settler organization petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court to expedite the execution of the demolition orders.

In contrast, Susiya settlement has been granted a generous planning scheme that allows for the future development of housing and infrastructure. While the outpost was established without permission and in contravention of Israeli law, it has been connected to water and electricity networks. Due to systematic settler violence and intimidation, Susiya village residents have limited or no access to about two-thirds of the community’s farming and grazing area.



Since the beginning of 2016, the Israeli authorities have demolished or confiscated a total of 222 structures and items provided as humanitarian assistance, many in response to previous demolitions. This is more than double the total for all of 2015.

East Jerusalem: record number of demolitions in 2016

In July and August, 50 structures were demolished within the Israeli-defined municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, including three structures demolished by their owners following demolition orders. This brings the number of demolitions since the beginning of the year to 28, the highest in any entire year since 2009, when OCHA began to systematically record this indicator. Half of the structures targeted so far in 2016 were residential, including 21 inhabited homes resulting in the displacement of 124 people and 43 uninhabited or under construction houses; the other half were commercial and livelihood-related structures.

The largest incident, involving the demolition of 15 structures, occurred on 26 July in a section of Qalandia village, which lies within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem although it is separated from the rest of the city by the Barrier.¹⁰ This incident was unusual because in recent years the Israeli authorities have refrained from carrying out demolitions in municipal areas behind the Barrier, leading to widespread and uncontrolled residential building. It remains unclear whether the Qalandia demolitions were an isolated exception or represent the beginning of a policy change. Palestinians living in these areas continue to pay municipal taxes although the public infrastructure, resources and services they receive are significantly degraded or absent entirely.

August's demolitions in East Jerusalem brings the number since the beginning of the year to 28, the highest in any entire year since 2009.



This year’s Humanitarian Response Plan seriously underfunded, impacting critical interventions

As of mid-August, the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the oPt was severely underfunded in both percentage terms (32 vs. 50) and in absolute terms (US \$183 vs. \$355 million) compared to the 2015 HRP. Almost 90 per cent of the funds received have gone to UN agencies, leaving INGO and local NGO projects substantially underfunded. This can be attributed, at least in part, to a global economic slowdown and to a number of major crises, particularly in the Middle East, which have put humanitarian budgets under increased pressure.

Although the oPt HRP shares many of the features of other operations around the world, the context of the oPt is unique - a protracted protection crisis that stems from the impact of a military occupation now in its 50th year. The HRP was launched locally in February and plans to support one in three Palestinians with some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016.¹¹ It includes 206 projects worth \$571 million, 19 per cent lower than the sum requested in 2015. Seventy-nine organizations are participating: 12 UN agencies, 36 international NGOs and 31 national NGOs. Approximately one-third of funds requested are designated as “top priority” to target where limited resources should be allocated first. Over 65 per cent of the funding requirement is for Gaza. Gender has been mainstreamed throughout all HRP objectives and cluster strategies to ensure the protection of all members of the affected population, and to guarantee effective and equitable delivery of humanitarian assistance.

As of mid-August, the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan for the oPt was severely underfunded compared to 2015.

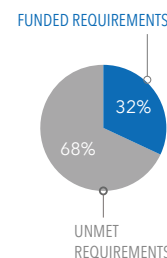
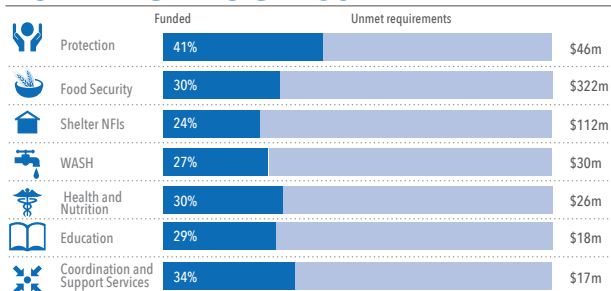
Top priority projects particularly affected

Only 16 per cent of the funds requested for top priority projects have been received. None of the projects funded so far in the Education Cluster address top priority activities. Likewise, no funding has been received by the Health and Nutrition Cluster for key interventions aimed at providing access to essential health-care services to some one

2016 FUNDING ANALYSIS To mid-August 2016



FUNDING PROGRESS



million people across the oPt. In the Shelter and NFI Cluster, the response to demolitions of agricultural structures - designated as a top humanitarian priority - remains unfunded, endangering vulnerable households in Area C.

In percentage terms, the Shelter Cluster is currently the least funded (22 per cent), having received \$27 million, leaving a funding gap of \$85 million. The Food Security Sector (FSS) has received most funds in absolute terms (\$97 million). Nevertheless, the funding gap remains high, especially for agricultural and livelihood support activities, and \$224 million are still required to implement food security activities for the rest of the year. The overall impact of the funding shortfall would mean failure to provide food assistance and “cash for work” to 1.4 million food-insecure Palestinians, leading to a high risk of increased food insecurity and deterioration of food consumption patterns.

Reduced funding for the oPt HRP limits the humanitarian community’s ability to implement a number of critical interventions and to respond to humanitarian needs, which remain critical. In the absence of additional pledges, organizations will be forced to scale back activities in the second half of 2016, and the impact will be felt across all humanitarian sectors in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Endnotes

1. The document “Procedure for Settlement in the Gaza Strip by Judea and Samaria Area Residents, December 2010”, which was provided to Gisha in April 2012, begins as follows: “In 2006, a decision was made to introduce a policy of separation between the Judea and Samaria Area and the Gaza Strip in light of Hamas’rise to power in the Gaza Strip. The policy currently in effect is aimed at reducing travel between the areas”.
2. True name has been changed.
3. Humanitarian Needs Overview December 2015.
4. Gaza Crossings Operation Status, Monthly Update July 2016. http://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/gaza_crossing_-_july_2016_d2_copy.pdf
5. Source: Gaza Ministry of Civil Affairs.
6. Source: Gaza Ministry of Civil Affairs. According to GISHA, two of the only four women granted BMC permits had their permits cancelled. July update.
7. Source: Gaza Chamber of Trade.
8. See OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, July 2016, p. 7.
9. For further background see OCHA, Susiya: A community at imminent risk of forced displacement, June 2015.
10. Two of the structures in Qalandiya village were in Area C and the others were within municipal Jerusalem.
11. The full versions of the HRP and the underlying Humanitarian Needs Overview are available at: <http://www.ochaopt.org/cap.aspx?id=1010132&page=1>.