

**Nursing reconciliation**

As Palestinian factions pave the way for national reconciliation, people in the West Bank and Gaza are eagerly waiting for an end to the political division that has only deepened the territorial divide imposed by Israeli occupation.

Beyond the negative affect on people, international aid agencies and local organisations have also reported being heavily affected by the divide, with coordination between Israel and two separate Palestinian governments often complicating the delivery of services and the provision of humanitarian aid.



“The lack of coordination between the government in the West Bank and the government in Gaza has led, among others, to some serious shortages of medicinal supplies in Gaza, over and above the already precarious situation imposed on us by the blockade,” said Dr Aed Yaghi, director of Oxfam partner Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) on his way to Cairo to witness the signing of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas.

PMRS, which runs mobile clinics and services across the Gaza Strip like the one photographed here, has seen its beneficiaries more than double since the internal Palestinian division, as patients who could not be given all the health services they need in government hospitals in Gaza have turned to local NGOs for support. Moreover, like with all the organisations based in both the West Bank and Gaza, PMRS itself had to set up parallel structures to deal with the two governments.

“Coordinating and registering with two distinct health ministries with their own regulations puts all of us under increased stress,” Dr Yaghi said.

**Photo and text: Karl Schembri/Oxfam**

## **1. Headlines**

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** There were reports this week of Israeli forces carrying out 1 incursion and 2 shellings. Last week, there were reports of 4 incursions and 2 shellings carried out by the Israeli armed forces.

There were reports this week of Palestinian armed groups firing 2 mortars towards Israel or Israeli forces. Last week, 1 Qassam rocket, and 2 mortars were reported to be fired towards Israel or Israeli forces.

4 Palestinian civilians, including 2 children, were reported injured this week as a result of Israeli military activity. Last week 1 civilian was reported injured. No Palestinian militants were reported injured this week or last week.

There were no reports of casualties or injuries to Israeli civilians or soldiers this week. Last week, a 16 year-old Israeli boy first reported injured on April 7<sup>th</sup> when a rocket struck the bus he was travelling on in the Sdot Negev Regional Council was reported to have died as a result of his injuries.

- **Fishermen:** There were no reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fishermen this week or last week. 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 injuries or fatalities reported this week or last week.
- **Palestinians in the access restricted area (the so-called "buffer zone"):** There were no reports this week of the Israeli military opening fire in the access restricted area, whereas 3 incidents, including 1 which resulted in injury to 1 Palestinian farmer, were reported the week before.

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,

- **Rafah border crossing:** The Rafah border crossing was open 4 out of 7 days this week, with reports of 1,374 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,303 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 464 Palestinians denied entry to Egypt. Last week, the Rafah border crossing was open 5 out of 7 days, with reports of 1,412 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,573 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 268 denied entry to Egypt.

Following the announcement on April 27<sup>th</sup> that Fatah and Hamas had reached an interim agreement for reconciliation, the Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi announced on April 29<sup>th</sup> that Egypt would soon be permanently opening the Rafah border crossing. While the terms of the opening have yet to be announced, the permanent opening of Rafah could allow for freer movement of both goods and people between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.

Following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, the Palestinian Authority was made responsible for running the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing, with the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) designated to monitor both Palestinian and Egyptian management of the border crossing. However, citing security concerns, Israel ordered the crossing closed in 2006. As the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip officially started in 2007, Egyptian officials kept the Rafah border crossing closed. Since the border crossing has remained closed, only the limited movement of people- foreign passport holders and Palestinians from Gaza who have received Israeli security- has been allowed.

An estimated 500 people rely on the Rafah border crossing every month to reach scheduled or ongoing medical treatment in Egypt or abroad.

- **Power plant and electricity supply:** There were no reports of additional disruptions to power supplies due to blockade related issues or Israeli military activity this week. Last week, there was a report of damage caused to a Switch Station in the Karni Industrial Zone as a result of

an Israeli military incursion. According to the report, the damage to the Switch Station resulted in interruption to sanitation, electricity, and water supplies.

Since January 5<sup>th</sup>, 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, at 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 now reportedly has a back up supply of fuel, capable of running the plant at an output of 60 Mw for one month.

- **Cooking gas:** 684 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week via the Kerem Shalom crossing, as compared to 497 tons of cooking gas reported to have entered Gaza the week before. The 684 tons of cooking gas entering Gaza this week represent 39 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. 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. Although this tunnel started functioning again in February, it was damaged soon after and is now used irregularly to transport limited quantities of cooking gas.
- **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:** 2 truckloads of flowers were reported to have left Gaza this week, representing .004 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average of all exports leaving Gaza.\* 1 truckload of flowers was reported to have left Gaza the week before.

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:** The Kerem Shalom crossing was only open 4 out of 7 days this week. During the 4 days that Kerem Shalom was open this week, there were reports of 733 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, representing 26 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average. Last week, the Kerem Shalom crossing was only open 3 out of 7 days due to the

Passover holiday, with a total of 540 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, representing 19 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average.\*\*

Following the permanent closure of Karni crossing in early March, Kerem Shalom is now 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, the maximum amount the belt was able to handle in a day remained limited to 41 truckloads this week. This belt is also not yet equipped to handle the bulk transfer of construction materials. While the Sufa crossing was initially opened temporarily to allow for the transfer of construction materials (aggregates) to humanitarian agencies involved in building projects, such as UNRWA and UNDP, the Sufa crossing has now remained closed since March 30<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, no aggregates entered Gaza via the Sufa crossing this week, which further delays rehabilitation and building projects, already behind schedule.

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.*

## **2. Humanitarian trucks (week):**

<b>Truck originator</b>	<b>Total for week 24- 30 April</b>
Bulk grains (human and animal)	139
UNRWA	150
Gaza institutions	4
ICRC	1
<b>Islamic Relief</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Commercial</b>	<b>437</b>
<b>Total trucks for the week</b>	<b>733</b>
<b>Percentage of pre blockade average (first 5 months of 2007)</b>	<b>26 %</b>

### 3. Fuel deliveries (week)

		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
24- 30 April		0	0	684 MT
	Percentage of need *	0		39 %
Previous week		0	0	497 MT
* 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	24- 30 April
0	0	0
<b>Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply capacity of 80 MW</b>		<b>0%</b>

#### Estimates of fuel supplied to the power plant from the tunnels

Diesel from the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border	Previous week	24- 30 April
	2.1- 2.8 million litres**	2.1- 2.8 million litres**
<b>Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply of 80 MW</b>	<b>60-80%</b>	<b>60-80%</b>

\*The power plant has not requested any industrial fuel to be transferred from Israel since January 5, 2011

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

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