

**Gaza air raids rekindle
Operation Cast Lead trauma**

The two-week long escalation of violence along Gaza's perimeter with Israel has left civilians on both sides of the conflict exposed. Since the escalation began, 6 Palestinian civilians have been killed, including 4 children. 3 Israeli civilians and 37 Palestinian civilians have also been injured. For many of the children caught in the cross fire, memories of the Israeli military Operation Cast Lead two years ago add to new trauma.



For 12-year-old Shabaan

Rashad Al Sammouni – seen here in this picture taken eight months after Cast Lead – last week's air raids were a stark reminder of the tragedy that struck his extended family from Zeytoun when more than 20 members, including his parents and brothers, were killed by Israeli fire.

"Last night we were asleep when we were suddenly woken up by the bombs, and then we heard another bomb," he said about the night of last Thursday, 24 March. "We were afraid as we heard the planes flying above us, but then we managed to sleep in peace."

Oxfam partner Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) works to hold all parties to the conflict to the standards of international law and to bring the protection of civilians to the forefront of national, regional, and international forums as a first step towards finding a just and sustainable peace.

"The bombing we witnessed these days has struck at Gaza's civilian population, including children playing football near their houses in Al Shejaeya," said the deputy director of Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Hamdi Shaqqura, adding that more must be done to protect civilians from attacks.

Last week, Oxfam's Executive Director Jeremy Hobbs called on all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and abiding by international law are their top priorities.

"At a time of great uncertainty in the Middle East, we cannot afford to let senseless casualties mount," Hobbs said. "For over two years, Palestinians in Gaza have been struggling to rebuild their lives shattered from the military operation Cast Lead. As the ongoing Israeli blockade continues to block reconstruction and recovery, escalating violence will only move people away from peace and towards hopelessness and despair."

Text and picture: Karl Schembri/Oxfam

1. Headlines

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** There were reports this week of 18 airstrikes, 13 shellings, and 3 incursions carried out by Israeli armed forces, as compared to 5 incursions, 12 airstrikes and 44 shells reportedly fired by Israeli forces last week.

This week, there were reports of 37 home made rockets (HMR), 6 Grad rockets, 6 Qassam rockets, 1 industrial manufactured type "107" rocket (a 107 mm rocket with high explosive capacity) and 38 mortars fired by Palestinian armed groups towards Israel or Israeli forces. Last week 1 home made rocket (HMR), 43 mortars, and 1 anti-tank missile were reported to have been fired.

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There were reports of 36 Palestinian civilians injured and 4 civilians killed- including 2 children- as a result of Israeli military operations this week. Last week, it was reported 1 Palestinian civilian was injured and that 2 Palestinian civilians- both children- were killed as a result of Israeli military operations.

There were also reports of 4 Palestinian militants killed and 3 injured by Israeli forces this week, as compared to 2 militants reported killed and 4 injured the week before.

3 Israeli civilians were also reported injured this week whereas no Israeli civilians were reported injured last week. No Israeli soldiers were reportedly injured this week, but 3 Israeli soldiers reportedly sustained injuries from shrapnel the week prior.

- **Fishermen:** There were 6 reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fisherman this week, with no injuries reported. The week before there were also 6 reports of Israeli naval vessels firing at Palestinian fishermen, with 1 fisherman reportedly injured. Since January 2009, Israeli naval forces have restricted the access of Palestinian fishing boats to three nautical miles from the coast; in practice, access is sometimes restricted to as little as one nautical mile, banning access to around 85% of Gaza's fishing water.
- **Tunnel related fatalities:** There were no tunnel related fatalities or injuries reported this week. Last week, there was 1 report of a gas canister exploding in a tunnel beneath the border between Gaza and Egypt, resulting in the death of 2 Palestinian workers and injury to 4 other workers.
- **Palestinians in the access restricted area (the so-called "buffer zone"):** There were 3 reports of Israeli troops firing at Palestinians in the access restricted area this week, including 1 incident which reportedly involved a shell fired by Israeli forces striking a Palestinian home located just outside the buffer zone, resulting in the death of 4 Palestinians, including 2 children, and injury to 12 other civilians, including 8 children. In a separate incident reported this week after the above mentioned shelling in the access restricted area, Israeli forces opened fire on the funeral procession for the 4 Palestinians killed in the prior incident reported. The third incident reported this week reportedly involved Israeli forces opening fire on farmers working on their land in the access restricted area. No injuries were reported in the second or third incidents.

