

Humanitarian Bulletin

occupied Palestinian territory

FEBRUARY 2016



HIGHLIGHTS

- Alarming rise in demolitions and displacement in the West Bank, mainly on grounds of lack of building permits; a third of the affected structures had been provided as humanitarian assistance.
- The frequency and intensity of protests and clashes declined in early 2016, alongside a moderate fall in attacks against Israelis, compared with the last quarter of 2015.
- Revision of food assistance rations in Gaza expected to improve health and nutritional values, public acceptability to local food habits, and logistical operations.
- INGO project targeting water needs and resilience of IDPs in eastern Khan Younis (Gaza) completed with funding by the Humanitarian Pooled Fund (HPF).



Large demolition incident in Al Farsiya, Jordan Valley, 11 February 2016

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Overview

“The Government of Israel must urgently cease discriminatory and unlawful planning processes in the West Bank”, UN Secretary General

In February 2016, the Israeli authorities destroyed or dismantled 237 Palestinian homes and livelihood-related structures across the West Bank – the highest figure in a single month since OCHA began to systematically document the impact of demolitions in 2009. As a result, 330 people, half of them children, were displaced and over 1,600 people were affected in other ways. One third (108) of the structures targeted in the first two months of the year had been provided as humanitarian assistance: this is the same number of humanitarian assistance items destroyed in all of 2015.

Most of the structures were destroyed on the grounds that there was no building permit. These permits are almost impossible to obtain due to the discriminatory and unlawful planning policies applied in Area C and in East Jerusalem, as pointed out by the UN Secretary General.¹

Also this month, the Israeli organization Peace Now released new data indicating that in 2015 construction started on 1,800 new settlement housing units, fewer than in 2014, but more than in the previous two years. Settlement expansion often has a negative impact on the living conditions of Palestinians, resulting in the loss of property and sources of livelihood and restrictions on access to services, and generating the need for assistance and protection measures by the humanitarian community.²

Although the wave of violence that started in October 2015 continued, the scope of incidents and casualties declined. In the first two months of 2016, four Israelis and 27 Palestinian suspected perpetrators were killed during Palestinian attacks or alleged attacks, and subsequent responses to them.³ Another seven Palestinians were killed and over 1,000 injured during protests and clashes, a sharp decline in comparison with the last quarter of 2015, but well above pre-October 2015 levels.

The targeting of Israeli civilians and the “glorification” of these attacks by some Palestinian factions, remain major protection concerns, as stressed by the UN Special Coordinator to the Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, in his monthly briefing

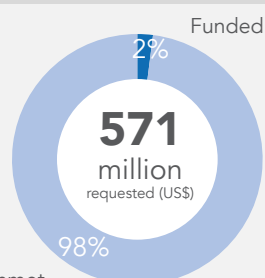
FEBRUARY FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	16
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	514
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	2
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	8
Structures demolished in the West Bank	237
People displaced in the West Bank	331

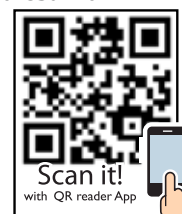
HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2016

571 million
requested (US\$)

2% funded



Unmet
requirement



to the Security Council. Also of concern, as recently noted by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, is “the extensive, often unwarranted, use of firearms by Israeli security forces in law enforcement operations... [which] raises serious questions as to whether the rules of engagement, which are confidential, are in compliance with international law and whether such rules are adhered to in practice.”⁴

Displacement also remains a major concern in the Gaza Strip. Although no major incident of displacement has taken place since the end of the 2014 hostilities, some 76,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are estimated to be still living in temporary accommodation pending reconstruction of their homes. Responding to their basic needs presents a significant challenge.

This Humanitarian Bulletin highlights a project completed in February to secure regular water supplies to displaced families in eastern Khan Younis, one of the areas hardest hit during the latest hostilities. The findings of a comprehensive needs assessment of IDP households, coordinated by OCHA, will be released in March 2016.

Despite some progress in addressing the needs of IDPs, the UN Special Coordinator Mladenov noted in the abovementioned briefing that “[T]he population of Gaza is squeezed from all sides... With little prospect of seeing public sector salaries paid, increased informal taxation and a strangled economy, tensions are rising.”

