

To: Gold Crisis (Director, Consular)

**PS/PUS
PS/Minister Ellwood
PS Foreign Secretary**

From: [REDACTED] Head of Consular Assistance Department

Date: 1 August 2014

**SUBJECT: ASSISTANCE TO BRITISH NATIONALS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS IN
GAZA**

Issue

What assistance we should provide to British nationals and their dependants in Gaza who now wish to leave, further to earlier assisted departures.

Recommendation

That providing the situation on the ground permits, we facilitate exit for British nationals and their dependants via the Erez crossing, liaising with the Israeli and Jordanian authorities to secure agreement.

Timing

Immediate subject to Israeli agreement to the names we have submitted and there being a ceasefire sufficiently well observed for this to happen safely. The UN expect the earliest opportunity would be either Sunday 3 or more likely Monday 4 August, subject to there being a ceasefire sufficiently well observed for this to happen safely. It will only be possible for HMG staff to deploy to the Erez crossing if there is sufficient notice from the UN / Israel and if Post / ESD are content for staff to be in that area.

Comment

*This will be the third Assisted Departure from Gaza we will have facilitated in recent weeks. It is entirely dependent on a ceasefire durable for as long as it takes to get foreign nationals through Erez. They will then be transported to the Allenby Bridge border crossing into Jordan. The UN will be responsible for the transportation within Gaza, but Consul General colleagues will, subject to security considerations, provide assistance from Erez onwards,, initially an armoured vehicle convoy, switching to soft skin minibuses once out of the 40 km zone. Colleagues from Amman, Jordan, will then receive the group at the border and oversee (but not fund) their onward journey. This has worked twice before, and while conditions will have to be taken into account on the day, having agreement to these arrangements means we can start the planning now. **Joanna Roper, Director Consular***

Also agreed by [REDACTED]

Background

1. The security situation in Gaza remains grave with continuing rocket fire and attacks through tunnels by Hamas and other extremist groups, Israeli air strikes and some Israeli ground operations. We have advised against all travel to Gaza since December 2005 and we continue to advise that our ability to provide consular assistance is extremely limited. Since the current round of fighting began we have carried out two assisted departures already, on Sunday 13 and Sunday 20 July. [REDACTED]

2. There are two main exit points from Gaza: the Erez crossing into Israel and the Rafah crossing into Egypt. Mono British nationals may use the Erez crossing but dual nationals are usually not able to do so without permission from the Israeli Defence Forces. Rafah can be more easily used by dual nationals but is regularly closed without notice, the situation across the border in North Sinai is extremely hazardous and we are not able to provide direct support on the other side of the border in Egypt. The last dual British / Palestinian national in touch with us who managed to cross Rafah was on 30 July (though others may have done so under their own steam). On 1 August there was significant violence around the Rafah area with approximately 40 Palestinians killed.

3 [REDACTED]

4. [REDACTED]

Argument / Risks

Assistance to British nationals and their dependants

5. The presence of British nationals in Gaza who wish to leave presents an ongoing risk of death or injury, given the high casualty figures and lack of any safe areas. [REDACTED]

6. To be prepared for an assisted departure through Erez, we have put in place a robust operational plan on a contingency basis, including for onward travel. It would require a ceasefire to be sufficiently well observed that it is safe to proceed. Considerations include the safety of those being evacuated, of our staff and of other international personnel carrying out the operation. [REDACTED]

7. [REDACTED]

8. [REDACTED]

Agreement and/or dissent

9. MENAD, CMD, ESD, Consular Director, Media, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Amman and Cairo agree.

[REDACTED]

Media

12. News of the assisted departure will not be pre-announced on our Travel Advice pages, but it's possible it will leak out at some stage over the weekend. We should have lines and Q&A prepared in advance to handle queries. [REDACTED]

Implementation and evaluation

13. An assisted departure from Gaza is a complex multi-stage process:

(i) Move safely from within Gaza to the Erez crossing. The UN will help to co-ordinate this and a BISO officer will be on the ground to facilitate. Transport will be provided by the UN.

[REDACTED]

14. It will only be possible for HMG staff to deploy to the Erez crossing if there is sufficient notice from the UN / Israel, and if Post / ESD are content for staff to be in that area. The acting Consul General in Jerusalem will assess the risks, based on local security advice, and liaise with ESD and Director MENA (as risk owner) before a final decision is taken on whether to go ahead with any operation.

Ross Allen
Head of Consular Assistance Department
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

To: PS/Mr Ellwood

From:[REDACTED]

Date: 18 July 2014

ISRAEL AND THE OPTS: TRAVEL ADVICE

Issue

Whether to amend our travel advice for Israel and the OPTs to advise against all travel to areas of Israel within a 40km range of the border with Gaza. This is in light of the current ground operation taking place in the area [REDACTED].

Recommendation

- i) We recommend changing travel advice for Israel and the OPTs to advise against all travel to areas of Israel within 40km of the Israel-Gaza border.

Timing

Immediate

Comment

I agree with the recommendation. This is the right response in light of the recently launched Israeli ground force operation in Gaza which has increased further the already significant security risks close to the Israel-Gaza border. We will continue to keep the situation on the ground under close review.