Israeli aircrafts also reportedly dropped leaflets over the northern and central areas of Gaza this week and last week, warning Palestinians to stay out of the access restricted area.

Last week, there were 2 reports of Israeli troops firing at Palestinians in the access restricted area, 1 of which resulted in the death of 2 teenage boys, both 8th grade students at UNRWA Nuseirat Prep C Boys School near Johr Ad-dik.

In 2010, 52 Palestinians were reported killed and 189 others were reported injured by Israeli troops while in the so-called "buffer zone." Israel first imposed a 150 metre-wide security 'buffer' within Gaza's perimeter in 2000. In certain areas along the northern and eastern perimeters, this official buffer extends up to 500 metres into Gaza. In practice, Israel restricts access to agricultural land up to 1,000-1,500 metres from the fence, which accounts for more than 30% of Gaza's agricultural land and a significant number of water wells. Most of the Gaza Strip's animal production is also concentrated in this area.

Oxfam partner Defence for Children International- Palestine (DCI) has reported that between March 2010 and February 2011 there have been 27 cases of children shot while collecting

rubble and scrap metal in the so-called “buffer zone.” DCI- Palestine has since launched an urgent appeal to stop targeting unarmed children working in the access restricted area.

- **Rafah border crossing:** The Rafah border crossing was open 5 out of 7 days this week, with reports of 1,011 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,202 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 175 denied entry to Egypt. Last week, Rafah border crossing was also open 5 out of 7 days, with reports of 604 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,255 leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 153 denied entry to Egypt.

Rafah border crossing remains the primary gateway to the outside world for the majority of Palestinians in Gaza, most of whom are not allowed to use Erez border crossing. While Erez border crossing remains open, very few Palestinians from Gaza are permitted to cross from Erez into Israel for medical treatment or emergencies. An estimated 500 people instead rely on the Rafah border crossing every month to reach scheduled or ongoing medical treatment in Egypt or abroad.

- **Power plant and electricity supply:** Electricity supplies to southern Gaza were reported to have been disrupted this week when an Israeli airstrike reportedly hit main electrical lines and a transformer in the area. Last week, there were reports that Israeli shells also struck main electrical lines, resulting in areas to the east of Gaza City and in the north of Gaza experiencing longer than average power cuts, with some neighbourhoods in this general location reporting no electrical service at all.

Since January 5th, Gaza’s power plant has not placed an order for industrial fuel to be transferred from Israel. The fuel for Gaza’s power plant is now being supplied through the tunnels underneath the Gaza-Egypt border in the form of Egyptian diesel, which has a much lower price than the industrial fuel supplied from Israel.

OCHA estimates that the power plant is buying between 300,000 and 400,000 litres of diesel from the tunnels every day. In addition to what is procured daily from the tunnels, the power plant in Gaza reportedly has a two-week back up supply of fuel, capable of running the plant at an output of 60 Mw.

- **Cooking gas:** 1,075 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week via the Kerem Shalom crossing, as compared to 1,037 tons of cooking gas reported to have entered Gaza the week before. The 1,075 tons of cooking gas entering Gaza this week represent 61 percent of the 1,750 tons of cooking gas needed weekly. The overall cooking gas shortage has been a main concern for humanitarian agencies since November 2009. Shortages of cooking gas are hardest felt in the winter, when families rely on canisters of cooking gas to fuel space heaters during nightly electricity cuts. Cooking gas cannot safely be transported through the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border as it is highly combustible and requires a special pipeline to transport in bulk. The one tunnel equipped with a cooking gas pipeline was reportedly destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in December 2010.
- **Diesel/petrol:** No diesel or benzine was reported to have been delivered to the private sector this week or last week. A near total ban on fuel imports for public sale was put in place by the Government of Israel in October 2008. Around 600,000 litres of diesel and 200,000 litres of petrol for public sale are reported to enter Gaza every day through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border (OCHA, January 2011).
- **Exports:** 10 truckloads of flowers were reported to have left Gaza this week, representing .02 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average of all exports leaving Gaza.* 9 truckloads of

exports, including 8 truckloads of flowers and 1 truckload of cherry tomatoes, were reported to have left Gaza last week.

