

Humanitarian Impact of Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian Territories



Date: 17 July 2014

	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Important	Major
Expected impact				X	
Need for international assistance	Not required	Low	Moderate	Important	Urgent
			X		

Key Findings

Anticipated scope and scale

- As of 17 July, 227 Palestinians have been killed, and 1,585 injured as a consequence of the hostilities. According to OCHA, nearly 80% of the casualties were civilians, of whom over a quarter were children.
- Some 1,660 homes have either been destroyed or damaged, prompting the displacement of 9,900 individuals.
- A further 22,600 residents of northern Gaza (mainly Beit Lahiye) have left their homes following IDF strike warnings, and now reside in over 21 UNRWA schools.

Priorities for humanitarian intervention

- Acute water shortages are affecting as many as 900,000 individuals. Airstrikes have also affected sanitation networks in Beit Hanoun, Gaza City and Khan Younis.
- Emergency food assistance may be necessary for the 32,500 displaced.
- An estimated 20% of Gaza's electricity supply has been damaged. Ongoing hostilities are preventing essential repairs.
- Gaza's medical services are overwhelmed, drugs are in severe shortage, and at least five health facilities have either been damaged or destroyed.
- At least 25,000 children are suffering from trauma and require psychosocial support.
- The number of civilian casualties as a result of the fighting is growing, and is expected to increase if either airstrikes continue or a ground incursion takes place.

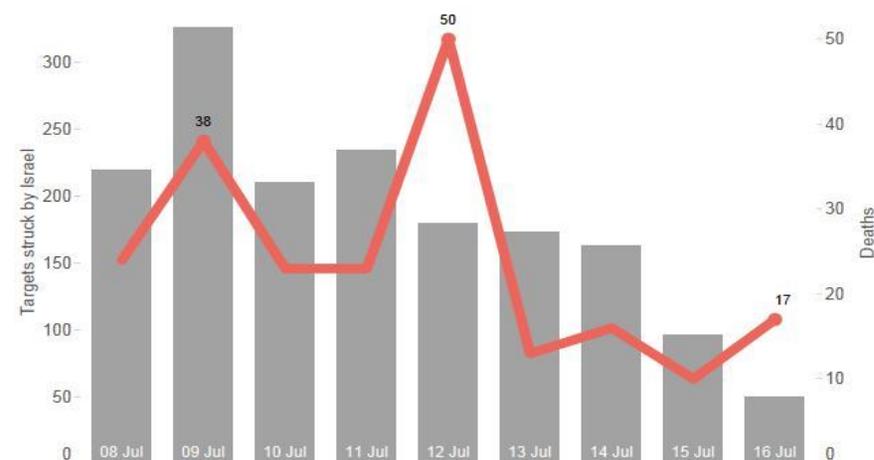
Humanitarian constraints

Immediate access to affected areas is difficult during military operations, and may require the creation of humanitarian corridors.

Situation overview



Source: NYT, 16/07/2014



Affected groups

	Gaza Strip
Resident pop.	1.8 million (43% under 14 years of age)
Killed	227
Injured	1,585
Missing	-
Total IDPs	32,500
Total registered refugees	1.52 million across eight camps
Breakdown of total recently displaced	32,500 (22,600 northern Gaza + 9,900 general and directly affected by home destruction)