[REDACTED]

Given the further deterioration in security this is the right change. There is a risk it will complicate any future evacuation operations, but the situation on the ground and our duty of care to staff means that it will be right for ESD to consider these on a case by case basis.

[REDACTED]

Background

1. At 22.38 local time on Thursday 17 July, Israel announced that ground forces had moved into Gaza. Prime Minister Netanyahu said "we have ordered a ground operation in order to damage the underground terror tunnels constructed in Gaza leading into Israeli territory". The announcement followed a vote in Israel's Security Cabinet earlier in the evening that had been kept out of the media.
2. The operation began with Naval fire into Gaza before IDF tanks moved in on the ground to secure an area, one-two kilometre deep, in three prongs spanning the north, centre and south (the focus of the initial main effort). The IDF have said that the operation includes "infantry, armoured corps, engineer corps, artillery, and intelligence combined with aerial and naval support". [REDACTED] In return nearly 50 rockets were fired into Israel, 20 of which were intercepted by Iron Dome.
3. The Palestinian Ministry of Health reported 20 killed overnight following the ground incursion, including several children and one 5-month old baby. Since the start of Operation Protective Edge, 246 Palestinians have been killed, the UN estimates 74% of these to be civilians. Nearly 2000 people have been injured. The IDF have announced that an Israeli soldier was killed in action overnight, with two wounded. An investigation is underway with some reports it may have been a friendly fire incident.

Travel Advice

4. Current travel advice advises against all travel to Gaza. On 8 July travel advice was amended to all but essential travel to areas of Israel within 40km of the border with Gaza; the change was made due to the escalation in the conflict.
5. The Canadians have amended their language to advice against all travel to the region surrounding the Gaza strip. The Australians and US currently advice against all but essential travel. [REDACTED]

Argument

6. Given the further deterioration in security since the previous submission on 8 July, we recommend a change to the level of travel advice advising against all travel to areas within 40km of Israel's border with Gaza.
7. We advise against travel when we consider that the level of risk to British nationals has become 'unacceptably high'. The principal argument for the change is that at present there is a continued risk of indiscriminate rocket fire from armed groups within Gaza into southern Israel and that with the current ground offensive focusing on the tunnels the risk has increased further.
8. We judge that advising against all travel is right at this point. [REDACTED] We will however need to keep this under close review however to be aware that this is now the highest level we have.

Agreement and/or Dissent

9. Agreed by BE Tel Aviv, BCG Jerusalem, Travel Advice Team, Consular Case Work and Estate and Security Directorate.

Risks / Impact

10. We envisage minimal impact; the area is already at the level 'all but essential travel'.
11. [REDACTED]

Resource

12. There are no resource implications to this decision.

Implementation and evaluation

13. If agreed, the Travel Advice will be revised immediately to read as follows.

On 17 July Israel launched a ground military operation in Gaza, in addition to air and sea strikes. The FCO advise against all travel to areas of Israel within 40km of the border with Gaza (including Sderot, Netivot, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Be'er Sheva, and Kiryat HaMalachi) due to the escalation in conflict in the area.

Press / Media

14. We will deploy the following press lines deployed in response to any enquiries from the press or travel industry:

- We keep our travel advice under constant review and the safety of British Nationals is our primary concern.
- Following the announcement of ground operations targeting Gaza in addition to the risk of indiscriminate rocket fire from armed groups in Gaza into southern Israel, and in line with advice from the Israeli authorities, we advise against all travel to areas within 40km of Israel's border with Gaza.
- We continue to advise against all travel to Gaza.
- The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate in Jerusalem are monitoring the situation closely and we will keep this advice under constant review.
- We will continue to keep the situation, and our travel advice, under close review.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 July 2014 17:14
To: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1. Eleven days since the launch of Operation Protective Edge - which itself followed the kidnapping of the Israeli and Palestinian teenagers, Israel's forceful response and an increase in Hamas rocket fire - the headline statistics are grim. 267 Palestinians have been killed, of whom the UN think three quarters were civilians. Access to clean water, power and medicines is becoming critically difficult, and will be further impeded by a ground invasion. Humanitarian agencies are coping for now but are not equipped for a long crisis. Israel has hit more than 2000 targets from the air, mobilised 56,000 reserves and now launched ground operations. Hamas and other militant groups have fired more than 1500 rockets into Israel.
2. [REDACTED]
3. [REDACTED]
4. [REDACTED]
5. We are (at least) days away from a ceasefire – partly because of the launch of ground operations, and partly because of the gaps on the substance of a ceasefire deal. Hamas are pushing for the release of prisoners (including some previously released and then re-arrested), the opening up of movement and access for Gaza, and Israeli acceptance of Fatah/Hamas reconciliation. Israel wants to see Gaza demilitarized, a commitment from Hamas to close tunnels and not build new ones, and international recognition of Israel's right to defend itself.
6. There is a lot of talk about how to make a ceasefire more durable this time than in 2008/09 or 2012. It is possible that the third Gaza conflict in six years will lead the parties to consider new approaches to Gaza's underlying problems, but that is far from certain.
7. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, August 02, 2014 09:49 AM
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: GAZA CRISIS WATCH: Posts Update 0840 BST 2 August OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE

The latest sitrep from post is below. In short, the violence has continued with further rocket fire from Gaza into Israel and some 88 Israeli strikes into Gaza. There has been further substantial loss of life, with almost 100 Palestinians killed, many of these in Rafah in the area where the IDF soldier was kidnapped yesterday morning. The numbers of Palestinian dead now surpass those of Operation Cast Lead in 2009 at 1635 killed, as do (by more than 5 times) the numbers of IDF killed. The Israeli Cabinet meeting last night does not seem to have taken any major decisions and the Israelis still appear open to ceasefire talks [REDACTED]. The Palestinian delegation to talks still plans to travel to Cairo today. A Hamas military wing statement suggesting that any kidnapped IDF soldier *may* have been killed may be an effort on their part to contain further response – their more usual reaction would be to celebrate a kidnap as they did earlier in this operation.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 02 August 2014 08:54

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: GAZA CRISIS WATCH: Posts Update 0840 BST 2 August OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE

Summary

- IDF hit 88 targets in Rafah yesterday following the capture of an IDF soldier and collapse of the ceasefire; Gazan Health Ministry report 74 Palestinian deaths in Rafah yesterday and 22 houses destroyed.

- 2 IDF soldiers confirmed killed during the incident in which an IDF soldier was captured; total IDF fatalities now 63, over 5 times the combined total from both previous operations in Gaza.
- Palestinian deaths surpass those of Operation Cast Lead. 94 Palestinians killed, 420 injured yesterday. 1635 killed so far, 8840 injured.
- Israel's security cabinet met for six hours last night. [REDACTED]
- Hamas' military wing have issued a statement claiming to have lost contact with the group that took part in the incident in which an IDF soldier was captured and alleging the Palestinian militants and IDF soldier were killed in the strikes following his capture.
- Humanitarian situation in Gaza has become critical. No electricity for 5 days is seriously affecting people's ability to drink or use water. Hunger reported for first time as Palestinians unable to access UN food distribution centres. Fears of disease epidemic.
- Possible assisted departure for 41 BNs unlikely to take place on Sunday due to continuing violence.

Violence

Gaza/OPTs

- 94 Palestinians killed and 420 injured yesterday – of those 74 were in Rafah, where 22 houses were destroyed in response to the capture of the IDF soldier. Overnight, a further 23 Palestinians killed by shelling in Rafah and 16 members of the same family killed in Khan Younis.
- Palestinian deaths now surpass those of Operation Cast Lead: 1635 killed so far, 8840 injured (source: Gazan Ministry of Health).
- The 72-hour ceasefire, starting at 08:00 on 1 August, collapsed after two hours, following the killing of two soldiers and the reported capture of another in the morning in Rafah. This has resulted in hostilities resuming with large numbers of fatalities and injuries in Rafah. No significant humanitarian operations could take place during the brief pause, including repairs to damaged water and electricity infrastructure; recovery of bodies from under the rubble; and distribution of food and water.
- The UN reports that at least 926 civilians have been killed, of whom 286 were children and 187 women. 66 Israelis have been killed including 63 soldiers, 2 Israeli civilians and 1 foreign national. Incidents of multiple family member fatalities continue: at least 76 families have lost three or more family members in the same incident, totalling over 400 fatalities. As of 19:00 on 31 July, 8,265 Palestinians, including 2,502 children and 1,626 women aged 18 to 60, and 303 elderly had been injured.
- IDF struck approx 50 targets overnight in Gaza. 88 targets struck yesterday in Rafah, with 12 militants killed. 4,379 targets struck by the IDF since the start of OPE.
- An Israeli airstrike hit an ambulance yesterday killing a paramedic and injuring 7 passengers. This brings the number of health workers killed in Israeli strikes since the beginning of the conflict to 16. Gazan Ministry of Health say this was the 13th ambulance to be targeted in an Israeli airstrike.
- Two Palestinians killed in clashes with IDF in the West Bank and a further eleven injured by live fire. Protests took place in Hebron, Bethlehem, Tulkarem and East Jerusalem yesterday.

Israel

- 2 IDF soldiers confirmed killed during the incident in which an IDF soldier was captured yesterday. Total IDF fatalities now 63, over 5 times the combined total from both previous operations.
- A barrage of rockets was fired into central Israel at approx 0600 local time this morning; Iron Dome intercepted 2 over Tel Aviv.
- IDF report at least 61 rockets fired into Israel from Gaza yesterday. 2,969 rockets have been fired into Israel since the start of OPE (as of 0645 1 August); average number per day has fallen from 154 to 109 since the start of the ground operation.

