

Humanitarian Bulletin

occupied Palestinian territory

NOVEMBER 2017



Floods due to mild rainfall in Khani Yunis, November 2017

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 560,000 Palestinians in Gaza residing in areas prone to flooding are at risk of temporary displacement due to the precarious state of infrastructure.
- 2017 marked a record of US\$18.2 million in revenue for agricultural exports from Gaza in an otherwise poor economic situation, with the unemployment rate reaching over 46 per cent.
- Around 1,300 Palestinians in twelve herding communities in southern Hebron affected by intense Israeli military training and additional access restrictions, exacerbating the coercive environment facing them.
- The 2017 olive harvest season in the West Bank impacted by a rise in incidents of settler violence, and access restrictions to lands behind the Barrier and near Israeli settlements.

OVERVIEW

The second week of December 2017 has been marked by heightened unrest across the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The 6 December announcement concerning the United States' recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel triggered widespread demonstrations and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces.

As of 13 December, one Palestinian civilian had been killed in Gaza as a result of clashes, and nearly 2,000 Palestinians had been injured throughout the oPt, the majority, (almost 70 per cent) due to tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment, and by rubber bullets and live ammunition. Palestinian armed factions in the Gaza Strip have also fired rockets towards southern Israel on a daily basis, none of which has resulted in casualties or damage to date. Following this, Israel has launched a series of airstrikes targeting military sites in Gaza, which have killed three Palestinians, including one civilian, and injured 25 others.

The escalation in Gaza is of particular concern given the extremely fragile humanitarian situation. In spite of recent progress towards Palestinian internal reconciliation, most of the measures adopted by the Palestinian Authority since March 2017, which triggered the latest deterioration, are yet to be reversed. In particular, cuts in the funding of electricity supply to Gaza have compounded the chronic electricity deficit, increasing power outages from 12-16 to 18-20 hours a day, with a pervasive impact on all spheres of life. On 8 December, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, Robert Piper, released US\$ 2.2 million from the oPt Humanitarian Fund to cover urgent additional needs in the Gaza Strip in the areas of health and food security.

As winter approaches, an item in this month's Humanitarian Bulletin addresses the risk of temporary displacement facing approximately over 560,000 people in some 60 locations across Gaza prone to flooding. The ability of organizations to reduce vulnerability and respond effectively is hindered not just by the ongoing energy crisis, but also by funding gaps and import restrictions imposed by Israel, citing security concerns. These restrictions are delaying the implementation of seven infrastructure projects, whose objective is to reduce the risk of flooding in central and southern Gaza.

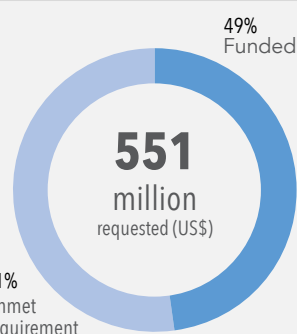
NOVEMBER FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	1
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	89
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	0
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	8
Structures demolished in the West Bank	31
People displaced in the West Bank	60

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017

551 million
requested (US\$)

49% funded



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November marked the beginning of the peak season in Gaza for the export of high value cash crops, such as strawberries. The economy in Gaza is characterized by sluggish growth and an unemployment rate which reached nearly 47 per cent in the third quarter of 2017. The increase in agricultural trade from Gaza recorded so far in 2017 is one of the few bright spots in an otherwise gloomy economic situation and has generated limited hope among farmers and traders for improved livelihoods during the upcoming export season.

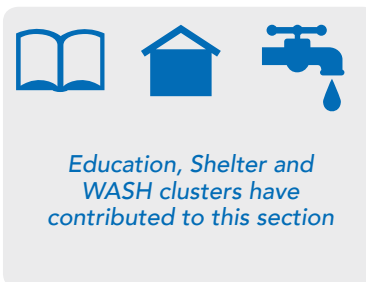
The agricultural livelihoods of at least 80,000 families in the West Bank are the focus of another article in this Bulletin, which focuses on the olive harvest season, which lasted from mid-September to mid-November. This season was reported to have proceeded relatively smoothly, although an increase in incidents of settler violence and restrictions on access to olive groves behind the Barrier and in the vicinity of Israeli settlements continue to pose challenges for Palestinian farmers. An additional challenge to Palestinian livelihoods in the West Bank is addressed in another Bulletin item, which looks at the impact of recent military training exercises and access restrictions on 12 vulnerable herding communities in the southern Hebron area.

The ongoing unrest throughout the oPt is a reminder of the sensitivity of the issue of Jerusalem: in his most recent briefing to the Security Council, Special Coordinator Mladenov observed that ‘of all the final status issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as identified in the Oslo Accords ... Jerusalem is perhaps the most emotionally charged and difficult subject.’ The UN Secretary-General, in his response to the US announcement, affirmed: “Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, taking into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides.”

One Palestinian civilian had been killed in Gaza as a result of clashes, and nearly 2,000 Palestinians had been injured throughout the oPt, the majority due to tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment. Palestinian armed factions in the Gaza Strip have also fired rockets towards southern Israel on a daily basis, none of which has resulted in casualties or damage.

POOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND LACK OF FUNDING PUT OVER 560,000 PEOPLE AT RISK OF FLOODING IN THE GAZA STRIP

In the Gaza Strip, another winter season brings with it the threat of temporary displacement, property losses and health risks due to flooding and poor housing conditions. Insufficient funding, import restrictions, the ongoing energy crisis and the limited capacity of the Palestinian Civil Defense (PCD) are key factors that hinder the ability of the relevant actors to reduce vulnerability and respond effectively.



Fragile infrastructure heightens risk of flooding

Some 60 communities in low-lying locations across Gaza have been identified by the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene cluster (WASH) as being at risk of flooding, even from light rainfall. These areas are home to over 560,000 people, 15 primary health centres and 69,000 students and teachers in 65 UNRWA and public schools¹. Vulnerability is heightened by the precarious state of the infrastructure, which has undergone minimal upgrading or repair over the last decade despite rapid population growth and widespread damage from recurrent hostilities.

The ability of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) and other WASH partners to implement infrastructural projects in high-risk areas has been impeded by restrictions on imports of materials regarded by Israel as “dual civilian and military” items.

The entry of such items is contingent on Israeli approval, which is required separately for each type of restricted item, in addition to approval for the project in principle. Since the beginning of the year, approvals for the entry of dual use construction materials (primarily cement and metal bars) via the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) have increased significantly in comparison with previous years.² However, applications for other restricted items such as generators with a 50 KVA capacity and above have either been rejected completely or have faced long delays, in some cases of up to 16 months.

These restrictions have affected the progress of seven CMWU projects aimed at reducing the risk of flooding in low-lying areas of Khan Yunis, Rafah and Middle Area governorates. These projects seek to separate storm and wastewater networks, extend storm water drainage networks and infiltration ponds, ensure the supply of spare parts and maintenance for pumping equipment in low-lying areas, clear existing drainage channels, and provide spare parts, material and equipment to service providers.

Risk of exposure to extreme weather due to poor housing

The Shelter cluster has identified roughly 8,100 households across the Gaza Strip in need of winterization assistance as their residences are in a precarious condition, including leaking roofs, unsealed windows, damaged walls and lack of insulation. A further 24,000 households across Gaza were categorized by the Shelter cluster as vulnerable to extremes of weather due to sub-standard conditions. The Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) referred 1,233 of the most vulnerable cases falling under both categories to the cluster for assistance. The Shelter cluster is referring these cases to partners for support.

Poor housing conditions result primarily from lack of access to construction materials for maintenance and repairs, including damage from the 2014 hostilities, alongside high unemployment and poverty rates.

Over 560,000 people, 15 primary health centres, and 65 UNRWA and public schools are located in areas identified by the WASH cluster as flood-prone.

