

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PALESTINE

The activities proposed hereafter are still subject to the adoption of the financing decision ECHO/WWD/ BUD/2015/01000

AMOUNT: EUR 25 000 000

1. CONTEXT

The long standing political stalemate in the Middle East Process (MEPP) and the policies of Israel have resulted in a protracted **protection crisis with humanitarian consequences** caused by prolonged occupation and **recurrent violations of international humanitarian law (IHL)** and International Human Rights Law (IHRL).

Humanitarian agencies have witnessed in the past year the **shrinking of their humanitarian operating space** and the reduction of their ability to respond to needs on the ground. In January 2014, the ICRC was compelled to partly withdraw from its emergency response to demolitions in the Jordan Valley as a result of the increased pressure from the Government of Israel (GoI) on response to demolitions in Area C (a humanitarian response considered illegal by the GoI). Regular denial and impediments on access of humanitarian workers and relief assistance to Gaza were also witnessed throughout 2014.

The expansion of Israeli settlements in the **West Bank**, which are considered illegal under International Law, has contributed to an increase in demolitions of private Palestinian property, deterioration of access to basic services, increase in settler violence, and restrictions on movement and access, which all lead to forcible displacement.

The **Gaza Strip** has suffered three wars in seven years. In the meantime, the collective punishment of the civilian population continues for the eighth year in a row due to the blockade imposed by the GoI, which is in breach of its obligation under IHL. This blockade translates into a situation of continuous economic de-development with consequent increase of vulnerabilities. Unless normal movement of people and goods is allowed to resume there will be no fundamental change in the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

Periodic shocks – whether internal or external –spark off humanitarian crises, as witnessed during Israel's 'Protective Edge' operation which started on 7 July 2014 and ended on 26 August, following an open-ended ceasefire that was brokered by the Egyptian government and agreed by the armed groups in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority and Israel. After fifty days of fighting, at least 2 100 Palestinians were killed, of which over 500 were children. The unprecedented damages to public infrastructures and private properties has further deteriorated the living conditions of the Gaza population.

For Palestine, ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework for 2014-15 (conducted in June 2014) identified moderate humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip. However, primarily due to repeated violations of IHL, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip dramatically deteriorated following the military escalation in July-August 2014. Meanwhile, the analysis of the humanitarian situation under UN coordination is underway. The massive destruction of private property including homes and agricultural lands has resulted in

internal displacement and serious loss of livelihoods for the Gaza population. For the West Bank, ECHO's¹ Integrated Analysis Framework for 2014-15 identified low humanitarian needs. However, the concerns regarding IHL violations and protection needs remain very high.

In the GNA², the vulnerability Index of Palestine is 2 and for the Crisis Index 3. Palestine is ranked 107 in UNDP's HDI.

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

- 1) Potential beneficiaries are the Palestinian population who are affected by IHL violations.
 - The 1.76 million inhabitants³ living in the Gaza Strip under a tight indiscriminate economic and physical blockade imposed by Israel and tightened by the Egyptian Authorities. More specifically, the people that have been directly affected by the military operation in July-August 2014, who may still be in need of humanitarian assistance in the mid-term. Over 100 000 Palestinians have had their homes destroyed beyond repair. Before the ceasefire, almost 500 000 people were displaced (more than 25% of the Gaza population). Following the ceasefire, many displaced families moved out of the UN or Government shelters to return to what is left of their homes or to seek refuge with host families or elsewhere.
 - Additionally, potential vulnerable categories of the population that could be exposed to protection threats, including fishermen and small farmers working in the Access Restricted Areas (ARA) and permissible fishing areas. Access and rehabilitation to agricultural lands are seriously compounded by remnants of war and the demolitions of agricultural assets (roads, wells, greenhouses...) resulting in an unprecedented decrease of livelihood opportunities in rural areas.
 - 297 000 Palestinians⁴ living in Area C, specifically communities having difficulty accessing their land because of settler violence and the expansion of settlements; communities affected by (or at risk of) demolition and confiscation of private property and whose livelihoods are at risk of forcible transfer; this includes communities in the Jerusalem Periphery and the E1 block.
 - The 11 000 Palestinians⁵ living in Seam Zones (between Israel's separation barrier and the 1967 Green Line) which are cut off from public services and are impeded in their free access to land and property.