Political

Israel / Gaza and OPTs

- Israel's security cabinet met for some six hours last night to discuss developments in OPE. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] The Hamas-affiliated al-Qassam Brigades blamed Israel for the violation of the ceasefire: "There had not been any Israeli soldiers in eastern Rafah for the past 20 days. But as soon as the ceasefire was announced, Israeli movement in the area began at around 2:00 a.m...In response, our fighters clashed with Israeli soldiers in Rafah at 7:00 a.m." Israel and the international community have blamed Hamas for the violation.
- Hamas Military Wing issues a statement saying that they believe that the missing Israeli officer was killed in an Israeli bombardment: "We lost contact with the group of combatants that took part in the ambush, and we believe they were all killed in the bombardment. Assuming that they managed to abduct the soldier during combat, we assess that he was also killed in the incident."
- [REDACTED]

International

- The international community called for Hamas to release Lt. Hadar Goldin unconditionally. President Obama unequivocally condemned "Hamas and the Palestinian factions" for killing two Israeli soldiers and abducting a third yesterday, adding "if they are serious about trying to resolve this situation, that soldier needs to be unconditionally released as soon as possible". Obama blamed Hamas for yesterday's failed ceasefire, saying "I think it's going to be very hard to put a cease-fire back together again if Israelis and the international community can't feel confident that Hamas can follow through on a cease-fire commitment... when they [Hamas] sign onto a cease-fire they're claiming to speak for all the Palestinian factions. And if they don't have control of them, and just moments after a cease-fire is signed you have Israeli soldiers being killed and captured, then it's hard for the Israelis to feel confident that a cease-fire can actually be honored."
- Arab nations have reportedly requested an informal meeting of the UN General Assembly to discuss the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.
- Demonstrations took place in a number of Jordanian cities to protest Israel's ongoing military action in Gaza.

Humanitarian

- Displacement: Up to a quarter of Gaza's population – 457,000 people - may have been forcibly displaced, including 280,000 in UNRWA and government shelters. The intensification of hostilities in Rafah has reportedly led to thousands of new IDPs moving to the western part of the city and to Khan Yunis, many moving to ten UNRWA schools. At least 872 houses have been destroyed or severely damaged. Water shortages remain and there are fears of epidemics. While showers in shelters have improved personal hygiene and decreased the risk of spread of disease, the situation in overcrowded shelters is becoming increasingly tense. Another 18,000 IDPs are in 19 government schools, 7,000 in public buildings or informal shelters and up to 200,000 residing with families.
- Access to water and electricity: Gaza's sole power plant remains shut down after being shelled on 29 July. Additional fuel supply is needed to operate backup generators at essential facilities, including water, sanitation and health. Gaza's entire population has reduced or no access to water. The current provision of water is estimated to be less than three litres per capita per day for IDPs in shelters. The lack of adequate water chlorination may have serious public health consequences.
- Challenges to humanitarian assistance: In the past 24 hours, two UNRWA schools were damaged by shelling, both for the second time. The total of damaged schools since the start of the

emergency therefore remains at 137, including 49 government schools and 88 UNRWA schools, in need of repair.

- Humanitarian Appeal: A combined emergency appeal has been launched by OCHA yesterday for a total of \$369m, including \$187m for UNRWA.

Consular

- Plans for an assisted departure from Gaza of 39 entitled persons are on hold until the situation on the ground has stabilised. Reports of up to 80 Palestinians caught between the Egyptian border and the Rafah crossing on 1 August due to ongoing fighting. A BN family due to take part in the assisted departure would probably be unable to leave Rafah due to Israeli military actions.
- BCG Jerusalem assessing numbers of dependents of BNs where the BN is not present – likely to be no more than a dozen – to enable us to consider whether to extend our support to them as part of the assisted departure.

[REDACTED]

Information Managers, BE Tel Aviv and BCG Jerusalem

Accountability – Israel and the Palestinians

1. The Foreign Secretary asked for advice on accountability of the parties to the recent Gaza conflict. A number of efforts have been made to hold Israel (primarily) and Palestinian militant factions to account for their actions during conflicts over the last ten years. These have ranged from internal IDF investigations to independent, international enquiries.
2. This note seeks to draw some lessons from previous initiatives, set out the steps that are currently being taken to investigate the current conflict, and explore some possible avenues for further action by the UK/ international community.

What has been done in response to previous conflicts?

3. [REDACTED] The different inquiries have varied in terms of their focus, their seriousness, and their impact. Two of the most significant inquiries over recent years were the **Goldstone Report** and Part 2 of the **Turkel Commission**.
4. The **Goldstone Report** was the result of a UN Fact Finding Mission (FFM) set up in response to Operation Cast Lead in 2009. It attracted a great deal of international attention and found that Israel and Hamas had committed serious violations of international law. Israel refused to cooperate with the Mission. The UK judged the report to be credible but did not agree with all of the final detail. Only a small number of its recommendations have been fully implemented by parties to the conflict. This is in part because recommendations were wide ranging and covered complex issues like easing movement and access restrictions, as well as more straightforward issues such as reviewing rules of engagement following the conflict.
5. **The Turkel Commission** was launched by the Government of Israel following the Mavi Marmara Flotilla incident in 2010. Part Two assessed Israeli mechanisms to investigate the IDF. It made a series of recommendations to improve the system of investigation and accountability. Most importantly, Turkel called in 2013 for decisions on whether to refer cases for prosecution to be made by the IDF's judicial branch rather than superior military officers. This recommendation – amongst others - remains unimplemented.

