

Gaza housing needs after three years of blockade and war

The housing needs in the Gaza Strip are not just limited to the Operation Cast Lead destruction. The total war related caseload includes damages from pre Cast Lead Israeli-related destruction. It must also not be forgotten the housing units partly completed, but frozen since June 2007 due to the blockade and the refugees currently living in camps who need to be re-housed. This is in addition to the tens of thousands of units needed to be built in Gaza to accommodate natural growth.

After three years of the blockade on the Gaza Strip and almost eighteen months after operation Cast Lead, little of the extensive needs for homes and infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip have been met.

Since the beginning of the blockade, largely only the repairing of minor damaged houses or transitional construction has taken place.

Almost **zero progress** has been made for over **6,000 major and totally** damaged homes during Cast Lead, less than 200 have been completed to date.

The **suffering continues**; reconstruction is being **prevented because the blockade** on the Gaza Strip.

The humanitarian community cannot do its job because of the blockade. Despite their willingness, for the last three years local authorities, NGOs, UN and other agencies have had little or no impact on shelter construction.

INGOs and some donors have re-directed or even withdrawn their effort until change happens. Meanwhile, families continue to suffer.

There remains no durable solution on the horizon for the worst affected families, unless the blockade is lifted.



Totally destroyed multi story apartment building, Gaza City

Data source: Shelter Sector Gaza - Unified Shelter Sector Database (USSD)
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SHELTER SECTOR GAZA

The main priority is the lifting of the blockade and a large-scale reconstruction effort taking place allowing the realization of the **local resources** and **open markets**.

Three years after the imposition of the blockade, there is a need for a **real solution** to the reconstruction of Gaza's infrastructure.

Negotiations with the **Israeli Government** have yielded **little** so far and are unlikely to in the near future.

International law stipulates that there should be unfettered access for humanitarian and reconstruction supplies. This is not happening in Gaza.

The Gaza Strip is one of the highest population densities in the world, including eight refugee camps making up the majority of the 1.5 million population.



UNRWA, Compressed Earth Block (CEB) shelters, are not the permanent solution, but they are one transitional option for those who are still living under tents or in damaged houses.

Total Estimated Needs

Cast Lead re-construction caseload

- **6,280 major** damaged or totally demolished as a result of Cast Lead.

None Cast Lead re-construction caseload

- **2,900** families suffering from pre Cast Lead Israeli related destruction
- **2,886*** housing units under construction by UNRWA and UNDP, but frozen since June 2007 due to the blockade
- **5,611** refugee families from camps living in derelict and unsanitary shelters
- Estimated **68,437**** additional housing units are needed to meet unmet natural growth between 2006-2010

Total 86,000

*work is anticipated to re-start on 151 units during June 2010
**Ministry of Planning

SHELTER SECTOR GAZA

Construction Materials Available

Currently there are two routes where housing sector construction materials are entering Gaza. First is via the crossing points from Israel, and the second are via the tunnels from Egypt.

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From tunnels

- Cement
- Lime
- Steel reinforcement bar
- Wood
- Aluminum
- Floor and wall tiles
- Paint
- Nails & screws
- Toilets & sinks
- Shower trays
- Electrical fittings
- Tools, equipment and machinery
- And much, much more...

2

From Israel

- Glass*
- Wood and aluminum that can be used to make doors and windows only*
- Materials for one pre-approved UN housing project (151 units)

*Only in limited quantities.

'Core Unit'



The first 'Core Unit, May 2010.

While the UN is reduced to build temporary mud shelters or carrying out minor repairs and subsidizing rental expenses the MoPWH intends to provide durable solutions and build 1,000 core units during 2010/11.

One innovative housing project the Ministry of Public Works & Housing (**MoPWH**) has started is the 'Core Unit' where the basic permanent core unit of a house is constructed including two rooms, bathroom and kitchen, with the design capability to easily extended upwards and outwards in the future, when more affordable materials become available.

This model is considered good; however it relies completely on tunnel materials.

Manufacture of Concrete Blocks

Manufacture of concrete blocks has begun in Gaza and this has led to an increase in some construction activities. These blocks use a combination of recycled crushed rubble from war damaged houses and tunnel cement. However, the blocks are often manufactured from poor quality cement and there are no quarries or sources of aggregates in Gaza.



The blockade is most effective against international humanitarian assistance.

While the local authorities are able to utilize tunnel materials, the UN and most international organizations are not. This essentially means that in the housing sector, while the blockade intended against the local government, it has turned into a blockade against the UN and international organizations. This is at great expense to the credibility of the international community, and against the most vulnerable people in Gaza.

Economic factor adds to the problem

The cost of building material in the market can change daily. Today cement costs approximately USD 220 per ton, but has peaked at over USD 750 per ton. While the price today in Israel is between USD 145-170. Other building materials suffer similar inflated values, often costing up to three times what the open market price would be without a blockade.

“Because of the blockade, and as a last resort, families are often forced to build back lower quality, potentially unsafe structures, this in an area with potential seismic activity”.



A small step in the right direction?

In May 2010, almost three years after the blockage on Gaza, Israel finally agreed, for the first time to allow housing building materials into Gaza for an UNRWA housing project that has been frozen since 2007. After years of negotiations, some materials, including 700 tons of cement, are to enter Gaza.

While it is acknowledged this is a very small step is in the right direction, the time, resources and suffering endured during the last three years is not acceptable. The shelter sector calls for swift actions to lift the counterproductive blockade and allow unfettered access to humanitarian and reconstruction projects.

Materials required for rebuilding an average house in Gaza:

The shelter sector estimates the following needs based on an average 150 square meter house, including foundation and for a family of average 7 members.

Material	Per house	Total for 86,000 houses	Truck loads (25T trucks approx.)
Cement	46 tones	3,956,000	158,240
Steel	7.6 tones	653,600	2,6144
Aggregate to make concrete	102 tones	8,772,000	350,880
Aggregate for blocks	40 tones	3,440,000	137,600
Toilets	2	172,000	650
Sinks	3	258,000	400
Granite/ surfaces	5,5 m2	473,000	11,000
Local stone/marble	20m2	1,720,000	15,000
Paint	200 liters	17,200,000	700
Electrical wire/ cables	1,500 meters	129,000,000	150

Materials are based on average house designs; some humanitarian agencies propose to build units using lesser quantities

Key Messages

1. ***Unavailability of building materials.*** Materials are immediately required on the open market, not negotiated case by case with the Israeli Authorities and not through tunnels from Egypt. People other than the local authorities, UN & INGOS at the country level need to be spearheading efforts to ***find this solution.*** The shelter sector calls for more pressure so that Israel lifts the blockade.
2. ***An additional 86,000 homes need to be constructed in the Gaza Strip.*** This number is growing each day the blockade continues.
3. ***The reconstruction of Gaza cannot meaningfully take place until the blockade is lifted and construction materials become available.***