Humanitarian assistance can help to reduce hardship. However, bold policy changes are required to address sources of tension and hopelessness, including a halt to demolitions and settlement expansion, the lifting of the Gaza blockade, the integration of the West Bank and Gaza under one Palestinian authority, and expediting the disbursement of pledges for the reconstruction of Gaza.⁵

Sharp increase in West Bank demolitions

Aid organizations face serious constraints in assisting displaced families

There was a sharp increase in Palestinian-owned structures destroyed, dismantled or confiscated by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank during the first two months of 2016: At least 321 structures, including 88 homes, were destroyed.⁶

February 2016 stands out as having the highest number of structures demolished in a single month since OCHA began the documentation of demolitions systematically in 2009. More than 90 per cent of the demolitions that took place in the past two months were in Area C, two in Areas A and B (punitive demolitions), and the remainder in East Jerusalem.

The first two months of the year were also unusual in the number of sites affected (45), including small herding communities and villages with part of their built up area in Area C. Over half of those displaced (231 people) were from five communities located in “firing zones”: Halaweh and Jinba in the Massafar Yatta area of Hebron (firing zone 918); Ein ar Rashash (Ramallah, firing zone 906); and Al Jiftlik-abu al Ajaj (Jericho) and

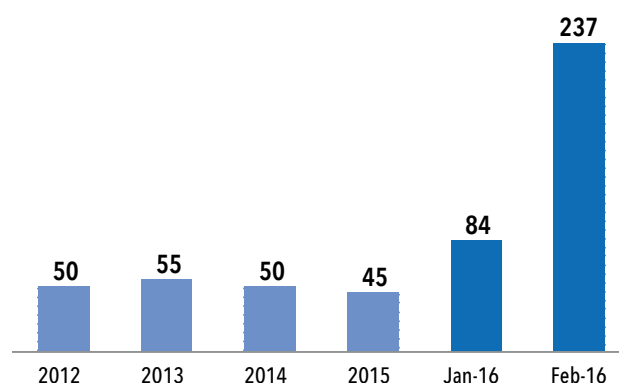
Although the wave of violence that started in October 2015 continued, the scope of incidents and casualties declined in the first two months of 2016.

Khirbet Tana in the northern Jordan Valley (firing zone 904). The demolitions in the first two communities follow the end (without agreement) of a mediation process taking place in the context of a petition filed with the Israeli High Court against the eviction of these and another ten communities from the affected area. Approximately 18 percent of the West Bank has

been declared by the Israeli authorities as “firing zones” despite 38 Palestinian communities, home to over 6,000 people, residing in these areas. A recent study indicated that, in practice, nearly 80 per cent of the areas declared as “firing zones” have not been used for training in recent years.⁷ Following a recent demolition in a firing zone, an Israeli Ministry of Defense spokesperson stated that the targeted structures “were built illegally without permits in a firing zone, which is a life danger”.⁸

All of the demolitions in Area C, and most of those in East Jerusalem, were carried out on the grounds that the structures lacked Israeli-issued building permits; these demolitions are considered as lawful enforcement measures by the Israeli authorities.⁹ However, building permits are nearly impossible to obtain in Palestinian communities. The UN Secretary-General has noted that Israel “must urgently cease discriminatory and unlawful planning processes in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as they result in violations of Palestinians’ rights, inter alia, to access water and services, including health and education.”¹⁰

STRUCTURES DEMOLISHED/CONFISCATED



Source: OCHA demolitions' database

Over half of those displaced during January and February (231 people) were from five communities located in “firing zones”, which cover 30 per cent of Area C.