[REDACTED]

What is already being done in response to this conflict?

Israeli Domestic Mechanisms

6. Investigations are automatically launched when IDF action has resulted in a civilian death. We have not yet received confirmation of which incidents resulting in deaths of civilians – such as the strikes on the UNRWA schools, the beach café and the market – will be investigated. In addition, media reports suggest that an Israeli Major General has been tasked with looking into IDF action during the conflict, including several incidents which resulted in deaths of Israeli soldiers.
7. [REDACTED]
8. To be credible, any Israeli enquiries – whether on the broader conflict or individual incidents - will have to be independent, transparent and rigorous, and must draw on lessons from the past to examine how Israel can in future exercise its right to self-defence without such heavy civilian loss of life

UN Commission of Inquiry

9. A Palestinian resolution passed at a Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council on 23 July mandates the UN to set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate all violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights law and report back to the Council in March. It is mandated to investigate all human rights and IHL violations in the context of the military operations since June 2014, which should enable it to focus on both Israeli and Hamas actions. [REDACTED]

10. The key focus now is the appointment of the Commissioners, which is a decision for the President. The appointments should happen at the September Human Rights Council. We are pressing for a balanced, expert and objective panel that would be able to evaluate Hamas' actions as well as understand IHL in the context of self-defence and security.

Proposed Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions

11. [REDACTED]

12. [REDACTED]

UK action so far

[REDACTED]

13. What other mechanisms could be used?

14. UK policy on accountability is governed by complementarity: HMG looks to domestic courts of the parties to the conflict to take action in the first instance, and only if we judge domestic efforts to have failed do we turn to international mechanisms. [REDACTED]
15. There is no single international body with the ability to decide authoritatively on breaches of IHL, but relevant mechanisms or tools could include:

I. The International Criminal Court

The only permanent court to try individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Whilst neither the Israelis nor Palestinians are currently parties to the ICC statute, there are options available to the UNSC or Palestinians to refer the conflict to the ICC.

II. The International Court of Justice

Only considers cases between UN Member States.

III. UN Security Council

Including by referring a case to the ICC, establishing an ad hoc court, or setting up a UN SC inquiry

IV. Geneva Conventions

A High Contracting Party to the Conventions can prosecute an individual for certain grave breaches of the Conventions under domestic legislation

V. International Committee of the Red Cross

Whilst it is not the ICRC's task to investigate or prosecute offences, if it observes a violation of the rules of war, the ICRC makes a confidential approach to the authorities responsible for the incident and may – exceptionally - take a public stance.

Gaza Crisis

London SitRep 20 – Monday 21 July: 1230

(New information is displayed in bold)

Situation Update Summary

Israeli forces advancing further into Gaza. Objective is destruction of tunnels, and Hamas's ability to launch rockets, but no clear exit strategy. Yesterday was the bloodiest day of the conflict so far with more than 100 Palestinians killed and 13 IDF soldiers. Casualties mounting rapidly (now more than 500 Palestinian dead and over 3000 injured; at least 20 Israeli deaths, 18 IDF, 2 civilians). The IDF are denying reports that a soldier has been kidnapped. PM spoke to Netanyahu last night. Whilst recognising Israel's right to self defence, the PM stressed it was vital Israel thought about its exit strategy and took maximum care to avoid civilian casualties. Kerry travels to Cairo to push for ceasefire. Diplomatic effort intensifies with Kerry to travel to the region on 21 July. Security Council expresses concern at escalation in violence and calls for the protection of civilians in line with IHL. Parliamentary interest continues to be high. PM to make statement to the House today.

Violence

Sunday 20 July was the bloodiest day of the conflict so far. Media reports 436 Palestinians and 20 Israelis killed. Palestinians killed include at least 270 civilians, of whom at least 83 were children. Gaza suffered intense shelling from land, sea and air. Residents have now been asked to evacuate 43 percent of Gaza's territory. Roads in the South closed this morning amid reports of two attempts by Hamas to infiltrate Israel – IDF report they have killed 10 militants.

Today set to continue in the same vein, with 20 Palestinians reported dead so far (as of 08.30 IDT). Yesterday's killings of 60 Palestinians in Shejaia remains the focus of media attention. Displaced Gazans struggling to find somewhere safe in an atmosphere of panic, fear and increased confusion. With only 3 hours power per day in some areas, any semblance of normal life has been paralysed. Major destruction of vital infrastructure caused increased difficulties with little sign of any future improvement. Medical supplies are depleted and the IDF provision yesterday of a field hospital at Erez might see few visitors, with Hamas prohibiting Palestinians to attend.

Gaza/OPTs

- Since midnight, militants have fired 15 rockets and 22 mortars into Israel. During the same period, the IDF conducted 47 airstrikes and 295 tank shells targeting different locations in the Gaza Strip. 23 houses were destroyed. IDF fired 295 tank shells. Ongoing incursions in Shejaia and East of Buriy refugee camp.
- 32 Palestinian fatalities and 49 injured since midnight; 436 killed since beginning of OPE, with 3008 injured.
- Hamas claim to have captured an Israeli soldier (no confirmation from IDF). Israel's Ambassador to the UN denied these rumours.

