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**Update on normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat,
including activities in areas affected by conflict and disasters**

Status of the development of the efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip: comprehensive report

Report of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 3 of its decision 2026/2,¹ the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) requested the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to complete a comprehensive report on the status of the development of the efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip once conditions permitted. The present report was prepared in response to that request.
2. Building on the previous interim reports, the present report summarizes key findings based on available data and external information, complemented by partial on-the-ground verification. The main content and analysis of the available data are contained in the *Gaza Urban Profile 2026*.²
3. While the present report provides a comprehensive overview of the efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip, some gaps are inevitable due to the lack of availability of certain data, limited access to the area by United Nations staff to conduct full verification on the ground, and the ongoing conflict leading to additional destruction of housing and infrastructure.
4. The report also takes into account the latest rapid damage and needs assessment, conducted by the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations (including UN-Habitat) as of April 2026.³

* HSP/EB.2026/17.

¹ See HSP/EB.2026/16.

² Available at https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2026/09/gaza_urban_profile.pdf.

³ World Bank, European Union and United Nations, *Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment: April 2026*. Available at <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e539cbf23b348c3d4fc69b8a7e9c9d7d-0280062026/original/Gaza-RDNA-2026-Final-April-19.pdf>.

II. Limitations

A. Availability of data

5. The *Gaza Urban Profile 2026* draws on the best available information from multiple stakeholders, combining primary and secondary sources, spatial data sets, satellite-based assessments and sectoral analysis.

6. However, the availability, geographical coverage, level of detail and reference dates of data vary considerably across sectors. Relatively comprehensive spatial information was available for physical damage to buildings, housing, roads and selected infrastructure, largely through remote sensing and damage assessment data sets. Greater limitations were encountered in obtaining sufficiently detailed and up-to-date information on the functionality of basic services and infrastructure, population distribution and displacement, housing occupancy and habitability, housing, land and property and tenure conditions, local economic activity and livelihoods, and the operational status of social and community facilities.

7. In several cases, the available data sets captured physical damage but provided only limited information on whether damaged facilities, networks or neighbourhood systems retained any residual functionality. Data gaps were particularly significant in areas subject to severe access restrictions, including in the zone to the east of the so-called “yellow line”, which is under military control by Israel. Information on that zone is predominantly derived from remote sensing and secondary sources.

8. Furthermore, data sets were produced by different actors and for different reference periods, making direct comparisons and aggregation challenging in a rapidly evolving context. The findings are therefore based on the best available evidence at the time of preparation, with the profiling process designed to be iterative and progressively refined as updated sectoral and community-level information becomes available.

B. Limitations on access and on-the-ground verification of data

9. Restrictions on access significantly constrained systematic on-the-ground verification across the Gaza Strip, particularly in areas east of the “yellow line” and at other locations that were inaccessible or subject to changing security and access conditions, representing more than 60 per cent of the Gaza Strip.⁴

10. Consequently, the *Gaza Urban Profile 2026* relies substantially on satellite imagery and remote sensing assessments, geospatial analysis, available administrative and sectoral data sets, and information provided by Palestinian institutions, United Nations entities and other humanitarian and development partners.

11. Where access and information permitted, those sources were complemented by input from local stakeholders and available community-level information, including information generated through the neighbourhood profiling process. Such input helped to contextualize spatial and sectoral data sets and provided additional insight into local conditions; however, it did not constitute comprehensive field verification throughout Gaza. In May 2026, UN-Habitat recruited a national officer located in Gaza, who has helped with field verification in accessible areas and strengthened UN-Habitat engagement with different partners in the Gaza Strip.

12. As a result, the extent of the physical damage could generally be assessed more consistently than could building habitability, infrastructure and service functionality, accessibility, population presence and conditions for safe return, which often require direct observation and more detailed local assessment. These limitations are particularly acute in inaccessible areas, where findings should be treated as indicative and updated as access improves and more detailed ground-level information becomes available.

C. Lack of stability

13. The operating environment remains highly volatile, with continuing access restrictions, periodic bombing, displacement and continued severe disruption of urban systems. Population distribution and neighbourhood conditions continue to change. As a result, the *Gaza Urban Profile*

⁴ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian situation report: 26 June 2026”. Available at <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-26-june-2026>.

2026 and related assessments are mere snapshots in time and require updates whenever possible, as access, population movements, damage conditions and service functionality evolve.

III. Key points regarding the impact of the conflict on the human settlements in the Gaza Strip

14. The *Gaza Urban Profile 2026* documents an unprecedented breakdown of urban systems in the Gaza Strip. Approximately 81 per cent of all structures have been assessed as damaged, amounting to 198,273 affected structures, including 123,464 destroyed structures. Around 1.9 million people have been displaced, often multiple times, while more than 68 million tons of debris constrain mobility, humanitarian access and recovery. Critical infrastructure has been extensively affected, including 88 per cent of above-ground water, sanitation and health facilities, 76 per cent of underground networks and 74 per cent of the road network, while hospitals and educational facilities have also sustained widespread damage. The productive base has been severely eroded, with 92 per cent of assessed commercial, industrial and tourism establishments affected and the agri-food system facing near-total collapse.

15. Those impacts are spatially interconnected: damage to housing, roads, utilities, social services and livelihoods collectively determines whether neighbourhoods can support safe return and daily life. The UN-Habitat Neighbourhood Functionality Index confirms the systemic nature of the decline, with only spatially limited and fragmented areas retaining low or medium functionality and with particularly severe deterioration in Rafah, North Gaza and Khan Younis.