¹ European Commission's Directorate- General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection - ECHO

² <http://echo-global-vulnerability-and-crisis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

³ PCBS, Demographic and Population Statistics, July-September 2013.

⁴ Area C vulnerability profile, UNOCHA – in the spotlight – March 2014

⁵ UNOCHA, The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier, Fact sheet July 2013

- The 293 000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, notably the 93 100 at risk of house demolition and evictions, and families at risk of forced transfer who will also lose their livelihoods⁶.

2) Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

The prolonged and entrenched nature of the Israeli occupation has resulted in the long term denial of the most basic rights of the Palestinian people. Although all parties to the conflict are bound by international law, violations of IHL most significantly include the complete blockade on the Gaza Strip for the eighth year in a row and the cyclical shocks resulting from military escalations, the establishment and expansion of settlements through the destruction and confiscation of property, restrictions on movement, and exploitation of natural resources. These violations contribute to a coercive environment that can lead to progressive isolation and deprivation as well as to the forcible transfer of the Palestinian population, a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions.⁷

The policy of occupation by Israel is the prime cause of the increased socio-economic vulnerability of Palestinian populations. The civilian population in the **Gaza Strip** continues to be subject to a collective punishment due to the all-out blockade by Israel on access and movement. This has had serious social and humanitarian consequences for many of its 1.8 million inhabitants. The situation has deteriorated further in recent months as a result of the closure of the majority of tunnels between Egypt and Gaza and most importantly by the latest military operation with serious consequences on the civilian population (the 3rd and most devastating shock in 7 years). Before the latest military escalation, Gaza was already facing a detrimental decline across all aspects of life with power outages across Gaza for up to six hours a day which has resulted in the closure of sewage pumping operations and reduced access to clean water. Furthermore, Gaza was suffering from a reduction in medical supplies and equipment, the cessation of imports of construction materials, rising unemployment, and lack of access to livelihoods especially in the ARA. The latest military escalation seriously exacerbated an already precarious situation, which is the result of a structural and chronic crisis. In fact, the gradual impoverishment of the average Gazan household is witnessed by a steady loss of coping mechanisms coupled with the weakening resilience of essential services. The situation is volatile and the population is more vulnerable if there were to be any further rise in tension or violence.⁸

In the **West Bank**, the Palestinian population is suffering from progressive fragmentation and isolation. This can be attributed to the ongoing seizure of Palestinian land as well as encroachment on Palestinian farming land and water resources for the purpose of Israeli settlement construction.⁹ The Palestinian population in Area C and East Jerusalem (about half a million) are subject to economic deprivation with severely limited access to basic

⁶ East Jerusalem; key Humanitarian Concerns, UNOCHA, Update December 2012

⁷ Rule of Law: A Veil of Compliance in Israel and the oPt 2010-2013 - Diakonia

⁸ Gaza under pressure – ICRC – April 2014. <http://blogs.icrc.org/ilot/2014/04/13/gaza-under-pressure-gazans-require-much-improved-access-to-essential-supplies/>

⁹ Increase of 123% in 2013 compared to 2012.

services (water, food, health, schooling) due to a multi-layer Israeli system of restrictions and obstacles; and in many cases the population is subject to displacement and dispossession of their land and housing through forced evictions and home demolitions.

The recent trend in mass demolitions (i.e. community demolitions vs. single households) has become a worrying development in 2014.¹⁰ In comparison between 2013 and 2014, there has been a 13 percent rise in demolitions and a 33 percent rise in people displaced.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

1) National / local response and involvement

The Palestinian National Development Plan (PNDP) 2014-2016 confirms that priority areas are governance, social sectors, economic sectors and infrastructure. The PA focus is shifting since 2011 from state-building focused on areas under its direct jurisdiction to Area C which is expected to become the backbone of the Palestinian economy despite the fact that it is exclusively under the control of the GoI. The PNDP will also focus on East Jerusalem with the purpose of enhancing the resilience of its Palestinian residents and to prevent the population from being further coerced into leaving the city.

Following Protective Edge operation, the PA has launched a two tracks initiative to support early recovery in Gaza:

- A 100 days plan initiating early recovery activities as soon as feasible, alongside immediate relief activities
- An Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (2 years), presented at the International Donor Conference, which took place in Cairo on 12 October 2014.

