

Dangerous Ground

Jaber Abu Al Kas, 10, was playing football with his friends in Al Shajaiya last Friday evening when an Israeli shell hit the street they were playing on, killing 10-year-old Mahmoud Al Jerou and 22-year-old student Bilel Al Areir.

In total, 10 civilians were killed and more than 30 were injured over the weekend at the peak of the escalation of violence since a rocket fired from Palestinian



militants hit a bus in southern Israel last Thursday, injuring two Israelis, including a 16 year-old boy.

Jaber, pictured here with his father, was one of 10 civilians wounded in the shelling incident that killed his playmates. Of the others who sustained injuries, six of them were children and one was a paramedic who works at Al Shifa Hospital, where the 10-year-old is now recovering from severe injuries to his chest, arms and legs from shrapnel.

“I just remember running after the ball when a massive blast shook us all,” Jaber said from the hospital bed.

Just two weeks earlier, a similar shelling killed five people in almost the exact location, including an 11 year-old, a 16 year-old, and a 20 year-old student who were also playing football in a street in Al Shajaiya.

The Al Shajaiya neighbourhood, which is located in the town of Khuza’a in the Khan Younis governorate, is located around 500 metres from the perimeter of Israel and Gaza, just within the access restricted area known as the “buffer zone.” Communities located close to the access restricted area are particularly vulnerable to conflict, as escalating violence across the perimeter leaves civilians caught in the crossfire. While the Israeli imposed “buffer zone,” encompassing 30 percent of Gaza’s agricultural land, has essentially cut farmers in these communities off from their main source of livelihood, it has also restricted children’s access to safe, open spaces in which they can play.

Meanwhile despite the trauma, Jaber is keen to get back to his neighbourhood to finish the football match.

“I want to return to continue the game,” Jaber said. “If I were afraid to return, where else would I go? We were 3-all so it’s not over until we win.”

Photo and text: Karl Schembri/Oxfam

1. Headlines

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** There were reports this week of 39 airstrikes and 60 shells fired into Gaza by the Israeli armed forces. Last week, there were reports of 4 airstrikes carried out by the Israeli armed forces.

This week Palestinian militant groups reportedly fired 58 home made rockets (HMR), 17 Grad rockets, 2 industrial manufactured type “107” rockets (a 107 mm rocket with high explosive capacity), 1 Qassam rocket, and 69 mortars towards Israel or Israeli forces. There were reports that several of the Grad rockets fired towards southern Israel this week were intercepted by Israel’s Iron Dome anti-rocket system, which was reportedly used for the first time. Last week, 3 home made rockets (HMR) and 1 Qassam rocket were reportedly fired towards Israel or Israeli targets.

10 Palestinian civilians were reportedly killed this week as a result of Israeli military activity, including a mother and her daughter who were reportedly killed when an Israeli shell struck their home and a child in the 4th grade at UNRWA’s Shija’ia Elementary B Boys School, who was also reportedly killed when shells and an airstrike hit close to his home. There were also reports of 39 civilians injured this week as a result of Israeli military activity. Last week, 2 Palestinian civilians were reported injured.

7 Palestinian militants were also reported killed and 7 other Palestinian militants were reportedly injured this week. The week before, 6 Palestinian militants were reportedly killed and 3 militants reportedly injured as result of Israeli military fire.

There were also reports of 2 Israeli civilians injured this week when a rocket reportedly struck a bus in the Sdot Negev Regional Council. The bus driver and a 16-year-old boy were both reported injured in the incident. No injuries of Israelis were reported the week before.

- **Fishermen:** There were 3 reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fishermen this week, with no injuries reported. Last week, there were 5 reports of Israeli naval vessels firing at Palestinian fishermen. 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 reports this week that 6 of the 39 airstrikes reported targeted the tunnels beneath the border between Gaza and Egypt, resulting in the reported injury of 6 Palestinians, including 1 medical worker. No tunnel related fatalities or injuries were reported last week.
- **Palestinians in the access restricted area (the so-called “buffer zone”):** There were reports of 9 incidents this week involving Israeli fire into the access restricted area, resulting in 1 injury to a Palestinian farmer who was reportedly wounded as a result of a tank shell fired in the access restricted area. In many of the other incidents reported this week, civilians were injured just outside of the so called “buffer zone” when Israeli shells fired into the access restricted area reportedly struck their homes located nearby. There was 1 report of Israeli forces opening fire on civilians in the access restricted area last week, resulting in 1 reported injury to a rubble collector.

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 5 out of 7 days this week, with reports of 1,180 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,269 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 179 Palestinians denied entry to Egypt. Last week, the Rafah border crossing was also open 5 out of 7 days, with reports of 933 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,269 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 202 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:** There were no reports of additional disruptions to power supplies due to blockade related issues or Israeli military activity this week or last week.