Crisis Overview

- On 8 July, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, following firing of rockets into Israel. The immediate triggers were the abduction and murder of three Israeli yeshiva students, for which Israel holds Hamas responsible, and the revenge torture and murder of a Palestinian teenager by vigilante Israeli Jews (PMO 08/07/2014; Haaretz 14/07/2014; ICG 14/07/2014).
- On the same day, Israel's security cabinet approved the mobilisation, by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) of up to 40,000 reserve personnel, signalling its intent to broaden military operations (JPost 08/07/2014).
- Following air strikes targeting the homes of a number of senior Hamas officials and military commanders, a Hamas spokesman announced that 'all Israelis have now become legitimate targets' (Maan News 09/07/2014; Reuters 12/07/2014).
- On 12 July, the UN Security Council called for de-escalation and reinstatement of the previous ceasefire agreement (UN 12/07/2014).
- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas requested that the Palestinian Territories be placed under 'international protection' (Times of Israel 13/07/2014).
- On 13 July and again on 15 July, the IDF warned residents of northern Gaza (Sajaiya, Zeitun and Beit Lahiya) to evacuate their homes towards Gaza City ahead of strikes. Despite exhortations by Hamas not to give in to Israeli pressure, some 22,600 individuals are estimated to have sought refuge elsewhere, including in schools (MaanNews 12/07/2014 JPost 16/07/2014).
- On 15 July, an Egyptian ceasefire proposal accepted by Israel was rejected by Hamas, which continued its rocket fire. By mid-afternoon, Israel renewed its airstrikes in response, targeting Hamas officials and buildings in Gaza (JPost 15/07/2014; JPost 15/07/2014; NYT 16/07/2014).
- As of 16 July, Israel has struck some 1,750 targets, and armed Palestinian factions, including Hamas' military wing, the Ezzeddin al-Qassam Brigades, have launched 1,248 rockets into Israel, especially towards the southern cities but also as far north as Hadera. Further, Hamas rockets have landed in the West Bank cities of Bethlehem and Hebron. So far, 227 Palestinians have died, as well as one Israeli man, and some 1,585 Palestinians and some hundreds of Israelis have been treated for injuries or shock (JPost 16/07/2014 ABC News 16/07/2014; BBC 17/07/2014).
- A handful of rockets from Lebanon and Syria have been fired into northern Israel and the Israeli-controlled sector of the Golan Heights, raising fears of the conflict spreading (ACAPS 2014).
- On 17 July, following a UN request to enable a humanitarian window, a five-hour humanitarian ceasefire took effect from 0700 until 1200 GMT.
- The Egyptian government is continuing its efforts to reach a ceasefire deal. Reports that a ceasefire would take effect on 18 July at 0600AM local time have been denied by Hamas and the Israeli authorities (BBC 17/07/2014).

Key Information

Drivers of the Current Conflict

Proximate drivers

- **An escalatory cycle** linked to the West Bank abduction and killing of three Israeli teenage religious students in June, the IDF's subsequent arrest of Hamas affiliates, including individuals released during the 2011 Shalit deal, and the torture and killing of a Palestinian teenager in a Jerusalem forest (Haaretz 14/07/2014).
- **In response**, Hamas' military wing and other armed Palestinian factions have fired low-precision rockets into Israel.
- **Israel** has stated that it aims to purge the Gaza Strip of Hamas' rocket infrastructure and to 'deliver a blow to terror organisations', in order to restore quiet (Haaretz 10/07/2014; Ch10 News (TV) 15/07/2014; INSS 09/07/2014 Stratfor 14/07/2014). **Hamas**, on 16 July, set forth a number of conditions for a ceasefire and a ten-year truce with Israel, including: an end to all armed hostilities and to the siege over Gaza; the release of Palestinians detained since 23 June 2014; the opening of border crossings to allow free movement of people and goods; the permitted construction of a power plant sufficient to supply all of Gaza; the lifting of the Israeli naval blockade in exchange for an internationally supervised air- and seaport, to be constructed; the deployment of international monitors to the borders; and non-interference in the affairs of the Palestinian government or national reconciliation efforts (JPost 16/07/2014; Electronic Intifada 16/07/2014).

Intermediate drivers

Half-hearted mutual abidance by the ceasefire agreement of November 2012, including restricted cross-border access by Israel (and Egypt) for crucial basic items such as fuel and construction materials, and Hamas' slack in restraining rocket fire by other armed factions. Some view Hamas' rocket fire as a way of persuading Israel back to the terms of the previous agreement (ICG 14/07/2014).

Remote drivers

- **The absence of a final political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians.** The US is trying to broker a framework of guidelines addressing core issues such as borders, security, the future of Palestinian refugees, and the status of Jerusalem. Palestinians want to create a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and are seeking a written framework agreement. Israel for its part demands that its security requirements be met. In addition, a segment of Israeli society also lays claim to the West Bank – Biblical Judea and Samaria – as their historical and spiritual patrimony, and aggressively defend their presence there. (ACAPS 2014).

- **This is however complicated by the existing intra-Palestinian schism and Israel and Hamas' hostile stance towards each other.** On 25 April, after a unity deal was struck between Hamas and Fatah, Israel withdrew from the US-sponsored peace talks, demanding that Abbas choose between peace with Israel and a pact with Hamas. Israel retains full control of Gaza's airspace and territorial waters, arguing that its blockade curbs dual-use materials for the production of rockets. In addition, it has cracked down on scores of tunnels believed to be used by Palestinians to smuggle weapons, but also food and other critical items, via the Sinai Peninsula. Moreover, Gaza has also been hemmed in by Egypt, with passage through Rafah crossing largely restricted to humanitarian cases. Import controls are affecting Gaza's economy, as are, for instance, the limits Israel has imposed on fisherfolk for instance, who are not permitted beyond three nautical miles from the shore (B'Tselem 01/01/2013; OCHA-WFP 10/2010; Haaretz 09/07/2014; ICG 14/07/2014).