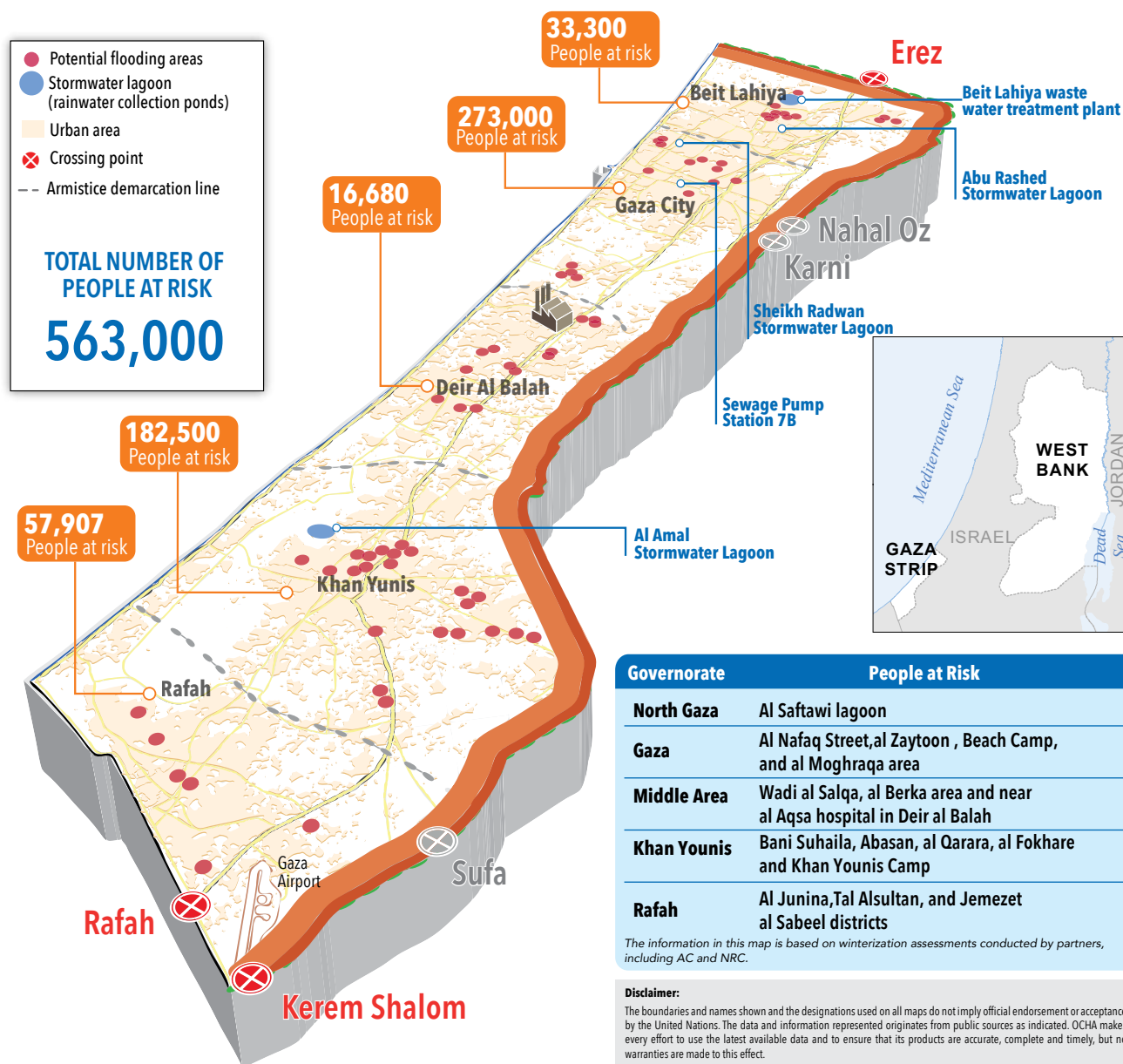
The electricity crisis

Electricity supplies have faltered since April 2017 following a dispute between the Palestinian authorities in Ramallah and Gaza about how to pay for fuel for the Gaza Power Plant. The situation has been compounded by the decline in electricity supplies from Israel following the Palestinian Authority's decision, in June 2017, to reduce payments. There have also been ongoing problems with electricity supplied by Egypt from recurrent malfunctioning and lack of repairs to feeder lines.

GAZA STRIP Flood-prone areas



OCHA



Gaza has had only four to six hours of electricity per day for the past seven months and this situation continues despite the reconciliation agreement reached between the Palestinian Authority and the Gaza de facto authorities in October 2017.

During periods of rainfall, the sewage/storm water station receives rainwater mixed with sewage. This must be pumped out to the storm water infiltration ponds, to the sea or to open areas. When electricity from the grid is not available, these plants rely on backup generators that run on expensive fuel. The Khan Younis and Rafah areas that depend on Egyptian feeder lines to a greater extent have been the most affected.

To maintain a minimal level of critical services, humanitarian agencies provide emergency fuel to health, water and sanitation, and solid waste collection facilities to run backup generators and vehicles. The number of facilities benefitting from this support has increased from 189 at the beginning of the crisis in March of this year, to 247 in October.

The WASH cluster anticipates that emergency fuel reserves will run out in mid-winter, by February 2017 at the latest. If no new funding is secured, the operation of storm water pumping stations and heavy machinery, trucks, and mobile pumps used to drain flooded locations may be undermined further. The entry of new generators and spare parts is hampered by Israeli import restrictions.

First response capacity undermined

The capabilities of the Palestinian Civil Defense (PCD), which is one of the key responders in emergencies, have been curtailed in recent years due to a combination of damage to civil defense stations in the reoccurring conflicts, lack of investment in equipment and staff development due to Palestinian political divisions, and severe restrictions imposed by Israel on the entry of both specialized and non-specialized equipment. As a result, the PCD's operational capacity in Gaza is estimated to have declined by up to 60 per cent since 2008 despite rapid urbanization and general population growth.

On 26 November 2017, mild rainfall caused the flooding of several houses, stores and vehicles in Gaza city, plus the sewage pump station in al Nafaq neighbourhood. At the time, no electricity was available and operational backup generators were insufficient to cope with the volume of water. Mobile pumps were deployed at the location for 12-18 hours to pump out the water. During this time, access to services was interrupted and the population was at risk of contracting water-borne diseases due to the seepage of sewage into the water.

Much of the technical equipment required, such as high-capacity pumps and mobile barriers to tackle flooding, and heavy tools to conduct effective Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) operations, have never been available to the PCD in Gaza. Other equipment, including medium-capacity pumps used to clear flooded areas and mechanical ladders needed to reach third floors and above, are worn out and are partially or non-operational. The PCD in Gaza estimates that 10 per cent of first response vehicles such as firetrucks, light rescue vehicles and ambulances are non-functional. The rest are working at less than 40 per cent of their full operating capacity.

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Ongoing and planned interventions

In the WASH cluster, only one of four Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) flood mitigation projects received partial funding in 2017, while the others were not funded at all. Nevertheless, WASH partners, including local and international NGOs, UN agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are stockpiling resources and planning for flood prevention and response activities to support service providers. To this end, WASH partners are raising funds to cover the highest priority prevention and response needs, as identified by service providers and WASH cluster partners.

Additional pre-emptive measures are being implemented by UNRWA for registered Palestine refugees and include the distribution of nylon or plastic sheeting and non-food-items to vulnerable cases who request support. Assistance to non-refugee cases is, in some instances, covered by partners under ongoing projects.

The Education cluster is preparing interventions that include the distribution of winter clothes to students, ensuring that schools are winter-proof by maintaining school buildings, and initiating the winter emergency committee that comprises MoEHE, UNRWA, Civil Defense and the Education cluster coordinator. The committee will observe and monitor the situation, in particular during bad weather, to ensure student safety.