Israel

- IDF confirm 13 soldiers killed yesterday bringing total Israeli deaths to 20 (18 soldiers and 2 civilians), more than Pillar of Defence and Cast Lead combined. Two soldiers reportedly dual US nationals. 65 soldiers currently reported hospitalised.
- 116 Israeli civilians injured since the start of OPE (13 from shrapnel; 10 from shattered glass and debris, 11 from car accidents during sirens, and 82 on their way to take cover).
- 10 Palestinian militants in two different groups infiltrate Kibbutz Nir-Am, close to Northern Gaza, this morning, all killed by IDF. No Israeli casualties confirmed but Embassy sources suggest the IDF may have suffered further fatalities.
- Over 87 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel yesterday, of which 70 hit Israel and at least 16 were intercepted by Iron Dome (IDF figures). 35.6% decrease in rocket fire compared to Friday. More

than 1850 rockets fired at Israel since the start of OPE.

- The IDF struck 187 targets in the Gaza Strip yesterday; total of 2603 since OPE began. IDF has uncovered 13 tunnels and 39 access points across Gaza since the start of the ground operation.
- IDF Ground Forces continued to advance to positions in the northeast Gazan Shejaia area overnight, and reportedly took part in heavy exchanges of fire with terrorists in the area. The IDF arrested 20 alleged terrorists overnight and is questioning several of them.

Political

Israel

- PM Netanyahu said last night that the current operation was part of Israel's historic 'struggle' against terrorism and that Israel would 'continue fighting as long as we must'.
- Defence Minister Ya'alon said yesterday 'we are expecting more long days of fighting' adding that most of the tunnels used by Hamas would be destroyed in the next two or three days.

Gaza / OPTs

- President Abbas met UNSG Ban Ki-Moon and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani yesterday in Doha. He called on the international community to protect Palestinians and to put an end to the "bloodshed." No update yet on Abbas-Mesh'al meeting in Qatar
- UN Security Council yesterday called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians.
- Senior Palestinians tell HMCG that moves towards the ICC are becoming more likely in the face of escalating civilian deaths in Gaza
- President Abbas recorded speech issued yesterday, calling for all parties to accept the Egyptian ceasefire, and for the OPTs to be put under an international protection regime. He also called for 3 days of mourning for victims of the Gaza conflict.
- A general strike was announced in the West Bank and East Jerusalem today following the deaths in Shejaia yesterday.
- Palestinian activists are planning to hold a massive demonstration on Thursday night, calling it the "48,000 demonstration". The activists hope to gather thousands of demonstrators at Qalandya checkpoint on that day in an attempt to pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque. Thursday night will mark Al Qader night, which is believed to be the holiest night of Ramadan.

UK response

[REDACTED]

Humanitarian

- **Ground offensive:** As of 1500hrs (20 July), up to 60 Palestinians from Shejaia (East of Gaza City) were killed, including 17 children and 14 women. Most of Shejaia's 97,000 residents had remained in their homes before the incursion, but half subsequently fled to Gaza City. A two-hour humanitarian pause in the Shejaia area, negotiated by the Red Cross, began at 1330hrs but was interrupted by crossfire. Warnings delivered to large population centres in the middle and south Gaza indicating further moves into populated areas – residents have now been asked to evacuate 43% of Gaza's territory
- **Pressure on Humanitarian agencies:** Rapid depletion of stocks, plus bombardments and access restrictions in urban areas, are increasingly challenging efforts by humanitarian agencies to supply food, water, mattresses and hygiene items to the displaced. Food stocks, especially for the under-5s, are running extremely low. Ground operation is limiting access to food warehouses, and one WFP storehouse has burned down. There is a critical shortage of safe shelters. UNRWA is launching an updated flash appeal today.
- **Civilian deaths:** As of 1500hrs on Sunday (20 July), 375 Palestinians were confirmed to have been killed, including at least 270 (72%) civilians, of whom 83 were children and 36 were women. 3008 Palestinians have been injured as of 1500hrs yesterday (20 July), of whom 904 are children and 533 women.
- **Displacement:** More than 100,000 people have now been displaced by the conflict. Numbers displaced in

UNRWA shelters now exceed the numbers displaced during this stage of the 2008/9 Operation Cast Lead operation (c 50,000), and considerably exceed the threshold of displaced persons that UNRWA is equipped and resourced to manage (35,000).

- **Infrastructure / key services:** Fighting has impeded efforts to repair electricity and water infrastructure. 1.2 million people now have no or very limited access to water and sanitation services. Shelling and airstrikes have damaged wells, sewage pumping stations and water lines. 80% of the population are still receiving electricity 4 hours a day. One third of MOH and UNRWA health facilities have been forced to close. 72 UNRWA facilities have been damaged, including two schools and a storehouse in the last 24 hours.

