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January Overview

The scope of civilian suffering during the Israeli military operation in Gaza (27 December-18 January) was immeasurable. Upon his return from a visit into Gaza the UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, stated: "The destruction I saw was devastating – both in human and material terms. The magnitude of loss of life and injury to the civilian population is bound to have a lasting impact on the mental and physical wellbeing of the Palestinians in Gaza. All aspects of life and livelihood have been affected."

The three weeks of almost uninterrupted Israeli aerial bombardments, artillery shelling and ground operations resulted in the killing of 1,440 people and the injury of another 5,380, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza. While the exact number of civilians among the dead and injured remains unknown, nearly half of the casualties were women and children. With Gaza's borders effectively sealed and no proper shelters or warning system within the Gaza Strip, the civilian population had no safe haven during the operation. Military operations also seriously impeded the ability of rescue teams to evacuate the wounded.

The humanitarian situation deteriorated rapidly from the onset of the hostilities: hundreds of thousands people in Gaza were displaced at some point during the conflict, due to damage or destruction of their homes or out of fear; no one in Gaza had daily running water during the three weeks of the operation; at the height of the fighting, most Gazans were without electricity due to damage to the network and lack of fuel to operate Gaza's power plant; despite the large influx of medical supplies into Gaza, the health system struggled to cope with the massive number of severe and complex injuries; livelihoods, already devastated by 18 months of blockade, were further eroded by the deaths and injury of breadwinners, the destruction of homes and workplaces and damage to the agriculture and fishing industries.

The lives of approximately one million Israelis living within a range of 40 km from the border of Gaza were disrupted and put under threat as a result of the continuous firing of rockets and mortars by Palestinian armed groups. As a result, three Israeli civilians were killed and 182 were injured, according to the Israeli Magen David Adom.

The rapid needs assessments conducted by humanitarian agencies upon the end of hostilities formed the basis of the Gaza Flash Appeal, launched on 2 February and totaling some US\$613 million. The appeal, which is a strategic plan incorporating over 100 NGO and 80 UN projects is designed to respond to the emergency humanitarian and



UNRWA Beach Camp Distribution Center. 16 January 2009

urgent early recovery needs of the Gaza population.

The continuing restrictions on the access of goods and personnel to the Gaza Strip, however, pose a major constraint to the implementation of the response plan. While the number of truckloads allowed into Gaza during January exceeded the number of the two preceding months, they remained far below needs. An expansion in the type and quantity of goods allowed entry, alongside the opening of all crossings into Gaza, the Karni crossing in particular is essential for any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation to occur. Spare parts, fuel, cement and other construction materials are particularly needed. In addition, it is critical that full and unhindered access of humanitarian staff to Gaza, including NGO staff, be granted.

Also of importance is that allegations of the violation of international humanitarian law affecting the protection of civilians during the course of the fighting be properly addressed. Following his visit to Gaza the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon emphasized that: "We need to restore a basic respect for civilians. Where civilians have been killed, there has to be a thorough investigation, full explanations and, where it is required, accountability." ¹

In the West Bank, multiple demonstrations were carried out against Israel's military operation, resulting in the killing of three Palestinians and the injury of another 130. Also, for the first time since October 2003, the Israeli authorities declared additional areas located between the Barrier and the Green Line in Hebron and parts of the Salfit, Ramallah, Jerusalem and northern Bethlehem governorates a closed military area ('seam zone'), giving rise to serious concerns for the affected population. Of concern also is the likelihood that 2009 will become the second consecutive year of serious drought in the region, with severe humanitarian impact on some vulnerable populations.



Gaza Strip

“Cast Lead” operation: civilians bear the brunt of hostilities

Palestinian casualties (direct conflict)

The situation of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip during Israel’s “Cast Lead” military operation made clear the extreme vulnerability of civilians in times of war. The operation, which was launched by the Israeli military on 27 December, lasted until 18 January 2009, when both Israel and the Palestinian armed groups unilaterally declared separate ceasefires.

Three key factors contributed to that vulnerability: first, the Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated areas in the world (3,881 people per square kilometer), a fact that increases the risk that any attack will cause civilian deaths and injuries and damage to civilian property. Second, there are no alarm warning systems or proper bomb shelters in Gaza to warn and protect the civilian population. Third, Gaza’s borders were effectively sealed during the hostilities, denying civilians the possibility of fleeing to a safer haven.²

In the course of the 22 days of the operation, the population of Gaza endured intensive and almost uninterrupted aerial bombardments, artillery shelling and ground operations resulting in the killing of 1,440 people and the injury of another 5,380, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza.³ The number of civilians not involved in fighting among these casualties seems to be overwhelming. While the number of civilian males killed and injured is yet unknown, MoH data indicates that almost half of all casualties (47%) are made up of children (431 dead and 1,872 injured) and women (114 killed and 800 injured).

More Palestinians were killed in Gaza during the three weeks of Israel’s military operation than during the entire first Intifada (December 1987 - September 1993).⁴ The first 24 hours of the operation resulted in one of the highest (if not the highest) casualty toll in one day in the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967, with 230 fatalities and 520 injuries; 207 of that day’s deaths and injuries were children and women, according to the MoH. The launching of the first wave of air strikes at 11:30 am - a time when the streets are usually crowded and when children are changing shifts at school - is a key reason behind the large number of casualties. In a statement issued on 28 December, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, condemned what he qualified as an “excessive use of force” by Israel.⁵

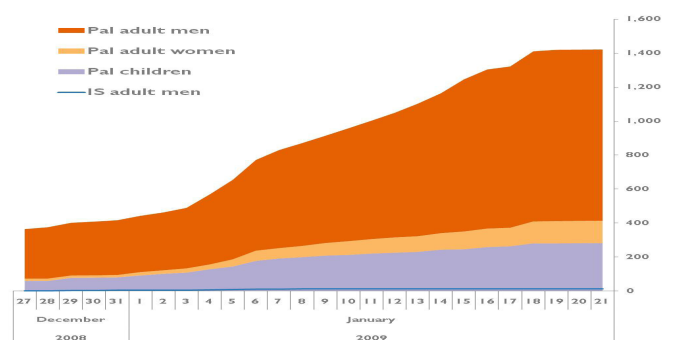
In his briefing to the Security Council upon his return from a trip into Gaza, the UN Under-Secretary General

for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, said that “given the scale and nature of the damage and loss of life, there are also obvious concerns about a lack of wider respect for international humanitarian law, particularly the principles of distinction and proportionality”.⁶ Numerous cases reported by OCHA in its daily and weekly reports reflect these concerns, including the following:

