

JUNE 2021

UNMAS PALESTINE

Programme Highlights - Special Edition

EMERGENCY RISK ASSESSMENTS



During the Operation "Guardian of the Walls" an estimated 4,223 strikes via air, sea and land hit over 258 buildings, comprising 1,042 housing and commercial units, 57 education facilities and 29 health facilities in the Gaza Strip.

Damage to infrastructure is severely affecting the provision of electricity, piped water and essential services. Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) are present in residential areas, posing a risk to life, precluding the delivery of humanitarian aid and preventing access to basic services. UNMAS is working to better understand the contamination and clearance needs to safeguard Gazans.



During the hostilities between 10th May and 21st May, UNMAS visited UN compounds and UNRWA schools to assess the premises, allowing UN staff to continue the emergency response. In total, 30 risk assessments were completed on UNRWA schools, medical centres, UN compounds and residential blocks, resulting in the removal of 1 ERW and the closure of two UNRWA school after the discovery of 3 suspected Deep Buried Bombs (DBB). Subsequently an additional 12 DBB have been identified, all of which require urgent removal.

EMERGENCY EORE TO SAFEGUARD GAZA CITIZENS

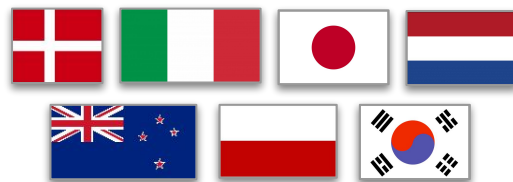
In response to the hostilities, UNMAS launched a targeted Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) campaign, with safety text messages being sent to 500,000 people in Gaza and thousands more were reached through social media of local family centres and community-based organizations. Directly after the escalation ended, radio messages were shared through 3 local radio channels in Gaza with a potential reach of 1.4 million Gazans.

In addition, UNMAS targeted the designated emergency shelters with safety messages for the IDPs returning to their homes. UNMAS distributed ERW awareness posters to 37 UNRWA Health and Distribution centres, reaching an additional 1,100 people per day.

A beneficiary of the ERW safety text message contacted UNMAS to say: "When I received a text message talking about the ERW dangers, I quickly informed my 3 kids to stay away from any strange item they find when they walk to school or to their friends neighbourhood. My family house was totally destroyed in the escalation; and the last thing I want is losing my kids." – the 33-year-old mother explained.



UNMAS in Palestine is funded bilaterally through contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for assistance in Mine Action. In response to the most recent escalation in hostilities in 2021, UNMAS is seeking to surge its capacity in Gaza and resource mobilise for the additional funds to allow them to respond to the needs for emergency EOD response, emergency preparedness, and risk education to continue operations in 2021 and beyond. UNMAS continues to make consistent efforts to raise the additional funds to allow them to respond to these needs as well as to provide support to reconstruction in Gaza and the Humanitarian Response Plan.



Thank you to all of our donors for their generous support.

'CONFLICT PREPAREDNESS HELPED ME SURVIVE'

"I have just survived another tough escalation in Gaza. The escalation this time was so intense and scary. Too many people died in a very short time. We all, here, had the feeling that anyone of us could be next, your house, your family [could be next]. We had no control over what was going on outside [around Gaza], all we managed to do was lock ourselves inside our house, watch the news and try to make sure everyone we know, our loved ones, are safe and still alive."



The EOD Police cleared over 150 ERW in the first 48 hours after the ceasefire.
Photo Credit: UNMAS.

Our EORE Advisor credits Conflict Preparedness and Protection (CPP) for the empowerment she felt during this escalation. CPP is a type of resilience training provided through 6 modules, including ERW safety, basic fire safety, first aid and how to safeguard your property during an escalation. CPP is aimed mostly at women but can be adapted to suit the audience such as Persons with Disabilities (DWP). CPP helps Gazans by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to safeguard themselves against the threat of ERW and escalations, introducing empowerment into a situation that is out of the control of civilians.



UNRWA Gaza HQ Security Office, severely damaged by an airstrike less than 10m from the facility.
Photo Credit: UNMAS.

"I always believed that our CPP programme is really helping people, helping women specifically to feel this empowerment, to feel that no matter what is going on outside, they still have that power to do something, to protect themselves, their families, their houses, their kids."

Witnessing the benefits of CPP on their community, the UNMAS team felt it was their responsibility to work harder during the escalation. "We have been teaching people how to protect themselves (like this) over the past years. This time, even if the whole team is under stress and scared, we feel that we still can help people." - UNMAS EORE Adviser

Q2 2021 – UNMAS ACHIEVEMENTS



EOD Support

UNMAS responded to requests for EOD clearance support to UN agencies and reconstruction partners in Gaza.



Risk Education

1046 ERW, and ERW/COVID-19 mixed messaging sessions delivered to 3418 beneficiaries of which 779 were women and 709 were children.



Risk Assessments

In response to the May escalation, UNMAS has, as of 03 June, carried out 16 risk assessments.

Established in 1997, the **United Nations Mine Action Service** (UNMAS) works to eliminate the threat posed by mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices by coordinating United Nations mine action, leading operational responses at the country level, and supporting the development of standards, policies and norms. As a specialized service of the United Nations located within the Department of Peace Operations, UNMAS operates under UN legislative mandates of both the General Assembly and the Security Council. UNMAS also responds to specific requests for support from the UN Secretary-General or designated official. UN Security Council Resolution 2365 (2017) the first stand-alone text on mine action, "Expresses grave concern over the threat that landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices pose to civilians, refugees returning to their homes, ...and stresses the need to undertake appropriate measures to mitigate this danger effectively."