British Nationals

ASSISTED DEPARTURE

- The UN and Canadians carried out a successful assisted departure yesterday via Erez crossing which included 8 of our Eligible Persons (2 families of 4). Amman consular staff are checking families' welfare today.
- 3 journalists also left via Erez yesterday by their own means and are being supported by their respective agencies.
- 1 BN left via Rafah route yesterday into Egypt. Cairo are providing consular assistance.
- Posts remain in contact with all of our Eligible Persons by phone including 23 journalists in Gaza.
- We assisted the departure of 27 Eligible Persons from Gaza on Sunday 13th July.
- As of Sunday 20th July, partners also had the following in Gaza: Canadians (69 EPs), US (120) and Australians (7). We are seeking updated figures to take account of yesterday's assisted departure.
- Consular enquiries since start of crisis: Tel Aviv (3), Jerusalem (4), London (25), Malaga Call Centre (10)

CRISIS HUB

- The Crisis Hub has been updated in light of assisted departure and confirmation of the location of a number of British Nationals.
- There are 107 open cases on Crisis Hub. Of these, 49 are in Gaza, this is made of up 34 British nationals, 12 Dual Nationals and 3 people of other nationalities.
- There are 23 British journalists currently in Gaza. 3 left via the Erez crossing yesterday. We are in daily contact with the others to check on welfare and location (though none have requested assistance). We have provided IDF with location details of hotels journalists are staying at.
- BCG Jerusalem and BE Tel Aviv's estimated figures of BNs and dual nationals in country overall are:
 - Israel 80,000
 - Jerusalem 30,000
 - West Bank 2,000
 - Gaza dual nationals were approx 100, but very difficult to verify how many have left.
 - 34 mono nationals in Gaza, including journalists who have entered since the conflict.

External Partners

- Secretary Kerry will travel to Cairo, Egypt on July 21 to meet with Egyptian and other senior officials on the situation in Gaza, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki confirmed.
- President Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke for the second time in three days yesterday. Obama 'reiterated the United States' condemnation of attacks by Hamas against Israel, and reaffirmed Israel's right to defend itself' and also expressed 'serious concern' over the number of casualties.
- The members of the Security Council reportedly expressed serious concern about the growing number of casualties and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in an emergency meeting of the UNSC yesterday.
- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon will arrive in Israel on Tuesday (22 July).

Post Operations

[REDACTED]

London Operations

[REDACTED]

Travel Advice / Press lines

Travel Advice

A factual update was made to [Travel Advice](#) yesterday (20 July) giving details of the second assisted departure on 20 July.

Travel advice will be kept under constant review.

MEDIA SUMMARY

- Most UK media coverage now focuses on last night's UNSC statement calling for an immediate ceasefire. The press statement issued afterwards expressed "serious concern at the escalation of violence" and called for the protection of civilians under international humanitarian law. Meanwhile John Kerry is due to fly to Egypt today to discuss current progress with a new ceasefire deal.
- Yesterday is believed to have been the most costly day so far in terms of lives lost, with at least 100 Palestinians believed to have lost their lives – 67 in one area alone – alongside 13 Israeli soldiers.
- The growing number of civilian and other casualties is causing significant alarm across all publications as the reported death toll passes 500, including over 100 children. Most broadcast coverage features reports on the impact this violence is having on the children of Gaza and what this will mean for the cycle of conflict between Israel and Gaza in years to come. However Prime Minister Netanyahu has condemned Hamas leaders for using women and children as 'human shields'.
- Number of Israeli military fatalities is also rising, with 7 killed in a single attack on a tank over the weekend. Israeli Twitter feeds and media are also emphasising the prevalence of tunnels leading from Gaza into Israel, and attempts to use them to carry out terror attacks. By Monday morning 43 access points to 16 different tunnels had been discovered, with Israel calling the network much more extensive than previously thought.
- Separately we are aware of concerns from members of the media, including UK media, in Gaza about their own safety. Despite giving their locations to authorities, there are worries about the recent announcement that the Israeli army can no longer guarantee their safety on the ground.

TOP LINES

- The conflict is taking a terrible toll. While indiscriminate rocket fire by Hamas and other militant groups is unacceptable, we are deeply concerned at the high numbers of civilian casualties and the humanitarian impact of the conflict.
- The urgent priority is bringing this violence to an end, to make Israelis secure and to ease the suffering of ordinary people inside Gaza. To this end, we are pressing the need for an immediate de-escalation to prevent further civilian loss of life, for agreement on a ceasefire and for all sides to minimise civilian casualties.
- We welcome Egypt's efforts to secure a ceasefire, which remains the best means of ending the current cycle of violence. Once a ceasefire is secured, there is an urgent need for a long term plan for Gaza.
- We condemn the appalling attacks being carried out by Hamas and other militant groups against Israeli civilians. These attacks must stop. The people of Israel have the right to live without constant fear for their security; the people of Gaza have the right to live safely in peace.
- We are clear that Israel has a right to defend itself against these attacks. No country would stand by as rockets are fired or terrorist tunnels are constructed into their territory. We are equally clear that Israel's response must be proportionate, taking all necessary steps to minimise civilian casualties in line with International Humanitarian Law.
- We are gravely concerned by the high number of innocent civilians killed in Gaza, tragically including families and children. The UN estimates that 74% of those killed in Gaza so far were civilians. We are also

gravely concerned by the death of the Israeli civilian killed by rocket fire from Gaza.

