



Gaza Report July 2006

General News

Introduction:

The situation in Gaza is heartbreaking and distressing and clearly has become worse since our last visit six months ago. Three weeks ago, Israeli troops re-entered Gaza and since then Gaza has been under siege, leaving its people with regular military attacks, lack of freedom of movement, lack of water and food, lack of electricity and fuel, unemployment and poverty. According to the people, the day of our visit was a quiet day in the part of Gaza City where we moved. Life seemed almost normal. No sound bombs, no aerial attacks that day, "only" the sound of tank bombs in the background. Yet, when we arrived back in Jerusalem that evening, we saw in the media, that even on that "quiet" day 9 people, among them 7 civilians, had been killed during the attacks.

Israel has killed around 121 Palestinians in a nearly month-long offensive in Gaza.

The new Israeli policy has been to send out leaflets demanding people in Gaza to leave their homes, warning them that such homes would be bombed. Many homes of civilians have been destroyed and Suhaila Tarazi, the director of Al Ahli Hospital, confirmed that in many cases people have only been given half an hour to leave their home before it was targeted.

Ismail Abu Shammala, the governor of the northern Gaza Strip said some residents had also received phone calls from the Israeli army telling them to flee because their houses would be targeted. An Israeli military source confirmed the calls.

Abu Shammala appealed for help: "The international community should protect civilians in times of war."

People have so many stories to tell. You ask them one question and it just flows out of them for hours without end, as if they want to relieve themselves from the burden of the daily humiliation, fear and hopelessness. They talk themselves into exhaustion and then begin to cry. We have seen so many people cry these days. The tears speak of the unbearable pain that is within them. And we cannot but feel that these are broken people with no hope left. Israel's government has succeeded to kill the last glimpse of hope and life within them, yet without shame or hesitation it continues to spread salt into the wounds.

Gaza Hospitals

*The **situation of the hospitals in the Gaza Strip is a grave danger.** The operating rooms in the hospitals are full, and they need more rooms. Many **operating theatres will stop functioning, if***

necessary supplies do not reach the hospitals within the next week. If the **Israeli "Summer Rain" military operation** continues, Gaza will run out of medical supplies soon. The hospitals depend on medical supplies coming from outside, through the terminals surrounding Gaza. Since the military offensive started, those **crossings are closed, so the stock of medical supplies cannot reach Gaza.** The continued army attacks on the towns and cities of the Gaza Strip have raised fears among doctors that there will soon be no medical supplies left in the Gaza hospitals, and that soon they will be unable to send ambulances to get patients.

A human rights centre in Gaza said that 26 people had been killed, and more than 200 injured during this (July 16 – 22) week alone. **Most of the casualties, women and children.** The General Manager of Ambulances and Emergencies for the Ministry of Health, Dr. Muawiya Hassanein, said in a report published by Ma'an news agency (<http://www.maannews.net/en/index.php>) on Thursday, July 20, that "Ten Palestinians were killed and more than 108 injured, 14 of them seriously, during the last two days in which the Israeli forces penetrated Al Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.

Use of non-conventional weapons

Of growing concern to the hospitals is also **Israel's use of non-conventional weapons in Gaza.** Hassanain, General Manager of Ambulances and Emergencies for the Ministry of Health, said that **"The Israeli forces are using internationally prohibited missiles that contain chemical materials and burning metals and in addition, have shrapnel in the shape of nails"**. He pointed out that the **injuries** received in the hospitals as a result of these missiles are **very dangerous because the human tissues and muscles are torn and in addition, the injured suffer from severe bleeding, loss of limbs and broken bones.**

The International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC) gained **interviews with several doctors** working in different hospitals in the Gaza strip, and **all confirmed the use of non-conventional weapons.** One of the doctors, Dr. Saeed Jodah, said, "When the Shrapnel hits the body, it causes very strong burns that destroy the tissues around the bones. When this shrapnel enters the body, it burns and destroys internal organs, like the liver, kidneys, the spleen and other organs, and makes saving the wounded almost impossible. As a surgeon, I have seen thousands of wounds during the Intifada, but nothing was like this weapon."

The latest case that matched these symptoms was Muhammad Muhra, 17, from Al Bureij refugee camp. He was killed on Thursday. His body arrived at the hospital in an almost unrecognizable condition.

IOF killed 39 paramedics during invasion

The Ministry of Health has confirmed that Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) **killed 39 first aid workers, doctors, ambulance drivers and nurses** since its military operation "Summer Rains" on June 28, 2006.

In a statement the Ministry of Health of Palestine revealed that the IOF **denied access to 23 ambulances** belonging to the Ministry of Health and the Palestine Red Crescent Society as well as **kidnapping bodies of victims from the ambulances** in different Governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Food, Water, Electricity, Fuel Supplies

The **Israeli army have closed all border crossings**, both foot-passenger and commercial, and **stopped food, fuel and medical supplies from coming into Gaza** since the start of the army offensive over three weeks ago.