Relevant Stakeholders

Israel cites the right to defend itself from rocket fire. It has attempted to demilitarise the Gaza Strip with the ultimate aim of restoring 'quiet for quiet'. In this round of conflict, by further isolating Hamas, Israel also implicitly aims to discredit the unity government announced in April. Prime Minister Netanyahu's decisions are likewise influenced by domestic politics: a rift currently exists between Netanyahu, who is treading with relative restraint on this electorally sensitive issue, and politicians further right, who have called for a full ground incursion into Gaza (JPPost 16/07/2014).

Hamas: Since its founding in 1987, the Islamic Resistance Movement (known by its acronym) has opposed political and diplomatic settlement with Israel and refuses to recognise Israel's legitimacy. Domestic division within the Palestinian body politic came to a head in mid-2007, when Hamas took over de facto control of the Gaza Strip following an electoral victory. In April 2014, Hamas agreed to a unity government headed by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Yet, this round of conflict also comes at a time when Hamas' domestic and regional standing has waned considerably, and the group may, despite the heavy casualty count and infrastructural destruction, view this as an opportunity to reinstate its domestic legitimacy. At the same time, given the economic consequences of the restrictions imposed by Israel (and Egypt), Hamas may see little alternative other than a return to armed conflict (MiddleEastMonitor 12/07/2014; JPPost 12/07/2014; Economist 12/07/2014).

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Popular Resistance Committees, and other armed Palestinian factions in Gaza: Following Hamas' coming to power in 2007, other armed factions in Gaza shifted still further right. Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the most prominent among them, has occasionally clashed with Hamas over the latter's relative moderation as well as attempts at restraining rocket fire by other factions.

While these are largely regarded as fringe groups, they wield potential as spoilers in any framework of accommodation or a ceasefire with Israel.

Fatah: The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, led by Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) remains the only officially recognised representative of the Palestinian people, and it has participated in several rounds of peace talks with Israel. A struggle for factional legitimacy vis-à-vis Hamas clearly continues apace despite the announcement of a unity government on 23 April.

International and Neighbouring Countries' Relationship to the Conflict

Egypt: The government of AbdelFattah Al Sisi is far less sympathetic to the Hamas government in Gaza than the previous Muslim Brotherhood government led by Mohammad Morsi. Indeed, in recent months, the Egyptian judiciary has tried and sentenced hundreds of members of the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamas' parent organisation), and declared Hamas a 'terrorist organisation'. Still, Egypt is expected to retain its role as key intermediary, which would burnish its international credentials at such a sensitive period of domestic transition (BBC 21/06/2014; Economist 12/07/2014; VOA 04/03/2014; ICG 14/07/2014; Wadi Masr 11/07/2014; AlWatanVoice 11/07/2014; Gatestone Institute 13/07/2014)

The United States: US administrations past and present have been highly committed to Israel's security, and have supported the financing of the Iron Dome anti-rocket system as part of a wider multilayered missile defence system in Israel. At the same time, Washington has mediated in critical negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in an effort to head off Arab pressure on its wider Middle East policy. The US continues to deal solely with the Palestinian Authority and Mahmoud Abbas and provides much needed financing in certain sectors.

Lebanon and Syria: in addition to their longstanding conflict with Israel, armed factions in Lebanon – most prominently Hezbollah – as well as in Syria, in the throes of its own civil war, occasionally fire rockets into northern Israel and the Israeli-controlled sector of the Golan Heights. During this round of conflict, a handful of rockets were reportedly fired across both fronts, although responsibility for them remains unclear (Ynet 15/07/2014; DailyStar 12/07/2014; DailyStar 11/07/2014).

Iran: Tehran, often through Damascus, has historically supported and armed Sunni militant factions in the Palestinian Territories, most notably Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The potential for Iran to play a spoiler role in this conflict therefore exists, if indirectly. In this current round of conflict, it has so far restricted itself to condemnatory statements (FarsNews 11/07/2014).

Past Conflicts or Displacement

This is the third round of direct hostilities in the Gaza Strip following Operation Cast Lead in December 2008, which lasted 22 days, and Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012, which lasted 8.