WEST BANK DEMOLITIONS JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2016

WB Area	Structures Demolished	People Displaced	Children Displaced	People Affected	Children Affected
East Jerusalem	29	45	25	146	81
Area A	1	10	5	0	0
Area B	1	6	2	0	0
Area C	290	378	205	1,533	591
Grand Total	321	439	237	1,679	672

Source: OCHA demolitions' database

INTENSITY MAP: STRUCTURES DEMOLISHED BY MONTH

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	15	41	31	42	141	108	82	85
February	22	16	69	81	14	31	14	237
March	11	4	80	59	3	14	96	
April	34	10	16	88	46	92	23	
May	6		34	49	69	76	22	
June	123	19	132	67	72	36	47	
July	32	143	32	18	33	10	22	
August	3	49	2	49	56	41	144	
September	4	8	22	5	95	63	13	
October	11	25	63	83	21	50	6	
November	10	39	43	36	25	48	57	
December	7	85	98	25	88	38	18	
Grand Total	278	439	622	602	663	607	544	321

Source: OCHA demolitions' database

In January and February, the Israeli authorities demolished or sealed the residences of six families of suspected perpetrators of attacks against Israelis in October 2015, citing deterrence needs, displacing 35 people, including 17 children.

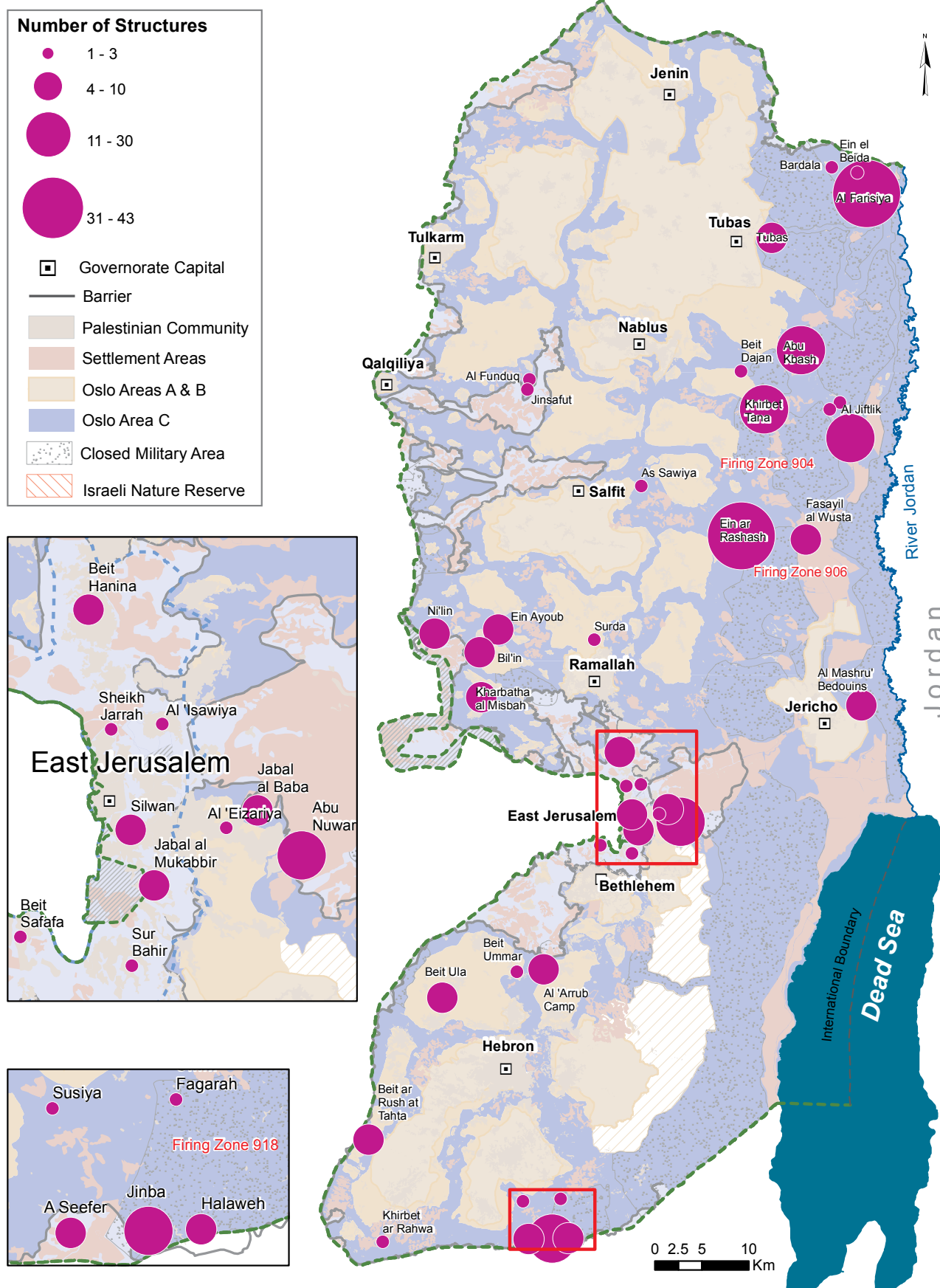
The Israeli authorities also demolished or sealed the residences of six families of suspected perpetrators of attacks against Israelis in October 2015, citing deterrence needs, displacing 35 people, including 17 children. Under international humanitarian law, the destruction of property in an occupied territory is prohibited unless absolutely necessary for military operations.¹¹