2) International Humanitarian Response

The UN 2014 Humanitarian Strategic Response Plan (SRP) amounts to USD 390 million (compared to USD 400 million in 2013) of which USD 270 million are dedicated to food assistance/social safety net. In presenting the needs, the 2014 SRP remains broad and should better capture the protection crisis in Palestine.

The Socio Economic and Food Security Survey (SEFSec), one of the main assessment tools used by the SRP, is used to capture key rates and trends while providing limited analysis on the protection elements needed to inform humanitarian programming suited for the Palestinian protection crisis. Moreover, an internal technical review of the assessment tool in 2014 highlighted the inadequacy of the used methodology in correctly measuring food insecurity rates.

The updated Gaza Flash Appeal, released on 9 September 2014, amounts to USD 551 million, of which USD 268 million for food assistance (48.6% of the appeal) and USD 159 million for shelters and NFI (28.8% of the appeal).

¹⁰ CSAWGD/AIDA. Demolition and Displacement Figures. June 1, 2014.

3) Constraints and ECHO response capacity

ECHO analysis prior to the July 2014 escalation, highlighted that despite the constant deterioration of the general situation, conventional humanitarian indicators remained above global and regional emergency thresholds and averages; thereby indicating the absence of a humanitarian emergency. Since the needs assessment tools currently used in Palestine are still not contextualized enough to better inform humanitarian programming with protection mainstreaming/integration as the main component for analysis, ECHO has been encouraging and contributing – technically and financially to the development of better suited tools to capture the needs of the current protection crisis.

During the past years, the humanitarian space has seriously deteriorated with increasing difficulties faced by ECHO partners in delivering humanitarian assistance. The provision of humanitarian assistance by humanitarian actors working in Area C communities could be subject to criminal prosecution by the GoI, according to recent Israeli policy.¹¹ This development could pose an additional significant risk to the international community's provision of humanitarian assistance to Area C communities.

Israeli Authorities are increasingly hindering access of humanitarian actors in and out of the Gaza Strip through denial of permits and detention of humanitarian aid staff. Following increased needs due to the July August 2014 escalation, the access of humanitarian staff as well as relief materials will be one of the crucial bottlenecks to be addressed with the Israeli authorities in order to ensure an efficient humanitarian response in Gaza. In case access impediments as witnessed before the military operation remain, this will directly affect the expected standards of implementation and follow up of ECHO projects.

The current coordination system in Palestine was created seven years ago in response to the military operation “Cast Lead” on the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, this system is not geared enough towards a protection crisis with humanitarian consequences which is expected to foster the needed accountability, transparency and effectiveness with the proper inclusion of national bodies and authorities. In Gaza, the GoI impediments on OCHA access to the Strip has not facilitated the scaling-up of the coordination structure during the recent military escalation. Considering the level of needs resulting from the operation Protective Edge, increased presence of coordination staff in Gaza should be supported in the short-run and for a limited period of time to follow-up the humanitarian response. This coordination should be done inclusive of national authorities as well as local service providers (such as CMWU for water issues for instance), should address the humanitarian needs in multi-sectorial approach and be aligned as much as possible with longer term reconstruction plans.

¹¹ West Bank Demolition and Displacement: An overview – UN OCHA – May 2014.

- 4) Envisaged ECHO response and expected results of humanitarian aid interventions.

Envisaged ECHO response:

ECHO strategy in Palestine will continue its focus on its core humanitarian mandate through increasing emphasis on protection and emergency concerns, namely **emergency preparedness and response, and humanitarian advocacy**. Accordingly, ECHO partners are expected to provide humanitarian assistance, **established on needs-based evidence** and aimed at ensuring protection against violations of IHL and possibly preventing violations from happening, under the overall framework of IHL.

Strategic partnerships are essential and will be sought with ECHO partners who have the capacities and the mandate to consolidate efforts - in the form of **consortia** - to **scale up emergency response** activities in response to humanitarian crisis.

Emergency Response and Emergency Preparedness:

Gaza Strip:

In Gaza Strip, ECHO will continue focusing its interventions around its core humanitarian mandate “emergency preparedness and response” to the recurrent shocks affecting segments of the population that are suffering from humanitarian consequences of the violations of IHL.

The response to humanitarian needs resulting from operation Protective Edge should address the most urgent needs in terms of access to emergency shelter and basic services such as water and sanitation, health and protection.