Since 2007, and despite Israeli government promises this past December to make additional efforts to increase exports from Gaza, exports have to date been entirely agricultural in nature, contributing to the de-development of Gaza's private sector. According to UNRWA calculations, before the blockade, 90 percent of garments, 76 percent of furniture products and 20 percent of food products produced in Gaza were marketed to the West Bank and Israel.

The limited exports now leaving Gaza are allowed as a result of an agreement between Israel and the Netherlands permitting limited exports of seasonal agricultural items. The agreement resumed on 28 November 2010.

**Pre-blockade weekly average (490 truckloads) is calculated on the daily average of all truckloads that exited Gaza between January 2005 and mid June 2007, before Israel's imposition of the blockade.*

- **Truckloads of supplies:** There were reports this week of 1,039 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, representing 37 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average.**1,140 truckloads of supplies entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom crossing last week. In the context of a relatively high level of transfer of goods last week to make up for no goods being transferred the week before last due to a strike held by Palestinian truckers protesting the Israeli authorities permanent closure of Karni crossing, nine truckloads of construction supplies were denied entry. With the closure of Karni, the Kerem Shalom crossing is the sole permanent crossing through which goods enter Gaza. While Karni could accommodate up to 1,000 trucks a day, Kerem Shalom can only accommodate up to 250 trucks per day. UNRWA has referred to the Kerem Shalom crossing, located in the deep south of Gaza, as an inefficient bottleneck that adds 20 percent in transport and labor costs to the price of humanitarian goods. Kerem Shalom crossing is also not equipped to handle the bulk transfer of large quantities of wheat and animal feed, while Karni is.

The Israeli authorities have recently installed a conveyor belt at Kerem Shalom crossing to handle the bulk transfer of wheat and animal grain. While the belt is said to have the capacity to transfer 50 truckloads of bulk wheat and animal grains a day, last week the maximum amount of bulk truckloads the belt was able to cross in a day remained limited to 33 truckloads. This belt is also not yet equipped to handle the bulk transfer of construction materials. The Sufa crossing has therefore been opened temporarily to allow for the transfer of construction materials to humanitarian agencies involved in building projects, such as UNRWA and UNDP. This week, 16,636 MT of aggregates entered Gaza via Sufa crossing, whereas last week, 19,473 MT of aggregates came in through Sufa. The recent openings of Sufa crossing marks the first times since 2008 that Sufa crossing has been opened. While imports remain limited, and raw materials severely restricted, exports remain banned almost entirely except for limited truckloads of strawberries, carnations and cherry tomatoes exported to the Netherlands. As a result, the scale of economic activity remains heavily dependent on local demand in Gaza, which in turn is constrained by the low purchasing power of the population and the relatively small size of the local market. Until crossings are fully opened for export, the impact of the easing of the blockade on unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates remains limited.

***Pre-blockade weekly average (2,807 truckloads) is calculated based on the monthly average of all truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007, before Israel's imposition of the blockade.*

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2. Humanitarian trucks (week):

Truck originator	Total for week 20 March - 26 March
UNRWA	89
ANERA	7
WFP	44
Islamic Relief	1
Gaza Institutions	5
Commercial	893
Sofa Crossing (aggregates)	16,636 MT
Total trucks for the week	1,039
Percentage of pre blockade average (first 5 months of 2007)	37 %

3. Fuel deliveries (week)

		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
20 March – 26 March		0	0	
	Percentage of need *	0		61 %
Previous week		0	0	59 %
* Fuel association 2006 estimates - ** Imports of diesel and petrol for the general public and public sector in Gaza were exceptionally authorized on 6 occasions since October 2008				

Request* of Industrial Fuel to the Power Plant via Israel (week):

Industrial diesel from Israel	Previous week	20 March- 26 March
0	0	0
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply capacity of 80 MW		0%

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Estimates of fuel supplied to the power plant from the tunnels

Diesel from the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border	Previous week	20 March- 26 March
	2.1- 2.8 million litres**	2.1- 2.8 million litres**
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply of 80 MW	60-80%	60-80%

**The power plant has not requested any industrial fuel to be transferred from Israel since January 5, 2010*

***based on OCHA estimates of 300,000- 400,000 litres of diesel per day*

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