Crisis Impact

Impact on Access of Affected Population to Essential Services

Damage to health, education, water and sanitation facilities, and electricity infrastructure makes it increasingly difficult to provide even the most basic services for the civilian population. Access to these services also remains severely restricted, primarily as a result of physical and administrative obstacles to freedom of movement (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

Access, Humanitarian and Operational Constraints

- Due to recent attacks, **Beit Hanoun (Arba Arba) checkpoint**, controlled by the Gaza administration was closed on 14 July until further notice. It is partially functioning to allow for movement of patients and Gazans returning, but it is not open for international personnel. Hence, this limits humanitarian access and raises major security issues for all humanitarian and development workers in Gaza (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- **Erez Crossing** is open for internationals and exceptional cases (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- **Kerem Shalom Crossing** is operating partially, to allow trucks with humanitarian supplies to enter (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- **Rafah Crossing** is open for medical evacuations (including first degree family members), as well as for foreign and dual nationals and Egyptian passport holders. Food and medical supplies have crossed into Gaza via Rafah in the period from 14-16 July (OCHA, 16/07/2014). The Rafah Crossing is the primary exit and entry point to the Gaza Strip for Palestinians, and restrictions were increased in July 2013.
- Ongoing hostilities continue to impede the movement of child protection staff and emergency psychosocial teams (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) is unable to work on the ground to remove unexploded remnants of war due to ongoing military operations (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- As movement is impeded, Food Security Cluster members continue to face problems in accessing agricultural lands and livestock in order to assess damages. Similarly, difficulties are faced in assessing the impact of hostilities on school infrastructure (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- (I)NGO and UN personnel continue to face difficulty in moving in and out of Gaza. All (I)NGO personnel as well as UN national personnel are required to obtain permits from the Israeli authorities to travel in and out of Gaza (SRP OCHA 2014).

Food Security:

- Food insecurity in Gaza surged from 44% in 2011 to 57% in 2014, unchanged from 2012. The halt in the smuggling of food via the network of tunnels has increased food prices (SRP OCHA 2014).
- 22,600 people hosted at UNRWA shelters, and 547 families hosted by relatives, are in need of emergency food assistance. Approximately 340

persons – or 57 families – are in need of food assistance in Gaza's Middle Area (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

- Food insecurity is driven by high rates of poverty resulting from unemployment, partly due to ongoing Israeli access and movement restrictions, as well as high food prices and economic shocks (UNRWA, FAO, WFP, Government, 03/06/2014).
- Fishing catch during the sardine season in the Gaza Strip increased by 27% compared to 2013 and 120% compared to 2012 (OCHA, 31/05/2014).
- Continuing restrictions on trade and access to natural resources and the ongoing imposition of the blockade on Gaza continue to stifle the local economy, further increasing levels of unemployment and food insecurity. An estimated 50% of agricultural land is inaccessible, hindering household and commercial production as well as shrinking jobs in this sector (HNO OCHA 2014).
- Over 3,600 fishermen are in need of re-establishing their livelihoods and require assistance in the interim period (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

WASH:

- The latest Israeli airstrikes and shelling have destroyed or damaged 19 WASH facilities, disrupting provision of water and sanitation including tap water, wastewater and storm water lines in Beit Hanoun, Gaza City and Khan Younis (OCHA 14/07/2014). While still functioning after it was hit, there is a serious concern over contamination in Al Montar water reservoir. Beit Lahiya Municipality decided to close a water pipeline in order to avoid supply contamination. Three workers have been killed while conducting repairs (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- An estimated 900,000 people in the Gaza Strip may not have access to adequate and safe water and sanitation services as a result of power outages and lack of fuel. Insecurity of staff is causing suspension of emergency operations and repairs (OCHA 14/07/2014 ICRC 15/07/2014).
- 20,000 people were affected as a water pipeline in the Middle Area was damaged. Water supply was further cut or disrupted in Rafah area as water pipelines and a waste water treatment plant were damaged (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- A groundwater well in the industrial area of Gaza City has become inoperative as an electricity line powering the well has been cut off (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Drinking water is an issue in Bani Suhaila (Rafah), where people cope with alternative water sources of questionable quality (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

Health:

- At least 25,000 traumatised children are in need of psychosocial support (OCHA 14/07/2014).
- Five health facilities have been destroyed or severely damaged. A centre for the developmentally disabled in Beit Lahiya was destroyed. Health services have been particularly affected by the power cuts, severe shortages of drugs and medical equipment (WHO, 12/07/2014).
- Massive shortages in drugs (28%) and disposables (54%) at Gaza hospitals are hindering the ability to deliver health services. There is an urgent need for

psycho-tropic drugs, including emergency drug kits, to use for relapsing patients with mental illnesses, as well as those suffering from forced displacement, trauma and anxiety (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