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Children on their way back from school, during floods in Gaza city, January 2015.

FAMILY HAS SUFFERED FROM FLOODS EVERY YEAR FOR THE PAST 30 YEARS

52-year-old Mohammed Wafi and his family have suffered from flooding every winter for the past 30 years. This reflects the deterioration in the neighbourhood's infrastructure in the face of pressure from rainfall.

Mr. Wafi resides with his family in the low-lying flood-prone area of al-Waffia in Khan Younis. Their house is situated two metres below street level and is flooded by both water and sewage. As precautionary measures, Mr. Wafi purchases sand to create a dam between the street and the house. He also seals the sewer drains in his house to prevent water from flowing back into the house. Despite these steps, water seeps into the house every year through the cracked walls, roof and drains, forcing the family to seek safer accommodation.

Mrs. Wafi said: "Every year, all my furniture, personal possessions, clothes, bedding, food and kitchen utensils are ruined. Even my refrigerator, washing machine and oven no longer function due to water damage. We are living in really difficult circumstances".

During the winter of 2016, the house was severely flooded and the family was forced to find alternative accommodation for an entire week.

Asked how the flooding impacts their social lives, Mrs. Wafi explained: "Our daughter dropped out of high school last year; every time there is heavy rain, all her books get soaked and can no longer be used. She loves to study but we cannot afford to keep buying her new books".

"Our daughter dropped out of high school last year; every time there is heavy rain, all her books get soaked and can no longer be used. She loves to study but we cannot afford to keep buying her new books".

Mrs Wafi



Floods due to mile rainfall, near the Wafi family home, Khan Younis, November 2017.



This section was
contributed by FAO

Agricultural exports and transfers from Gaza have improved significantly during the past two years following the lifting of the Israeli ban on the marketing of goods from Gaza to the West Bank.

FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN GAZA'S AGRICULTURAL TRADE AMID SOARING UNEMPLOYMENT

November marked the beginning of the peak season for the export of high-value cash crops such as strawberries. Growth in agricultural trade from the Gaza Strip in 2017 is encouraging news within an economic context characterized by sluggish growth and unemployment peaking at 46.6 per cent in the third quarter of 2017.

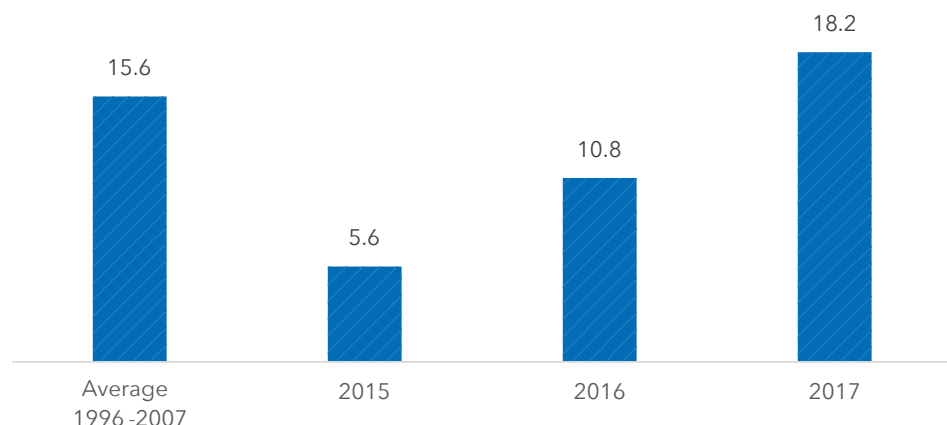
Agricultural exports from Gaza have improved significantly during the past two years following the lifting of the Israeli ban on the marketing of goods from Gaza to the West Bank (with the exception of potatoes), and a monthly export quota of 50 tons of eggplants and 350 tons of tomatoes to Israel, introduced after the 2014 ceasefire.

Revenues from the sale of Gaza agricultural products outside the Strip reached a record level of US\$18.2 million in November 2017. This is above the average of \$15.6 million per year recorded over the period 1996 to 2007, prior to the imposition of the blockade.

The bulk of the increase in sales during 2017 was recorded from sales to the West Bank (83 per cent growth), while exports to Jordan and Israel increased by 21 and 12 per cent respectively. Jordan has been a key market for Gazan potatoes and imported 2,236 tons compared with only 420 tons in 2016. The EU market for Gazan dates commenced in November 2017 when around 20 tons of dates were exported to Germany.

On 23 November 2017, the first shipment of 1.2 tons of strawberries left Gaza for the West Bank. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, 908 dunums of strawberries were cultivated this season, an increase of 65 per cent compared with the 2016-17 season. As a result, total production is expected to reach 2,800 tons. Expansion in the area of land planted has been encouraged by the positive results of strawberry exports in 2016-17 following the removal of the restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities during the 2014 and 2015 seasons. Exports are expected to follow last season's distribution patterns (2016-2017) when some 79 per cent of strawberry production was traded to the West Bank, 14 per cent to Europe and nearly 8 per cent to Russia.

