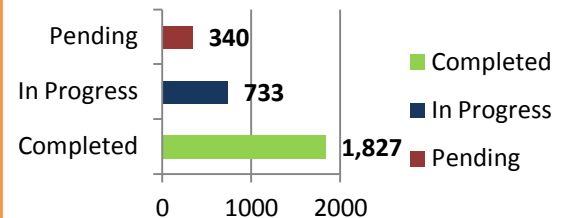


Situation Overview: Six Years on from the Blockade

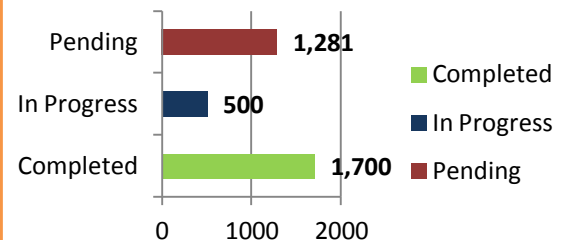
In mid June 2007, Israel tightened the blockade on the Gaza Strip resulting in significant restrictions on the movement of people and goods on land, air and sea. This led to the 'de-development' of Gaza degrading living conditions, increasing poverty and resulting in a serious decline in services and infrastructure for education, healthcare and water/sanitation. Despite some easing of the access restriction in 2010, people in the Gaza Strip still have difficulties accessing basic services with the most vulnerable continuing to live under challenging humanitarian conditions.

Israeli restrictions on imports have had a significant impact on construction in Gaza, affecting international and private construction projects. Gravel, cement and steel bars remain on Israel's list of dual use goods, and are currently available in Gaza either in limited quantities through crossings for international projects, or illegally through the tunnels with Egypt. Starting in December 2012, Israel began allowing a quota of **20** truckloads of gravel to enter Gaza per day for the private sector, while Egypt started recently allowing gravel and cement officially into Gaza via the Rafah Crossing, but only for reconstruction projects funded by the Qatari government¹. According to OCHA, **20** truckloads/day represents only **15%** of the daily demand for aggregate, and less than **10%** of the amount of aggregate that entered Gaza prior to the 2007 restrictions².

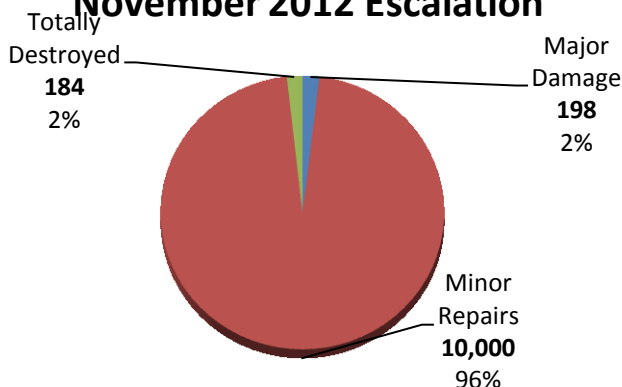
Pre Cast Lead Figures - Totally Destroyed



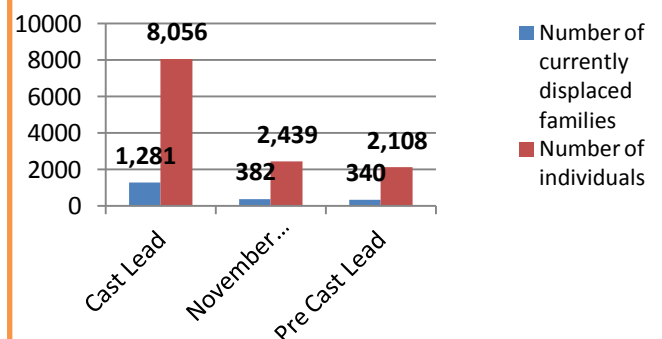
Cast Lead Figures - Totally Destroyed



November 2012 Escalation



Displacement Statistics



1 Gisha – The Gaza Cheat Sheet, May 7, 2013

2 NRC – Overview of the Housing Situation in the Gaza Strip – March 2013

Housing and reconstruction projects are failing to catch up with the demand created by the natural growth of the population, or to respond to the reconstruction needs emerging from historic and ongoing Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip has one of the highest natural growth rates in the world at **3.5%** which, combined with the blockade, has led to growing population density and housing problems³. In addition, Israeli military operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009 left **3,481** totally destroyed and damaged housing units. The Gaza Shelter Sector members were able to respond to **64%** of these cases, while **1,281** cases are still pending due to the lack of construction materials arising from the blockade. This has left just over **8,000** people still displaced and living in potentially hazardous conditions due to lack of durable housing options for them.