- There is generally an urgent need for medical equipment, as well as fuel for the Al Awda Hospital to run basic operations (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- There is a lack of adequate protection of health facilities and personnel, as another two clinics sustained damage on 14 July (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- There is restricted access to the injured due to ongoing military operations; as well as reduced access for referral cases out of Gaza, due to travel difficulties and delays in processing referrals (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

Shelter and Non-Food Items:

- Following warnings from the Israeli military, more than 22,600 Palestinians fled their homes in northern and central Gaza and took shelter in 21 UNRWA schools (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Another 9,900 people, who have been displaced since 8 July, are residing with families or host communities throughout the Gaza Strip (ACAPS 2014).
- Many housing units have been totally destroyed or severely damaged in air strikes, rendering them uninhabitable (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Approximately 8,200 persons – or 1,370 families – are in need of emergency NFI kits (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

Protection:

- Protection concerns are the primary drivers of humanitarian needs (SRP OCHA 2014): Palestinians are subject to various threats to their physical safety, stemming from both Israeli military/law enforcement operations and the actions of Palestinian armed groups and security forces.
- In addition, many have been forcibly displaced or are at acute risk of forced displacement as a result of multiple factors including planning restrictions and other constraints related to the ongoing blockade, recurrent hostilities, conflict-related violence and abuse (SRP OCHA, 2014)
- At least 25,000 children whose families have experienced death, injury or loss of homes are in need of specialised psychosocial support (PSS) (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Human rights organisations estimate that since the start of Operation Protective Edge, 1,660 homes have been targeted and destroyed, at the cost of civilian lives. Targeting of homes not used for military purposes is a violation of international humanitarian law. (OCHA 14/07/2014).
- Many families are forced to purchase unsafe water from unregulated water vendors and distributors. Initial reports indicate that people, mostly children, are filling jerry cans from desalination units during night hours (when the electricity is switched on), raising safety and protection concerns (OCHA, 16/07/2014)
- UNICEF has warned of the long term impact the current violence is having on children, who are not sleeping or eating and who are exhibiting signs of mental

distress (OCHA, 16/07/2014). Psychosocial distress was already prevalent and on the rise pre-crisis, due to violence and other consequences of the Strip's closure (SRP OCHA 2014).

Education:

- 79 schools, 32 government buildings, two educational directorate offices, and 47 UNRWA schools have been damaged due to their proximity to targeted sites (OCHA, 16/07/2014). The latest destruction of education facilities has further negative impact on the education sector that had already been heavily damaged or destroyed during the Israeli military offensives of 2008-2009, and November 2012, when nearly 300 educational facilities were damaged or destroyed, affecting more than 275,000 students.

Impact on Critical Infrastructure

- Two out of three sewage internal pipelines of the Gaza sewage treatment plant in Ash Sheikh Ijleen were destroyed in air strikes. Airstrikes resulted in the partial destruction of pressure lines draining sewage from Abu Rashed Pumping Station in north Gaza to the wastewater treatment plant (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- An estimated 20% of Gaza's electricity supply – or two of the 10 lines supplied by the Israel Electric Corporation – has been damaged by rocket fire. Ongoing hostilities are preventing essential repairs (JPost 15/07/2014).

Affected Vulnerable Groups

- Refugees, the food-insecure, displaced people and those at risk of displacement; children and adolescents, persons with disabilities, and older people remain the most affected by the current crisis (SRP OCHA 2014).
- Those living in, or in the vicinity of the Access Restricted Area (ARA) on land close to the fence with Israel, are particularly exposed to threats to their life as a result of measures taken by Israel to enforce restrictions on access to these areas. Families living in, or individuals working in areas near the fence in the north (east of Jabalia, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia) and middle area (around al -Burej, Deir-EI-Balah) are at greatest risk (SRP OCHA 2014)
- **Children:** Children account for half of those displaced, which results in psychosocial distress and negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriage of girls, while access to services such as education is hampered by damage/destruction of school infrastructure. Rising unemployment and poverty moreover, have resulted in increasing child labour. In addition, children constitute the overwhelming majority of victims of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) (SRP OCHA 2014).
- **Adolescents:** Adolescents, a third of the population, are subject to the political situation, and are economically and socially marginalised. School dropout rates, an alarming increase in substance abuse, early marriage and limited access to cultural and social facilities including health and sports are among the resulting key protection issues (SRP OCHA 2014).