- On 3 January, an IAF aircraft fired a rocket targeting Al Maqadmah mosque east of Beit Lahiya project while many people were praying, resulting in 15 fatalities and 30 injuries. No warning was delivered prior to the attack and the IDF did not provide any reason for it.
- On 5 January, Israeli shells hit a building in the Zeitoun area in Gaza City killing 22 Palestinians, including nine children. According to various testimonies gathered by OCHA, over 100 Palestinian civilians had been evacuated to the house the day before by Israeli soldiers and told not to leave. At the time of the incident, the IDF spokesperson claimed that he was not aware of this incident.
- On 6 January, an IDF force fired several mortar shells that landed outside an UNRWA school in Jabalia RC, which served as an emergency shelter for over 1,300 civilians. According to UNRWA, over 40 people, including some of those who took refuge at the shelter, were killed while staying just outside the school yard. According to a report in the Israeli media, an internal investigation carried out by the Israeli military indicates that the mortar fire targeted an adjacent site, where Palestinian militants were allegedly firing rockets, and one of the mortars missed the intended target.⁷

As of the end of January, the ceasefire unilaterally declared by Israel and the Palestinian armed groups was only partially holding. Incidents of rocket firing towards Israel by Palestinian militants, as well as airstrikes and land incursions by the Israeli army occurred on an almost daily basis, resulting in a number of Palestinians deaths and injuries.

Chart I: Evolution of fatalities during the conflict





Israeli casualties

During the 22 days of hostilities, the lives of approximately one million Israelis living within a range of 40 km from the border of Gaza were disrupted and put under threat as a result of the continuous firing of rockets and mortars by Palestinian armed groups. According to Magen David Adom (the national society of the International Red Cross Movement in Israel), 1,180 sites in southern Israel were hit by rocket and mortar fire. Many of these sites are located within built-up areas, including cities like Beersheva, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Sderot, and Kiriyat Gat. As a result, three Israeli civilians were killed and 182 were injured, according to Magen David Adom. The UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, qualified these attacks as “indiscriminate fire” and a “clear violation of international humanitarian law”.⁸

In addition to the civilian casualties, according to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ten Israeli soldiers were killed in the course of the military operation, four of them in a ‘friendly fire’ incident, and 336 were wounded.

Tens of thousands internally displaced

In the course of the conflict, tens of thousands of Palestinians were internally displaced. Human rights NGO, Al Mezan, estimates as of 15 January, at least 200,000 people were displaced. Surveys conducted immediately after the ceasefire indicate that between 37% and 38% of Gazans, i.e. over half million people, had fled their homes at some point during the conflict for at least a short period of time.⁹ The surveys also found that all of those displaced fled their homes to find safer areas out of fear of bombardment, following warnings delivered by Israeli military through leaflets dropped from the air or through individual phone calls, or due to damage or destruction of their homes.

While the vast majority of the displaced stayed with relatives or friends, those unable to find host family accommodation were housed in UNRWA schools and facilities, which were turned into emergency shelters. The influx of displaced people into these shelters rose dramatically following the Israeli ground operation on 3 January. Between 3 and 5 January, the number of displaced in UNRWA shelters rose from 1,200 to more than 14,000, and continued to rise over the remaining two weeks of the conflict. By 17 January, just prior to the commencement of the ceasefire, UNRWA was hosting close to 51,000 displaced people in 50 emergency shelters. These shelters were barely equipped to accommodate such number of people. Most of them quickly emptied in the following days as families returned to their homes or to stay with host families. By the end of the month, only about 500 people remained in three shelters.

UNRWA communicated the exact coordinates of each of these shelters to the Israeli military and adopted strict measures that prevented the infiltration of Palestinian militants or weapons into them. However, despite these procedures and measures, on three separate occasions during the conflict, Israeli shells directly hit three of these shelters resulting in the killing of five people, including two children. On another occasion, several shells hit outside the shelter killing over 40 (see above Jabaliya incident of 6 January).

[For further information on the scope of damage to households and response by the humanitarian community see Shelter Section below]



UNRWA's Emergency Shelter in the Jabaliya Elementary Boys' School.

Evacuation of the wounded seriously impeded

The devastating effects of bombardments and military operations on the civilian population of Gaza were compounded by the difficulties that medical and rescue teams faced while trying to reach and evacuate the wounded. While this problem was apparent from the very beginning of hostilities, it was significantly exacerbated during the first four days following the launching of the ground operation (3-7 January). During that time, most attempts by the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and PRCS (Palestine Red Crescent Society) to coordinate with the Israeli military access to areas around Gaza City and in the northern parts of the Gaza Strip were unsuccessful.

As a result, dozens of wounded civilians had to wait several days until they could be evacuated, in some cases, in the streets or under the rubble of their houses. According to PRCS, some of the wounded may have died while waiting for medical treatment.¹⁰ The severity of the impediments to the evacuation of the wounded became evident in the two days following the ceasefire, during which the ICRC/PRCS teams retrieved about 120 bodies, some of them in a state of advanced decay.¹¹



One of the most well documented incidents was the denial of access to a number of wounded people in the Zeitoun area of Gaza City for four days. Once access was granted, ICRC/PRCS rescue team evacuated 18 wounded and 12 others who were extremely exhausted. Due to the large earth walls erected by the Israeli army around the area, the wounded had to be taken to the ambulances on a donkey cart. The ICRC stated that “in this instance the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded”.¹²

[For information on medical staff and facilities hit during the conflict see Health Section below]

Humanitarian personnel and facilities denied adequate protection

UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs continued to carry out operations despite extreme insecurity. In the course of the three weeks of hostilities, five UNRWA staff and three of its contractors were killed while on duty, and another 11 staff and four contractors were injured; four incidents of aid convoys being shot at have been reported; at least 53 UN buildings sustained damage, 28 of them during the first three days of the military operation.