Less than one per cent of Area C has an outline plan approved by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) that may allow Palestinians to obtain a building permit. Less than two per cent of Palestinian permit applications submitted to the Israeli authorities between 2010 and 2014 were approved.¹² Over the past five years, the Palestinian government has prepared and submitted to the ICA 67 new outline plans for Palestinian communities in Area C, of which only three have been approved to date.¹³

Humanitarian assistance obstructed

There has also been a sharp increase in the demolition of structures provided as humanitarian aid. Humanitarian actors, including both UN agencies and NGOs, have faced serious constraints for years when trying to access and provide much-needed emergency assistance to displaced families and communities. In the first two months of 2016, 108 structures provided by aid organizations were demolished by the Israeli authorities, more than five times the monthly average for similar demolitions in 2015 (108) and 2014 (116). This practice runs counter to international humanitarian law, which

DEMOLITIONS IN THE WEST BANK (1 Jan - 29 Feb 2016)

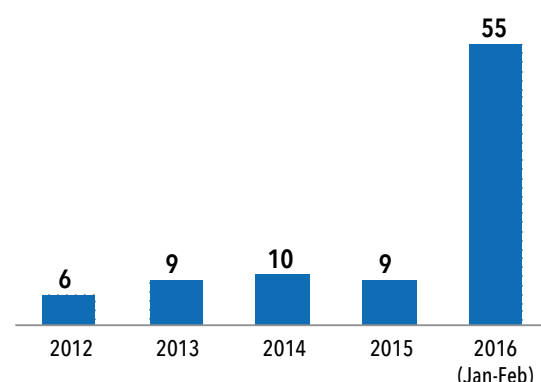


requires Israel as the occupying power to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian assistance.

Following a 19 January visit to a Palestinian Bedouin community (Abu Nuwar in the Jerusalem periphery), where 13 structures provided as humanitarian assistance had been demolished, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, Robert Piper, and the Director of UNRWA Operations in the West Bank, Felipe Sanchez,

condemned the destruction of assistance. They also called for revocation of the plan to “relocate” the community, which may constitute forcible transfer.

MONTHLY AVERAGE OF ASSISTANCE DEMOLISHED (IN STRUCTURES)



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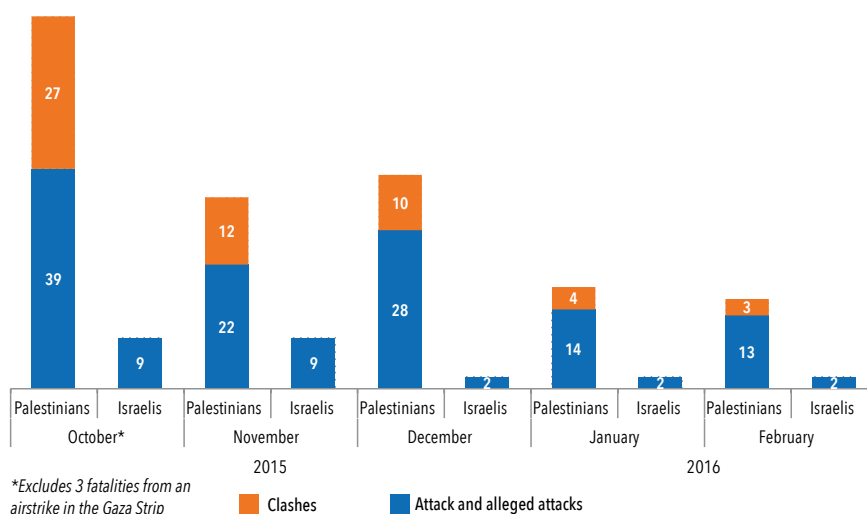
Wave of violence continues at reduced level