- **Persons with disabilities:** At least 6.9% of the Palestinian population are living with disabilities. In this context, persons with disabilities face particular challenges in accessing livelihood opportunities as well as adequate health, education and social services (SRP OCHA 2014).
- **Elderly:** many older people are dependent on support provided by their family and community, which is not always appropriate or adequate to meet their needs (SRP OCHA 2014).

Potential Aggravating Factors

Pre-crisis vulnerabilities:

- The current crisis comes against a backdrop of heightened vulnerability and instability. Unemployment increased dramatically since mid-2013, following a halt in illegal tunnel trade, exacerbating the impact of the longstanding access restrictions imposed by Israel. Additionally, Gaza administration employees, including the security forces, have not been paid salaries regularly since August 2013 and no salaries at all since April 2014 (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- **Access:** In the longer term, as a result of restrictions imposed by Israel and the Gaza administration, humanitarian actors continue to face constraints in their ability to deliver aid. The process of approval, coordination and verification of reconstruction projects by the Israeli authorities takes 12 months on average, hence impeding a response to urgent needs and increasing project costs. The Gaza administration has requested the compliance of international NGOs with certain administrative and tax procedures which has proven challenging for some organisations given the overall policies that frame assistance for some key donors. In addition, the “no contact” policy adopted by certain countries and donors, prohibiting contact with the Gaza administration, even on an operational level also constrains action (SRP OCHA 2014).
- **Displacement:** Most of Gaza’s population – 1.5 million of the 1.8 million – consists of refugees. The psychological and, in many cases, material consequences of secondary or tertiary displacements cannot be ignored in a spiral of conflict that repeats itself every now and then (UNRWA 01/01/2014).
- **Population density and the scarcity of space** make any military operation challenging if civilian casualties are to be averted or at least minimised. In addition, many of the rocket launch sites, production facilities and storage caches are reported to be located either within, or in striking proximity to civilian infrastructure, raising risks for non-combatants.
- **WASH:** People in Gaza lack access to basic water and sanitation services as a result of the cumulative influence of planning restrictions imposed by Israel for urgently needed large scale infrastructure (e.g. wastewater treatment plants), the ongoing blockade in Gaza, cyclical droughts and population growth. 90% of the groundwater is not suitable for human consumption; and limited supplies as well as high prices and the quality of tankered water are of great concern. Since the tunnel closure towards Egypt, the situation deteriorated significantly (SRP OCHA 2014).
- Vulnerable groups include students with poor WASH facilities in schools, communities with less than 50% connectivity to sewage networks in Gaza, communities consuming poor quality drinking water, communities with water consumption rates below 30 litres per capita per day (lpcd) and 60 lpcd, communities paying unaffordable amounts for water tankering above 20 NIS/m³, communities considered at Risk of Displacement from man-made disasters with emerging protection needs (SRP OCHA 2014).
- Wastewater treatment plants in Gaza are overloaded and working beyond their designed capacities. About 89 million litres (MLD) of untreated or partially treated sewage are discharged into the sea daily. Also, solid waste remains a major concern with the proliferation of uncontrolled dumpsites (SRP OCHA 2014).
- **Impact on critical infrastructure:** Gaza’s economic situation continues to deteriorate, with livelihoods eroded and prices increasing. Crucial commodities are in scant supply, living conditions are abysmal in many places, and much of the population is dependent on food aid. In November 2013, over 250,000 workers lost their jobs, with construction and tunnel-trade employment stagnating. Unemployment reached a three-year high of 41.5% in the last quarter of 2013 (OCHA, 03/2014).
- Gaza Strip’s utilities are suboptimal as they stand. Delivery of basic services has been undermined due to an ongoing energy crisis, involving power outages of up to 12 hours per day (OCHA, 16/07/2014). Compromised water supply and sanitation networks, with high summer approaching, could presage waterborne epidemics. Shortages of electricity and building materials are undermining livelihoods. Shortages of fuel, attributed to the closures of the Kerem Shalom crossing and coordination issues between Palestinian authorities in Gaza and Ramallah, have gradually worsened, with most of Gaza’s 180 fuel stations forced to close or severely limit operations (OCHA, 12/05/2014).
- **Health:** The healthcare system in Gaza has limited capacity to meet the needs of its 1.8 million population. The blockade from 2007 onwards has led to a gradual deterioration through destruction and lack of maintenance of the health infrastructure. Continuity of medical care is threatened by the financial crisis and electricity shortages. The main Ministry of Health drugstore reported that stocks of 118 (of 481) essential medicines have been completely depleted (OCHA, 12/05/2014). Procurement of essential drugs and other medical supplies has declined due to budgetary restrictions faced by the PA as well as the political schism (SRP OCHA 2014).
- Since the beginning of 2014, shortages of affordable fuel to operate generators have severely disrupted critical hospital functions, such as emergency rooms, operating theatres, and neonatal care. All health facilities, including 30 hospitals and over 135 clinics, are affected (OCHA, 12/05/2014).
- The impact of the protracted crisis on the health of Palestinians has been both direct, such as with violence-related deaths, traumas and injuries, mental