In one of the gravest incidents, which occurred on the morning of 15 January, the main UNRWA compound in Gaza City was directly hit several times by Israeli shells. As a result, the warehouse of the building was set ablaze destroying hundreds of tonnes of food and medicine, some of which was scheduled for distribution that day. Moreover, had UNRWA fuel trucks parked in the area been hit, the conflagration would have been worse. Approximately 700 Palestinians taking refuge in the building had to be evacuated. According to UNRWA’s Director of Operations, John Ging, the shells hitting the building contained white phosphorus.¹³ This incident occurred despite explicit assurances given by the IDF to UNRWA prior to the attack, according to which the building would not be hit. Following a visit to the building, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, said: “I am just appalled... it is an outrageous and totally unacceptable attack against the United Nations”.¹⁴

Civilians endangered by the use of certain types of weapons

The reported use by the Israeli military of white phosphorus (WP) munitions, heavy artillery and flechette shells in attacks carried out on built up areas, significantly enhanced the level of risk faced by the civilian population. Common to the three types of weapon is the fact that, once they explode, they affect a wide area, rather than a specific point, and have devastating health effects. While

none of these is explicitly banned by IHL, their use is subject to the general rules in IHL governing the conduct of hostilities, including the prohibition on indiscriminate attacks.¹⁵

According to the Israeli media, the IDF acknowledged that during the military operation it had used two types of ammunition containing white phosphorus and began to investigate the possible misuse of one of them in the area of Beit Lahiya.¹⁶ Human rights groups have claimed that Israeli forces used WP in other built up areas of the Gaza Strip as well.¹⁷ According to the head of the ICRC arms unit, WP “has a potential to cause particularly horrific and painful injuries or slow painful death”.¹⁸ Several hospitals and clinics in Gaza reported the treatment of patients with severe flesh burning, breathing difficulties and throat spasms.

Also of concern are reports regarding the use of 155mm artillery shells and 122mm flechette shells. The former inflicts blast and fragmentation damage on large areas, up to 300 meters away. According to Human Rights Watch, this type of heavy artillery shell was used against targets in Gaza City.¹⁹ The flechette shell is a type of anti-personnel ammunition, which is usually fired from a tank and explodes in the air, scattering 5,000-8,000 tiny darts in a conical pattern over an area around 300 metres wide and 100 metres long. Amnesty International found evidence indicating the use of this type of shell in towns and rural areas in the northern part of the Gaza Strip.²⁰

Locating military objectives within civilian areas

The vulnerability of the civilian population was exacerbated during the conflict as a result of the practice by Palestinian armed groups to fire rockets towards Israel from sites located within densely populated areas. This practice has exposed the civilian population living nearby locations used for the launching of rockets or for the storage of weapons to the risk of attacks by the Israeli military.

Alleged “collaborators” executed or abused by Palestinian armed groups

Various sources have reported that dozens of Palestinians accused of “collaborating” with Israel were summarily executed or injured by Hamas security forces and unidentified gunmen, during the three weeks of the conflict. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) in Gaza reported that it has documented the execution in these circumstances of 32 Palestinians, 17 of whom were prisoners and detainees who fled the Gaza Central Prison after it was bombarded by the Israeli Air Force on 28 December 2008.²¹ According to the organization, the spokesman of the Ministry of the Interior in Gaza



admitted the execution of “some collaborators with the [Israeli] occupation”. In addition, PCHR documented dozens of other cases where suspected collaborators were arbitrarily detained and then severely beaten and tortured.²²

The blockade on the Gaza Strip continues

Despite slight increase imports remain far below needs

Despite the hostilities taking place during the first 18 days of January, there was a significant increase in the number of truckloads allowed entry into Gaza, compared to the previous two months: a total of 3,053 truckloads entered Gaza, constituting a daily average of 122 truckloads. This represents a three and five fold increase respectively, compared to the parallel figures for December (35 truckloads) and November 2008 (23 truckloads). January imports included 273 truckloads, which entered Gaza from Egypt through the Rafah crossing, most carrying medical supplies. This is the first time since September 2005 that goods entered Gaza through Rafah crossing. Exports continue to be prohibited.

However, the overall level of imports remains well below parallel figures before the blockade in June 2007, with a daily average of 475 truckloads in May 2007, and insufficient compared to market needs. The Palestine Trade Center (Paltrade) estimated that in order for any sort of economical revival to begin, exports should resume immediately and a minimum of 850 truckloads of market-triggered imports per day should be allowed entry.

Of total imports in January, 79% were made up of foodstuff and 12% of medical supplies, while construction materials, spare parts for water and wastewater infrastructures and industrial inputs continued to be almost totally banned. Almost half of all truckloads (47%) were imported by humanitarian agencies.

The conveyer belt at Karni crossing, used for the import

of grains, opened on only ten days during January, most of them after the 18 January ceasefire. The closure of this facility during most of the conflict created a severe shortage of wheat grain forcing all mills in Gaza to shut down. The reopening of the conveyer belt allowed for the entry of about 12,000 tonnes of wheat grain, compared to 5,000 tonnes in December 2008. The increase enabled five of the six mills in Gaza, which had been closed most of time during the military operation due to lack of wheat grain, to reopen. One mill in North Gaza, which sustained damages during the bombardment, has remained non operational.