Following the systematic destruction of water facilities in various locations of the Gaza Strip during Operation Protective Edge, ECHO will increase its support to those partners who have proven effective capacity to respond to emergency **WASH** needs (essential repair, rehabilitation, operation and maintenance) at municipal and community levels. ECHO partners are requested to constantly monitor the situation in Gaza while strengthening readiness to respond to possible emergencies together with national bodies like the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) and the Palestinian Water Authorities (PWA).

Union funded **health** interventions will be geared towards “emergency medical services”. This will be achieved through the support of ICRC operation aiming at enhancing health emergency preparedness and response.

ECHO will continue to prioritize other alternatives to in-kind food aid while encouraging other donors to address the structural/chronic food insecurity resulting from the blockade with appropriate instruments/modalities. According to ECHO, **cash and vouchers-based interventions** are feasible in Gaza as it is already implemented successfully by some UN and INGO partners. Those partners confirmed that despite the strangled economy of Gaza due to the blockade and the latest military escalation, food is available in the market. This modality would increase the range of possibilities available to humanitarian organisation in

emergencies as well as promoting more dignity and empowerment of the affected population in the delivery of assistance. In terms of preparedness, ECHO strategy aims at: 1) increasing capacities to respond to new emergencies by developing tools and systems (e.g. cash assistance, vouchers, etc.) 2) promoting effective contingency planning/preparedness of ECHO partners and 3) increasing the coordination capacity of lead agencies (including UN, National NGOs, Local Authorities).

West Bank:

In the West Bank, ECHO strategy will be implemented by reinforcing the response to demolitions, preventive legal measures to prevent destructions of Palestinian assets and increased resilience to IHL violations by providing targeted assistance to the most vulnerable communities to protection issues namely settler violence and forced displacement. This is expected to be implemented in full respect of the humanitarian principles and in line with the Humanitarian Imperative.

The emergency response mechanism in the West Bank has to be implemented within a **comprehensive needs-based approach** that would **ensure impartiality** of the response with a **transparent mechanism** within the existing humanitarian systems.

Most importantly is the operationalization of the Area C Policy Framework and the possibility to strengthen the accountability of the broader humanitarian system in Area C including donor agencies, UN and NGOs.

Humanitarian Advocacy:

Humanitarian advocacy needs to remain a pre-condition for ECHO partners in Palestine: the causes of the on-going deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the central issue of protection must be addressed through effective advocacy, by calling all parties to the respect of IHL. This is particularly important in the case of Gaza where advocacy should systematically complement the humanitarian response in order to address the blockade as the root cause of the humanitarian crisis.

Coordination:

ECHO will continue its support in areas where there is evident evolution towards the transition of the international humanitarian coordination mechanism in order to promote increased ownership of national authorities.

Effective coordination is essential. ECHO supports the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda (ITA)** and encourages partners to demonstrate their engagement in implementing its objectives, to take part in coordination mechanisms (e.g. Humanitarian Country Team/Clusters) and to allocate resources to foster the ITA roll-out. ECHO regrets the fact that it is not allowed to be present at HCT and at the Inter-clusters coordination meetings, which seriously hampers ECHO's capacities to contribute to and monitor the effectiveness of the coordination systems.

Expected results of humanitarian aid interventions:

Humanitarian assistance in Palestine is expected to address needs arising from violations of IHL and improve resilience to these violations, provide evidence-based advocacy through quality programming and promote humanitarian advocacy addressing IHL violations as the root cause of the humanitarian needs.

As IHL violations constitute the main trigger for humanitarian needs in other sectors, partners should ensure that the context analysis takes into account threats in addition to vulnerabilities and capacities. The analysis should bring out both external threats to the target population as well as the population's coping strategies adopted to counteract the vulnerabilities. Based on this analysis ECHO expects partners to design integrated programme responses, where protection actions will address needs in other sectors and where other sector actions will mitigate or increase resilience to protection risks. These responses must thus demonstrate how risks are reduced by reducing the threats and vulnerabilities and increasing the capacities.

In Gaza, the humanitarian response to urgent needs caused by the recent military escalation should pave the way to early recovery operation conducted under the auspices of the national authorities and the international community. All operations should be designed with the aim to avoid increased dependency of beneficiaries to humanitarian short-term delivery system. As far as emergency housing solution is concerned, every effort should be made to ensure full participation of targeted community in the design of the most appropriate response, systematic inclusion of public/private basic services (such as CMWU for WASH services) and a multi-sectorial approach to each specific local situation.