health disorders; and indirect, linked to the different obstacles in access to essential health services, leading to an increased burden of care for the sick and injured, normally borne at the household level by women and girls (SRP OCHA 2014).

- **Education:** Following military operations in 2008-9 and 2012, 217 of the schools have been rebuilt but the education sector is still struggling to recover. Half of the population in Gaza are children under the age of 18, and the increasing number of school-age children is putting additional pressure on an already over stretched education system. Israel's closure policies since 2007 have prohibited the construction, rehabilitation and upgrade of nearly all educational infrastructure, causing an acute shortage of classrooms and schools resulting in 85% of schools running on double shifts (SRP OCHA 2014)

Other Vulnerability Factors

- The Palestinian territories are vulnerable to natural hazards such as droughts, a factor which could result in increased needs in several sectors (e.g. food security) and compound existing vulnerabilities amongst many communities (SRP OCHA, 2014). Since 2009, both the West Bank and Gaza have been facing drought conditions in July (HEWS 2014).
- 2013 was a year of relative calm, however, in 2014 the number of violent incidents in and around Gaza grew. In early February, Hamas reportedly deployed a 600-strong special security force tasked with preventing cross-border fire by Palestinian factions. An increase in Israeli raids, Palestinian rocket attacks, and border incidents built up tensions between Israel and Hamas, leading to a significant escalation of violent incidents in the Gaza Strip between 11 and 14 March (ACAPS 2014).
- Heavy Egyptian military deployment along the border, combined with severe access restrictions and destruction of tunnels, has reportedly resulted in a dramatic decline in the movement of people and the transfer of goods and fuel between Egypt and Gaza. (ACAPS 2014).

Response Capacity

Local, National and International Response Capacity

- An Emergency Operations Centre was set up by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) upon the start of the emergency. It is centralising information management and coordinating operational responses among HCT members and clusters, as well as with UNRWA, ICRC, and local emergency bodies (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- The 2014 Strategic Response Plan (SRP) received US\$ 166 million (42%) out of a total request of US\$390 million. Nearly 90% of 1.9 million vulnerable people in total in the oPt were targeted in the SRP area in Gaza. Gaza projects have received just over 30% of their requested funding (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- The HCT is currently identifying the most urgent SRP projects that, if funded, would help the response in Gaza (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

- WHO has called for urgent funds to prevent the collapse of health services in the Gaza Strip as the Palestinian Ministry of Health reported they are unable to maintain adequate medicine stocks due to chronic outstanding debts (WHO, 10/07/2014).
- The Protection Cluster initiated the broadcasting of radio spots alerting families to the dangers posed by Explosive Remnants of War and Unexploded Ordnances (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Immediate emergency funds to cover food assistance to displaced people are required. As funds will be advanced by core agencies, they need to be resourced subsequently (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

Population Coping Mechanisms

- Coping mechanisms and resilience of children, adolescents and their caregivers are impacted by the overall situation, leading to grievances as well as increased levels of violence among the community (SRP OCHA 2014).
- Coping mechanisms are exhausted since the current crisis exacerbates the high degree of pre-existing vulnerability in the Gaza Strip, with high unemployment and the lack of a viable economy as a result of strict movement and access restrictions, internal division and sporadic conflict (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

Information Gaps and Needs

- The inter-cluster coordination group (ICCG) is discussing priority needs based on preliminary information on the humanitarian impact of the Gaza emergency to inform the resource mobilisation strategy. The lack of access to priority areas and populations due to the security situation is preventing clusters and partners for now to verify information, particularly regarding casualties, as well as efforts to start a joint needs assessment (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Information in regard to the displaced families sheltered by relatives is needed in order to provide emergency food assistance (OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- There is no information available about the condition of 13 schools located in the Access Restricted Area (ARA) OCHA, 16/07/2014).

