

DREF operation final report



Egypt: Palestinians Stranded on the Al-Areesh and Al-Rafah Borders

DREF operation n° MDREG005
8 February 2008

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

Summary: CHF 100,000 (USD 81,300 or EUR 60,350) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 20 July, 2007 to support the national society in delivering assistance to some 5,000 beneficiaries.

This DREF Operation aimed to assist the Egyptian Red Crescent (Egyptian RC) in its efforts to assist thousands of Palestinians stranded at Al-Areesh and Al-Rafah borders. With this assistance, in total, 5,110 people have been reached.

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Location of Rafah border crossing

The situation

The internal fighting in Gaza which ended with Hamas taking full control of Palestinian Authority institutions including security, and the ensuing political developments led the European observer team that had been stationed at the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt to withdraw. As a consequence, the border crossing between Gaza and Egypt was closed from 15 June until a political solution was found at the end of July, allowing the Palestinians to gradually return home.

During the closure of the Rafah outlet between Egypt and Gaza region of Palestine, more than 6,000 Palestinians were stranded mainly in the cities of Al Areesh and Rafah in North Sinai, close to the Egyptian-Palestinian border.

On 15 July 2007, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) called for urgent aid for Gaza as fears about a humanitarian crisis mount. The call came during a meeting in Cairo between the UNRWA Commissioner General, Karen AbuZayd and the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Musa.

Most of the Palestinians were hosted by families or relatives and some, who could afford to, rented apartments waiting for the reopening of the border. During the first month, there was no problem since most Palestinians and their hosts covered the daily necessities of their families. In the meantime, the Egyptian government covered the health care costs for those in need, who were treated for free in governmental hospitals and if necessary referred to hospitals nearby.

The situation started to change on 20 July as many of the families grew short of money. The governorate of Al Areesh arranged free lodging in schools and youth clubs both in Al Areesh and Rafah for 1,000 Palestinians. A total of 743 Palestinians moved to these places.

By end of July and beginning of August 2007, the concerned authorities accepted the return of Palestinians stranded in Rafah and Areesh via the Israeli-controlled "Aouja Passage". The return operation of the stranded Palestinians took two weeks except for some particular cases of Palestinians blocked in Arish airport and persons not registered at the Palestinian Embassy in Cairo. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that it has been "the longest period since the implementation of the Access and Movement Agreement (AMA) in November 2005."

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

After an initial assessment was made by the Egyptian RC branch of El Areesh, the Secretary General of the National Society, Professor Gabr, visited El Areesh and Rafah in mid July to monitor the situation and identify the humanitarian needs of the stranded Palestinians. Several meetings were held with the concerned authorities.

Following other assessment missions, the board of the Egyptian RC adopted an action plan to support the stranded Palestinians, as outlined below:

- Provide immediate food assistance to the victims and assist the most in need;
- Provide psychological support to the stranded families, identify their other needs and try to meet them (to be conducted by trained youth volunteers of the headquarters and North Sinai branch);
- Receive Palestinian children and provide them with a hot meal (to be conducted by two RC nurseries in North Sinai);
- Help hospitalized and handicapped Palestinians, providing them with extra necessities (to be conducted by youth volunteers).

A special committee composed of representatives from the Egyptian RC headquarters, from North Sinai branch and the governorate, including the Secretariat of the Governor and Departments of Health and Solidarity, was established to assure the distribution of the food parcels.

A team of 35 Egyptian RC volunteers was deployed in Al Areesh on 20 July to prepare for the distribution of food packages. Some 17 volunteers from the National Society were actually present at the food company in Cairo, preparing the packages. Trucks were hired on a daily basis to transport the packages to Al Areesh.

In order to cover initial expenses, the Egyptian RC received donations from individual national donors and organizations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) supported the operation with a contribution of approximately USD 20,000. Contributions from other international organizations were also received.

The National Society requested the support of the International Federation and CHF 100,000 was granted by the disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) upon submission of the plan of action and budget by the Egyptian RC. In addition to this assistance, the National Society, in close partnership with the UNRWA Cairo office, got the relevant authorization to transport 1,500 tons of food aid including rice, wheat and sugar to the Gaza region. 13 truck-loads of food items arrived in Rafah from the Egyptian RC in order to support the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Progress towards objectives

Egyptian RC played an important role in developing and setting up new operational procedures for the management of Palestinians stranded at the borders, waiting their return back home. These procedures were discussed and agreed with local authorities and other concerned key players aiming at facilitating and organizing the logistic and registration system, including the distribution of food and non food items to the beneficiaries.



Egyptian Red Crescent youth volunteers working on the beneficiaries' lists

The Egyptian RC volunteers prepared a list of the Palestinians based on their passport number. Data for each family was registered in information sheets, which were entered later in a database. The National Society immediately provided available urgent relief materials.

