



Nursing the scars

Nurse Nivine Ebed, who works with Oxfam partner Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS), is seen here dispensing medicine to a Palestinian woman at the Zeytoun advanced field clinic. Thousands of Palestinians in Gaza are registered with PMRS to receive free medicine, treatment and follow-up care through its network of mobile clinics, while individuals in need of specialised treatment abroad are also helped to cope with expenses.

Ebed said many Palestinians suffering from chronic diseases were badly affected by drug shortages recently.

“It’s been a tough time with drugs out of stock. We never have enough reaching us,” Ebed said.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported last week that since 2007 there has been an ever-increasing shortage of essential drugs in Gaza, with 38% of essential drugs out of stock in Ministry of Health hospitals and clinics across Gaza in early 2011. As a result of the shortages, the WHO found that more patients in Gaza were using non-Ministry of Health providers, such as NGOs and UNRWA, in hopes of finding the medicine and treatment they need.

PMRS provides primary and advanced health care to marginalised and impoverished communities around the Gaza Strip, with a focus on improving services to those living in access restricted areas, such as the so-called buffer zone which has caused many families to lose their main source of livelihood as they are cut off from their agricultural land. People living in the so-called buffer zone are made even more vulnerable due to regular incursions across the border by the Israeli army.

PMRS’s director in Gaza, Abd El Hadi Abu Khussa, said the organisation itself has been hampered as equipment and construction materials being denied access from Israel means that completing rehabilitation work on primary care centres has been delayed for months.

Photo and text: Karl Schembri

1. Headlines

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** Palestinian armed groups reportedly fired 8 mortars, 2 home made rockets (HMR) and 1 Qassam missile towards Israeli forces this week. There was an additional report that Hamas fired an experimental test rocket into the sea this week. Last week, there were reports of 2 HMR and 2 grad-type missiles fired by Palestinian armed groups.

There were reports of 2 incursions and 5 airstrikes this week, resulting in injuries to 5 civilians and 2 Palestinian militants. One of the airstrikes reportedly hit a residential area, destroying a carpentry workshop and wood store and resulting in injury to 5 civilians as well damaging surrounding homes. There were no incursions or airstrikes reported last week. No deaths were reported this week or last week.

- **Fishermen:** There was 1 report of an Israeli naval vessel firing at Palestinian fisherman this week, just as there was 1 incident reported 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:** No tunnel related fatalities were reported this week or last week. There had been reports that many of the tunnels under the border between Gaza and Egypt had been operating at a lowered capacity due to the situation in Egypt, but they are reportedly now beginning to resume at prior levels. There were also reports that the tunnels had been used to supply Egyptians in Rafah and bordering towns with basic supplies such as eggs, bread, and canned goods from Gaza as store owners on the Rafah side reported running out of general supplies amid the recent unrest in Egypt.
- **Palestinians in the "buffer zone":** There were 6 incidents of Israeli fire reported in the so-called "buffer zone" along the perimeter with Gaza this week, resulting in injuries sustained by four Palestinian civilians reported to have been collecting scrap metal. Last week, 5 incidents of Israeli fire in the so-called "buffer zone" along the perimeter with Gaza were reported. 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 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 remained closed this week, following the official border closing by the Egyptian authorities on January 29th due to the events taking place in Egypt, with reports of riots and looting on the Rafah side, which have now subsided. The Rafah border crossing is now closed until further notice. The closing of the Rafah border has a severe impact on humanitarian movement and access, Egypt serving as the main transit point for medical emergencies or people approved for medical treatment outside of Gaza. There are an undetermined number of Palestinians from Gaza who are stuck abroad and unable to get home due to the closure of Rafah. There are also approximately 500 medical cases registered with the authorities in Gaza who need to travel abroad for medical treatment and who are unable to do so while Rafah remains closed.
- **Power plant and electricity supply:** No fuel was reported to have been delivered for Gaza's power plant this week; no fuel has been reported to have been delivered at all since 5 January 2011. Fuel for Gaza's power plant is now being supplied through the tunnels underneath the Gaza-Rafah border in the form of Egyptian diesel, which has a much lower price than the industrial fuel supplied from Israel.

Last week, there were reports of many of the tunnels beneath the border between Gaza and Egypt shutting down amid the crisis in Egypt, which reportedly caused fuel shortages and raised concerns over the power plant potentially running out of fuel supplies, which could cause power failures in hospitals and increase blackouts across the Gaza Strip.

Despite new supplies from the tunnels, the ongoing shortage of industrial fuel remains an area of humanitarian concern as the provision of essential services including regular water supply, sewage treatment and removal, and the functioning of health services, continues to be negatively affected by the chronic lack of electricity in Gaza. In addition to what is procured from the tunnels, the power plant in Gaza reportedly has a two-week back up supply of industrial fuel, capable of running the plant at an output of 60 Mw for 14 days.

- **Cooking gas:** 268 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week. This figure represents 15 percent of the 1,750 tons of cooking gas needed weekly. Last week, 621 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza. 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 amidst nightly electricity cuts. Cooking gas is not available 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 are reported to enter Gaza every day through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border (OCHA, January 2011).
- **Truckloads of supplies:** A total of 944 truckloads of supplies reportedly entered Gaza this week. This number is 33 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average of all trucks entering Gaza.* Last week, 1,075 truckloads of supplies were reportedly allowed entry into Gaza.

While imports remain limited, and raw materials severely restricted, exports remain banned almost entirely except for limited truckloads of strawberries and carnations 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.*

- **Exports:** This week, there were 21 truckloads of exports reported to have left Gaza, including 7 truckloads of cut flowers and 14 truckloads of strawberries. This small amount of exports represents .02 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average of all exports leaving Gaza.* Last week, 24 truckloads of exports were reported to have left. The limited exports are allowed as a result of an agreement between Israel and the Netherlands allowing limited exports of flowers and strawberries. The agreement resumed on 28 November 2010.

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.

**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.*

2. Humanitarian trucks (week):

Truck originator	Total for week 6-12 February
UNRWA	93
CMWU	17
UNDP	5
Gaza Institution	8
Commercial	649
ICRC	2
Karni conveyor (gravel, wheat, grain, animal feed)	170
Total trucks for the week	944
Percentage of pre-blockade average (first five months of 2007)	33%

3. Fuel deliveries (week)

		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
6-12 February		0	0	268 tons
	Percentage of need *	0		15%
Previous week		0		621 tons
* 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				

Delivery of Industrial Fuel to the Power Plant (week):

Industrial diesel	Previous week	6-12 February
	0	0
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply capacity of 80 MW		0%

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