**Revenues from agricultural trade from Gaza
in millions of US\$ (Jan-Nov)**



Total revenues from external sales in January-November 2017 were over 60 per cent higher than in the same period of 2016, when revenues increased by 102% compared with 2015. Growth during these years is mainly due to the larger quantities traded, and to a lesser extent to increases in the sale price.³

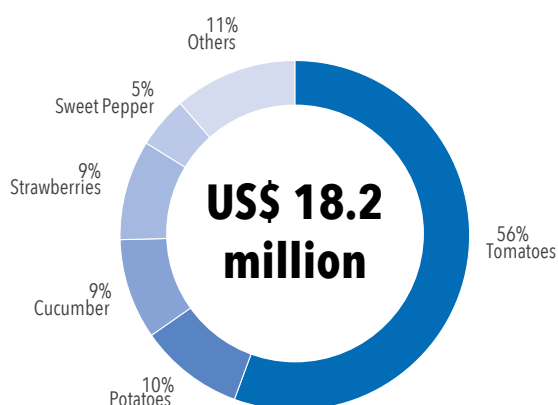
Despite overall growth, there were significant fluctuations during 2017: trade grew very fast between January and May 2017 versus the same period in 2016, slowed down in the period from June to September, and resumed growth in October and November (compared with the same months in 2016). Although detailed information on production costs is not available, it is likely that the limited availability of electricity was a major factor in the slowdown of exports during the summer period. Similarly, available information does not allow for analysis of how the increased revenues from agricultural trade were distributed between traders and farmers.

Accounting for 4.5 per cent of the Gaza Strip's GDP⁴ and employing 5.8 per cent of its workforce,⁵ agriculture remains a key sector of the Gazan economy that could contribute to reducing high unemployment and food insecurity. The potential of this sector could be boosted by a range of measures to improve the competitiveness of Gazan produce in the West Bank and international markets, including:

- Increasing the electricity supply needed to operate irrigation systems and expand cold storage capacity;
- Simplify and streamline border controls for products exported to all destinations, including reducing waiting times and providing shaded areas for produce at the Kerem Shalom crossings;
- Improving access to agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and irrigation pipes;
- Increasing the height of permitted cargo pallets from 1.6 to 1.9 metres in line with international standards;

Accounting for 4.5 per cent of the Gaza Strip's GDP and employing 5.8 per cent of its workforce, agriculture remains a key sector of the Gazan economy that could contribute to reducing high unemployment and food insecurity. The potential of this sector could be boosted by a range of measures to improve its competitiveness.

EXPORTS/TRANSFERS IN 2017 BY TYPE IN US\$



COERCIVE ENVIRONMENT INTENSIFIED ON HERDING COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHERN HEBRON

Intense military training exercises over the past two months and the obstruction of key access routes have exacerbated the coercive environment imposed on approximately 1,300 residents of 12 Palestinian herding communities in southern Hebron.

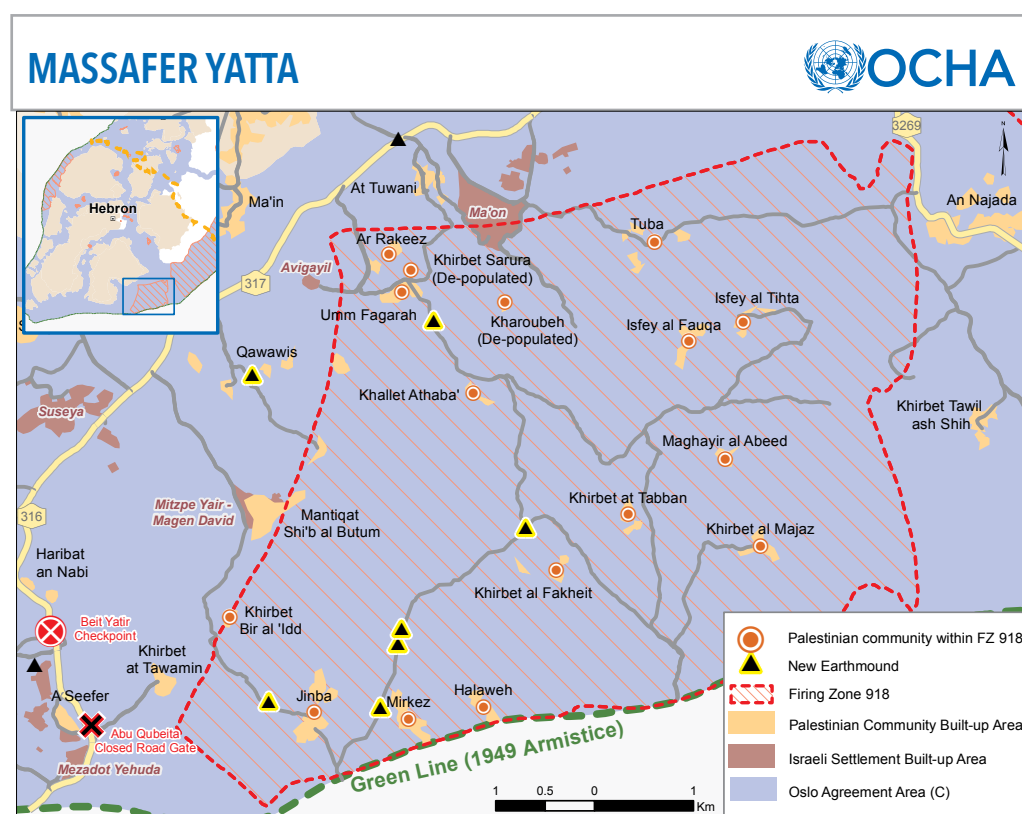
In the 1980s the area, known as Massafer Yatta, was designated by the Israeli authorities as a closed military zone for training (Firing Zone 918) and they have sought to remove the communities on this basis. Residents have been subjected to a range of policies and practices that have undermined their physical security and sources of livelihood, and which heighten the risk of forcible transfer from the area.