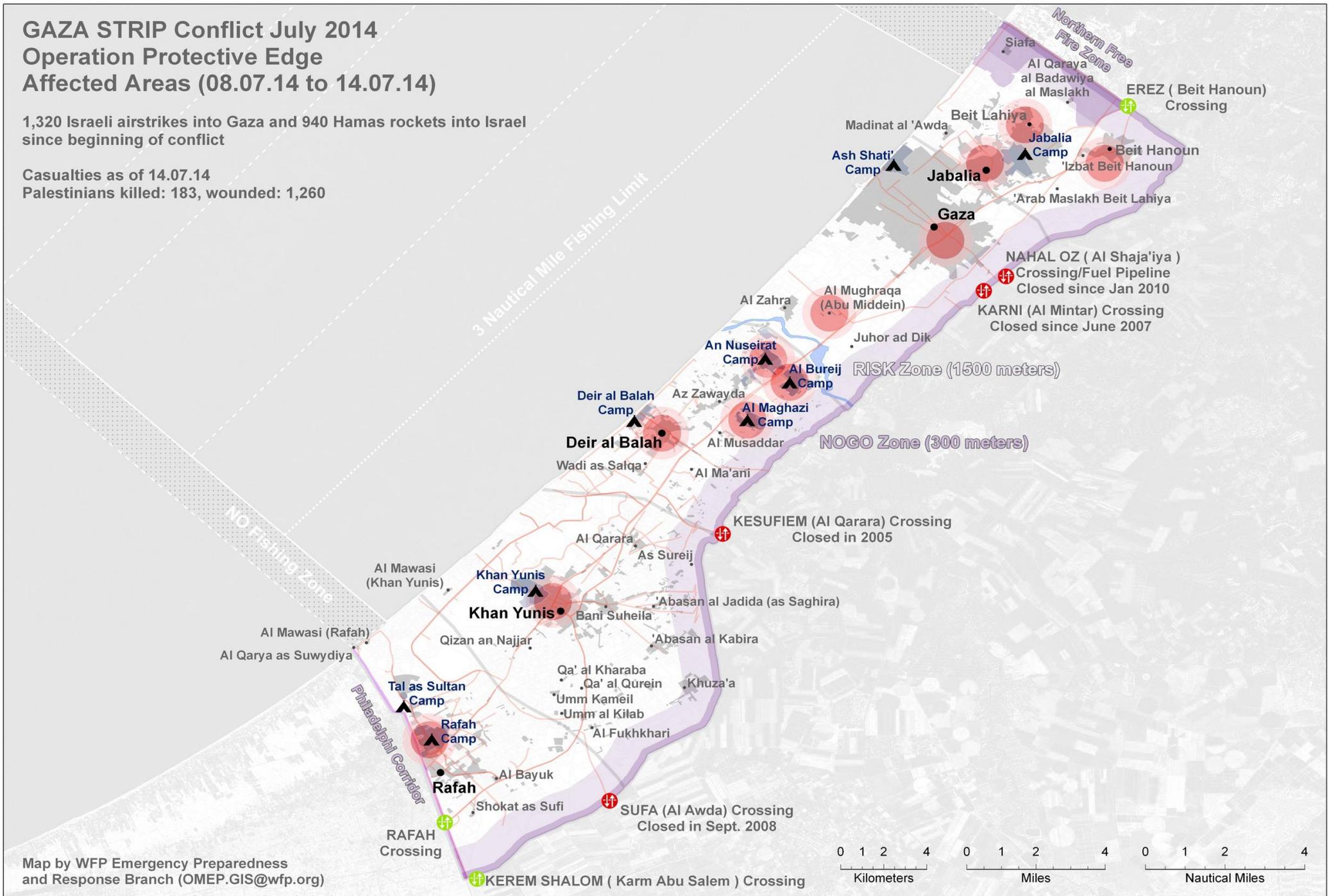
GAZA STRIP Conflict July 2014

Operation Protective Edge

Affected Areas (08.07.14 to 14.07.14)

1,320 Israeli airstrikes into Gaza and 940 Hamas rockets into Israel since beginning of conflict

Casualties as of 14.07.14
 Palestinians killed: 183, wounded: 1,260



Map by WFP Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch (OEMP.GIS@wfp.org)