Compared with the last quarter of 2015, the frequency and intensity of protests and clashes declined in early 2016, alongside a moderate fall in attacks by Palestinian on Israelis civilians and security forces.

Fewer attacks by Palestinians

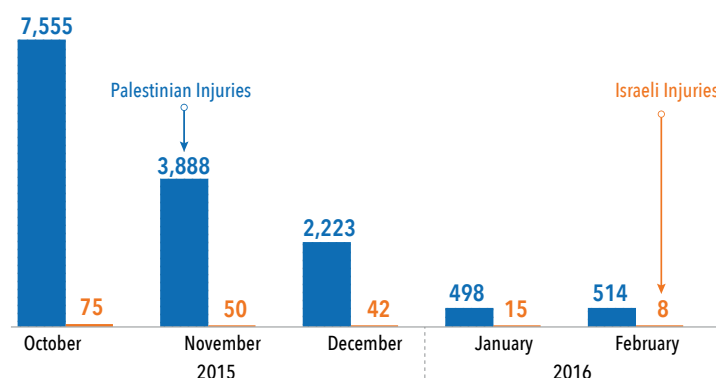
In the first two months of 2016, 28 Palestinian attacks and alleged attacks were recorded against Israeli forces and civilians, mainly settlers, that resulted in casualties. Nearly 80 per cent of these incidents were stabbings or attempted stabbings (or allegations), while the rest involved incidents of car ramming and shooting.¹⁴ On average, this represents a 65 percent decrease compared to the number of similar incidents during the last quarter of 2015. A similar trend was highlighted by the Israel Security Agency (ISA).¹⁵

FATALITIES IN ATTACKS AND CLASHES IN THE OPT AND ISRAEL



Source: OCHA protection of civilians database

INJURIES IN THE OPT AND ISRAEL



Source: OCHA protection of civilians database

Attacks in 2016 resulted in the killing of four Israelis¹⁶ and the injury of another 16, while 21 of the Palestinian suspected perpetrators were shot and killed on the spot. None of the perpetrators or alleged perpetrators reportedly belonged to any faction or armed group, although in two cases (both involving shooting) the perpetrators were members of the Palestinian security forces reportedly acting on their own. The involvement of Palestinian children in attacks against Israelis continues to be of concern: over 40 per cent of Palestinian fatalities in this context were children (9 of 21) compared to less than 20 per cent in the previous three months (19 of 119).

Of note, none of the attacks carried out in January and February by West Bank Palestinians took place in Israel,¹⁷ in contrast with 18 incidents in the previous three months. A growing number of incidents so far this year occurred within or next to Israeli settlements.

Overall, between 1 October 2015 and the end of February 2016, 116 Palestinians, including 28 children, and 24 Israelis were killed in attacks by West Bank Palestinians, alleged attacks or responses to them by Israeli forces.

Protests and clashes decline sharply

The decline in the volume of Palestinian casualties during clashes with Israeli forces during January and February was even more pronounced. These included seven deaths and 1,053 injuries, compared with 49 deaths and some 13,600 injuries in October-December 2015. Although clashes along the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza continued into 2016, none of them resulted in fatalities, compared with 23 deaths recorded in the previous three months. Of the injuries recorded this year, five per cent were in the Gaza Strip and the rest were in the West Bank.

Most of the clashes in 2016 erupted during protests to demand the release of bodies of perpetrators of attacks held by Israel, in solidarity with prisoners on hunger strike, in the course of Israeli search and arrest operations, and protests against the occupation in general.

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Nearly 60 per cent of injuries in 2016 involved tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment, almost 18 per cent were hit by rubber bullets and 15 per cent by live ammunition. This distribution is approximately the same as in the last quarter of 2015, despite the decline in overall numbers.

