OCHA Flash Update

Ban on the import of cement into Gaza for the private sector results in scarcity and price increases

28 April 2016

Since 3 April 2016, the Israeli authorities have been preventing the import of cement into Gaza for the private sector, following allegations that a substantial amount had been diverted from its intended legitimate beneficiaries. The controlled import of cement into Gaza for the private sector only resumed in October 2014 as part of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM), after a general sweeping ban imposed since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007. The recent restrictions were further reconfirmed on 18 April, following the discovery of a tunnel running from Gaza into Israel, the first such discovery since the 2014 Gaza conflict.



Shuja'iyeh, Gaza Strip, March 2016. Photo: OCHA

Prior to the recent restrictions, since October 2015 an average of 75,000 tonnes per month of controlled cement has entered Gaza for the private sector through Kerem Shalom crossing, primarily to address the house repair and reconstruction needs for the over 171,000 units which were damaged or destroyed during the 2014 hostilities. Most of the previously entered shelter repair and reconstruction material has already been sold to beneficiaries.

The Shelter Cluster reports that organizations providing assistance have had to suspend cash assistance for house repairs to over 1,370 families as a result of scarcity and acute price increases. In addition, payment to 1,550 families scheduled to start reconstruction are being delayed due to the lack of available cement. Over 75,000 people whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged during the 2014 hostilities continue to suffer from prolonged internal displacement due to access restrictions on basic construction materials and a lack of funding. According to the Palestinian Contractors Union, the current shortage of cement is disrupting the jobs of 40,000 people working in the construction sector.

Data and analysis provided in this Flash Update is based on preliminary information available. OCHA oPt Flash Updates are issued following developments raising humanitarian concerns and requiring coordinated humanitarian responses.