16. The Neighbourhood Functionality Index reveals a near-total collapse of physical functionality throughout the Gaza Strip. Approximately 83.3 per cent of the territory is classified as exhibiting very low or extremely low functionality; the figure rises to 95.2 per cent when low-functionality areas are included. Only 4.8 per cent of the territory remains at a medium level of functionality, with no areas classified as having high functionality. In comparison with pre-war conditions, deterioration has spread from peripheral areas into urban centres, severely affecting infrastructure, services, housing and economic activity. Rafah is the most severely affected governorate, while North Gaza and Khan Younis also show extensive decline. The remaining functional areas are fragmented, indicating a broader breakdown of interconnected urban systems and recovery capacity in Gaza.

17. The findings underscore the fact that recovery cannot be addressed through isolated sectoral interventions but requires coordinated, area-based approaches that restore neighbourhood functionality and reconnect interdependent urban systems.

IV. Ongoing efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip

18. Ongoing recovery and reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip are increasingly focused on establishing the foundations for a coordinated, area-based, rights-based and people-centred recovery process, while addressing urgent needs arising from the widespread destruction of housing, infrastructure and essential services. UN-Habitat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations entities, in coordination with Palestinian institutions and municipalities and humanitarian and development partners, are supporting damage and needs assessments, debris management, housing and shelter recovery, the restoration of basic services and infrastructure, and planning for neighbourhood-level recovery. The UN-Habitat *Gaza Urban Profile* and neighbourhood functionality assessments contribute to those efforts by providing spatially grounded evidence to identify geographic priorities, assess the interdependencies between housing, infrastructure, services, accessibility and livelihoods, and inform the prioritization and sequencing of recovery interventions.

19. Recognizing that secure housing, land and property rights are a critical foundation for safe return, housing recovery and reconstruction, UN-Habitat has also developed a strategic housing, land and property framework for Gaza, in consultation with relevant Palestinian institutions, the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, UNDP, the Norwegian Refugee Council and other partners. The framework provides a strategic basis for integrating housing, land and property considerations throughout humanitarian response, early recovery and reconstruction, including the protection and documentation of tenure and property rights, the management of housing, land and property risks and disputes, and the incorporation of relevant safeguards into housing, debris removal, infrastructure and area-based recovery interventions. This is particularly important given the extensive destruction and loss of property documentation, repeated displacement and the complexity of tenure

arrangements, which may otherwise create barriers to return and reconstruction and increase the risk of exclusion or secondary displacement.

20. Building on that strategic framework, UN-Habitat and UNDP are implementing a joint pilot initiative in Gaza, supported by the Government of Norway, to operationalize practical approaches for safeguarding housing, land and property rights as a foundation for recovery and reconstruction. The initiative combines participatory housing, land and property documentation and mapping, adaptation of the UN-Habitat Social Tenure Domain Model to the Gaza context, awareness-raising and referral mechanisms, and support for the resolution of issues related to housing, land and property. The initiative is intended to generate fit-for-purpose, evidence-based records of people-to-land and people-to-property relationships where formal documentation has been lost or damaged or is inaccessible, while maintaining links with the competent Palestinian institutions and pathways towards formally recognized documentation when conditions allow. Lessons generated through the pilot initiative are expected to inform the scaling-up of housing, land and property protection and documentation and its integration into wider housing and neighbourhood recovery processes.

21. With support from Japan, UN-Habitat also finalized a pilot housing repair project, helping 70 families to return to their homes and ensuring basic habitability. It also created extra hosting capacity, thus taking more families out of camps. Additional actors are now helping to scale the approach.

22. Together, these efforts are aimed at connecting urban evidence, housing, land and property safeguards and neighbourhood-level planning with the broader recovery and reconstruction process. Given the scale of destruction and the interconnected nature of urban systems in the Gaza Strip, sustained coordination among humanitarian, development and reconstruction actors will be essential to ensuring that housing recovery is accompanied by the restoration of infrastructure, services, accessibility and livelihoods, while safeguarding the rights of displaced and affected populations. This integrated approach provides a basis for moving from individual and sector-specific interventions towards coordinated, area-based recovery that supports voluntary, safe and sustainable return, and towards the progressive restoration of neighbourhood functionality.

V. Next steps

23. UN-Habitat will continue and deepen neighbourhood-level profiling and participatory recovery planning using the Neighbourhood Functionality Index as an initial prioritization tool and progressively incorporating more detailed sectoral data and community-level evidence. Particular attention should be given to the conditions for safe and sustainable return, whenever and wherever possible, including housing, accessibility, infrastructure, basic services and transitional housing needs.

24. UN-Habitat will also promote integrated, area-based recovery that sequences housing rehabilitation and reconstruction with debris management, the restoration of roads and infrastructure, essential services, livelihoods and public facilities. Recovery priorities should be regularly updated as access conditions, displacement patterns and neighbourhood functionality evolve, with strengthened coordination among national and local institutions, humanitarian and development actors and international partners.

25. Building on its strategic housing, land and property framework, UN-Habitat will strengthen the integration of housing, land and property rights into recovery and reconstruction planning. This includes scaling up housing, land and property documentation and verification, addressing related risks, and integrating relevant safeguards into housing and neighbourhood recovery to support safe, equitable and rights-based return and reconstruction.

26. In line with its strategic plan for the period 2026–2029, and by leveraging its expertise, UN-Habitat remains ready to provide technical advisory services, mobilizing its housing and planning tools to inform and support recovery and reconstruction strategies and plans for the Gaza Strip.