Ongoing protection concerns

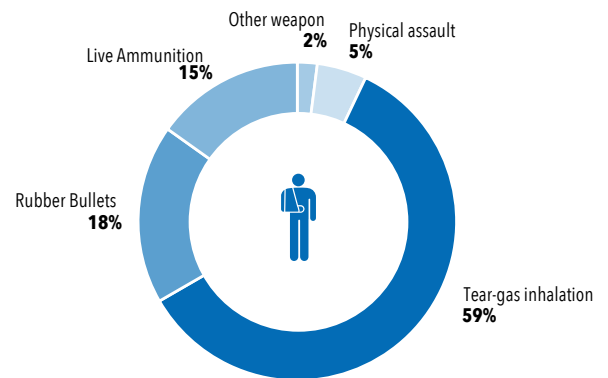
The ongoing targeting of Israeli civilians by Palestinians, including in knife attacks, shootings and ramming, remains a major protection concern. As stressed by the UN Special Coordinator to the Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, in his monthly briefing to the Security Council, the “glorification” of these attacks by some Palestinian factions is a major aggravating factor.

The response of Israeli forces to some of these incidents has also raised concern, particularly in regard to the possible use of excessive force. In his latest report to the Human Rights Council in January 2016, the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that “some of these responses strongly suggest unlawful killings, including possible extrajudicial executions”.¹⁸ Senior Israeli officials, including the IDF Chief of Staff, have also cautioned against the use excessive firepower in response to attacks, particularly against children.¹⁹

The High Commissioner also pointed out that “the extensive, often unwarranted, use of firearms by Israeli security forces in law enforcement operations... raises serious questions as to whether the rules of engagement, which are confidential, are in compliance with international law and whether such rules are adhered to in practice”.

Although comprehensive official figures were not available, information from the media and human rights organizations suggests that allegations of excessive use of force have not led to the opening of investigations in the majority of cases, reinforcing long-standing concerns about a lack of accountability. The High Commissioner has urged the Israeli authorities to “conduct prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial investigations into all incidents of the use of force leading to death or injury, ensuring they are subject to public scrutiny”.

PALESTINIAN INJURIES BY WEAPON
1 JAN - 29 FEB 2016



Information from the media and human rights organizations suggests that allegations of excessive use of force have not led to the opening of investigations in the majority of cases, reinforcing long-standing concerns about a lack of accountability.

Revised food baskets aim to improve nutrition among food insecure refugees in Gaza

Lack of economic opportunities remains the main driver of food insecurity

At the end of January, UNRWA completed a comprehensive revision of the contents of its food assistance rations aimed at improving them against three main criteria: (i) health and nutritional values; (ii) public acceptability and local food habits; (iii) availability and logistical practicalities. The new baskets will be launched during the April-June food distribution round for all 960,000 beneficiaries.

The revision process was highly participatory and the views of beneficiaries were captured through ad hoc consultations, focus groups and periodic surveys. An extensive outreach campaign on the new food baskets will be rolled out during February and March to ensure that all questions and concerns of beneficiaries will be addressed.

UNRWA's food assistance program includes two separate food baskets: a regular one and an enhanced basket targeting beneficiaries qualifying as "abject poor". Among other changes, canned meat has been replaced in both baskets with more nutritious items due to the meat's low nutritional value (high cholesterol) and low satisfaction indicated by beneficiaries. The abject poor basket now includes canned sardines, which contain low-fat animal protein, calcium and the important bone-building vitamin D. Both food baskets now include lentils and chickpeas as optimal additions because of their high nutritional value (protein). Flour, rice and sunflower oil remain unchanged.

Additionally, UNRWA will adjust its distribution methods to improve fairness. The new method will be based on the actual number of household members rather than on pre-defined family size groups. Each beneficiary household will receive a food basket calculated by multiplying the per capita ration by the family size.

High levels of food insecurity

Recurrent hostilities, combined with the blockade and the resulting constraints on productive capacities, have resulted in high unemployment and low incomes. Together with a high cost of living, one million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are now moderately to severely food insecure. Although food is available, it is priced out of reach for many. These households are food insecure despite food assistance and other forms of social transfers from the Palestinian Authority and humanitarian organizations.