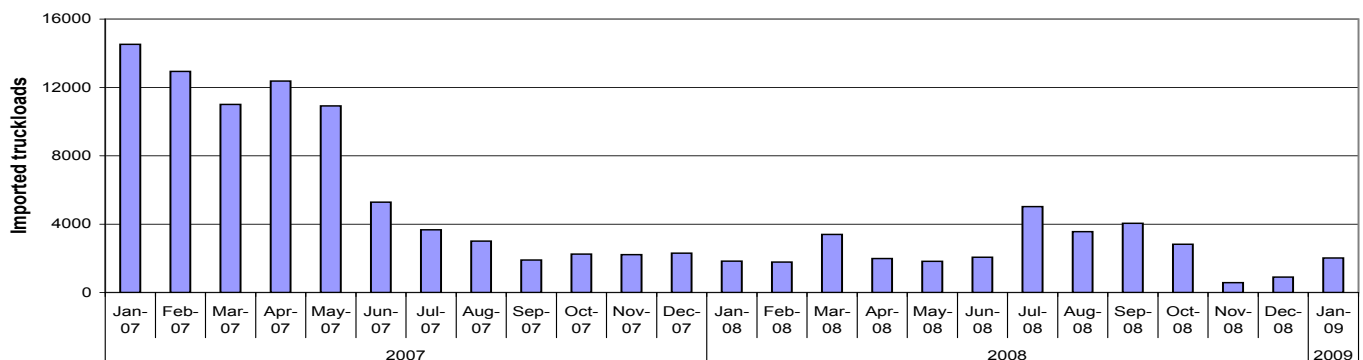
Nahal Oz crossing was opened on 11 days in January, also mostly after the ceasefire. Import of cooking gas, which was almost totally suspended in December 2008, resumed with a total of about 915 tonnes allowed entry. This, however, is a small fraction of the monthly needs, estimated at 7,500 tonnes. The limited availability of cooking gas, coupled with the improvement in electricity supply (see below), allowed almost all bread bakeries throughout Gaza to reopen during the last third of January. In contrast to cooking gas, commercial diesel and benzene continued to be denied entry through January, with the exception of 92,000 litres of diesel for UNRWA operations.

Tunnels under the Rafah-Egypt border were targeted and bombed by Israeli airstrikes over the course of the three-week military operation. As a result, they were reportedly rendered non-operational, either due to their destruction or to the risk entailed in using them. Following the ceasefire, some of these tunnels have reportedly resumed operations under precarious conditions, supplying the market with otherwise unavailable goods, including fuel. Tunnels have remained an important economic lifeline for Gaza’s population, providing goods not allowed through Gaza crossings.

Access of international NGOs to Gaza severely restricted

Since the cessation of hostilities the Israeli authorities have allowed only a handful of international aid workers

Chart 2: Total monthly imports entering through Gaza commercial crossings





into Gaza. Of the 178 requests to enter Gaza submitted by International NGOs (INGOs) staff members and recorded by OCHA during January, only 18 NGO staff were approved as of the end of the month, while no answer was received for the rest. All approved requests related to INGO in the field of health. Six additional INGO staff also working in the medical field and a number of staff members working in the field of UXO clearance entered Gaza from Egypt during January. The Israeli authorities have stated that the processing delays were due to the priority given to medical NGOs and the overwhelming demand for access to conduct urgent surveys into Gaza.

Diminished livelihoods in Gaza further eroded by Israeli military operation

The 22 days of fighting occurred against the backdrop of livelihoods already significantly eroded by 18 months of blockade: the closure had triggered unprecedented rates of poverty (80%) and unemployment (46%);²³ the private sector had been effectively paralyzed by the prohibition on exports and most industrial imports; and the livelihoods of 14,000 farmers, herders and fishermen were at risk of collapse following the drastic reduction of agricultural and fishing activities.

Israeli military operations caused the further erosion of Palestinian livelihoods. Those already vulnerable before the recent war are likely to have fallen deeper into poverty. Thousands of families, whose breadwinners were either killed or sustained permanent injuries, lost their main source of income. Families dependent on agriculture and fishing were affected by the widespread destruction of agricultural land, livestock farms, including poultry, sheep, goats and rabbits, and fishing boats and equipment.²⁴ Furthermore, thousands of families, whose homes were damaged or destroyed by bombardment, now endure additional economic burden.²⁵ Compounding these problems are that the extensive destruction of public infrastructure constrains the delivery of public services and the functioning of productive enterprises and commerce, leading to the slower absorption of labour in both private and public sectors.²⁶

During the operation, the availability and quality of fresh food in the market dropped significantly, due to the suspension of production during the fighting and the spoiling of existing produce. Wheat flour, the major staple, was in short supply. The limited supply of cooking gas and water hampered food preparation for families and institutions, and for the commercial food preparation sector such as bakeries. Following the cease-fire, access to available food by most of the population remains severely constrained by inflation in the price of some items and the lack of cash notes. Preliminary estimates indicate that

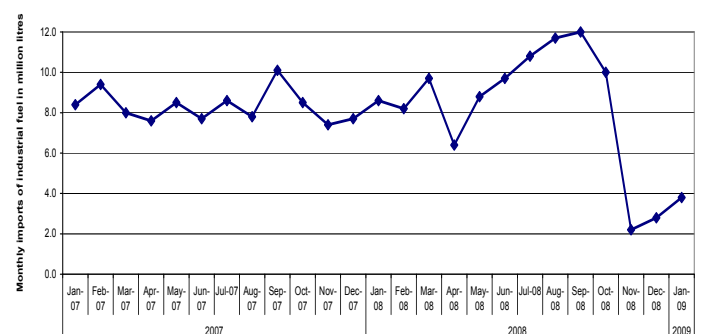
the military operation resulted in a 20% increase in food insecurity, raising the overall level of food insecurity to 75% of the population.²⁷ Combined, these factors make it likely that aid dependency will increase further in the aftermath of the crisis; prior to 27 December 2008, 80% of the population was already receiving aid of some kind (although not all on a regular basis).²⁸

Electricity supply impaired due to fuel shortage and damages

During January, approximately 3.8 million litres of industrial fuel were delivered to the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) through the Nahal Oz Crossing – a more than 50% increase compared to the monthly average in the previous two months. This amount, however, is about 27% of what is required to operate the plant at full capacity. The limited supply of fuel has forced the GPP to shut down for prolonged periods of time during the conflict. Combined with damage incurred to main power lines and transformers and access difficulty for technical teams to damaged areas, the closure of the GPP has rendered more than 60% of Gaza population without electricity over the bulk of the three-week period of military operations. Gaza City and northern Gaza were the worst affected, with some areas experiencing up to 14 days without electricity supply and others with up to 16 hours of power cuts per day.