The latest round of military exercises, which began in September 2017 and have continued into November, involve military helicopters flying over and landing within a radius of one kilometre of four communities: Tuba, Majaz, Isfey at Tahta and Isfey al Fouqa, where over 400 people live. Most of the incidents have taken place during daylight hours.

Residents have reported that the constant noise of helicopters and presence of troops on the ground has had an intimidating effect, disrupted access to grazing areas, and triggered anxiety and fear among children. The wind generated by the helicopters also resulted in minor property losses such as animal fodder being blown away.

On 10 November, the Israel military blocked three of the four dirt roads leading to and from the closed area. This action prevented access by the residents to basic services, water in particular. The Israeli authorities did not provide any explanation for this measure.

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As the area is designated as a firing zone and lacks adequate planning by the Israeli authorities, these communities are not connected to the water network. To meet their domestic and livestock water needs, residents rely on rainwater collection (when available) through traditional water cisterns, and on water tankers from filling points located outside the closed area. In recent years, water supplies from the latter source have been supported by humanitarian agencies through a voucher programme that subsidizes the cost of water paid by beneficiaries (NIS 10 per cubic metre, which is still more than twice the price of piped water). During 2017, this voucher programme has been funded by the oPt Humanitarian Fund.

The recent closures have impeded or prevented water deliveries to the area. Supply to the three most southern communities, Jinba, Mirkez and al Halaweh, home to approximately 460 people, has come to a halt since the blocking of the roads as the area is inaccessible to water tankers. Households in these communities whose water reserves were exhausted have transported water from Israel, at higher costs, and at risk of being arrested or fined for illegal entry into Israel. Following some delays, deliveries to the other communities in the areas have resumed but the drivers of water tankers are forced to use longer and more precarious routes.

The new closures have also caused disruptions in the four primary schools in the area. All the teachers travel from the nearby town of Yatta, outside the area. Faced with longer journeys, teachers have been delayed and have been forced to cancel classes. Some children have been unable to reach their schools located outside the closed area.

Two of four mobile health clinics in the area, located in the communities of Jinba and Mirkez, were unable to operate for two weeks due to access difficulties faced by the medical team until the residents opened an alternative dirt road.

“Forcible transfer does not necessarily require the use of physical force by authorities, but may be triggered by specific circumstances that leave individuals or communities with no choice but to leave; this is known as a coercive environment.”

UN Secretary General
March, 2017

COERCIVE ENVIRONMENT AND FORCIBLE TRANSFER- A REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL⁶

“International humanitarian law not only prohibits the transfer of the population of the occupying State into the occupied territory, but also individual or mass forcible transfer or deportation of the population of an occupied territory regardless of the motive. Such transfer amounts to a grave breach of the Geneva Convention and is also considered a war crime.”

“Forcible transfer does not necessarily require the use of physical force by authorities, but may be triggered by specific circumstances that leave individuals or communities with no choice but to leave; this is known as a coercive environment. Such transfer is considered forcible, except where the affected persons provide their genuine and fully informed consent. However, genuine consent to a transfer cannot be presumed in an environment marked by the use or threat of physical force, coercion, fear of violence, or duress.”

Most of the homes, animal shelters, cisterns and community infrastructure in Massafer Yatta have been issued with a 'demolition' or 'stop work' order by the Israeli authorities on the grounds that they were built without a building permit. However, the designation of the area as a firing zone means that such permits are impossible to obtain. In October 2017, the authorities demolished two homes, one of which had been provided as assistance in response to a previous demolition, and an agriculture structure, in the communities of Halawe and ar Rakeez.

Since the 1970s, Israel has declared some 18 per cent of the West Bank, or nearly 30 per cent of Area C, as firing zones for military training. Presence in these zones is prohibited by military order unless special permission is granted. Despite this prohibition, there are 38 small Palestinian herding communities (12 of them in Massafer Yatta) with a population of over 6,200, located within these zones. Many of these communities existed in the area prior to its closure.

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OLIVE HARVEST MARKED BY ACCESS AND PROTECTION CONCERNS

The 2017 olive harvest season, which lasted roughly from mid-September to mid-November, was reported to have proceeded relatively smoothly. However, an increase in incidents of settler violence, including theft of and damage to olive trees, and restrictions on access to olive groves behind the Barrier and near Israeli settlements, continue to pose challenges for Palestinian farmers.