- **We are deeply concerned that the violence is deepening the already chronic humanitarian situation. There are hundreds of thousands of extremely vulnerable civilians in Gaza who are suffering acutely as a result. According to the UN, over 50,000 people have been displaced and are seeking shelter in UN schools. Hundreds of thousands more have been affected by damage to electricity, water and sanitation systems. All sides must do everything possible to protect these people and ensure unhindered access for humanitarian supplies.**
- **We are already adjusting our funding to existing partners to meet urgent needs as the humanitarian situation develops.**
- **We are working with international partners to secure a durable ceasefire that will end the bloodshed and provide a platform for resolving the underlying causes of the conflict.**

Assisted Departure

How are you helping BNs who want to leave Gaza?

- **Our travel advice has advised against travel to Gaza for a number of years. We arranged an assisted departure of British nationals in Gaza on Sunday 13 July, and of a smaller number again this weekend.**
- Due to the severity of the security situation, we are no longer able to offer consular assistance in Gaza. If you are a British national currently in Gaza and you require advice you should contact the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem.
- Any assisted departure will be subject to security conditions in the area surrounding Gaza and UN co-ordination. The FCO can't guarantee that there will be further opportunities for assisted departure from Gaza.

Battle Rhythm - All times shown in BST

TUESDAY 22 JULY

0830 – Post SitRep to Crisis Mailbox

0900 – SecView (Lon/TA/Jerusalem/Cairo/Amman)

1200 – London SitRep 21 to issue

[Ends]

1. Briefing for the Foreign Secretary, received from the FCO, dated 21 July 2014

[Starts]

Gaza briefing for FS at NSC: 21 July

Key facts

Israeli forces advancing further into Gaza. Objective is destruction of tunnels, and Hamas's ability to launch rockets, but no clear exit strategy. Yesterday was the bloodiest day of the conflict so far with more than 100 Palestinians killed and 13 IDF soldiers. Casualties mounting rapidly (now more than 500 Palestinian dead and over 3000 injured; at least 20 Israeli deaths, 18 IDF, 2 civilians). The IDF are denying reports that a soldier has been kidnapped. PM spoke to Netanyahu last night. Whilst recognising Israel's right to self defence, the PM stressed it was vital Israel thought about its exit strategy and took maximum care to avoid civilian casualties. Kerry travels to Cairo to push for ceasefire. Security Council expresses concern at escalation in violence and calls for the protection of civilians in line with IHL. Parliamentary interest continues to be high. PM to make statement to the House today.

- Since midnight 21 July, militants have fired 15 rockets and 22 mortars into Israel. During the same period, the IDF conducted 47 airstrikes and shelled different locations in the Gaza Strip extensively. 23 houses were destroyed. Ongoing incursions in Shejaia and East of Burij refugee camp.
- There have been more than 1850 rockets fired at Israel since the start of OPE. Over 87 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel yesterday, of which 70 hit Israel and at least 16 were intercepted by Iron Dome (IDF figures). 35.6% decrease in rocket fire compared to Friday.
- The IDF struck 187 targets in the Gaza Strip yesterday; total of 2603 since OPE began. IDF has uncovered 13 tunnels and 39 access points across Gaza since the start of the ground operation.
- IDF Ground Forces continued to advance to positions in the northeast Gazan Shejaia area overnight, and reportedly took part in heavy exchanges of fire with terrorists in the area. The IDF arrested 20 alleged terrorists overnight and is questioning several of them.

Humanitarian issues

- UN estimates more than 100,000 Gazans have been displaced since the start of the conflict. Of the Palestinian dead 70% are civilians and 83% children. Over 3,000 have been injured, including 904 children and 533 women.
- There has been major damage to vital infrastructure leaving 1.2 million without access to adequate water and sanitation facilities and 80% of the population with less than 4 hours of electricity a day.

- A two-hour humanitarian pause in the Shejaia area on 20 July, negotiated by the Red Cross, began at 1330hrs but was interrupted by crossfire.
- More than 100,000 people have now been displaced by the conflict. Numbers displaced in UNRWA shelters now exceed the numbers displaced during this stage of the 2008/9 Operation Cast Lead operation (c 50,000), and considerably exceed the threshold of displaced persons that UNRWA is equipped and resourced to manage (35,000).

Key concerns

- Our main concern is the mounting civilian casualties and the risk of more given that Israel does not appear to have a clearly defined exit strategy. Without this, Israel could find itself trapped in Gaza. This would lead to an increase in civilian casualties, which would diminish international sympathy for Israel.
- No sign of a ceasefire yet that the parties can agree.
- Any ceasefire must be followed by a solution which tackles the underlying cause of the violence, so that we do not find ourselves dealing with another flare up in two years time. Need for an international monitoring mechanism for ceasefire. UK has shared idea with partners.

UK role & next steps

[REDACTED]

[Ends]