Following the ceasefire, the GPP was able to progressively increase electricity production to its prior level of 60-65 MW (megawatt) – about two thirds of its full capacity. However, with an electricity distribution schedule in place, most Gaza population continue to receive intermittent supply, with Gaza and North Gaza governorates experiencing an average of 8 hours power cuts occurring three times a week. Though damaged power lines have been repaired, many households are still not supplied due to the malfunctioning of power networks in their areas. The limited supply of power by the GPP continued to affect the functioning of water and wastewater, as well as medical facilities (see below).

Chart 3: Total monthly imports of industrial fuel through Nahal Oz Crossing





Fragile health system confronted with thousands of conflict injuries; only entry of medical supplies improved

Gaza's health care system, already fragile following the 18-month-long blockade, faced serious challenges during the three weeks of fighting. Import restrictions since June 2007, alongside the inability of the medical staff to update its knowledge and the rift between Palestinians in Ramallah and Gaza, reduced the quality and accessibility of health care in Gaza. With the onset of Israel's military offensive, this weakened system was confronted with a massive influx of critical injuries.

The emergency state was declared at all the MoH hospitals until the 22nd of January. Additional ten MoH PHC (Primary Health Care) centers provided emergency medical services. The pre-hospital emergency services in Gaza have showed to be relatively well organized. Despite the waves of mass casualties with multi-injured patients and extremely difficult security conditions, most of the injured were rapidly transported from the incident site to the emergency rooms, where urgent medical interventions were provided.

Of the 5380 injured reported by the MoH, 2142 (40%) were admitted to the main hospitals in Gaza, mainly in Shifa. There are concerns about patients with injuries, burns and acute surgical conditions who may have been discharged too early. The inadequate follow up care may have led to complications (e.g. later infections, burn scars, post operative complications). Many injuries have resulted in permanent disability such as amputation and disfigurement. Some other injured will end up with permanent disability if not provided with immediate and appropriate rehabilitation and other specialized services, such as prosthetic fitting. About 30% of injured people are expected to have long-term disabilities.²⁹

Moreover, medical facilities were repeatedly hit during the bombardments and medical staff were themselves victims of some attacks. In the course of the three-week military operation, 16 health personnel were killed 26 were injured, while on duty. Israeli bombardment damaged or destroyed 29 ambulances and hit medical facilities. Of the 122 health facilities throughout the Gaza Strip, 48% (58) were either damaged or destroyed by direct or indirect shelling. Of these, 15 were hospitals and 43 PHC clinics.³⁰ On 15 January, Al-Quds Hospital, located in the PRCS compound in Gaza City, was twice hit by Israeli shells. The hospital was forced to shut down and approximately 100 patients were evacuated and transferred to Shifa hospital.

Of particular concern is the impact of the conflict on chronically ill patients. It is estimated that 40% of them interrupted their treatment, as life-threatening injuries

had a higher priority in an overwhelmed system. The situation of many of them was aggravated by the fact that referral of chronic patients to Israeli and West Bank hospitals came to an almost complete halt in the course of military operations, during which the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) was closed. The RAD was only re-opened on 18 January, after which applications for all patients' categories have been processed. As a result, the number of referral documents that were issued in January dropped dramatically in comparison with December 2008. Furthermore, due to the closure of Erez Crossing for most of January, only 34 patients with permits out of 113 who applied for permits were able to cross Erez.

By contrast, the situation vis-à-vis medical supplies, including drugs, consumables and equipment, progressively improved throughout January following the entry of increasing numbers of truckloads carrying these supplies through Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings. Nevertheless, the health system could not take full advantage of this improvement due to a number of factors, including the close expiry of some of the drug items and the logistical challenges involved in the storing, cataloguing and distribution of these supplies during the bombardments and the fighting.³¹ Against this background, a more comprehensive assessment is still needed in order to clarify the real impact that the influx of medical supplies and equipment during the conflict had on the health system, as well as to identify remaining gaps.³²

Assistance to the displaced and assessment of damages ongoing

Damage and destruction caused to homes during the three weeks of Israel's military bombardment resulted in thousands of displaced Gazans, many of whom turned to UNRWA shelters or stayed with extended family. UNRWA, UN agencies, ICRC/PRCS, and many international and local organisations provided immediate humanitarian assistance to the displaced population in both UNRWA shelters and within host families (for details on the number of displaced people see Protection Section above). UNRWA endeavored to provide potable water and bread to each shelter each day, but the supply of blankets, mattresses, and other food and NFI (non-food items) could not meet the rapid increase in the number the displaced. Several international NGOs were able to distribute plastic sheeting, blankets, and food packages, despite access difficulties.³³

A UNDP-led survey of damaged and destroyed housing throughout Gaza conducted immediately following the ceasefire in Gaza, has found that 3,354 houses were completely destroyed and 11,112 houses were partially damaged. The survey was conducted by engineers who reviewed the damage of individual housing units. Damage



was found to be greatest in the two northern governorates in the Gaza Strip, where 65% of the completely destroyed houses are located. The survey found 1,436 completely destroyed houses in North Gaza governorate, and 752 in Gaza governorate. UNRWA estimates that an average 4,000 USD will be needed to repair one housing unit.