After the November 2012 escalation of hostilities, various assessments were carried out by United Nations agencies and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works (MoHPW), and the data showed that the escalation left about **184** housing units totally destroyed, while **198** others sustained major damage; another estimated **10,000** housing units needed minor repair. Under the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), UNDP received US\$**0.5** million, and UNRWA received US\$**2.5** million to pay for transitional shelter cash assistance for all total and major damage cases for six months and the repair costs for **2,262** minor repair cases. Additionally, UNRWA received US\$ **15.6** million from the Saudi Fund for Development to repair the total and major damage cases and the MoHPW was able to repair **4,000** minor damage housing units and initiate reconstruction of **40** totally destroyed houses. However, almost **2,500** people remain displaced and unable to return to their home.

These military operations, compounded by the six-year blockade, have caused a chronic housing crisis, creating a dire need to end the displacement of hundreds of families and reconstruct thousands of houses. The Gaza Shelter Sector estimated in 2011 that over **71,000** housing units were needed to meet all shelter gaps in the Gaza Strip⁴. Even with the recent increase in construction and reconstruction, the current housing gap in the Gaza Strip is likely to still be in the tens of thousands. This has contributed to overcrowding, which is a significant problem. The Norwegian Refugee Council issued a research report in March 2013 which concluded that roughly **34,000** households in the Gaza Strip suffered from overcrowding in 2007, and it is believed that overcrowding has likely increased since 2007 due to the overall lack of construction in Gaza between 2007 and 2010⁵.

Closures and restrictions on the crossings have also significantly harmed the economy in Gaza and contributed to a deteriorating humanitarian situation. In 2007, the unemployment rate in Gaza was **29.7%**, increasing to **40%** in 2008, the first year of the blockade. The rate has fallen gradually, but remains high and is currently **31%**⁶. **44%** of the population of Gaza is food insecure⁷, and an estimated **70%** receive humanitarian aid⁸.

3 NRC – Overview of the Housing Situation in the Gaza Strip – March 2013

4 Shelter Sector – Gaza, Assessing Housing Needs in Gaza June 2007 – December 2011

5 NRC – Overview of the Housing Situation in the Gaza Strip – March 2013

6 PCBS - Labor Force Survey: Annual Report: 2012.

7 OCHA - 2011 Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey FAO, UNRWA, WFP, PCBS

8 Gisha – The Gaza Cheat Sheet, May 7, 2013

My House Means Life to Me

My name is Amirah Abu Watfa. I'm a refugee from Al Majdal and currently live in Al-Zaitun area, Gaza City. I'm a housewife and my husband used to work as a blacksmith, but due to his ongoing medical problems he cannot work anymore. I have three sons and five daughters, two of them go to university. All my children were born and raised in our house, We have lived there for more than 20 years. All our memories are related to this house, I have stories about every corner.



On January 8th, 2009, around 2 AM, we were asleep. We woke up frightened from the sound of an explosion. We knew that this was a warning drone missile and that a bigger airstrike will follow. So we gathered quickly and rushed out of the house into the street and tried to take cover. Three minutes later, another drone strike targeted our neighbours' house, followed momentarily by a big F16 airstrike. The explosion was enormous; while none of us got injured, one of our neighbours was killed; two houses were totally destroyed, our house being one of them; and three other houses partially damaged.

After we lost our home, we started a journey of suffering. We stayed in my family's house for a few months, then moved to my uncle's vacant house, and in mid-2011 we rented a small apartment, where we pay about \$150 a month for rent. We received \$5,000 as compensation for furniture from UNRWA. The only progress in our case was submitting a map and permits for reconstruction of the house per UNRWA's request in December 2012⁹. Since 2009 we survive by receiving donations and assistance from charities and kindhearted people, but it is not easy living on donations, it harms our dignity and pride. Had we been living in our own house, we would not be paying rent and the little money we have would be spent on the family and would have been enough to cover our basic needs. All I wish for in this life is to have my old house back. I dream to have, a house with a concrete ceiling, for it to be clean and furnished; I want to be able to host people in my house once again, without any shame, and that my children say with pride: "we have a house of our own".

Recommendations

- Lift restrictions on the commercial import and export of goods, including those relating to international humanitarian housing construction projects.
- Press Israel to end the approvals process for construction materials for humanitarian agencies by January 2014. In the interim period:
 - Streamline, simplify and reduce the approval, coordination, monitoring and reporting requirements for international humanitarian projects in the Gaza Strip. Projects should be approved within the specified two month time frame.
 - Improve the capacity of land crossings in order to transport more construction materials into Gaza.
 - At Kerem Shalom install a conveyor belt to simplify the movement of materials across the border and reduce costs.
 - Re-open the Karni and Sufa Crossings in order to decrease transportation costs of materials.
 - Remove bureaucratic and financial barriers currently preventing import of construction materials by humanitarian agencies from the West Bank.
 - Streamline the process to approve changes or modifications to already approved humanitarian construction projects.
 - End the requirement for GPS coordinates for all humanitarian reconstruction projects.
 - Approve projects on a needs basis, not on location or beneficiary profile.

⁹ This family is scheduled to be assisted by UNRWA as part of its Islamic Development Bank-funded self-help project.