This section was
contributed by UNRWA

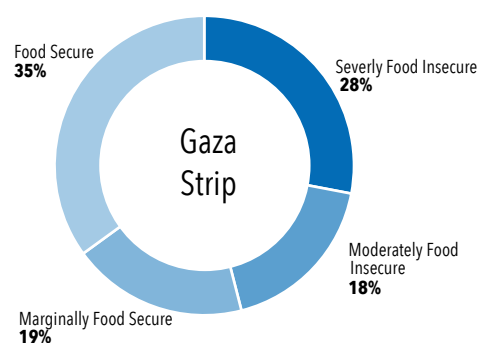
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Food insecure families in poverty spend half their income on food. Food assistance enables scarce cash resources to be spent on other essentials such as education, health and clean water. This prevents further deteriorations in food security and livelihood status, and avoids the use of negative coping mechanisms.

Unemployment in the Gaza Strip, 38.4 per cent in the last quarter of 2015, remains one of the highest in the world and one of the main drivers of food insecurity. Youth unemployment, which exceeds 60 per cent, is particularly alarming. Lower household incomes, poor food utilization due to poor quality water, sanitation and hygiene, limited access to health care, and the declining quality of diets also contribute to food insecurity.

FOOD SECURITY STATUS BY HOUSEHOLD



Source: Socio-economic and food security survey (SEFSec) 2015.

Food assistance enables scarce cash resources to be spent on other essentials such as education, health and clean water. This prevents further deteriorations in food security and livelihood status, and avoids the use of negative coping mechanisms.

Approximately 50 per cent of the Palestinian population suffer from more than one micronutrient deficiency, particularly female adolescents in Gaza where 72 percent are deficient in vitamin D and 64 percent are deficient in vitamin A. Preliminary findings from an IDP survey in Gaza reveal a high number of families incurring debt to purchase food, in addition to other negative coping mechanisms related to food consumption and diversity.

Responding to water needs of hundreds of vulnerable households in southern Gaza Strip

200 displaced families living in the rubble of their homes connected to the water network

In February 2016 a project was completed targeting water needs and supporting the resilience of vulnerable households, including IDPs, in Abassan Al Kabira, a town of about 28,000 people in Khan Younis governorate in the Gaza Strip. The project was implemented by Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), an international NGO, with funding provided by the Humanitarian Pooled Fund (HPF). In February, there were 15 ongoing projects

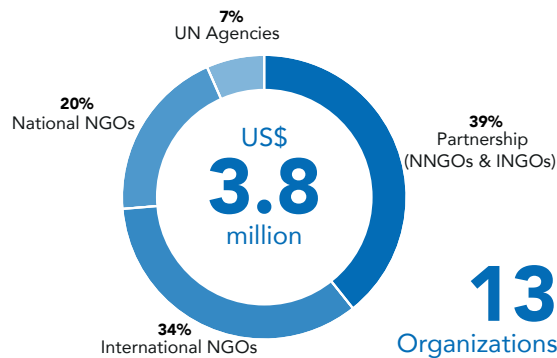


financed by the HPF for a total of US\$ 3.7 million, addressing urgent needs throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The eastern area of Khan Younis governorate was one of the hardest hit during the 2014 Israel-Gaza hostilities. Approximately 450 homes were totally destroyed or severely damaged in Abassan al Kabira and most of these are yet to be reconstructed.²⁰ Of particular concern are 340 displaced families living within or next to their destroyed/damaged homes, including in tents or caravans, in very precarious conditions.

As part of the PUI project, 200 of the most vulnerable displaced families were provided with water meters and connected to the municipal water network. Among the targeted families, 50 displaced households also received small water pumps to transport water to storage containers on the roof. Additionally, women from beneficiary households participated in a series of awareness workshops addressing good hygiene practices, reducing the risk of water contamination and safe water storage. Each workshop participant also received a hygiene kit and a one cubic meter water tank for storage purposes.