Education system hard hit

With 56% of the population of Gaza under the age of 18, children and youth bore a disproportionate share of the impact of the recent military operation. All children and youth living in Gaza have been affected in some way. Current reports show that seven schools in northern Gaza were badly damaged and over 150 primary schools partially damaged. All schools in Gaza were closed from 28 December until 24 January. During this period, the schools' final examinations for the first semester were disrupted and students missed more than ten days of classes, taking into consideration that winter vacation is scheduled between 10 January and 23 January. The number of children, youth and teachers who have returned to school by the end of January is unclear, although reports put the overall figure as high as 80% of pupils. Attendance at UNRWA schools is around 90%. Movement of children, youth and teachers to and from schools remains dangerous, particularly for children, due to explosive remnants of war (ERW) present in the areas where missiles and bombs have fallen; in the days immediately following the ceasefire, two Palestinian children were killed by unexploded ordnance in Az Zaitoun. Schools, 60 percent of which were already running double shifts prior to the recent conflict, and may now have to run triple shifts, are not designed to accommodate additional students.

The Education Cluster, lead by UNICEF and Save the Children, was activated on 20 January. Education sector assessments (formal and informal) have been conducted by cluster members/organizations in order to ensure that priority needs are identified and addressed. Immediate assistance is needed to provide safe learning spaces through rebuilding schools damaged and destroyed in the operation as well as ensuring that all ERW are safely removed. It is also imperative that teachers and learning resources be provided to each affected school and that efforts begin addressing the immense psychosocial impact this recent conflict has had on learners and educators. Rubble removal is another serious issue facing the education sector. Estimated beneficiaries of identified Education Cluster interventions include all children from pre-school through to university age (3 to 18 years). This equates to approximately 740,000 persons, and several thousand university students.

Significant damage to water and sanitation infrastructure

Water and sanitation services and infrastructure, already badly affected by 18 months of restrictions on the entry of spare parts, construction materials and fuel, were seriously damaged by the recent fighting in Gaza. At the height of the operation, approximately 500,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip did not have access to running water as the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) had not received approval from the Israeli authorities for safe access to repair damage to the water and waste water networks. Another 500,000 people received water for only a few hours a week and the remaining population received water for 4-6 hours every 2-3 days.

Water and sanitation facilities at public shelters and community centres were overstressed by the massive influxes of people needing shelter, resulting in unhygienic situations. Schools were particularly affected. The damage to sewage networks and pumping stations affected thousands of people, with raw sewage flooding some streets.

On 10 January, the Gaza City Wastewater Treatment Plant, located south-western Gaza City, was hit during military operations. As a result, one pond treatment embankment was severely damaged, causing the leakage of 200,000 cubic metres of wastewater into the nearby agricultural fields. Moreover, one of the plant's sewage pipeline was also hit and damaged on the same day. The damage has resulted in the leakage of an estimated 20,000 cubic metres of wastewater per day until 23 January.

Preliminary findings of the Palestinian Hydrology Group's initial rapid needs assessment of households shows that some 5,700 roof-top tanks were completely destroyed and 2,900 damaged. A couple of areas had 50 percent of their water network destroyed, while other areas sustained damage to 30-35 percent of their water network. As of 29 January, though approximately 70 percent of water wells in the Gaza Strip were functioning, certain localities were still not receiving water due to localized damage to the network, including 10,000 people in Beit Hanoun. The Gaza City Wastewater Treatment Plant had been partially repaired, and wastewater was no longer leaking into surrounding agricultural fields. Following additional repairs, sewage is no longer flooding the streets of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia.

“Cast Lead” takes massive psychosocial toll on Gaza population

Three weeks of virtual non-stop bombardment by air, land and sea has had an immense psycho-social impact on Gaza



residents, particularly on children. One of the foundations of mental health and psychosocial well-being is a sense of security that comes from living in a safe and supportive environment. People's lives have been shattered through the killing and injury of family members, widespread displacement and the inability of anyone to find a safe place for shelter from exposure to life-threatening and terrifying events. These events, along with the destruction of homes, schools, health facilities and play areas and the severe disruption to family and community support mechanisms, have undermined the psychosocial well-being of children and caregivers. All sense of what was considered "normal" has been violated. The psycho-social impact of recent events on Gaza's residents is likely to last for years to come; some may never fully recover.

Psychosocial support and mental health activities, lead by WHO and UNICEF, focus on responding to the related needs of the population by coordinating the efforts, plans and interventions undertaken by different mental health – psychosocial organisations. Help lines for basic level counseling were operational from the second week of the military operation. Post-cessation response activities focus on: assessing the impact of the crisis; providing technical guidance, support and training to existing mental health - psychosocial organizations, in order to ensure a better response and management of the mental health consequences of the crisis; provide logistic/operational support according to urgent needs (such as psychotropic medication); and providing urgent repair to damaged MoH mental health services.

West Bank

Deaths and injuries in wave of protests in the West Bank

Numerous demonstrations protesting the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip took place throughout the West Bank in January. These protests occurred in addition to the regular anti-Barrier demonstrations that occurred during the month in Ni'lin, Bil'in (Ramallah), Jayyus (Qalqiliya) and Ma'sara (Bethlehem) villages. Some of the demonstrations evolved into violent clashes between stone throwing demonstrators and Israeli security forces, who responded with live ammunition, rubber-coated bullets, teargas and physical assault. In the course of these clashes, three Palestinians were killed, including one 15-year-old boy, and 130 others were injured, including 53 children, by Israeli security forces. A number of demonstrators were injured by Palestinian security forces in similar protests held in Hebron City.

More areas between the Barrier and the Green Line declared closed

In January, the Israeli authorities issued military orders declaring the area between the Barrier and the Green Line

in Hebron and parts of the Salfit, Ramallah governorates and between the Barrier and the Jerusalem Municipality Borders in Jerusalem and northern Bethlehem governorates a closed military area ('seam zone'). These are the first such orders to be issued since October 2003, when all of the land between the Barrier and the Green Line in the Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates was designated as a closed area. Based on OCHA's monitoring of Barrier-affected communities the northern West Bank since 2003, the new military orders give rise to serious humanitarian concern.