The annual olive harvest is a key economic, social and cultural event for Palestinians. More than 10 million olive trees are cultivated on approximately 86,000 hectares of land, representing 47 per cent of the total cultivated area for agriculture. Olive and olive oil production is concentrated in the north and northwest of the West Bank. Between 80,000 and 100,000 families are said to rely on olives and olive oil for primary or secondary sources of income, and the sector employs large numbers of unskilled labourers and more than 15 per cent of working women. The entire olive sub-sector, including olive oil, table olives, pickles and soap, is worth between \$160 and \$191 million in good years.⁷ This year's yield is projected to be 19,000-20,000 MT (metric tons) of oil – higher than the 16,000 MT in 2016, but lower than the 21,000 MT in 2015 and the 24,000 MT in 2014 – and is worth between \$114 million and \$120 million.

Increase in settler violence and damage to olive trees

Olive-based livelihoods in many areas of the West Bank are undermined by Israeli settlers who uproot and vandalize olive trees, and by intimidation and the physical assault of farmers during the harvest itself. Consequently, a protective presence is provided in certain parts of the West Bank under the coordination of the Protection cluster (see box).

During this olive season (mid-September to mid-November) the number of Palestinian-owned olive trees vandalized by Israeli settlers more than doubled: 5,582 trees were damaged compared with 1,652 during the 2016 season. The majority of incidents were



Protection cluster has contributed to this section

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© Photo by OCHA

Palestinian farmers picking olives in land near Alon Moreh settlement requiring access coordination, Azmut village, October 31, 2017.

reported in Bethlehem governorate (around 2,200 trees), especially in al Khader village, followed by Nablus district. Palestinian farmers reported that when they visited their land, after being granted approval, they found that the produce of some 3,200 olive trees had been harvested and stolen.

Overall, after a decline in recent years, settler-related violence rose in 2017. There were 156 incidents that resulted in Palestinian casualties or damage to Palestinian property by the end of November compared with 107 in all of 2016. This increase coincides with a significant rise in Palestinian attacks against Israelis during this period. Concerns persist about the holding of violent settlers accountable (see box).

The 'Prior Coordination' and Permit Systems

The presence of settlements restricts access to Palestinian land for cultivation purposes. Approximately 90 Palestinian communities own land within or in the vicinity of 56 Israeli settlements and settlement outposts. Farmers can only access their land by means of 'prior coordination' with the Israeli authorities. Access is generally only permitted for a limited number of days during the harvest and ploughing seasons. This system was in force during this year's olive harvest but, as in previous years, many Palestinian farmers complained that the period of time allocated was insufficient, or that the Israeli army did not arrive at the designated time, leaving farmers insecure and vulnerable to attacks by settlers.

Palestinian farmers also require special permits or prior coordination to access farming land designated as 'closed' between the Barrier and the Green Line. If granted approval, farmers have to cross designated Barrier gates or checkpoints to reach the closed area.

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PREVENTIVE MEASURES BY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

For the sixth successive year, the Protection cluster, via the Settler Violence Core Group (SVCG) chaired by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Premiere Urgence Internationale, has coordinated the deployment of a protective presence to support Palestinian farmers and their families during the olive harvest. This year, SVCG members identified 70 locations across the West Bank most affected or at risk of settler violence. The SVCG coordinated coverage of these locations by 19 organizations, including coordination of a protective presence during the olive harvest; the monitoring and documentation of incidents of settler violence; information and monitoring tools for volunteers; and ensuring the referral of cases for protection responses, including legal aid and a psycho-social response.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SETTLER VIOLENCE

The prevalence of Israeli settler violence, particularly the vandalism of olive trees, is closely linked to inadequate law enforcement by the Israeli authorities. During the 2013- 2015 olive harvests, the Israeli organization Yesh Din documented a total of 53 harvest-related offenses: 10 of crop theft, 25 vandalism of trees and 18 of harvest disruption. Of these, 26 complaints were filed with the Israeli police but only one resulted in an indictment. In 18 cases, the investigation was closed without an indictment, the majority (15) on the grounds of "offender unknown."⁸ In total, of 289 cases of ideologically motivated offenses tracked by Yesh Din between 2013 and 2016, only 20 led to the indictment of offenders.⁹

During this year's olive harvest, 76 gates¹⁰ were designated for agricultural access, down from 84 last year. Of these, 54 only open during the few weeks of the olive harvest, and only for a limited period of time on those days, and are closed for the remainder of the year. An additional 10 gates are considered 'weekly' in that they open for some day(s) of the week throughout the year in addition to the olive season. Only 12 gates along the completed 465 kilometres of the Barrier open daily, although this is an increase over the nine gates open on a daily basis in recent years. Of the 76 gates, 56 require access permits and 20 operate via prior coordination.

In the northern West Bank (Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqiliya and Salfit governorates) where the majority of Barrier gates (47) and the only crossings which open on a daily basis are located, the approval rate for permit applications fell slightly from 58 per cent in 2016 to 55 per cent this olive harvest, for a total of 12,582 permits granted. However, over 10,700 applications by farmers for this olive harvest were rejected or still pending by the end of the olive harvest.

