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A PROTRACTED CRISIS OF HUMAN DIGNITY

OVERVIEW OF THE 2010 CONSOLIDATED APPEAL FOR THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY (oPt)

DECEMBER 2009

The 2010 Consolidated Appeal (CAP) in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) requests a total of USD664,473,688 for 236 humanitarian and early recovery projects: 147 to be implemented by United Nations agencies, and 89 by international and local NGO's. The residents of the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, including those living in areas near Israeli settlements and in Barrier-adjacent areas, have been identified as priority populations in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Programs regarding Cash Assistance/Cash for Work, and Food, Security and Nutrition comprise approximately two-thirds of this year's funding requirements.

Background to the Crisis

Palestinians living under Israeli occupation continue to face a human dignity crisis, characterized by the erosion of livelihoods, the continued denial of basic human rights and a forced dependency on international aid that affects all aspects of their daily life.

The Gaza Strip: Continued blockade, 1.4 million people "locked in"

The past year witnessed one of the most violent periods experienced by Palestinian civilians since the beginning of Israel's occupation in 1967. Between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, 1.4 million Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip endured intensive and continuous bombardment from land, sea and air in the course of Israel's "Cast Lead" military offensive, launched with the stated purpose of preventing indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza. With Gaza's borders effectively sealed, the population had no safe haven as even emergency shelters operated by the UN sustained direct damages. In Gaza, the conflict was marked by high Palestinian civilian casualties and widespread damage to Palestinian property and infrastructure.

The "Cast Lead" military operation significantly worsened conditions brought about as a result of the blockade imposed by Israel in June 2007, following the Hamas takeover. The blockade continues to date, placing heavy restrictions on imports, effectively banning all exports and denying most Gazans their right to exit the Gaza Strip. The economy continues to be weakened and the private sector has all but

collapsed. The blockade has prevented repairs and improvements to public infrastructure and utilities and has led to fuel and cash shortages. Living conditions continue to be degraded and public services and water and sanitation conditions are deteriorating.

Donor support, following the launch of the Gaza Flash Appeal in February 2009, provided vital support to meet some of the needs of the Gazan population. However, the blockade constitutes a major factor in preventing reconstruction and recovery efforts. With Israel's restrictions on the entry of construction materials and its failure to approve a UN proposal to resume needed construction projects, the level of need remains high, as does dependency on international aid. Added to this, are the problems emanating from the overall operational environment in Gaza which hampers the provision of principled and effective humanitarian aid.

The West Bank, including East Jerusalem: Improved movement but restricted access to land, resources and space

In the West Bank, there were significant improvements in Palestinian movement between major cities east of the Barrier, following the lifting of some obstacles and easings at some key checkpoints. In addition, the level of direct conflict casualties reduced considerably. However, Israel continued to deny Palestinian access to land and resources through a multi-layered system of restrictions,

which have been a prominent feature of Israel's occupation, including: movement obstacles, the expansion of settlements and settlement outposts, the construction of the Barrier, as well as the implementation of zoning and planning regulations that deny Palestinians the ability to expand and develop their communities. A study conducted by OCHA in 2009, on the Bethlehem governorate showed that only 13 percent of the territory was available for Palestinian development.

In addition, the situation in East Jerusalem continued to deteriorate: the majority of the Palestinian population of the oPt continues to be denied access to the city, while the city's Palestinian residents face poor living conditions due to the inequitable distribution of resources. Thousands are at-risk of displacement through either eviction or house demolition. An estimated 60,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites are at-risk of displacement, due to the possible demolition of their homes by the Israeli authorities for lack of building permit or by eviction as a result of Israeli settler activity.

Needs

While some progress on several macro-economic indicators and large financial contributions by the international community have been registered, the overall performance of the Palestinian economy remains poor, with persistently high unemployment and poverty rates, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

- Nearly 40 percent of the population remains food insecure.
- About 90 percent of water supplied to Gaza residents is unsafe for drinking according to WHO standards. In the West Bank, approximately 10 percent of the population resides in communities that have no water network, forcing already impoverished communities to pay for tankered water up to ten times the average cost of networked water.¹
- The blockade, internal Palestinian divisions and Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive have undermined the ability of the health system in Gaza to function properly, causing an

overall decline in the quality of health services provided to the population. In the West Bank, movement and access obstacles impede the access of patients and medical staff to health facilities, particularly to hospitals in East Jerusalem. There is a significant need for psycho-social support in the aftermath of "Cast Lead".

- Palestinian students face increasingly inadequate, overcrowded educational facilities and are performing poorer on standardized achievement tests.
- In the Gaza Strip, more than 20,000 people displaced during the "Cast Lead" offensive continue to reside in rented apartments, in the houses of relatives or in tents next to their damaged houses. In the West Bank, until the end of September 2009, OCHA field teams recorded the Israeli authorities' demolition of a total of 225 Palestinian-owned structures, displacing 515 Palestinians, over half of whom are children. Thousands of other Palestinians are at-risk of displacement.
- Israeli forces evicted 53 Palestinian refugees, including 20 children, in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem in 2009. OCHA estimates that a further 475 Palestinians are at risk of forced eviction, due to plans for settlement expansion in this area.

The current level of need for humanitarian aid in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the levels of food aid and cash assistance, is a result of continued Israeli-Palestinian and inter-Palestinian conflict and, in particular, due to Israeli policies implemented in the context of its continued occupation. Despite relatively high levels of education among the Palestinian population, a skilled labor force and great potential for economic growth, policies implemented by the Israeli government, particularly since September 2000, continue to deny Palestinians their ability to exercise their basic human rights, devastate the economy, reduce to a minimum job opportunities and erode other sources of livelihood, including agriculture, herding and fishing. Serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, by both Israeli and Palestinian parties, continue to take place in a climate of

impunity. These policies cause an increasing dependency on humanitarian aid and an increasing need for protection. Israel, as the occupying power, has the primary responsibility for providing for the basic humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population.

On the internal Palestinian level, national reconciliation talks have failed to resolve the

internal Palestinian political rift, resulting this year in occasional outbursts of violence, arrests of political opponents, and other efforts to exert control. In the absence of reconciliation, the rift is deepening, contributing to the difficult conditions facing Palestinian civilians.

Strategic Objectives for CAP 2010

1. Provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable, including refugees and the poorest families in the oPt, mainly those residing in Gaza, East Jerusalem and Area C, including areas near Israeli settlements and in Barrier-adjacent areas.
2. Strengthen the protective environment for civilians in the oPt through: increased advocacy for the respect of international humanitarian law and human rights law, especially focusing on freedom of movement and access; and by active protective programming.
3. Enhance the monitoring of, and reporting on the humanitarian situation by developing baseline indicators to measure the impact of the assistance provided and by emphasizing gaps and priorities.

Response

In addressing the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population, the 2010 Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) brings together many partners from UN agencies, the Palestinian Authority, and national and international NGOs to develop a focused humanitarian response. Through the CAP, humanitarian agencies will continue the important work of mitigating the worst impacts of the on-going crisis on the most vulnerable Palestinians and stemming further deterioration in living conditions, while strengthening the protective environment for civilians by advocating for the fundamental rights for Palestinians in accordance with agreed principles of international humanitarian and human rights law.

At the same time, the projects included in the CAP will support Palestinian self-reliance through early recovery interventions. The identification of current humanitarian needs and the coordination of this Appeal have been the first steps towards realizing these goals, but there remain formidable challenges.

The CAP steps in to fulfil the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population because Israel has not

done so. Given that the most-likely scenario of this Appeal envisions no significant improvement in the humanitarian situation of these vulnerable groups, the absence of sufficient funding for the activities included will likely result in a further weakening of the protective environment and an additional deterioration in livelihoods, with concurrent rises in poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity levels for the vulnerable populations identified in this CAP. In particular, support for early recovery interventions, through this Appeal as well as through other frameworks such as the Mid-Term Response Plan, is necessary to ensure that the response not only mitigates the effects of the protracted crisis, but that it also supports recovery, strengthens communities' resilience and reduces the need for aid.

Way Forward

Only through a political solution can the ground be laid for future peace, stability and prosperity. In the meantime, in order to improve the humanitarian situation, alleviate some of the worst aspects of the human dignity crisis and reduce Palestinian need

for aid, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), under the Humanitarian Coordinator's leadership, has called for a number of measures to be taken:

1. Substantial improvements in Palestinian access and freedom of movement are needed to generate significant economic progress; without this, the oPt will continue to be largely dependent on donor support. In this vein, the HCT has repeatedly called on Israel to lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and remove internal movement obstacles and access restrictions in the West Bank. Opening up areas in the Gaza Strip, including the so-called Buffer Zone and fishing areas, and in Area C of the West Bank, including closed military areas and nature reserves, to Palestinian development as well as lifting access restrictions to Palestinian grazing areas, agricultural land and water resources, would constitute important steps towards improving Palestinian livelihoods.
2. Israel should freeze all demolition and eviction orders and ensure that planning and zoning regimes meet Palestinian needs.
3. In line with the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the

International Court of Justice, Israel should stop construction of the Barrier inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and dismantle or re-route to the Green Line those sections already constructed.

4. In light of the illegality of settlements under international humanitarian law, Israel should cease transferring its civilian population into settlements in the oPt, freeze all settlement activity and dismantle settlement outposts.
5. Israel should bring about an end to impunity for Israeli settlers' attacks on Palestinians and their property through enforcement of the rule of law on Israelis residing in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
6. Finally, all relevant authorities should implement appropriate mechanisms of accountability in order to ensure respect for international human rights (IHR) and humanitarian law (IHL) and end the climate of impunity for rights abuses that prevails in the oPt. This includes undertaking credible, independent investigations into allegations of serious violations of IHR and IHL.

For further information and sources, please refer to the CAP 2010 general document.
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