Until the recent declarations, access of Palestinian farmers to the areas beyond the Barrier required prior coordination with the Israeli army. Once land has been officially declared closed, Palestinians require IDF-issued 'visitor' permits to access their land in these areas. In the northern West Bank, permit requirements have become more stringent over the years. Those applying for, or renewing, fixed-period permits are required to pass security checks and to prove a connection to their land by providing valid ownership or land taxation documents, which are not easily obtainable. Landless labourers are routinely rejected, those with security records have no hope of receiving permits, and those who suffer repeated refusal are discouraged from re-applying. Allocation is such that while some families have more than one permit-holder, others have only a single successful applicant - not necessarily the most appropriate or able-bodied - and many families have no valid permit-holder at all. According to a UNOCHA-UNRWA survey of 67 localities in the northern West Bank, fewer than 20 percent of those who used to farm their lands in the closed area before completion of the Barrier are now granted permits.³⁴

For the minority that succeeded in obtaining permits, access is through one of the approximately 70 designated Barrier gates and checkpoints, which open on a daily, weekly and/or seasonal basis. Permit-holders must queue for their documents to be inspected and their persons and belongings searched before being allowed to access their land. There are also restrictions on the passage of vehicles, agricultural equipment and materials. The restrictions resulting from the permit and gate regime severely curtail the opportunity available for cultivation, with negative impact on agricultural practice and rural livelihoods.

In the northern West Bank, there are approximately 10,000 Palestinians who reside in the closed area and, since October 2003, have required 'permanent resident' permits to continue to live in their own homes. They are physically separated from the rest of the West Bank and from health, education and health services, which are generally located to the east of the Barrier. Children, patients and workers have to pass through gates to reach schools, medical facilities and workplaces and to maintain family and social relations.³⁵



There is one neighbourhood of Dahiet El Barid in East Jerusalem and three Palestinian households in southern Hebron located in the area declared closed. However, once construction of the Barrier is complete, a total of approximately 35,000 West Bank Palestinians (including those in the northern West Bank) will be located between the Barrier and the Green Line, approximately 22,000 of them in nine Palestinian communities next to the Gush 'Etzion settlement bloc in Bethlehem governorate. Residents of these communities are expected to face reduced access to markets, health services, and higher education in Bethlehem city, restrictions which will be institutionalized should a closed area be declared. This section of the Barrier will also sever the territorial contiguity of the governorate and separate the Bethlehem urban area from its agricultural hinterland, so curtailing the city's potential for residential and commercial growth.

Increasing concern over expected drought

The minimal amount of rainfall since the beginning of the winter has increased the likeliness that 2009 will become the second consecutive year of severe drought in the oPt, in the West Bank in particular. Similar conditions are affecting neighboring countries, including Syria, Jordan and Israel. As of mid-January 2009, the West Bank had received only 26% of the multi-year average rainfall for this time of the year, according to the Palestinian Water Authority. Even if a particularly high amount of rain falls during the months of February and March, the level of rainfall for the entire 2008-9 rainy season is expected to be below the multi-year average.

The communities most affected by the water crisis are those not connected to the water network, which rely to a large extent on traditional water sources, such as cisterns for the collection of rainfall and springs. There are about 200 such communities throughout the West Bank with a combined population of approximately 200,000. Of particular concern are herding and Bedouin communities in the southern and western parts of Hebron, the eastern slopes of Bethlehem, some areas east of Jerusalem and in the Ramallah governorates and the Jordan Valley. These communities depend on water from rainfall not only for household and livestock consumption, but also for the renewal of grazing areas. Their livelihoods were already severely eroded as a result of the 2008 drought and frost, as well as by the inflation of fodder prices. The vulnerability of these communities is exacerbated by the movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities, which impede access to springs, water filling points and grazing areas. An estimated 80% of the budget allocated by humanitarian agencies to water supply to vulnerable communities in 2008 was spent on transportation.

Possible ramifications of a severe drought in 2009 include the outbreak of water-borne diseases following increasing

consumption of lower quality water; loss of livelihoods among herders opting to sell their flocks due to the inability to purchase fodder; and the relocation of a large number of people to other areas of the West Bank in order to reach grazing areas and water resources.

A response plan to the ongoing water crisis, aimed at securing basic water needs for households and herds, is being currently developed by UN agencies and 45 national and international NGOs.

Unemployment in the West Bank increased in the third quarter of 2008

According to the latest PCBS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics) labour force survey, unemployment rate in the West Bank reached 20.7% in the third quarter of 2008, an increase of 4.4 percentage points compared to the previous quarter (16.3%).³⁶ This increase has been triggered by a drop in employment in the agriculture and the service sectors. Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates registered the highest rates of unemployment, 30.3% and 31.5% respectively, while Jerusalem and Jericho recorded the lowest rates, 14.2% and 13% respectively. Restrictions on movement remain a major factor behind the continuing high rates of unemployment.

Anecdotal information collected among beneficiaries of UNRWA's job creation program in Jenin governorate, where unemployment rose from 18.4% to 24.4% between the second and third quarters of 2008, suggests that the deterioration in the economic situation has encouraged more people to enter Israel without permits to seek jobs. This coping mechanism exposes workers to the risk of fines and imprisonment, if caught by the Israeli security forces, as well as exploitation by Israeli employers.

Funding

Gaza Flash Appeal

The Gaza Flash Appeal was launched in Geneva on 2 February 2009 by John Holmes, the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. The appeal, which requests \$613 million, reflects the outcome of the needs assessments carried out in late January. It includes 106 NGO and 82 UN projects that respond to the emergency humanitarian and early recovery needs of the some 1.4 million people in Gaza.

The appeal builds upon and now supersedes the Initial Response Plan and Immediate Funding Needs announced in mid-January, which requested \$117 million for urgent humanitarian actions. The Flash Appeal comprises the revised Gaza component of the oPt 2009 CAP, of which \$209 million is made up of new projects, \$270 million are highlighted existing CAP projects for the Gaza Strip, and budget increases of totaling \$134 million for existing



highlighted projects. The new total for CAP 2009 for both Gaza and West Bank is \$876 million. The oPt CAP 2009 which will be reviewed later in the year.