In the West Bank a consolidated and systematic humanitarian response mechanism to demolitions under the intercluster framework that is transparent, coherent, accountable, cost-effective and reactive is expected.

Increased scrutiny (i.e. risk/legal analysis) should promote "do no harm" in the delivery of assistance in order to ensure the safety and protection of beneficiaries rather than being counter protective and exposing them to further risk or danger.

Partners will be expected to ensure full compliance with **visibility** requirements and to acknowledge the funding role of the EU/ECHO, as set out in the applicable contractual arrangements.

4. LRRD, COORDINATION AND TRANSITION

During the last four years, the steady decrease of EU humanitarian funds to Palestine corresponds to a re-focus towards more support to protection of the people affected by IHL violations (demolitions, eviction, the blockade, settler's violence) and humanitarian advocacy while transferring classical service delivery to development instruments. Pending no serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation, this policy will be pursued in 2015.

Increased collaboration with the other EU instruments, will be guaranteed in order to transfer ECHO support to more structural and sustainable funding instruments.

1) Other ECHO interventions

In case of natural disasters or epidemics, according to the needs, other humanitarian actions could be financed either through the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) or under the HIP for small scale humanitarian response or the HIP for epidemics.

2) Other services/donors availability

The EU Heads of Mission report on Area C and Palestinian State Building from July 2011 proposed a rationale for EU interventions in Area C **while shifting the general approach from a purely humanitarian response to longer-term and development-oriented activities.**

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) of May 2012 proposed a comprehensive EU policy for Area C. It insisted on the needs to support social and economic developments in Area C and to improve access and control by the PA over Area C. The Foreign Affairs Council of April 2013 condemned the lack of progress in Area C and re-iterated the need of improved social and economic conditions for Palestinian populations in Area C and of a fundamental shift in Israelis policy toward Area C.

EU current programming takes all the above into consideration with the EU delegation in Palestine supporting related projects. Palestinian communities in Area C are supported in the development of statutory outline plans and investment plans for small scale infrastructure projects. The EU moreover funds the implementation of the infrastructure projects identified by the communities as priority interventions. The EU also supports Palestinian agro-businesses in Area C to enhance the access to and the utilisation of land and water with the aim to support agriculture growth and profitability. The EU and MS are also about to set up and run a comprehensive system of monitoring of demolitions, threat of demolitions, stop working orders by Isr authorities affecting their financed projects.

The necessary political support to encourage actions in East Jerusalem has also been regularly reiterated by the Council's conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process since 2010. Increased support is being provided from the EU to sustain and develop the living conditions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, with the aim to prevent the population from being further coerced into leaving the city, thus pre-empting possibilities for future talks on the final status of East Jerusalem. Within EU current programming targeted interventions are/will be yearly supported in the frame of a multisectoral non-focal sector. This included interventions in a wide range of sectors such as legal assistance, disability, socio-economic development and empowerment of vulnerable groups, protection and promotion of cultural identity. Other concomitant EU interventions

An additional EUR 5 million was provided in August 2014 to an existing programme under the Instrument for Stability (IfS) in support of socio-economic stabilization in Gaza. These new funds will address job creation where in cooperation with UNRWA short-term employment opportunities will be provided to over 16 000 inhabitants thereby reaching over 80 000 dependents. Support will also

be provided to refugee employment in fisheries and agriculture where in the latter at least 60 % of beneficiaries will be unskilled women. The action will also provide labour support to the private sector industries in food processing, wood and furniture, leather and garments and textile. The EU also established a window of PEGASE (direct financial support) to contribute to the expenses for referrals of the Palestinian EJ hospitals. In 2012-2014, EUR 36 million have been implemented to this aim.

Additional, actions supporting the protection and promotion of human rights and the socio-economic development of vulnerable groups are being implemented under the European Instrument for democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and Civil Society Thematic programme.

3) Exit scenario

While full transition to development assistance will only be possible when IHL is fully respected in Palestine, in the meantime, long-term chronic vulnerabilities would need to be addressed by development assistance. Moreover, humanitarian aid remains essential to improve access of the population to basic services during emergencies by supporting local structures and by developing emergency response capacities.