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, 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:** 403 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week via the Kerem Shalom crossing, as compared to 1,023 tons of cooking gas reported to have entered Gaza the week before. The 403 tons of cooking gas entering Gaza this week represent 23 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:** 1 truckload of flowers was reported to have left Gaza this week, representing .002 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average of all exports leaving Gaza.* 3 truckloads of flowers were 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 open 3 out of 7 days this week. The crossing was closed on April 6th by the Israeli authorities citing security concerns. During the three days that Kerem Shalom was open this week, there were reports of 380 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, representing 13 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average.** 786 truckloads of supplies entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom crossing last week.

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 29 truckloads this week. 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 (aggregates) to humanitarian agencies involved in building projects, such as UNRWA and UNDP. However, the Sufa crossing has now remained closed since March 30th. Therefore, no aggregates entered Gaza via the Sufa crossing this week, which further delays rehabilitation and building projects, already behind schedule. Last week, 10,953 MT of aggregates entered Gaza via Sufa crossing.

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.*

This update is compiled by **Oxfam International** from the best available information drawn from reliable international sources. Some of the information is preliminary and may be updated in subsequent reports.

2. Humanitarian trucks (week):

| Truck originator | Total for week 3 April- 9 April |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Bulk grains (human and animal) | 78 |
| UNRWA | 16 |
| ICRC | 1 |
| Commercial | 285 |
| Total trucks for the week | 380 |
| Percentage of pre blockade average (first 5 months of 2007) | 13 % |

3. Fuel deliveries (week)

| | | Diesel | Petrol | Cooking Gas |
|------------------|----------------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| 3 April- 9 April | | 0 | 0 | 403 MT |
| | Percentage of need * | 0 | | 23 % |
| Previous week | | 0 | 0 | 1,023 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 | 3 April- 9 April |
|---|---------------|------------------|
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply capacity of 80 MW | | 0% |

Estimates of fuel supplied to the power plant from the tunnels

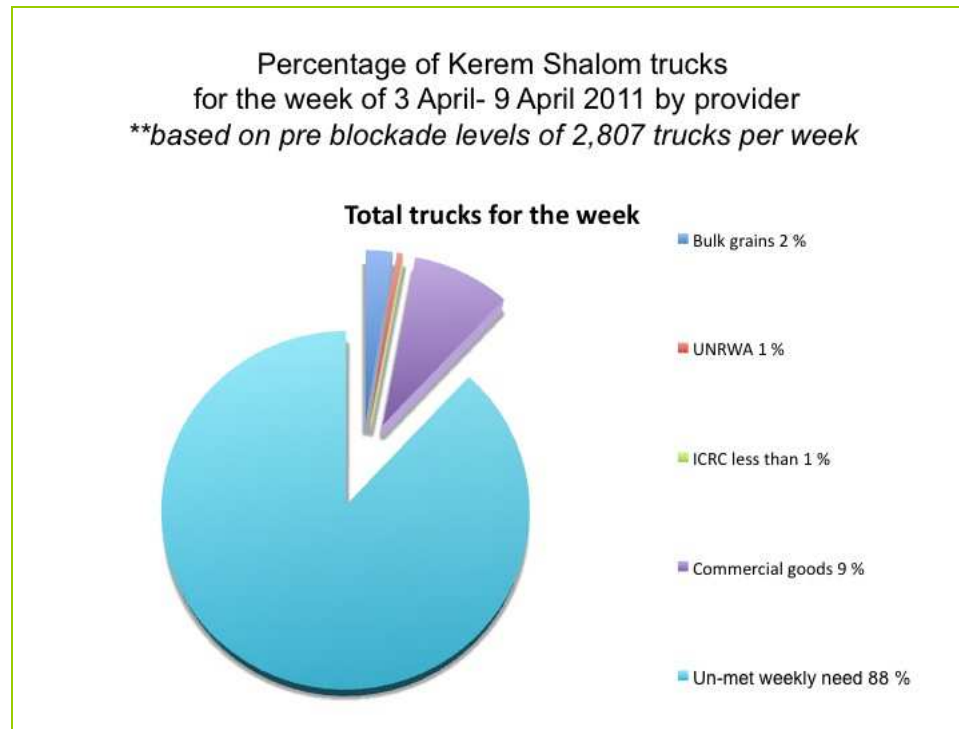
| Diesel from the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border | Previous week | 3 April- 9 April |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | 2.1- 2.8 million litres** | 2.1- 2.8 million litres** |
| Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply of 80 MW | 60-80% | 60-80% |

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

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

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4. Charts



5. Contact information

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