Included in the CAP is the Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) a vital flexible funding mechanism that is responding to emerging and critical needs in Gaza. To date, 14 projects have been approved to meet a variety of urgent needs, including mine clearance, blankets and fresh food to counteract growing rates of malnutrition.

Sector/Cluster	Requirements in million \$	Funding date in \$	% covered
Agriculture	29.5	-	0%
Cash for work/ Cash assistance	92.3	13.2	14%
Coordination and Support services	29.8	5.7	19%
Early recovery	27.5	-	0%
Education	46.3	1.8	4%
Food security and Nutrition	153.5	34.6	23%
Health	46.2	6.1	13%
Protection	5.5	-	0%
Psycho-social and Mental health	38.4	1.6	4%
Sector not specified	-	0.9	-
Shelter and Non-food items	119.1	12.8	11%
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	25.2	5.5	21%
Total	613.3	82	13%

End Notes

- 20 January 2009, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, "Opening remarks at press conference" in Gaza.
http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/speeches/statments_full.asp?statID=407
- Gaza's borders have been almost totally closed for the crossing of people since the imposition of the blockade on June 2007, following the Hamas takeover of Gaza.
- Issued by the MoH on 8 February 2009. Figures do not include people who died in the course of the conflict due to lack of access to regular health care, nor those killed or injured after the beginning of the ceasefire.
- According to Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, Israeli security forces killed 1,070 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip between the start of the first intifada on 9 December 1987 and the signing Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation on 13 September 1993. See were killed by Israeli security forces between 9 December 1987 and 28 September 2000. See http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/First_Intifada_Tables.asp.
- Statement available at:
<http://www.unsco.org/Documents/Statements/SG/2008/on%20continued%20escalation%20in%20and%20around%20Gaza%2029%20Dec.pdf>
- Briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, 27 January 2009, available at: www.ochaopt.org/gazacrisis/admin/output/files/ocha_opt_gaza_crisis_security_briefing_2009_01_26.pdf.

- Amos Harel, "IDF investigation shows errant mortar hit UN building in Gaza", Ha'aretz, 10.1.09.
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- UNDP, Attitudes and perceptions of the Gaza Strip residents in the aftermath of the Israeli military attacks, February 2009, p. 16; Near East Consulting Group, Monthly monitor of Palestinian perceptions towards politics and economics, January 2009. The results of both surveys are likely to be biased downward as they were conducted through telephone landlines, thus not capturing people who do not have telephone or who did not return to their houses.
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- Briefing held by Michele Montas, Spokesperson for Secretary General, UN Headquarters, New York, January 20, 2009. Available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/Jan/20090120.unsgsmmt.arch.asp?HighID=1262>
- Indiscriminate attacks are those which, inter alia, "employ methods or means of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction". See, J.M. Henckaerts and L. Doswald-Beck, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I: Rules, ICRC, Cambridge University Press, 2005, Rule 12.
- See for example, Amos Harel, "IDF probes improper use of phosphorus shells in Gaza Strip", Ha'aretz, 21 January 2009.
- See press statements by Human Rights Watch ("Israel: Stop Unlawful Use of White Phosphorus in Gaza", 10.1.2009) and Amnesty International (Israel's use of white phosphorus against Gaza civilians "clear and undeniable", 19.1.2009).
- Available at: <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/weapons-interview-170109>.
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- The undersecretary of PA Ministry of Prisoners Affairs in Ramallah, Ziyad Abu Ein, issued a statement mentioning 181 names of people from Gaza targeted by Hamas during the conflict. According to this statement, 11 of these people were executed, 58 were shot in the feet or legs, and 112 had their legs broken. Available at: <http://www.maannet.net/en/index.php?opr=ShowDetails&ID=35455>.
- PCBS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics) estimates poverty rate at 80% in 2007. PEC DAR (Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reform) states that poverty rates are steadily increasing in 2008. Economic direct losses as a result of Israeli Aggression in the Gaza Strip, 20 January 2009. Unemployment figure is based on relaxed definition, i.e. includes those who are unemployed, who were available for work and actively seeking jobs, and the discouraged. PCBS labour force survey Q3 2008. The rate was estimated at 49% in Q2 2008.
- Direct and indirect losses to the fishing sector alone as a result of military operations are estimated at more than \$2 million. Source: "The Effect of War on the Fisheries in the Gaza Strip." January 2009.
- PCBS estimates that more than 17 thousand houses were either damaged or destroyed (more than 4,000 totally destroyed). PCBS. Report on Preliminary Economic Losses in the Gaza Strip by Israeli



- Aggression. January 2009.
26. PCBS (Report on Preliminary Economic Losses in the Gaza Strip by Israeli Aggression. January 2009) and PECNDAR estimate overall direct economic losses to be more than \$1.9 billion. PECNDAR estimates that losses to damaged and destroyed civilian houses are \$330 million (17%), damages to the private sector, including agricultural land, workshops and factories are around \$90 million (5%) and damages to infrastructure are \$150 million (8%).
 27. Gaza Flash Appeal 2009. This estimate is based on based on the joint WFP/FAO/UNRWA Rapid Food Security survey conducted in April 2008, which found that 56% of the population in Gaza are food insecure.
 28. See Gaza Flash Appeal for additional detail. Available at <http://www.ochaopt.org>.
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 35. UNOCHA Special Focus: Three years later: the Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier since the International Court of Justice Opinion, July 2007. (http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ICJ4_Special_Focus_July2007.pdf)
 36. Unemployment rates are based on ILO (International Labour Organisation) definition, which captures the unemployed who were available for work and actively seeking job. Taking into account the discouraged workers, i.e those who no longer looking for jobs, rate of unemployment is estimated at 26.4% during Q3 2008 compared to 24.4% in Q2 2008.

The following UN Agencies, local and international NGOs and organisations participate in sector working groups and regularly provide information to the Humanitarian Monitor: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), Al Haq, Badil, Save the Children (UK), Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI-PS), Oxfam GB, Palestine Hydrology Group (PHG), ACF-E,AAA, ACP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

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