2017 OLIVE HARVEST

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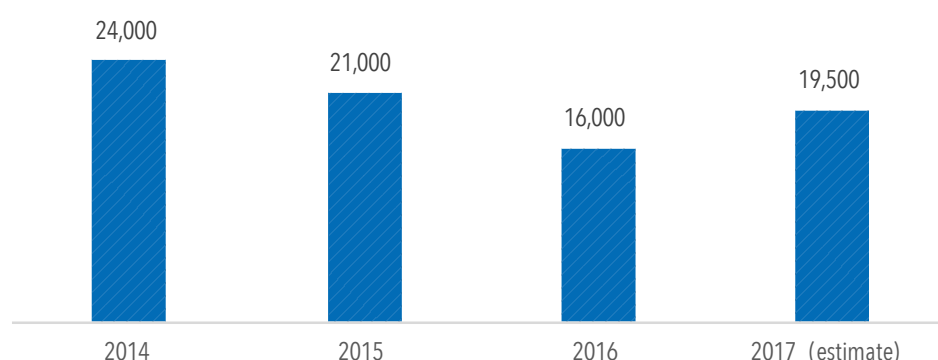
54 gates are open during the few weeks of the olive harvest, and only for a limited period of time, and are closed for the remainder of the year.

10 additional gates are considered 'weekly' in that they open for some day(s) of the week throughout the year in addition to the olive season.

12 gates along the completed 465 kilometres of the Barrier open daily

56 require access permits and 20 operate via prior coordination.

OLIVE OIL YIELD IN WEST BANK IN METRIC TONNES



In Ramallah governorate only 10 gates operated, all seasonal, compared with 18 last year. Approval for permits fell to 59 per cent versus 79 per cent in 2016 and 2015: there were 657 approvals from 1,113 applicants. In Jerusalem governorate, nine of the 13 gates operate via prior coordination. A total of 1,517 people applied for coordination to access their land behind the Barrier, up from 1,368 in 2016 and 1,350 in 2015. For the four gates that require permits, 67 people applied, of whom 59 received approval.

In the Ramallah and Jerusalem districts, farmers again complained about the lack of midday gate openings; no access on Fridays and Saturdays when they could dedicate more time to harvesting the olives; and gates placed too far from the land they wanted to access, particularly as the entry of tractors is not generally approved. Most landowners reported that olive trees and land behind the Barrier were in poor condition due to the lack of year-round access, and that the lengthy and cumbersome permit and prior coordination system discouraged applicants.

In Bethlehem governorate, the three gates are seasonal and operate via prior coordination. The Wad Dahshish gate did not open in the 2016 olive harvest because the 160 landowners refused to provide ownership documents as a requirement to access their land behind the Barrier. This year, only 15 applied and they succeeded in accessing their land with prior coordination without providing ownership documents. In Hebron governorate, six gates require permits and were opened for three weeks from 16 October to 23 November: 537 out of 663 (81 per cent) of permit applications were approved.

Impact of access restrictions on olive productivity

Access restrictions to land behind the Barrier and in the vicinity of settlements impede essential year-round agricultural activities such as ploughing, pruning, fertilizing, and pest and weed management. As a result, there is an adverse impact on olive productivity and value. Data collected by OCHA over the last four years in the northern West Bank show that the yield of olive trees in the area between the Barrier and the Green Line has reduced by approximately 55-65 per cent in comparison with equivalent trees in areas which can be accessed all year round.¹¹

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ENDNOTES

1. There are 37,649 students and teachers registered at 38 UNRWA-administered schools, and 31,233 students and teachers registered at 27 public schools.
2. For further details, see <https://grm.report/#/Sectors/Detail/Water>
3. The value of exports increased by 29 per cent in 2016 over 2015, while in 2017 the unit export value increased only marginally by 4 per cent over 2016.
4. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016. National Accounts at Current and Constant Prices, 2015. Ramallah – Palestine.
5. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017. Labour Force Survey: Annual Report: 2017. Ramallah - Palestine.
6. Report of the Secretary General, Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, A/HRC 16, 34/39/March, 2017 paras 22, 27.
7. PALTRADE, *The State of Palestine National Export Strategy: Olive Oil, Sector Export Strategy 2014-2018*, pp. 5-9. In a typical year, approximately 75 per cent of olive oil is absorbed by the domestic market, 14 per cent is exported to Arab markets and eight per cent is exported to Israel.
8. Five cases are still being investigated; two cases involved incidents documented by a different organization and Yesh Din has not been informed of their status. Yesh Din, Disruptions to the Olive Harvest in the West Bank, November 2016. According to Yesh Din, over 96 per cent of complaints filed with the Israeli police between 2005 and 2014 regarding deliberate damage to Palestinian-owned trees by Israeli settlers, and followed up by the organization, were closed without an indictment. <http://www.yesh-din.org/infoitem.asp?infocatid=633>
9. "This failure manifests in the incapacity of police investigators to locate offenders or collect evidence in order to put suspects on trial." Yesh Din Data sheet: *Law enforcement on Israeli civilians suspected of harming Palestinians and their property. March 2017.* <https://www.yesh-din.org/en/march-2017-data-sheet-law-enforcement-israeli-civilians-suspected-harming-palestinians-property/>
10. This figure excludes Barrier checkpoints which are not used to access agricultural land but by residents of the "Seam Zone" to reach workplaces and essential services in the rest of the West Bank.
11. For further details on the methodology used for data collection, see February Humanitarian Bulletin 2014, p 12. Link: <https://www.ochaopt.org/2014/agricultural-productivity>