ONGOING HPF PROJECTS BY IMPLEMENTING PARTNER (FEB 2016)



200 of the most vulnerable displaced families in Abassan al Kabira were connected to the municipal water network. Fifty displaced households also received small water pumps to transport water to storage containers on the roof.



New water pipeline installed in Absan Al Kabira ©

Water and sanitation services systematically undermined

Gaza's water, wastewater resources and infrastructure were already critical prior to the 2014 conflict. Gaza relies on the underlying Coastal Aquifer as its only water source, but systematic over-extraction has resulted in the intrusion of seawater and the emergence of the underlying saline water, leaving 96 per cent of the water from the aquifer unfit for human consumption. Some 40 per cent of the population receive water for 5-8 hours only once every three days and 60% resort to private, unregulated water suppliers, with lower and largely unmonitored hygiene standards, exposing them to severe public health risks.²¹ The chronic electricity and fuel deficit also disrupts the delivery of basic WASH services, affecting more than 280 water and wastewater facilities. In total, 23 per cent of the population in Gaza are still not connected to the sewage network. These problems have been aggravated in recent years by Israeli restrictions on the entry of goods through the blockade. As many as 23 WASH items such as pumps, drilling equipment and disinfectant chemicals are on the Israeli 'dual use' list, meaning that their entry into Gaza is only permitted selectively.

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The 2014 hostilities also caused widespread damage to the water infrastructure serving Abassan al Kabira. Compounded by previous weaknesses in the network and water leakage resulting from it, the war rendered the majority of households in the town dependent on private water vendors, further stretching their limited socioeconomic capacities. During the project, 23 water networks in the town were repaired or replaced, and three new water networks were constructed under the supervision of municipality engineers and PUI's civil engineer, serving 3,442 households.

The project also included a cash-for-work component. This entailed the employment of 50 beneficiaries, almost all IDPs, in various tasks, thus supporting the resilience of vulnerable IDP households.

Endnotes

1. Report of the Secretary-General: Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, A/HRC/31/43, 20 January 2016, para. 69.
2. Report of the Secretary-General: Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, A/HRC/25/38, 12 February 2014, paras. 21-36.
3. This figure excludes a shooting incident that took place inside Israel perpetrated by an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin.
4. Report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/31/40, January 2016.
5. The call for such policy changes has been reiterated numerous times by authoritative UN bodies and senior officials. See for example: Report of the Secretary-General: Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, A/HRC/28/45, 5 March 2015, para. 67-75; Briefing to the UN Security Council by the Special Coordinator to the Peace Process, Nikolay Mladenov, 18 February 2016.
6. In addition, 34 partially built or uninhabited residences were demolished, making a total of 104 demolished residences.
7. Kerem Navot, A Locked Garden, March 2015.
8. The Jerusalem Post, 4 March 2016.
9. For a recent statement of this position see: <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/UN-raps-Israel-for-wide-scale-demolitions-of-Palestinian-homes-446936>.
10. Report of the Secretary-General: Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, A/HRC/25/38, 12 February 2014, paras. 11-20.
11. Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 53.
12. Response dated 16 November 2014 from Lieut. Aliran Sasson of the Civil Administration to a request under the Freedom of Information Act submitted by Adv. Sharon Karni-Cohen of Bimkom.
13. UNOCHA oPt, "UNDER THREAT: Demolition orders in Area C of the West Bank", September 2015, p.13.
14. This figure excludes a shooting incident that took place inside Israel perpetrated by an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin.
15. Israel Security Agency, Terror Data and Trend, Monthly Summary (relevant months), available at <http://www.shabak.gov.il>
16. Three other Israelis were killed in the attack perpetrated by the Israel-Arab citizen, while the perpetrator was killed several days later.
17. This figure excludes a shooting incident that took place inside Israel perpetrated by an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin.
18. Report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/31/40, January 2016.
19. Israel 24 News, Israeli media source: <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/diplomacy-defense/103314-160218-israel-s-defense-minister-backs-army-chief-on-rules-of-engagement>
20. The majority of IDPs live in three neighborhoods: Al Faraheen, Abu Daqqa and Abu Tae'ma.
21. EWASH Advocacy Note on impact of power cuts on the WASH sector in Gaza, 2015