The good communication between the National Society headquarters and the branches of the South as well as the effective coordination with the authorities has facilitated the implementation of the logistics and the management of this operation in the field.

Thanks to the DREF allocation and financial assistance provided by other organizations, the Egyptian RC provided a timely response, focusing on food assistance but also providing complementary support to the

medical assistance provided by the volunteers due to other donations in cash. The National Society has purchased several medical items and medicaments and distributed them with the support of its volunteers.

The logistic department of the National Society has arranged these combined distributions. These have been successful since the assessment made at the early stage, was accurate and relevant. During 6-9 August, 8 tons of medical items were delivered. During Ramadan (September and October), assistance in medical items were provided to the Palestinians blocked at Areesh airport waiting to return home.

The Egyptian RC continued to supervise the medical cases, the handicapped, and other emergency situations with the support of the Egyptian Ministry of Health after the return of the majority of the Palestinians to their homes.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: Provide food assistance to more than 5,000 Palestinians stranded at Rafah and Areesh.

Activities planned: The aim was to distribute food parcels sufficient for ten days to the families most in need. These were conducted by the local Red Crescent branches in Rafah and Al Areesh. Data of these families - including the date of arrival and personal information stated in the travel documents - were recorded. In line with the lists prepared, the distribution has been conducted as follows:

From 2 August 2007 (during two weeks)	5,000 food parcels
From 6 to 9 August	500 tons of food items (rice, flour and sugar)
From 12 to 16 August	600 tons of food items (rice, flour and sugar)
During Ramadan (September/October)	110 meals for Palestinians blocked at Areesh airport

A total team of 70 volunteers have been deployed from the local committees of the Egyptian RC in Areesh and Rafah.



The immediate needs of the Palestinians stranded at the borders were met with food packages distributed by the Egyptian RC

Impact:

The immediate needs of the Palestinian families stranded could be served in time. The effective distribution monitored by the Egyptian RC volunteers has contributed to maintain a smooth atmosphere, avoiding troubles during the emergency phase. Initial assessments were proven to be very relevant and relief aid did reach all the beneficiaries in due time.

The relief items provided during the initial days played an important role in meeting the physical needs of the victims, and also contributed much to their psychological wellbeing. The ability to distribute items within 12 - 48 hours to those people who needed them the most underscored the importance of a National Society having access to disaster preparedness stocks.

Challenges:

In such a sensitive situation, the Egyptian RC had to negotiate with all the concerned parties - Egyptian, Israeli and Palestinian authorities - in order to ensure its humanitarian role without discriminating any of the victims.

Conclusion

Relief assistance provided to the affected people touched upon one of the largest existing socio-economic challenges that are being faced by the Palestinians today. In addition to the distributed relief items, there has been a great psychological support, especially to the elderly, women and children. The activities carried out by the volunteers contributed to reducing the effects of the weeks of waiting at Rafah and Areesh borders.

The unspent amount of CHF 3 was returned to DREF.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

MDREG005 - Egypt - Gaza Border Closure

Final Report

Selected Parameters	
Reporting Timeframe	2007/07-2007/10
Budget Timeframe	2007/07-2007/10
Appeal	MDREG005
Budget	APPEAL

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Consolidated Response to Appeal

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
A. Budget		100,000				100,000
B. Opening Balance		0				0
Income						
<u>Other Income</u>						
<i>DREF Allocations</i>		99,997				99,997
C5. Other Income		99,997				99,997
C. Total Income = SUM(C1..C5)		99,997				99,997
D. Total Funding = B + C		99,997				99,997
Appeal Coverage		100%				100%

II. Balance of Funds

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
B. Opening Balance		0				0
C. Income		99,997				99,997
E. Expenditure		-99,997				-99,997
F. Closing Balance = (B + C + E)		0				0

III. Budget Analysis / Breakdown of Expenditure

Account Groups	Budget	Expenditure					TOTAL	Variance
		Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation		
A		B					A - B	
BUDGET (C)		100,000					100,000	
Supplies								
Food	90,417		78,349			78,349	12,068	
Total Supplies	90,417		78,349			78,349	12,068	
Transport & Storage								
Transport & Vehicle Costs			7,018			7,018	-7,018	
Total Transport & Storage			7,018			7,018	-7,018	
Personnel								
National Staff			2,410			2,410	-2,410	
National Society Staff	1,000		3,636			3,636	-2,636	
Total Personnel	1,000		6,046			6,046	-5,046	
General Expenditure								
Travel			1,577			1,577	-1,577	
Office Costs	2,083						2,083	
Communications			34			34	-34	
Financial Charges			475			475	-475	
Total General Expenditure	2,083		2,085			2,085	-2	
Programme Support								
Program Support	6,500		6,500			6,500	0	
Total Programme Support	6,500		6,500			6,500	0	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (D)	100,000		99,997			99,997	3	
VARIANCE (C - D)			3			3		