

**INTER – AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE – WORKING GROUP  
49th MEETING**

**19-20 June 2002**

**at**

**International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: Auditorium**

**In-Depth Country Review--Occupied Palestinian Territory: Background Note on  
Humanitarian Coordination Update—prepared by UNRWA/OCHA**

Circulated: 14 June 2002

The critical socio-economic situation prevailing in the oPt has not thus far reached the proportions of a full-fledged humanitarian crisis due to the massive macro-economic support of donor countries and to the remarkable resilience of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and other national and international service providers (most notably UNRWA). However, the relief efforts and the PA social services provision have not completely offset the effects of active warfare, closures/isolation and growing poverty.

The aggregate effects of the past 21 months of violence - compounded with the currently enacted mobility restrictions regimes and the recent massive destruction of production factors, individual assets and public infrastructure - have brought about qualitatively new humanitarian trends. These trends indicate at an alarming decline in the living standards of the majority of Palestinians. Given the current level of violence and total external and quasi-total internal closures strangulating the Palestinian economy and Palestinian administration, the negative humanitarian dynamics are expected to grow, possibly exponentially.

The bleak outlook and the recently announced additional restrictions on movement of persons, goods and relief and service providers render pessimistic the prognosis of the humanitarian situation in the medium and short term highly.

If the current closure regime remains unchanged, dramatic humanitarian consequences are expected to occur by the end of summer 2002:

- The severe slump of the Palestinian economy, which is already close to collapse, will be accelerated;
- The ratio of Palestinians living in absolute poverty will sharply increase – currently this ratio reaches the alarming level of 40-60 percent;
- Tighter movement restrictions will further complicate and, in many cases, prevent the prompt delivery of basic and urgent social and health services, putting in danger the lives of many in the West Bank and Gaza.
- The response capacity of PA and its specialized services will further decline; thus reducing the national/international crisis management tools to humanitarian aid exclusively;
- Donor development assistance will come to a complete standstill as the absolute majority of resources will be diverted to humanitarian relief. However, movement restrictions currently imposed on relief operators are expected to curtail their response capacities to such an extent that major humanitarian consequences will be difficult to avert.

The assessments recently conducted by relief agencies suggest vulnerability rates are already on the rise. The already traditional distinction between the refugee and non-refugee vulnerability is being increasingly blurred. While multi-sector emergency assistance programs implemented by UNRWA help to maintain the overall stability of the refugee population, the coping mechanisms of non-refugees or residents are significantly diminished, as instanced by the recent WFP study that identified some 620,000 food vulnerable among non-refugee Palestinians.

While the socio-economic factors, such as increasing unemployment, falling PA consumption, the widening budget deficit and the PA's large and growing debt to the private sector, continue to constitute driving forces behind the decline in the living conditions, the isolation and closures accelerate the incidence of vulnerability.

While a humanitarian crisis in its classical sense is still looming, the relief community in oPt is already facing a crisis of humanitarianism, when basic notions of humanism are repeatedly defied and disrespected, and those who are mandated to bring relief to the needy are prevented from carrying out their mission, often violently.

A common humanitarian action plan recently launched by a number of UN organizations, international NGOs and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society identified a series of humanitarian activities to maintain certain stability in living conditions of the "closure-affected" population. A total budget of 47.3 million US dollars is required to implement a number of emergency interventions ranging from food and water distributions to psychosocial support to traumatized children. This sum represents the net increase in funding requirements to address the "qualitative changes" that emerged as a result of the resent upsurge of violence in the West Bank.

Agency	Amount required USD
UNRWA <sup>1</sup>	8,485,500
WFP	18,300,000
CARE	5,600,000
UNFPA	3,596,990
WHO	1,269,000
SCF	2,652,500
UNICEF	3,100,000
PRCS	1,280,000
WVI	1,000,000
OCHA	1,012,000
MAP	800,000
OXFAM GB	256,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>47,351,990</b>

While the donor support to aid projects remains high, currently there are funding shortfalls for humanitarian interventions. Of particular concern is the large budget deficit of UNRWA that provides emergency humanitarian aid to over 1.2 million refugees throughout oPt. The Agency currently requires some 188 million US dollars to meet the urgent needs and to reconstruct refugee camps (including housing) and its own infrastructure damaged destroyed in March-May 2002.

<sup>1</sup> The total requirements of UNRWA to meet the reconstruction/rehabilitation needs stand at over US \$ 70 million. The infrastructure and shelter rehabilitation activities of UNRWA are included in the infrastructure damage report of LACC/Donor Support Group. This report covers exclusively humanitarian activities (food, health, temporary shelter) and their funding requirements.