Al Ahli Arab Hospital – Emergency Situation

**“Death would be more merciful!” –
Suhaila Tarazi, director, about the situation at the hospital**



“This is the worst situation we ever had here in Gaza: politically, socially, and economically. Everything is in deterioration. And what is even worse is that we cannot see any hope.”

Lack of medicine, electricity, water

“Gaza is under a complete siege. We are running out of medicine. I am really afraid that if we do not get what we urgently need at the hospital for our medical stocks and our operating theatre we will stop operating. The severe shortage of medicine and infusion is our greatest problem.”

“We are suffering from the **bombardment of the main power station** in Gaza. It has its effect on people and on our hospitals. We have electricity from five to eight hours maximum a day, which means a **shortage of electricity of between 16 to 19 hours a day**. Now imagine any hospital in the world without electricity. And even through the times we have electricity, it never comes in one go, but comes and goes unpredictably.”

“Yesterday, I had **300 children underweight**, because their parents had heard that we offer food supplies. We had to tell them: “Sorry, we have no milk. There is **no dry milk in the market**.” There is a **big problem with water**. Many children are suffering from diarrhea. There is a real **danger of contaminated water**, because the sewage goes directly into the water, if there is no electricity to clean the water. Last week I had no water at my home, like so many others. And even if there is water, how am I going to pump it to the first floor without electricity? We are really **afraid of cholera to start, especially in areas of high population with no water**.”

Severe financial crisis at the hospital

“Even those who used to be able to pay their fees for hospital treatment are now unable to do so. As a result we have a **dramatic shortage of income from patients** in the out patient department. The out patients used to be a source of income for the hospital. Usually, fees are subsidized directly by the hospital. Before, we used to receive one quarter from the patient. Now even this one quarter becomes impossible for them.”

“The actual cost of a bed at the hospital is US\$ 77.-: US\$ 9.- for the patient and US\$ 68.- for UNRWA. Now these US\$ 9.- have become a burden for the patient and he cannot pay. As a result we have a severe shortage of the cash revenues from our patients.”

“This becomes even more of a problem, because we have to increase the number of staff for emergencies to be ready for any mass casualties. This is an additional financial burden to the hospital.”

Mobile Clinics

“The **Mobile Clinics had to be cancelled for three weeks** because of the current crisis, but the hospital hopes to start them



again next week, if the situation gets better. Two of the areas our Mobile Clinics serve, Beit Hanoun and the Middle Camps, were invaded seriously so many times during the last two weeks that it was impossible to get there. The Mobile Clinics need a lot of preparation, and if the area we are planning to serve is suddenly targeted, it is impossible to go to another area, for each area has its special needs and needs extra preparation.”

Non-conventional weapons

“Shrapnel exploding nearby are causing **severe burns and injuries** and we do not even know what type of weapon they are using. **Many people, amongst them many children, lost hands and limbs, and have severe burns** not only to the flesh but also to the muscles and bones.”

Damage to the hospital

“The **hospital** has repeatedly suffered from **damage caused by sonic bombs**, such as broken windows and ceilings.”

Collective Punishment

“Since the election of Hamas, **all people have to pay the price**. It is collective punishment. **Each night** there are **bombings**. Yesterday, they hit central Gaza City. Two days ago they were in Beit Hanoun. Some of the Israeli troops used several homes, **captured the families** and put them for **three days into one room without water and food**. We could hear the screams of the children, yet were unable to even give them water. Those who refused to open their homes to the soldiers would face the complete destruction of them.”

Infrastructure

“There is **no single item of our infra-structure left without any damage**. We will need a billion dollars and many years to rebuild the infra-structure. It is a real catastrophe here.”

Restriction of movement & civilian targets

“People are unable to move out of the area they are in. Even I only move between my house and my office. If I need to buy any thing, I quickly go to the shop and then immediately return home. Because the bombing can start any second. We never know what will happen next, so we limit our movement.”



Ministry of Planning before destruction

& after its destruction

“**Everyone who moves is a subject for the Israeli soldiers to be killed**. There are hardly any cars in the streets, because cars are subject to targeting and shooting. Most of the government offices are targets for F-16 bombings. They do not pay attention whether these buildings are adjacent to any civilian buildings. In fact, they do not care about the civilians. 90% of the victims of the recent Israeli attacks have been civilians.”

“These days, with the new technology, any place becomes a target and within a second can be turned into a rubble.”

“Recently, eight people died of sickness while Israel denied them entry into Gaza for 20 days at Rafah. They were stuck between Egypt and Gaza.”



Poverty

“Before, the poverty rate was 43%. Now it is more than 70%. 156 000 government employees in Gaza and the West Bank – 80 000 in Gaza alone – have been left without salaries for more than four months, because international aid was frozen.”

“We are crucified every day!”

“We are wondering: Do they really want peace? Peace can never be achieved by force. On the contrary, this oppression creates more hatred. Even a child can now distinguish between an apache and a F-16 or any other jet. If a child begins his life in violence, it will continue it in violence.”

“Why do people become so violent? Because we have nothing. No money. No food. No water. No schools. No land. We are not recognized as human beings.”

“We will continue to love our enemy, even if they continue to hate us, and we pray for forgiveness. I always put myself into the shoe of the victim. I cannot see blood, even as director of a hospital. Yet, the blood of our people is shed every single day. We are crucified

every day.”

Hopelessness

“There is no hope. Life and death have become equal. Death would even be more merciful. What is hurting most is that the international family is closing its eyes to what is going on here.”

Plea to the international community

“We strongly plea the international community to put pressure on their governments and on Israel to stop this collective punishment. We are all against violence. Might and violence will never solve problems. There need to be negotiations and we will find solutions!” (July 19, 2006)

“We are passing through a real catastrophe!” – Mohammad Ali Hassan about the Social Unit Department



Mohammad Ali Hassan is the **social worker** of Al Ahli Hospital. Among other things he arranges the free medical missions for the hospital, organizes meetings with leaders, doctors and staff, addresses the needs of the people and arranges for their doctors, treatment and medicine. He is also responsible for accounting, sitting with families, and going into communities to make studies about their needs.

“We are passing through a real catastrophe. The old catastrophe can be summarized by our people being expelled from their land. Today we have another catastrophe: People are dying at their homes as a

result of daily bombardment, lack of food, water and medicine. They are unable to move on their own land.”

*"We are in a **real humanitarian crisis**. Even humanitarian agencies are unable to offer services. After the disengagement we hoped that Gaza would begin to develop, but instead things have gone from bad to worse. They left Gaza without building an economy and with no security for the people."*

*"**People have not received their salaries since February**. Instead of helping the people to help themselves, **65% to 70% are left without work**. They used to live on **US\$ 2 per day**. Today they do not even have these **US\$ 2**."*

*"Of course, this has an **impact on our work in the Social Unit Department**, because you cannot disconnect social issues from the political situation."*

*" **Hamas was willing to change its political program. It agreed to negotiate, to start to talk, and to recognize Israel, if it withdrew to the 1967 borders, but then Israel began its invasion of Lebanon.**"*

*"Now **everything is deteriorating**. Our children are on their summer vacations now. But Israel killed even our summer time. We do not go to the beach, because of what happened to that family. We do not watch TV, because there is no electricity. We do not move outside. We cannot do anything. The children are frightened from the F-16 and other jets. Sometimes we start singing to cover the noise, or we begin to pray..."*

"The movement now is even more difficult than before the settlers left. At least we knew where not to move, seeing the soldiers. Now we could become a target at any time and any place, at the beach, in the streets, at home..."

Needs

"Our greatest needs are food baskets (milk, sugar, etc.) and commodities. And in two months time the new school year will start, so we urgently need school bags, school uniforms. The families cannot afford to buy these things." (July 19, 2006)

"Where are our human rights?" – Imm Alla', patient at Al Ahli Hospital



*"I want to understand one thing: **Are human beings divided into classes? Are not all people human beings?** Are Moslems, Christians and Jews different from each other? Are we as Moslems second class human beings? Why should my mother have to grieve and cry?"*

"The whole world is silent when the catastrophe is with us, yet when one Israeli soldier is kidnapped, it meets within two hours."

*"**Would you agree if someone was to take you out of your house? Kill your son? Take your water? Bulldoze your trees, your land, your house? Where are our human rights??**"*

(July 19, 2006)

***“We are the living dead!” –
Imm Ahmed, patient at Al Ahli Hospital***



“We cannot continue to live in fear our whole life. **Fear has become a common feeling.** When the airplanes are bombing we prepare ourselves for death.”

“**We are the living dead!** Better to die than to live like this. Enough! They have taken the land and we are left and forgotten in Gaza. There is no hope! **We only want to live in peace!**”

“The economic situation is dreadful. People have **no wheat, no water, no gas, no electricity.** We returned to the old testament: Eva cooking on wood. And the little food that is available on the market gets more and more expensive. And it gets spoiled easily because there is no electricity for the fridge.”

“The **psychological pressure** causes headaches and affects our eyes. We are all psychologically ill. I am here in the hospital because of the situation. I believe my illness is a direct result of the psychological impact of the shelling and bombings. We cannot take it any more. Life is so unstable.”

(July 19, 2006)

Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal - International Appeal: NOW!!!

Need I say your support in prayer and otherwise are greatly desired! But most important **NOW** is to stop the fighting and to stop the killing. Therefore, we expect you to appeal to your government to pressure both parties to stop this military action and to pave the way for a settlement of all relating matters.

We continue to thank you for your prayers, care and support!

Know that this comes with my prayers and best wishes,

***+ The Rt. Rev. Riah Abu El-Assal
Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem***