



**The Politics of Food Assistance:
UNRWA's work with Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip**

A Research Paper presented by:

Walaa A. J. Shehada

Palestine

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Specialization:

**Conflict, Reconstruction and Human Security
CRS**

Members of the examining committee:

Dr. Dubravka Zarkov (Supervisor)

Dr. Joao Guimaraes (Reader)

The Hague, The Netherlands
November, 2011

Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

Inquiries:

Postal address: Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

Location: Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

Contents

Chapter 1

The contexts

xi

- 1.1 Statement of the Research Problem
xi
- 1.2 Research Questions
xii
 - 1.2.1 Main question
xii
 - 1.2.2 Sub-questions
xii
- 1.3 Research Objectives
xii
- 1.4 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis
xiii
 - Sources of data for the analysis
xiii
- 1.5 Scope and Limitations
xiii
- 1.6 Researcher's Perspective and Contribution
xiv
- 1.7 Ethical and Political Choices and Personal Involvements
xiv
- 1.8 Historical Context
xvi
 - 1.8.1 Palestine and Gaza
xvi
- 1.9 Context of Aid
xvii
 - 1.9.1 Geopolitics of aid
xvii
 - 1.9.2 Israel, UN and international legal obligations
xviii
 - 1.9.3 Problems with definitions
xviii
 - 1.9.4 Geopolitical aspects of aid
xx
 - 1.9.5 Humanitarianism and the legal responsibility of the aid giver
xx
 - 1.9.6 Socio-economic aspects of aid in Gaza
xxi
- 1.10 Theoretical Context
xxii
 - 1.10.1 Humanitarian imperative and New Humanitarianism
xxii

- 1.10.2 Humanitarianism: Rights-based approach or needs-based approach?
xxiii
- 1.10.3 Dangerous consequences of politicizing humanitarian aid
xxiv

Chapter 2

UNRWA: The Politics of Aid

xxv

- 2.1 Palestinian territories: Dependent on Political Aid
xxv
- 2.2 Aid: Neutral and Independent?
xxvi
- 2.3 Political Flow of Aid
xxvi
- 2.4 Conflict with Hamas-led Government
xxvii
- 2.5 Control of borders
xxvii
- 2.6 The Insecurity of Food Security
xxviii
- 2.7 Assistance Cuts: Who Is to Blame?
xxix
- 2.8 UNRWA: The Realpolitik on the Ground
xxix
 - 2.8.1 Games with needs
xxx
- 2.9 UNRWA-Refugee Relations
xxxi
- 2.10 Conclusion
xxxi

Chapter 3

UNRWA's Assistance Implementation Problems

xxxii

- 3.1 Introduction
xxxii
- 3.2 Strategic Planning
xxxii
- 3.3 Creating Classifications: UNRWA Social Survey, Eligibility Criteria and Gradations of Poverty
xxxii
- 3.4 Issues of respect: Quality of services and food
xxxiv
- 3.5 Dealing with adversities: Finding the ways around
xxxvi
- 3.6 Refugees' Perspective: Reasons for UNRWA Food Aid
xxxviii
- 3.7 Conclusion
xxxviii

Chapter 4
Conclusion
x1

Appendices

References

xliii

xlvi

List of Acronyms

EP	Emergency Programme
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	internally displaced people
IHL	international humanitarian law
INGOs	international non-governmental organizations
ODA	official development assistance
oPt	occupied Palestinian territories
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
RR	Registered Refugees
RSS	Relief & Social Services
UNCC	United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WBGS	West Bank and Gaza Strip

Abstract

This study takes as the focus of its analysis the influence of geo-political relations on humanitarian interventions in a conflict situation; in this case the Gaza Strip. Two main determinants that inform UNRWA's humanitarian work emerge from the analysis of its work with Palestinian refugees in the Strip. The first one is the geopolitical relations that influence the flow and priorities of aid by formulating specific policies and intervention schemas based on emergency strategies rather than finding long-term solution. The second factor is the nature and the privileges that organization enjoys as sole actor in charge of satisfying these needs. Bureaucratic dysfunction leads to disregarding of feedback from recipients and therefore the perception of beneficiaries not taken into consideration through a continuing process of reform as a result of budget cuts.

Reflecting on the literature debates surrounding humanitarian aid, and especially those around neutrality, independence, impartiality and humanity, the paper concludes that humanitarian interventions have a very limited impact on the well-being of aid recipients when they are stripped from the main principles that should guide humanitarian work. In this case, the deviation of humanitarian assistance away from the humanitarian imperative is due to the politicization of aid. Understanding how geo-political relations impact on humanitarian assistance in the Strip is an essential step for the humanitarian actors if they are to avoid becoming part of the larger geo-political agenda.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research is related to the field of development studies because it investigates the factors that inform humanitarian action on the ground and how they relate to the principles of the humanitarian imperative in a conflict situation. As the study demonstrates, the factors that influence humanitarianism in the Gaza Strip are also factors that have a bearing on development in the Palestinian territories. It is important to understand the discourses surrounding humanitarian interventions claiming to mediate human suffering. It is important to understand the roots of the human suffering in a particular conflict situation in order to design integrated involvement that addresses the roots and effects of such a conflict in the short term as well as the long term.

Keywords

Humanitarian Assistance, Humanitarianism, Food Aid, Food Security, Politicization of Aid, Geo-politics, Refugees, UNRWA, Gaza Strip.

Chapter 1

The contexts

On a typical food distribution day at one of the 12 centres run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Gaza Strip, there are multiple long queues of refugees and an observer might think that all the people were waiting to receive their rations. However, if the observer were to ask the people what they were queuing for, or listen to them complaining to each other, s/he would soon realize that most of the people were not there to receive food rations, but to check whether their names had been included in the list of those who had been approved to receive assistance during the current round of assistance. On one side, there would be a long queue of people waiting to check whether they had been excluded from the list. On the other side, there would be an even longer queue of people who already knew that they had been rejected, and who wanted either to know the reason for the exclusion or to make a formal complaint.¹ There would also be a queue of people clutching their UNRWA cards, waiting to receive their food rations. During the last round, in July 2011, food assistance was cut off from 100,000 people. They were rejected but not informed about it.² One widow told me during an interview that her assistance had been cut without UNRWA even visiting her home to check on her situation (Interview PR18).

UNRWA was set up as a temporary agency in 1949 to assist displaced Palestinians after the Arab-Israeli hostilities of 1948. Its original mandate was to carry out relief and work programmes in cooperation with local governments. Over the years, the UN General Assembly repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate while awaiting resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees. As the situation continued to remain unresolved, UNRWA's services were extended to include relief, human development and protection of Palestine refugees.

This research is concerned with the politics of humanitarianism, analyzing how geopolitical relations influence the situation at the micro level and how that relates to the principles by which UNRWA is meant to be guided. More specifically, I will focus on the *politics of humanitarian assistance* in terms of the policies and the relationship between policies and practice.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

In the aftermath of 1948 Arab-Israeli war, more than 700,000 Palestinian civilians were displaced from their homeland (Bocco, 2010) to become refugees either in cities and towns within what remained of Palestine or in countries outside Palestine. Immediately after the 1948 war, emergency aid was channelled to Palestinians via international agencies and international non-governmental organizations. On 8 December 1949, the United

¹ This observation was made on 17 July 2011 in the Al-Sabra distribution centre by a research assistant for this study. However, similar scenes occur at the other centres, too.

² The confusion caused by UNRWA's decision to make drastic cuts in the number of people receiving food aid has been captured on a video placed on the Internet. See video titled "Shortage of UN food aid to Gaza" at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezbFtVBgzng>.

Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established by the UN under General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) (UNRWA, 2007: 4) to provide assistance, protection and advocacy for Palestinian refugees in five areas of operation: the occupied Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Currently, the total number of refugees who benefit from UNRWA services in the five areas of operation is 4.6 million. UNRWA provides relief and services such as food, education and health to 1.1 million refugees in Gaza; that is equivalent to 75% of the entire population of the Gaza strip (UNRWA, n.d.). UNRWA has been the main provider of basic humanitarian relief and human development services to the Palestinian refugees for more than 60 years. In spite of the Palestinian population being one of the highest per capita receivers of aid on a regular basis, the socio-economic indicators for Palestinian households, including food security, have not shown any improvement.

This study investigates how the political context of Gaza informs the policy and practice of humanitarian aid by UNRWA to Palestinian refugees. While the study highlights Israeli violations of international law as an important factor affecting UNRWA services, the focus will be on how international agencies like UNRWA have become involved in that violation through their policy formulation and application. In other words, this study will use the 'humanitarian aid' lens to analyze the reasons underlying UNRWA's limited impact on the socio-economic well-being of the refugees. I aim to analyze the policies and schemas of intervention, their relation to the political agendas, and the effect on the socio-economic situation of the refugee households, especially the level of food insecurity.

1.2 Research Questions

1.2.1 Main question

- What are the determinants of humanitarian assistance, especially food assistance, in Gaza and what are their implications for the specific work of UNRWA?

1.2.2 Sub-questions

1. How has UNRWA framed its humanitarian responses to Gazan refugees in the context of conflict?
2. How does UNRWA's intervention relate to international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles?
3. How do Israeli violations of international conventions impact on the humanitarian situation and UNRWA policies on the ground?
4. How do the recipients perceive the food assistance programmes (as programmes and in relation to their livelihood)?
5. What are the long-term implications of food assistance programmes from the recipients' point of view?

1.3 Research Objectives

The overall objective of the research is to investigate the tensions within and between humanitarianism as international legal and humanitarian principles and policies, and humanitarianism as practised by UNRWA when providing relief and services to Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip. This investigation will be conducted in the context of contemporary geo-political relations affecting the Middle East.

So far I have not found any other study that focuses on the links between international law, politics and humanitarian aid in Gaza. Nor have I found a study focusing on the link between international humanitarian obligations, political relations and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. Therefore, this paper will fill a gap in the current literature on the subject. And make an important contribution to the field.

1.4 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The main focus of the research will be on UNRWA food security policies and practices in Gaza, in relation to international and local human security discourses, and international and local donor systems and policies. In order to situate UNRWA's policy and practical work critically, I will employ the following three levels of analysis:

1. The people of and the actual situation in Gaza: food insecurity and general socio-economic conditions;
2. The Israel-Palestine conflict and the internal conflict in Gaza;
3. The international political and legal context: war on terror, donor systems and policies, and international humanitarian law.

Sources of data for the analysis

1. Primary data was obtained by conducting semi-structured interviews with:
 - A. 18 Heads of households/individual beneficiaries receiving assistance.
 - B. Two UNRWA humanitarian aid programme employees.

The sampling method was “purposive sampling” because it gives space to select people on the basis of traits relevant to the research focus (Schiphorst, 2011). I chose this kind of sampling because, during my work experience in one of the food aid programmes, I observed actions that are neither discussed/included in published documents nor stated as specific policy. Accordingly, the purpose of conducting these interviews was to confirm or refute the possibility that those actions are isolated occurrences. Then, the results of my interviews will support or challenge my understanding of the topic.

The instability of Gaza's borders made it impossible for me to conduct the interviews in the field and forced me to coordinate with a research assistant in Gaza. In addition I conducted interviews with two employees and one female refugee who have access to the internet and the telephone.

2. Some data were also collected through a day-long observation on 17 July 2011 at the Al Sabra distribution centre.
3. In addition to the information from interviews and observation, I obtained data from a variety of relevant documents that inform UNRWA's work in Gaza. Those were, among others: mission statements, project documents, annual reports, surveys, fact sheets, internal memos, etc.

To help me analyze discourses that inform the policy papers on which UNRWA's work practice is based, I used a number of documents that are listed in Appendix 1.

4. A two-minute video titled “Shortage of UN food aid to Gaza”,
<<http://www.youtube.com/v/ezbFtVBgzng&fs=1&source=uds&autoplay=1>>.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

I had doubts regarding the exact mechanisms of UNRWA's work on the ground (for example, in the warehouses, food stores, etc.). My previous work was with a different organization that targets non-refugees, and I had a total picture of its working system

and mechanisms. I used that experience to formulate interview questions in order to get information about the practical elements from both employees and beneficiaries.

Palestinian refugees were chosen as the focus of the research because of their historical and current situation, but that does not mean that the non-refugees in the Gaza Strip do not experience suffering. , I am focusing on refugees because of the limited space in this research paper. I hope that I will have an opportunity in the future to do comparative research into the differences between both groups as well as the differences between the organizations targeting those groups.

1.6 Researcher's Perspective and Contribution

My main argument is that the limitations in humanitarian assistance programmes for Palestinian refugees in Gaza are embedded in international geo-political relations. The international community is asked to assist people by giving them food and other means to survive when they are in crisis situations. This assistance has to conform with basic principles of humanitarian intervention, and has to stop once a sustainable solution has been achieved. However, in the case of Palestinian refugees, this humanitarian response has been in place ever since 1948 because of particular geo-political historical reasons.

I have previous work experience in the field of food security, where I have seen how the 'coupon culture' became an integral part of the daily life of Gazans. At my work place there were clear instructions to cancel the names of the beneficiaries if they sold their rations partially or totally. However, some beneficiaries were selling part of the food in order to pay transportation costs or to buy medicine. Day after day, we, as an implementing partner, were held responsible by the donors for minimizing the percentage of food that ended up being sold. However, this ignored the reasons why food is sold by recipients. More importantly, there was an unanswered question: why after 60 years, do Palestinians still depend on humanitarian assistance for such a basic human right as food? The restriction of humanitarian work to material relief, and the failure to deal with the larger questions of the context within which this work is conducted, provided the incentive for me to do this research.

1.7 Ethical and Political Choices and Personal Involvements

I have more than one motivation to do this research. The first one is professional. I have worked in the humanitarian assistance field, and have good knowledge of how such programmes are implemented. So I am very enthusiastic about mixing my professional knowledge with the academic skills I have gained at the ISS.

My academic motivation is to make a contribution to the literature on the politics of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, I have a personal motivation. I am a Palestinian refugee; I was born and grew up in Gaza city and studied in UNRWA schools. In spite of the invaluable services offered by UNRWA, I think that it has failed to protect the refugees' rights as human beings. The assistance is always a kind of philanthropy, and there is always a threat to cut the assistance at any time.

I also believe that refugees would prefer to go back to their homes and lands and take care of their food and other needs there. Therefore, the fulfilment of the 'right to return' is a starting point for enabling refugees to ensure sufficient and proper nutrition as well as secure decent livelihoods on a self-reliant basis. In a situation where Palestinian refugees have been denied their rights for more than 60-years, development programmes are obviously preferable to charitable relief programmes that are vulnerable to global politics and economic conditions. The current projects in the Gaza Strip are exclusively designed by outsiders who are blind to the vision of insiders, and there is a lack of needs

assessment studies. Hence, a development approach is not dominant, or to be accurate, is not given a chance to be dominant.

This study focuses on relief programmes because, in the near-absence of development programmes, food assistance is the primary, and often the only, source of sustenance for a large proportion of the population of Gaza. The focus of this paper is on the implementation, implications, strengths and weaknesses of the programmes, and the geo-political context within which the programmes operate.

1.8 Historical Context

1.8.1 *Palestine and Gaza*

During World War I, the Balfour Declaration issued by the British government on 2 November 1917 expressed support for establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, which at that time was administered by Britain under a League of Nations mandate. The Balfour Declaration led to large-scale migration of Jewish people from all over the world to their so-called ‘national home’. Since that time, the Palestinian problem has become an international issue and has been discussed and negotiated in international forums. In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) issued ‘The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine’, resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which marked the end of the British mandate over Palestine, and proposed partitioning Palestine into two independent, Palestinian and Jewish, states. This plan was not accepted by the neighbouring Arab countries and war broke out to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.

In the wake of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the flight of indigenous Palestinian people from the area increased and over half of the Palestinian population fled to many places inside and outside Palestine. This event, known as Al-Nakbah (the Catastrophe) – the process through which Israel was created and the Palestinian population killed or displaced – is an unforgettable event in the minds of Palestinians, especially among the refugees. At that time, the Western powers permitted the violation of international law through the replacement of the Palestinian population with the colonial settler state of Israel (al-Majdal, 2006). This was the beginning of the refugee issue, but the Gaza Strip was not yet under Israeli occupation. Between 1948 and 1967, the Gaza Strip was under Egyptian control and the West Bank was under Jordanian control. Then the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 resulted in Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and other territories such as the West Bank, Syrian Golan Heights and the Egyptian Sinai. It is worth noting that UN Security Council Resolution 242 in 1967 demanded Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 territories and return to the 1948 borders; however, the resolution, like all subsequent resolutions about Israeli violations of international law, was not binding, so there was no question of the UN enforcing its observance. Israel was left unhindered to continue its politics of forced displacement of Palestinians until the Six Day War in 1973.

On 8 December 1987, the First Intifada (uprising) broke out in Jabalia refugee camp, which is located in the Northern governorate of Gaza. The Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation continued until the Oslo accords were signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 as a framework for future negotiations to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Oslo accords were considered as the first peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis. Following the negotiations in Oslo, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in 1994 to govern parts of the West Bank (Jerico) and the Gaza Strip, with its mandate restricted to civilian and internal security issues. However, issues related to defence and foreign trade were retained by Israel.

On the ground, frustration among Palestinians increased because of the tight control by Israeli forces over borders as well as internal roads between cities and refugee camps. The frustration was also fuelled by the fact that the Oslo accords failed to address all the major issues in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, such as Al-Quds (Jerusalem), refugees, the 1967 borders and Israeli settlements violating those borders, the resolutions of which were delayed without any future vision towards solutions.

The Second Intifada, ‘Al-Aqsa Intifada’, started in 2000 in the West Bank when Ariel Sharon, Israel’s Prime Minister from 2001 to 2006, visited the Temple Mount in the old city of Jerusalem. Although the uprising started in the West Bank this time, much of the conflict was in Gaza. In 2002 Israel started to construct the Separation Barrier between

it and the West Bank. The International Court of Justice called on Israel to remove the wall but it was only an 'Advisory Opinion' and therefore not binding. The UN also passed a non-binding resolution asking Israel to remove the wall and compensate the civilians who had been affected by its construction.

The Gaza Strip is a part of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). It covers 360 km² and is composed of five main governorates: North, Gaza, Dair El-Balah, Khanyounis and Rafah. There are also eight refugee camps run by UNRWA, spread across the Strip: Beach, Bureij, Deir El-Balah, Jabalia, Khan Younis, Maghazi, Nuseirat, and Rafah. The camps are among the most crowded areas in the world. For example, according to the UNRWA website, in the Beach camp, called 'Shati', 80,000 refugees live in an area of only 0.52 km².

Seventy five per cent of the 1.5 million people currently living in the Strip are refugees from cities and towns outside it. Historically as well as currently, they have experienced suffering on a large scale. The situation in Gaza is a complex political, economic, social and ideological one. The basic struggle there, as in any occupied territory, is human security in all its aspects, with its origins in the decision by the UK to accept the creation of Israel and guarantee its security at the cost of the indigenous Palestinian people.

Gazans have been heavily affected by the Israeli occupation, and the strong resistance to Israeli rule finally led in 2005 to Israel's Disengagement Plan, the process of removing all the settlements from Gaza and a few settlements from the West Bank. The 'Disengagement' was conducted unilaterally by Israel after it was proposed in 2004 by Sharon. However, as will be shown later in this paper, this 'Disengagement' was not the end of the occupation.

In 2006, Palestinians held legislative elections, which Hamas won in Gaza. As Hamas was on the USA and EU list of terrorist organizations, Israel responded by withholding customs tax revenue, which it was obliged to transfer to the PA under the Paris Protocol, and international donors immediately ceased budget support payments to the PA. The Quartet representing the international community, composed of the European Union, the United Nations, the United States, and Russia, "insisted upon three conditions: that Hamas renounce violence, recognise Israel, and endorse previous agreements" (Alexander, 2007) before the election results could be accepted.

Internally, factional fighting started between Hamas and Fatah over the resources, power, control over ministries and security forces. Economic factors and external pressure played an important role in that struggle. In June 2007, Hamas took control of Gaza after fighting between its members and Fatah. Since then, the blockade of Gaza has become tighter and the general situation in Gaza has deteriorated dramatically.

On 27 December 2008, Israel unleashed 'Operation Cast Lead' on the Gaza Strip, aimed at weakening Hamas or destroying it totally. It was a very violent operation against Hamas members as well as civilians in the Strip, which drew the attention of the world to the catastrophic situation in Gaza.

1.9 Context of Aid

1.9.1 *Geopolitics of aid*

Humanitarian assistance in the oPt has never been detached from the political situation and the international political agenda. For instance, because Hamas won the democratic Palestinian Legislative Council elections in Gaza in 2006, the EU stopped paying the salaries of civil servants in the Strip and Israel withheld customs duties payable to the Palestinian Authority. These actions contributed to raising the poverty level in Gaza to 67% by the end of that year (al-Majdal, 2006). The international community started seeking new strategies to deal with the humanitarian crises in the oPt because of the new

political situation in Gaza. For example, “the Quartet expressed its willingness to endorse a temporary international mechanism that is limited in scope and duration, operates with full transparency and accountability, and ensures direct delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people” (Quartet Statement, 2006). This approach of amending aid mechanisms meant avoiding dealing directly with the Hamas-led government and was clearly based on political reasons rather than humanitarian goals. Such mechanisms exclude the PA from the humanitarian process and give the humanitarian organizations a monopoly in providing aid. This approach of framing the humanitarian process according to the global dynamics means that principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality and humanity of humanitarian aid were all compromised.

1.9.2 Israel, UN and international legal obligations

Israel claims that the disengagement from Gaza in 2005 was the end of the occupation (Alexander, 2007); however, this argument is practically and legally invalid. Israel is still effectively an occupying power, even after the disengagement of 2005 (Hupkes, 2007) because it still controls the movement of goods and people across the borders. This control breaches the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, signed by Israel with the PA. This dominance enables Israel to use humanitarian assistance as a tool of collective punishment on Gazans. As an occupying power, Israel has the responsibility under the Fourth Geneva Convention to maintain the welfare of the civilian population, but Israel is violating this Convention.

Israel’s blockade of the Strip has grown increasingly stringent since Hamas won the elections. Food, medicine, fuel, electricity, construction materials, imports, exports and the movement of people in and out of the Gaza Strip all have been slowly choked off, leading to life-threatening problems of food, sanitation, health, water supply and transportation. The blockade on Gaza is still ongoing. Under these circumstances, UNRWA has the responsibility to assist and protect the refugees.

After the 1948 Nakbah, the UN General Assembly established the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) in December 1948. Besides affirming the ‘right of return’, the UNCCP was charged with facilitating the repatriation, resettlement and social and economic rehabilitation of the refugees (BADIL, 2005: 42). Repatriation is the only solution and is a right of the refugees and the internally displaced people (IDPs). The 1951 Refugees Convention states that refugees and IDPs have the right to get food, health, education and shelter. They are also entitled to protection through asylum, travel documents and ensuring of basic human rights. (Badil, n.d.).

Unlike the UNCCP, the UNRWA was given a mandate to provide assistance. While the UNCCP was clearly responsible for protection of the refugees, UNRWA’s mandate included some responsibilities regarding their security and human rights.

The 1951 Refugee Convention does not apply to the Palestinian refugees, since they receive assistance and protection from other UN bodies: UNRWA in the five areas of operation, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) outside those areas.

The Palestinian refugees are denied the right to return to their homeland by Israel although the ‘right of return’ has been reaffirmed by many UN resolutions (such as number 194 in 1948 and number 237 in 1967). Here, a new aspect of protection arises, which is the absence of a legal entity (in the form of a Palestinian state) through which the refugees can seek their rights.

1.9.3 Problems with definitions

Many organizations and parties have defined **humanitarian aid**. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines humanitarian aid as “a sector of [Official Develop-

ment Assistance] ODA that includes: disaster prevention and preparedness, reconstruction relief, relief coordination, protection and support services, emergency food aid and other emergency/distress relief. This strict definition of humanitarian aid, which is governed by the principles of neutrality and impartiality, marks it out from development aid, which can be subject to some conditionality” (GHA, 2010).

This definition presents several problems in general, and specifically for the situation in Gaza. Some of the terms, for example ‘protection’, are unspecified. The definition does not provide clear tools and schemas for implementation, and does not emphasize the human dignity aspect of aid recipients. Respecting human dignity could be included under ‘protection’, but again it is still unclear. Further, this definition makes a problematic distinction between humanitarian and development aid: humanitarian aid can also become subject to conditionality, if not in policies, then during implementation.

The UN has no specific definition of humanitarian assistance. However, the UN emphasizes four main principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance: (1) neutrality, (2) humanity, (3) impartiality, and (4) independence (UNGA, 2009). These principles are central to my discussion on politics of humanitarian assistance to Gaza.

Food aid is defined as the transfer of food on concessional terms from one country to another. It comes in three forms: emergency food aid, given in cases of famine and natural or man-made catastrophes; project food aid, administered within the framework of development projects and targeted feeding programmes; and programme, or structural food aid consisting of bulk transfers of food to governments, to be used for sale on the local market (Uvin, 1992). The food aid in Gaza – as I will argue later – may be seen as falling in all three, or rather, not neatly falling into any of those categories.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active, productive and healthy life. Food insecurity exists when this access is jeopardized (PCBS, WFP&FAO, 2009; Uvin, 1992). If so defined, since food security is one of the objectives of UNRWA, the Agency falls all too short in fulfilling the objective – even when it changes the criteria for distribution of food aid in order to reduce the number of recipients.

The concept of **protection** encompasses: “... all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law, i.e. human rights law, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and refugee law. Human rights and humanitarian organizations must conduct these activities in an impartial manner (not on the basis of race, national, or ethnic origin, language or gender).” (ICRC, 2009: 8). However, as I will argue in this study, the Palestinian right to protection, like the other rights, is conditioned by the international and regional political context.

Finally, most problematic is the definition of **Palestinian refugees**. According to UNRWA (2009) Palestinian refugees “are persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. Palestine Refugees, and descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, are eligible to register for UNRWA services. The Agency accepts new applications from persons who wish to be registered as Palestine Refugees. Once they are registered with UNRWA, persons in this category are referred to as Registered Refugees or as Registered Palestine Refugees.”

The shocking point about this definition is that UNRWA includes in its mandate just the persons displaced by 1948 war, but not those displaced by the 1967 war, as registered refugees, while both groups have been displaced due to conflict, at different times. The definition also gives the rights of registration to ‘descendants of Palestine refugee males’, not to the ‘descendants of Palestine refugee females’, which is a clear gender bias in defining the refugees.

1.9.4 Geopolitical aspects of aid

Official Development Assistance is being distributed according to other criteria than poverty indicators. This is clear from the fact that Middle East-North Africa is the region with the highest global aid flow per poor person (USD 950 per capita), which is well above the rest. Central Asia is in second place with USD 363, and sub-Saharan Africa receives only USD 49 per capita (Petrik, 2007: 116). There might be multiple reasons for this, but one explanation seems to stand well above the others. The ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the main lens through which the EU sees humanitarian aid, as something that can be used to maintain/promote stability, security and prosperity (ibid.). The international community’s long engagement in the area has aimed to calm passions on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The support has targeted moderate political representation, hoping to reduce the support for extremist parties such as Hamas (ibid.).

This is emphasized by Alberto Alesina and David Dollars, who present evidence that the “direction of foreign aid is dictated as much by political and strategic considerations, as by the economic needs and policy performance of the recipients” and that “colonial past and political alliances are major determinants of foreign aid” (Alesina & Dollars, 2000: 1).

From this it is clear that bilateral aid has very little relationship to poverty, especially when it is directed to a politically very unstable area like Gaza.

On the other hand, discussing the international politics of food aid, Uvin sees political or economic self-interest as only one (and probably not the most important) motivation for food aid. He develops an alternative interpretation, ‘centering on the operational relevance of a developmental international food aid regime’. He sees three factors underlying food aid: availability, regime and self-interest (Uvin, 1992).

I base my arguments on these scholars and others who have shown that food aid no longer gives priority to the poor and the neediest people; in Gaza, it is all about politics.

1.9.5 Humanitarianism and the legal responsibility of the aid giver

Humanitarian assistance is given under special circumstances, such as a failed state or natural disasters. The moral aspect is always accompanied by humanitarianism; subsequently the responsibility of aid giver is legal as well as ethical.

Humanitarian assistance is given to Palestinians under specific condition: occupation. Currently, Palestine is not a state. There was a Palestinian state before 1948, which was destroyed with the establishment of the Israeli state.

Verdirame and Harreil-Bond discuss humanitarianism from a legal perspective. Their central argument is that the international humanitarian organizations that are in charge of looking after refugees are responsible for wide-ranging and avoidable violations of the rights of those dependent upon them (Verdirame & Harreil-Bond, 2005). Discussing the situation of Rwandan refugees in Kenya and Uganda, the authors note one important difference between them and Palestinian refugees. The former are seeking their rights in other countries from both the host government and international organizations; in contrast, Palestinian refugees in Gaza are inside the historical Palestinian borders and are seeking some of their rights from UNRWA as the UN body established for that

purpose. I find it a weakness in Verdirame & Harreil-Bond (2005) that the authors do not discuss the return of those Rwandan refugees to their homeland sufficiently. I totally agree with the authors' suggestion that the refugees can be integrated with the local community instead of being seen as passive recipients of international welfare. However, the book does not discuss their right to return, nor does it suggest educating the refugees to enable them at least to participate in resolving the conflict that pushed them to seek asylum.

1.9.6 Socio-economic aspects of aid in Gaza

The number of families receiving food assistance from UNRWA has kept increasing, especially during periods of political instability. For instance, during the First Intifada, the number of families receiving food assistance increased from 9,383 to 120,000 between June 1990 and June 1991. This increase in one year indicates that poverty rose dramatically (Alexander, 2007: 11).

After the Israeli "Cast Lead" offensive on Gaza between Dec 2008 and Jan 2009, the humanitarian assistance increased to cover a larger portion of the people in the Gaza Strip. The percentage of dependents on foreign aid became 86% (Palestine Monitor, 2009). From this high percentage, we can easily imagine the number of people dependent on aid assistance for their survival. The extent of this dependence on donations, as well as on whether or not food is allowed into Gaza, generates economic insecurity and thus human insecurity. One more indication of poverty is that the number of families depending on UNRWA food aid increased tenfold in less than 10 years (Palestine Monitor Factsheet, 2008). In spite of the increase in food aid, "Over 60% of households are now food insecure, threatening the health and wellbeing of children, women and men" (Relief web, 2010). In such a situation, the agricultural sector could offer solutions to food problems; however, the restrictions imposed by Israel continue to hinder any potential growth in the agricultural sector.

The current statistics on poverty in the Gaza Strip released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) show that 38% of the Palestinian population are living under the poverty line and 23% are living below the deep poverty line (PCBS, 2011). Most of those poor Gazans have no other choice except to stand in queues on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis to receive the bare essentials of life, especially with the high dependency rate in Gaza: on the average, each employed person in Gaza has 8.6 dependents (WFP et al. 2008: 12). However, their wages are not enough to support so many dependants.

An important implication of this is that food coupons have become an integral part of life in Gaza. They have become part of conversations, with people asking each other: "Have you received the coupon?". Thus, food has changed from being a basic human right ensured by the state or the occupier to a charitable handout. This is indicative of a problem of not just poverty but also insecurity and instability. Moreover, families have other expenses too, such as clothes. With few sources of income, families have no choice but to sell their belongings in order to survive. In June 2007, over 40% of families were forced to sell assets such as jewellery and furniture (Alexander, 2007). Obviously, minimal food aid is not a solution to the situation in Gaza; what Gazans need is a more sustainable solution.

The Israeli military, administrative and economic restrictions imposed by the occupation are key elements influencing the current dependency level in the Gaza Strip. The resulting financial crises created unprecedented increase in food prices, which raised the consumer price index for food from March 2007 to the end of April 2008 by 14.6 per cent in the Gaza (WFP, FAO & UNRWA, 2008). The price of wheat flour – a staple – increased by 68 per cent (ibid.). The soaring global commodity prices, including those of food, coupled with decreasing incomes, continue to be a major problem for families.

There are already signs that the supply of food aid to Palestinian households is being reduced and will continue to be reduced because of increased food commodity prices, under-funding for aid agencies, particularly UNRWA, increased fuel prices and constraints in the Gaza (the Israeli embargo, political pressures, difficulty of making bank transfers, etc.).

Low domestic production of cereals and pulses (less than 5 per cent of the amount consumed) has made household food consumption highly dependent on imports. That, in turn, has raised the prices of locally produced fresh food such as meat and vegetables, which makes it impossible for many poor households to afford it. 'A third of Palestinians have reported a fall in income this year, the poor suffered most heavily with a 40 percent drop' (ibid.). Even taking into account that the "Socio-Economic and Food Security" survey conducted by WFP and FAO covers the first half of 2010 and therefore does not capture the impact of the Israeli decision in June 2010 to "relax" the flow of some goods into and out of the Gaza Strip (WFP&FAO, 2011: 22), the situation is grim.

2011 witnessed a change in the political arena, with the signing a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah. However, this has not been followed yet by change at the population's socio-economic level. "Two-thirds of Palestinians in Gaza [...] are still not able to secure an adequate diet without assistance" (UN, 2011: 1).

1.10 Theoretical Context

1.10.1 Humanitarian imperative and New Humanitarianism

Humanitarian action is defined as "International attempts to help victims through the provision of relief and the protection of their human rights" (Weiss, 1999). However, this definition fails to emphasize the main ethical framework of humanitarian action, including humanitarian principles. The main principles of humanitarianism are intended to guide response to human suffering. The **neutrality** principle is the most debated in terms of its meaning, effectiveness and morality (ODI, 2001). According to Pasquier (cited in ODI, 2001) neutrality of a humanitarian worker means that s/he must stand apart from the political issues at stake in a conflict. The **independence** principle means that the humanitarian agencies should remain independent with regard to financial support subject to political conditions from major donor states. The **universality** principle means that humanitarian action should reach all the conflict victims, no matter where they are, or which side they support. The **impartiality** principle means that humanitarian response should be guided by need only, and that there should be no distinction between 'good' and 'bad' beneficiaries. The **humanity** principle means "human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found" (OCHA, 2010). There are many other principles, including voluntary service, unity (ICRC, 1996) and solidarity (Slim, 1997). These principles should guide humanitarian intervention in order to avoid negative consequences from it.

The Weiss definition of humanitarian action also fails to highlight the importance of "humanitarian mobilization," which comprises the period both before and after the precise moment of a given humanitarian operation; and affords a better understanding of the relationship between political, military, economic and humanitarian players (Sommaruga, 1999).

Humanitarianism has always been a highly political activity, but the relationship between humanitarian aid and politics keeps on changing. Many authors discuss the newly emerged changes and argue that "humanitarian intervention is increasingly becoming an integral part of western governments' strategy to transform conflict, decrease violence and set the stage for liberal development" (Duffield et al. 2001). This changing role of humanitarian aid is often termed 'New Humanitarianism', and is seen as "an overt politicization of aid" (Fox, 2001). It has been a main theme of international intervention in

many recent conflicts. Atmar, (ODI, 2001) analyzes current humanitarian aid policies and practices in Afghanistan and how they were shaped by western foreign policy goals rather than by actual conditions on the ground. He argues that the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, universality and independence are considered to be secondary to foreign policy interests. The same argument applies to the international response to the situation in Gaza, where humanitarian aid agencies are not able to receive and deliver “unconditional” assistance. The international assistance community continues to use punitive conditionalities aimed at producing desired political and social change, as will be discussed later in this paper.

While the universality principle implies that humanitarian action should reach all conflict victims, no matter where they live, the new merging of politics and humanitarian action restricts the provision of assistance to countries believed to be following ‘correct’ policies. Non-conforming countries may be excluded from assistance, kept out of politics and constrained to “conditional” forms of assistance.

When humanitarian objectives are subordinated to strategic and political ones, some victims may be seen as more deserving than others, or be seen to deserve assistance depending on the political environment at the time of the intended intervention. Thus, **impartiality is abandoned.**

Traditional humanitarianism is particularly vulnerable to becoming a sort of ‘new humanitarianism’ when it is financially dependent on donor countries with political imperatives. In such cases, the principle of independency would no longer be valid and the action no longer moral or neutral since there would be no legitimacy of the assistance as disinterested humanitarian action.

The consensus of the international humanitarian system on there being a need to enhance the ‘coherence’ between humanitarian and political responses to complex political emergencies started in the 1990s after ten years of failed humanitarian assistance. Macrae and Leader (2001) discuss the origins and the impact of that change. Closer integration between aid and political responses was seen to be necessary in order to address the root causes of conflict-induced crises, and to ensure that aid did not worsen political tensions. They argue that the coherence agenda has been reinterpreted so that humanitarian action has become the primary form of political action, rather than merely a substitute for it. The coherent agenda has been driven by geopolitical events, domestic policy considerations in donor countries and the more unsophisticated concerns of aid policy, and is reflected in a number of substantive changes in the humanitarian architecture. They conclude that political humanitarianism is flawed ethically and technically. It provides neither an effective palliative for the devastating effects of war, nor addresses its causes (Macrae and Leader, 2001).

1.10.2 Humanitarianism: Rights-based approach or needs-based approach?

One of the main debates about humanitarianism is whether it should be a rights-based approach or needs-based approach. There are contradictory views and debates around this issue. Slim (2002) is one of the main advocates of grounding humanitarian action in rights and laws rather than in principles. He does not object to the original values inherent in charitable or philanthropic ideology; rather, he sees a rights-based approach to humanitarianism as giving it an integrated moral, political and legal framework to affirm universal human values. Slim further argues that rights dignify individuals, so they become claimants of rights rather than objects of charity. Slim thinks that “the explicit adoption of rights by humanitarians will allow us to connect with a proper politics that leads beyond humanitarian protection to justice and to the development of real political contracts between people and power about the place and extent of armed conflict

in their politics” (Slim, 2002: 26). On the other hand, Fox (2001) spells out some of the dangers of the rights-based approach. She argues that humanitarianism as a rights-based approach is in conflict with the universality and neutrality principles of relief aid. There is a belief among the needs-based approach advocates that rights-based conditionalities can allow donors to get away with any negative humanitarian consequences of politicization.

I believe that this is a false dichotomy that is open to misuse by donors to achieve political ends. Meeting the basic needs of people is a basic right of every person, regardless of their ethnicity, colour, political affiliation and/or place of residence or origin. In this context, the humanitarian principles of a needs-based approach can achieve justice. If a rights-based approach is adopted to humanitarian action, then relief is a right and so is protection. However, the principles of humanitarianism are needed to ensure that political justification will not be used to withhold aid and violate these rights.

1.10.3 Dangerous consequences of politicizing humanitarian aid

The transformation of traditional humanitarian action from an apolitical exercise to an overtly political activity has had an undesired impact on attempts to deal with crises and conflict- or post-conflict situations. The current practice of making aid a political tool to be used to advance the strategic interests of powerful countries blurs the distinction between national foreign policy and neutral humanitarian aid (Fox, 2002). It turns aid workers into political agents, which not only creates suspicions about them but also ensures that the political dimension of the conflict is not adequately addressed. Aid workers do not have the skills or resources to respond to the new political demands made of them, which sometimes include acting as intelligence officers as well as conflict-resolution and development specialists, in addition to being humanitarian workers.

To avoid such negative impacts, it is necessary to prioritize identification of the conditions required for effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. This should be done collectively by humanitarian workers, international humanitarianism law personnel and the victim populations. The lack of clarity in the New Humanitarianism regarding priorities and principles can have negative operational consequences.

In the next two chapters, I will discuss the degree to which UNRWA applies the principles of humanitarian aid - neutrality, independence, humanity and impartiality - in its practice in Gaza.

Chapter 2

UNRWA: The Politics of Aid

This chapter discusses the economic situation of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and UNRWA, mainly using that context to test UNRWA's application of neutrality and independence principles. I will start by discussing the two principles and the debates around them. Then I will describe the political and financial situation in the oPt, with a focus on UNRWA. My analysis will show whether humanitarian practice in Gaza is informed by humanitarian principles or by political considerations.

2.1 Palestinian territories: Dependent on Political Aid

For a better understanding of aid programme mechanisms, we have to revisit the relationship between the main actors in the oPt. The relationship between aid actors is not merely between donors and recipients; it is a complicated combination, especially among the recipients. Politically, the oPt are divided into two main areas, Gaza and the West Bank, which are currently governed by two governments: the Fatah-led government in the West Bank and the Hamas-led government in Gaza. Until 2006, Palestinians were represented by a "unity" government comprising the major political parties. However, in that year Hamas, which the international community describes as a terrorist organization, won the National Legislative Council elections in Gaza. That sparked a conflict over power, with Israel and the international community playing a significant role. They refused to accept the election result and recognized the West Bank government as the sole representative of all Palestinians, and therefore the only recipient of aid and participant in negotiations involving Palestinians. The Fatah-led government, while making no formal statement, also did not accept the election result in practice.

After winning the elections, Hamas formed a new executive group which took the control of the ministries and security forces in the Gaza Strip. The West Bank authorities started procedures to weaken Hamas and replace it in Gaza. An ordinance was issued to exempt people in Gaza from paying taxes to the Hamas government in order to weaken it financially. Additionally, public servants were asked to stay home if they wanted to continue receiving their salaries. Consequently, ministries, hospitals and schools were left without personnel, which totally paralysed all aspects of life in Gaza. The actions taken by the West Bank authorities to bring down Hamas, with the blessing of Israel and the international community (including the former Hosni Mubarak government in Egypt) caused much suffering to Gazans in terms of all their daily requirements. The actions were widely perceived to be a punishment to Gazans for voting for Hamas. Even travelling outside Gaza became difficult because Arab and western countries only accepted travel documents issued by the West Bank authorities. It was a graphic example of international financial and political support being used to reward the party that served Israeli interests even if it meant going against the people's democratic choice.

UNRWA, as the most important international organization in Gaza, continued to provide its services while shunning the Gaza government. Sometimes there was tension over the distribution of assistance to registered refugees, which occasionally led to halting of aid. The aid was resumed only under the condition that the Hamas government would stop interfering in UNRWA's work.

2.2 Aid: Neutral and Independent?

This chapter focuses on neutrality and independence because both of these principles stress the necessity of keeping aid free of politics and economics. The **neutrality** principle is the most debated one among academics and practitioners. The Red Cross and Red Crescent define their neutrality as follows: ‘In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature’ (as cited in Slim, 1997). The **independence** principle is defined as “Providing care and assistance and doing so in complete independence [...]. To act accordingly, it must rely on its own assessment made on the basis of objective criteria” (ICRC 1996: 10). OCHA (2010:1) also observes that “Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.” This is how aid should work, but with the adoption of ‘New Humanitarianism’, in which aid plays an integrated role in a political agenda, the perception of neutrality has changed. This threatens just and unbiased access to victims.

The ‘New Humanitarianism’ is the preferred form of intervention in many emergency crises even though it has failed to address long-term as well as short-term life-saving needs and violates international humanitarian law. Duffield Macrae and Curtis (2001) show how New Humanitarianism, with its blend of aid and politics, leads to the exploitation of skills, resources and legitimacy of non-state actors in a wider political project. As part of social and political calculations, humanitarian assistance has become an essential component of mechanical conflict resolution, peace-building processes and development strategies. Such strategies by powerful parties usually assume that warring parties react in a predictable manner to the power of aid (Duffield et.al., 2001) and then use it as a pressure tool to achieve specific political agendas.

2.3 Political Flow of Aid

The outsider’s perception of Palestinian people is that they cannot look after themselves, so donor countries should do it. Actually, they are not allowed to look after themselves.

There are two clear examples how is the flow of aid and donations conditioned by politics. One concerns the Oslo accords,³ which marked a turning point in donors’ attitude toward Palestinians. Before the Oslo accords, the donors did not seem to be interested in strengthening Palestinian society, but after 1994 there was more focus on building and strengthening civil society institutions such as NGOs, and capacity building in municipalities. By late 1998, the total pledged support was over \$4 billion (Brynen, 2000) but not all of this was actually delivered. There was preference for actual disbursements to be channelled directly to support peace and civil society-building projects rather than to the core budget of UN bodies like UNRWA, whose financial requirements were seen as an ever-expanding burden.

Another example of the politicization of aid concerns the flow of international aid as well as the tax revenue collected by Israel, supposedly on behalf of the Palestinian government in the West Bank. Israel uses its control over the tax revenue to apply pressure in the political arena, with devastating effects. For example, in July 2011, when Israel delayed the transfer of tax revenue, and international donors (including some Arab countries)⁴ failed to fulfil their pledges, the PA was unable to pay full salaries to its employees. The flow of money was cut off after Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation accord.

³ The Oslo accords are officially called the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles (DOP).

⁴ <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/04/world/middleeast/04palestinians.html>>.

This showed how fragile a Palestinian government can be if it does not have independent economic resources. Similar pressure had been applied in the wake of the Hamas victory in the National Legislative Assembly elections of January 2006, making it impossible for the PA to pay its employees' salaries for six months.

2.4 Conflict with Hamas-led Government

One of the main functions of an effective aid programme is to strengthen the host government's planning and management capabilities. However, in Gaza, there are very few coordination channels with regard to food aid assistance between UNRWA, as the main service provider to refugees, and the current government. "We may coordinate with the current government on the operational level if needed" (Interview UNRWAS2), said one of the senior staff at UNRWA. Another employee said he can communicate with governmental parties on a personal level to facilitate the work or the assistance for handicapped people, but not officially.

Besides the absence of coordination between UNRWA and the Hamas-led government, there are also strains in the relations between them. At times this tension has led to halting of the aid distributed by UNRWA.⁵ The tension between UNRWA and Hamas arises out of conflict between two principles; the first is that UNRWA is committed to assisting the refugees, while the second principle is the international labelling of Hamas as a terrorist organization, which means that international agencies are forbidden to deal with it. This clash of ideologies and power diminishes the effectiveness of aid.

2.5 Control of borders

Another example of political influence on aid is the way UNRWA aid is affected by Israel's tight control over the Gaza Strip borders. Before Israel's unilateral disengagement plan, there were problems moving aid both inside the Strip because of Israeli military roadblocks as well as from outside into the Strip. With Israel's physical withdrawal from Gaza, the roadblocks have been removed, but there are still serious problems importing food and other necessary materials into the Strip. One of the UNRWA employees stated that the Agency has eventually managed to import its aid supplies (Interview UNRWAS2). However, this contradicts the information provided by another UNRWA staff member who stressed the difficulties of importing the commodities through the Karni border checkpoint (Interview UNRWAS1). UN reports also refer to the effect of the Israeli blockade of Gaza. According to the UN, 10,614 truckloads of food and materials entered Gaza in August 2000. By January 2011 this plummeted to 4,123 truckloads (with desperately needed construction materials remaining totally banned) and exports from Gaza fell from 2,460 truckloads to 107 truckloads (Roy, 2011).⁶ Consequently, the levels of food insecurity rose from 40 per cent to 61 per cent between 2000 and 2010. This means that over 900,000 people of the population of 1.5 million do not have the bare minimum amount of food they need, while another 200,000-plus remain vulnerable to food insecurity (Roy, 2011).

There is one border that is no longer controlled by Israel: the border at Rafah between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. As long as the Mubarak regime ruled in Egypt, the Rafah border was controlled according to the desires of Israel. After the overthrow of Mubarak, some of the restrictions on movement of people were eased, but not the re-

⁵ <<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3667825,00.html>>.
<<http://www.haaretz.com/news/un-hamas-meet-to-discuss-stolen-gaza-aid-1.269602>>.

⁶ <http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/16/gaza_after_the_revolution>.

restrictions on movement of goods. Moreover, the international agencies operating in Gaza keep clear of any goods that come through Egypt. They are not allowed to procure any supplies that are not channelled through Israel, which is an indication of the complicity of international donors and several Arab states in making life harder for Palestinians. Israel's violation of the Movement and Access Agreement it signed, under which it is supposed to allow relief goods/materials to be imported via Israel, and the politically influenced problems at the Rafah border are factors that combine to allow Palestinian people only the bare necessities of life. And it is all done for political reasons.

2.6 The Insecurity of Food Security

As highlighted at the beginning of this study, refugees experience considerable hardship in order to try and get their daily food securely, regularly and permanently, especially with the recent sudden cuts in UNRWA's assistance.

UNRWA is the main provider of all basic services for the refugees, but this study focuses only on the programmes that include food assistance. There are two main such programmes. The first is the Relief & Social Services (RSS) Programme, which in 2010 assisted 104,581 individuals (UNRWA, 2011c) with relief (including four rounds of food parcels annually with cash assistance) as well as a package of social services. This programme is directed at 'Special Hardship Cases' among refugees, who comprise 9.0% of registered refugees. The RSS programme has 201 employees.

The second programme is the Emergency Programme (EP) which addresses 12 different sectors. One of these is food assistance on a quarterly basis. In each round in 2010, the EP reached between 126,174 and 132,091 families, providing food assistance for up to 765,560 individuals (UNRWA, 2011b), covering between 50 and 76 per cent of daily caloric needs (UNRWA, 2011a).

Both programmes assist the neediest group on the basis of poverty-based eligibility criteria, which have been used over the last two years. EP basically helps those rendered vulnerable by the border closure and who are not addressed by the UNRWA social safety net programme. Poverty and food insecurity are estimated through a proxy means test formula (PMTF) based on household consumption and expenditure compared with poverty and food security lines defined by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) for each field, in line with Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) strategy (UNRWA, 2011a).

UNRWA's explanation for reduction of the number of people eligible to receive food aid was that the EP budget had been scaled back because of insufficient contributions from donor countries. The EP was started after the Second Intifada in 2000, and the majority of aid recipients receive food parcels from the EP, not from the RSS. The core of the \$300 million emergency appeal was for food assistance to 600,000 people in 2011 (Ma'an news Agency, 2011) but because of weak donor response, the budget ended up with only \$150 million. The number of aid recipients was cut from 600,000 to 500,000 people due to an apparently more accurate poverty assessment system (which I will discuss later in this study).

The aim of the food assistance programme is "to meet the basic food needs of vulnerable refugee families and mitigate the impact of chronic food insecurity" (UNRWA, 2011a). Thus, it can be assumed that the assistance is intended to have only a temporary effect.

Table 1 in Appendix 2 shows four levels of food security and insecurity. It would be reasonable to assume that households that belong to the 'Marginally Secure' and 'Vulnerable' categories would slide into the 'Food Insecure' category when their rations were cut off by UNRWA.

UNRWA's redefinition of poverty to address the needs of the poorest of the poor, is a strategy used to cope with the scaling back of its budget, a circumstance which is likely to happen in such emergency programmes, especially when donors use political considerations to decide the level of their contribution. This adds a new dimension to the understanding of food security for the recipients. The fitful entitlement to food from UNRWA's Emergency Programme guarantees neither satisfactory quality nor security of regular food distribution. We can thus infer that this insecurity is basically an expected outcome of aid provision not being independent. What makes the situation even worse for the refugees is that their inability to feed themselves is not their fault: the very donors who are cutting their contributions to UNRWA are the ones who stood by and let the refugee problem develop in the first place, have been standing by and letting the problem continue, and are now making life even more difficult for the refugees.

In the last emergency appeal, UNRWA said it would "continue to contract local flour mills to produce flour rather than relying exclusively on international sourcing" (UNRWA, 2011a: 13). UNRWA has also intervened in the border issue so that wheat can be brought to the local mills, from which UNRWA then buys flour. This is economically significant for Gaza because it creates many job opportunities.

2.7 Assistance Cuts: Who Is to Blame?

There are two possible reasons for UNRWA's budgetary deficits: 1) UNRWA's management failed to highlight Palestinian refugees' needs, their poverty and their unemployment conditions sufficiently, and therefore failed to influence donors and convince them; or 2) an external agenda influences donor policies and contributions.

Perusal of UNRWA documents yields an overall picture of the tragic socio-economic situation in Gaza but few details about the roots of that situation. There is an attempt to represent whole complex situation with numerical tables and statistics, which is only one, albeit essential, aspect of the situation; statistics by themselves cannot convey the appalling misery of those in need. In the last UNRWA Medium Term Strategy (MTS), a radical organizational development was presented: a new programming approach (decentralization, re-engineering of key processes, and more innovation) as well as institutional reform (resource mobilization, knowledge management and evaluation, HR management, risk management and accountability). UNRWA did not fail to highlight the needs of Palestinian refugees. However, while still addressing refugees' needs as caused by the conflict, UNRWA plays no role in mobilizing efforts for a sustainable solution which can be achieved by resolving causes of conflict, not just by dealing with its impact. The UNRWA strategy will certainly affect planning and implementation of its programmes as we will see in the following chapter. Nevertheless, this leaves us with the possibility that the budgetary deficits are not just an economic problem but remain under the influence of political agendas.

2.8 UNRWA: The Realpolitik on the Ground

UNRWA is supposed to operate on the basis of humanitarian principles, but the reality of the situation in Gaza means that political factors play a significant role in its work. This can be seen in the following quotations from an interview with a senior staff member of UNRWA (Interview UNRWAS2).

"We know we never capture the right number of refugees in Gaza, because the number of poor families that benefit from our programmes, either the Special Hardship Case programme or Social Safety Net programme, has been dependant always on the available budget."

“I believe that there is nothing in this world not related to politics. [...] certainly, the donations and economy in general are associated strongly with the political situation. The most important factor that caused the UNRWA’s and other organizations’ financial problem is the financial crisis that hit the whole world. The countries have not recovered fully from it. Another factor is the competition with other disaster areas as in Africa. But as I said, you cannot exclude the political factor completely. It will be there, but you cannot ask a donor country, why did you reduce or cut your funds? Certainly it will use economic problems as an argument, which could be true.”

Given the ‘available budget’ approach and UNRWA’s critical financial situation, it is clear that UNRWA’s establishment by a UN resolution to take care of all Palestinian refugees is not enough for it to carry out its mandate. In order to feed people who are denied return to their land, UNRWA is still required to provide donor countries with a justification during each budget appeal round. This financial dependency on donors contradicts the principle of independence, especially since the biggest donors to UNRWA are allies of Israel.

There are three reasons for the aid cuts: the first is political: the more pressure that is put on Hamas, the more ungovernable Gaza should become. The political will is to make Hamas less popular and to bring about its failure. Hamas’ failure is what Israel has persistently sought. The second reason is environmental: competition with other disaster areas. The third reason is financial: the financial crises which made donor countries reluctant to give money.

I assume that the current economic situation is worse than before in terms of availability of money. However, donor countries can still decide to prioritize channels through which the ‘less money’ can be spent. By correlating the timing of aid cuts, we can see a concurrence with events in the Palestinian political arena. For example, there was a serious financial crisis in 2008, yet there was no problem channelling aid in late 2008 and early 2009 when operation Cast Lead was launched by the Israeli military. Currently, while announcing serious financial problems in the UNRWA budget for food and job creation programmes, UNRWA spends millions of US dollars for other programmes in Gaza. The UNRWA Summer Games are one example; while sports are very important for the physical and psychological well-being of children in Gaza, parents are wondering how to feed their children. So, again, priorities are not determined on the basis of Maslow’s pyramid of needs (Jahn, 2004), but on the basis of what donors decide.

2.8.1 Games with needs

“The agency is paying for Summer Games but it did not rebuild houses for people who lost theirs. It cuts food coupons but pays for other programmes” (Interview PR5).

“I am for Summer Games for my children. The holidays are over and they have not gone to a beach or to a garden. The children have not left the house, and they need entertainment camps. But entertainment is not more important than food. I can waive the entertainment, but I cannot waive food. For my children, food is first” (Interview PR13).__

Some interviewees also noted that the UNRWA Summer Games were launched as the largest competitor to camps for children organized by Hamas. Thus the timing and generous financing for them could be seen as questionable. It was difficult for the fathers and mothers to express their priorities versus UNRWA priorities. It is sad for parents to say, “I do not want joy for my children,” but if the joy is at the expense of food, they are forced to choose. Most mothers preferred to increase the amount of food as they believed good nutrition of children to be more important than entertainment. However, some said: “Children also have ‘right to play’ as well as ‘right to eat’ ” (Interview PR16).

The views expressed by aid recipients reflect conflicts at the household level between food needs and non-food needs. The point is not whether or not non-food programmes should be stopped, but rather about the capability of UNRWA to be transparent with recipients by engaging them in deciding priorities.

2.9 UNRWA-Refugee Relations

When refugees were asked about current status of UNRWA assistance and future possibilities of aid being stopped, their reaction varied. Some expressed disbelief and despair:

“It is impossible that UNRWA will leave us without a sustainable solution” (Interview PR11).

“It would be a real disaster to stop aid, especially with the current blockade. There are no income sources except UNRWA, how can they cut the assistance?” (Interview PR13).

From the perspective of the Gazan people, the Agency has stronger authority in the Strip than the Hamas government does. It is an advantage to be an UNRWA employee rather than a government employee. It is also an advantage to be assisted by or connected to UNRWA rather than the government. It is seen as a privilege to be on the UNRWA side. It is the best option available in Gaza.

2.10 Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the political context is the main determinant of UNRWA's assistance to Palestinians. Aid to the oPt is neither neutral nor independent. Its function has been transformed from reducing poverty and meeting necessities to imposing sanctions on the recipients to achieve political objectives. The people in the oPt are not the only ones to experience this; Randel et al. (2002) discuss several examples of aid being tied to political conditions. One of the examples during the Cold War was the aid given by the US to Mozambique under the condition that Mozambique would end its close links with the Soviet Union. Some years later, the US State Department stated that all US aid is political and that there are always conditions even if they are not stated explicitly. Randel notes that France also conditioned its aid to its former colonies in Francophone African countries. A frequent pre-condition for continued development aid is ‘good governance’, which in practice means governance in accord with the donor country's policies. So donor countries enforce their own governance styles, leaving no space for indigenous concepts of governance and leadership.

Given the political influence on aid in conjunction with marginalization of the principles of humanitarian imperatives, it is not surprising that humanitarian programmes have limited success in improving the socio-economic status of beneficiaries.

Another determinant of the effectiveness of aid is the way the process is organized. The nature of organization (establishment base, structure, implementation schemas) is deeply associated with political factors, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

UNRWA's Assistance Implementation Problems

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 presented determinants of aid that might not be under UNRWA's control. In this chapter, I will analyze determinants that are under UNRWA's control and test the Agency's application of two principles of humanitarianism: impartiality and humanity. **Impartiality** means that "Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress" (OCHA, 2010). The **humanity** principle, as defined earlier in this paper, means ensuring that suffering is addressed with total protection and respect for human beings. It is difficult to design a framework of humanitarianism using only one principle independently of the others. Clearly, in order to fulfil impartiality as an essential principle you should also ensure independence and neutrality of aid and the financial sources. While keeping this mind, the main aim of this chapter is to analyze whether UNRWA's practice is in accordance with the principles of impartiality and humanity.

3.2 Strategic Planning

"This dependency on donor contributions introduces a risk for fixed-term employees. For example, 3.5% is an annual increase in our programme beneficiaries, which represents natural population growth. A long time ago we used to have an annual increase in the budget equivalent to 3.5%. To meet the increase in the number of beneficiaries, the number of social workers should be increased. At least for the last 3-4 years if not more, the programme has not been able to hire a single social worker. We are afraid that if the Agency funding continues to decrease, the Agency will have to terminate staff. So, imagine what could happen then!" (Interview UNRWAS2).

The above quotation indicates the vulnerability of the Agency's strategic planning for sustainability. By sustainability I mean both to equip refugees with self-sufficiency tools, and to ensure stable and substantive financial resources for its own continuing care of refugees. As to the former, if there is expectation of long-term conflict (and I think there should be after 63 years) it is worth empowering refugees with mechanisms to fight hunger independently. With regard to the latter, UNRWA has not taken any steps to generate its own income sources, remaining at the mercy of annual donations. Due to the absence of this strategic planning, UNRWA is now unable to fulfil its responsibilities towards refugees. The consequences of insufficient planning are now threatening both refugees and UNRWA employees' job security.

UNRWA's dependence on annual financial appeals means that the Agency will continue to work under the influence of donors and their geopolitical agendas regarding the oPt and Israel. This influence impacts on UNRWA's ability to assess and address the real needs of the refugees fully, as the recent changes in eligibility criteria show.

3.3 Creating Classifications: UNRWA Social Survey, Eligibility Criteria and Gradations of Poverty

"Since the end of 2007 or the beginning of 2008, the Special Hardship Case Programme has been reformed into a new programme - Social Safety Net. This new programme is poverty based, by which the poverty status assessment of a family is carried out through a computerized system depending on a formula called Proxy Means Testing Formula (PMTF). This formula is applied in

over 70 countries around the world to assess the poverty status of families. Using this formula, the programme became much more objective. It was much more subjective earlier, because it was mainly depending on social workers' assessment of family conditions. A social worker made a recommendation whether the family should be included in the programme. This does not happen anymore. Now we have a special questionnaire which is filled out by a social worker during a household visit. Then the filled-out questionnaire is entered into the system (SSM module) which shows the result: the family is 'non-poor' or 'turning/absolutely poor' or 'abjectly poor'. The quantity and quality of assistance will be determined on the basis of this classification of poverty level of the family" (Interview UNRWAS2).

This explanation about the reform to bring about 'more objectivity' was given with conviction by a senior UNRWA staff member. The timing of the reform brings us back to the time when Hamas took over control of the Gaza Strip and the funding cuts by main donors were initiated. The cuts demonstrated the politics of aid, emphasized by Volberg (2006), who shows how external factors like donors, host governments and hostilities can affect the pragmatism of humanitarian space.

UNRWA's Poverty Survey is based on collection of verifiable socio-economic data which can be used to predict family expenditure levels. Collected information includes housing characteristics (type of tenure, total number of rooms, connection to water, availability of a toilet, etc.); availability of durable goods (refrigerator, washing machine, etc.); economic status; and level of education (UNRWA, 2011d).

The poverty-based system is designed to include "observable and verifiable characteristics on (i) household demographics and characteristics of household head; (ii) ownership of assets; (iii) housing quality, and access to facilities and remittances; and (iv) location variables in a formal algorithm to proxy household welfare" (Sharif, 2009). The PMT formula may function in poverty-stricken areas, but it fails to take into account the reality that the Gazan refugees are in a volatile economic situation due to occupation.

For example, the most influential category of people in the last ten years in Gaza were the 100,000 Palestinians who worked in Israel. They were less educated than public service workers in Gaza because it was more advantageous to leave school and go to work inside Israel to enable them to improve their families' lives. They earned a comparatively high income before 2000 and thus could afford to buy refrigerators and other 'white goods'. After the outbreak of the Second Intifada, those workers were fired (often without 'end of service' payments) and left without sources of income. Their living standards deteriorated dramatically. Having discontinued their education to earn a good income, they were less privileged educationally but more privileged financially; now they are less privileged economically, financially and socially. Their case is a typical example of "structural impoverishment".

Palestinians who were able to work and build houses before the Second Intifada and were able to buy a TV or a refrigerator. However, in their current situation they cannot even afford their daily food. Most of them have already sold their jewellery and furniture as a coping strategy. Additionally, at any moment Gazan people might lose everything under Israeli air strikes, which occur frequently. So, application of a universal poverty formula in conflict area like Gaza has to take into account sustainable and sufficient sources of income, and not merely the amount and quality of furniture and 'white goods' in the house.

The 2010 Emergency Appeal Progress Report states that "A refined poverty-based targeting system identified beneficiaries, ensuring that only the neediest families received food aid" (UNRWA, 2011b: 16). The main theme in the report is the exposition of selection criteria and targeting mechanism. The "neediest" means the most impoverished segment among refugees. As budgetary deficits increased, the size of the assisted segment of population shrank. This is in line with the original mandate of UNRWA, as giv-

en in the Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), which specifies that UNRWA services are “subject to budgetary limitations”:

“UNRWA’s mandate is to provide relief, humanitarian, human development and protection services to Palestine Refugees and other persons of concern in its Area of Operations. In pursuance of its mandate, UNRWA has formulated criteria and standards for identifying those who are entitled to be registered in its Registration System and/or to receive the Agency’s services. These standards and criteria are intended to facilitate the Agency’s operations. The provision of UNRWA services is subject to budgetary limitations and all relevant Agency Instructions, Regulations and Rules.” (UNRWA 2009).

In this light, I would argue that the gradation of poverty introduced by the new UNRWA criteria is cynical, dishonest and unethical. It would have been more honest and ethical to say openly that there is no money, than to pretend that better, more ‘objective’ criteria are in place. Furthermore, this gradation clearly contradicts the humanitarian principles of impartiality and humanity, which require that aid be given on the basis of need alone, and that this be done with respect for the recipients. Breaking the ethical framework affects recipients heavily and increases their suffering; as argued earlier, international donors frequently use aid to increase suffering on the assumption that the pressure will lead to achievement of specific political goals.

One female refugee summarized her family’s situation:

“I see UNRWA’s financial problems as a punishment on Gazan people. Social workers come to our houses and see that we own furniture and electronic devices. So they consider us non-eligible. Does the furniture feed us? If you ask, “Why did you cut our coupon?” they will answer, “Since you have this and that in your house, you are able buy your food.” We bought those things a long time ago. But now we cannot buy food” (Interview PR3).

Another housewife hoped that the social survey would be conducted fairly (Interview PR2):

“I hope as a housewife that the social worker who comes to check out my case will be able to consider all aspects of my problem. This house is not mine and my husband is not working. Why should I wait one year to have assistance? Why doesn’t the social worker report immediately about the field visit and the status of the family? If we had work, I would not seek coupons. But what can I do when we do not have any income? When we ask about the result of the social survey, the answer is, “Your name is listed in the computer system” . What benefit do I get with my name in the system?”

While refugees trace the problem to the field staff, in fact the survey questionnaires and decisions taken by a social worker are not the main issue. As argued earlier, the position of the Agency is problematic in itself, with its dependency on donors and their politics, and the ways in which it handles this dependency.

3.4 Issues of respect: Quality of services and food

Humanitarian agencies that are in charge of looking after the welfare of refugees are often responsible for widespread and avoidable violation of the rights of those dependants (Verdirame and Harreil-Bond, 2005). Service provision, treatment of people, the quality and quantity of food, how it is delivered and how people’s concerns and complaints are handled, strongly influence the human security of refugees as well as their attitude towards UNRWA. This section focuses on situations in which UNRWA has failed to accord the refugees the respect and human dignity they deserve.

“It is an unusual humiliation. May Allah bless all people so that they do not need to be at the food distribution centres. Like beggars, we stand at doors; a person may hit you, or a cart. No

respect, but we have been pushed us into this to avoid an even worse situation” (Interview PR13).

“We used to stand under the sun. No chairs there. If you left your place in the queue, you would have to queue again” (Interview PR5).

“The day of receiving food is the day of humiliation. It’s always crowded, because we queue to receive food in the street, under the sun. Of course I’m earnestly looking for a job to avoid being like a panhandler” (Interview PR13).

These images captured through the descriptions of food recipients indicate that UNRWA considers its responsibility to end at the doors of the distribution centres. Whatever happens outside the doors is not its concern. It does not seem to care if the recipients stand in the street without a canopy to protect them from the hot sun. Put simply, UNRWA does not provide the conditions necessary to preserve human dignity.

A similar observation can be made about the timing of food distribution. Gazans adjust their food needs according to an expected income source. Employees regulate their life on the basis of their salary at the end of each month. Food recipients, too, organize themselves on the basis of a pre-determined time cycle of food distribution.

“Once I know that my coupon receiving time is close, I dream of it. On receiving day, I wake up very early at morning and go with my son to collect food. I have never failed to collect it because I always go to receive it on time” (Interview PR2).

“The coupon before the last was delayed. When I went to collect it on 17 February, they told me that it was delayed until 3 March, and I have no clue why! [...] that month I borrowed some food from my brother-in-law’s wife who receives her coupon from CHF⁷ and I promised her that I would return it once I received my coupon” (Interview PR10).

One would expect UNRWA to make sure it could meet distribution dates as much as possible. Regrettably, frequent delays in distribution were regularly mentioned by the interviewed refugees.

Lack of respect for human beings is against the basic principles of humanitarianism. Moreover, it can hinder the original goals of implemented programmes. Food aid programmes aim to ameliorate the chronic poverty and food insecurity levels among refugees. However, when they provide low-quality services, they add to human insecurity.

Food insecurity as well as human insecurity are embedded in this testimony of one of the interviewees:

“Some time ago, delivery of food rations was every two months. Now, it is every three months and sometimes every four months. Then it will become every six months, and then good bye. It is all politics” (Interview PR2).

UNRWA field workers themselves are touched by the tragedy of people. An UNRWA community developer said:

“A mill owner swore to me that dozens of people come to take wheat that should be given to animals.⁸ This happens frequently when there is a delay in the entry of wheat by UNRWA and

⁷ CHF International (Cooperative Housing Foundation) is an international organization that gives food rations to non-refugee Palestinians.

⁸ In mills, wheat is sifted through many stages, the very lowest quality being used to feed animals.

UNWFP [into Gaza]. *If the biggest organizations are not able to import wheat on time, traders certainly cannot do that, and people have a desperate need to eat*” (Interview UNRWAS1).

The quality and quantity of the commodities were frequently mentioned by the interviewees.

“Food assistance is not enough. One day I had no food and the food ration had run out; I found bad wheat flour which had been thrown away because it was rotting and had a very bad smell. Nevertheless, I took it and made bread to feed my children. I cannot afford to buy better-quality wheat flour” (Interview PR2).

“Maybe aid cuts are punishment. Why not? If assistance is cut, it is a disaster. It is a slow death. War is better than such a slow death” (Interview PR4).

“The quality of food is not that good, but I do not sell coupons because I cannot afford to buy higher-quality food” (Interview PR5).

In spite of many shortcomings in relief action, relief actors still hardly ever consider the voices of the refugees. They look at them through the lens of philanthropy, not the lens of rights (Slim, 2002). Consequently, there is no an effective complaints system.

“When the last problem of low-quality wheat flour occurred, we did not submit a written complaint. We were talking about the problem in the food distribution centre while the social worker was listening. We are afraid that our coupon will be cut if we submit a written complaint?” (Interview PR8).

“There is no option of objecting. This is your commodity; if you do not want it, you can sell it and use the money instead” (Interview PR1).

Asking food recipients about the “UNRWA complaints system” resulted in reactions that can be classified into three categories. In the first one, a complaint is made but no feedback is received. In the second category, no complaint is made because of a belief that it will not change anything. In the third one, no complaint is made because of a fear that expressing dissatisfaction will lead to assistance being cut. These reactions show a darker face of humanitarianism, one which discourages refugees from pursuing action to ensure a minimal level of accountability on the Agency’s part. This aspect is discussed by Verdirame and Harreil-Bond (2005) from a socio-legal perspective. They observe that refugees are rarely in a position to pursue action against the organization that feeds them and argue that integrating the protection aspect in the pragmatism of aid organization is necessary in humanitarian action. Protection also entails making refugees aware of their rights. Treating refugees as a voiceless category and exercising great power over their lives contradicts the principle of humanity.

3.5 Dealing with adversities: Finding the ways around

In spite of the low level of satisfaction with the quality of UNRWA service in general, there was a noticeable difference between the reactions of Relief and Social Services (RSS) programme beneficiaries and those in the Emergency Programme (EP). RSS beneficiaries expressed more satisfaction than EP beneficiaries did. There are two main reasons for this. **Firstly**, the RSS programme comprises both relief and social aspects. Its beneficiaries receive more food than those in the EP. Moreover, they receive a cash supplement (\$40 per person per year) and social support through a permanent social worker. Each social worker is responsible for a specific number of families, so they can communicate easily in case of need. Complainant must receive written feedback about the status of their complaint, which is also filed in the complainant’s family file. Thus, the greater satisfaction expressed by RSS beneficiaries demonstrates that organization plays an important role in optimizing service quality in a conflict-affected area.

Cash supplements, sufficient food quantities and systematic feedback system are all advantages that are not enjoyed by EP beneficiaries. The EP social worker is more a data collector. The relation between EP social workers and households comprises filling out an application form during a single visit. The RSS programme is directed at the most vulnerable refugee segments, such as orphans and widows. This is an incentive for refugees to find ways to become beneficiaries of the RSS, not EP. One informant narrated how she changed her assistance from the EP to the RSS programme. She applied to the RSS programme as a divorced woman and started receiving assistance. After a while, she re-married her ex-husband and gave birth to a daughter in addition to her four older children, but she did not inform the RSS about her changed status because she feared being cut off. She continued receiving assistance for five persons instead of seven, but RSS support for five persons is better than EP assistance for seven persons (Interview PR13). This is one way of coping with the limitations of aid.

Secondly, the difference between the previous living conditions of RSS and EP beneficiaries is significant. RSS beneficiaries have a background of poverty and so are used to deprivation. A widow who lost her husband a long time ago and became dependent on basic RSS services does not make comparisons between the current situation and her previous one because they are almost the same. The situation is different for EP beneficiaries. They were relatively better off before 2000, while now they survive on emergency coupons provided by the EP. They keep recalling what forced them to resort to food coupons and they continue comparing the quality of food.

What is similar to both groups, however, is their dependence on aid, with all its negative consequences. The quality of life for many Palestinians is currently decided by international actors implementing different programmes and projects according to different criteria and decisions. One of the outcomes of such a situation is development of a ‘coupon culture’.

“We have become coupon-people, which is not good. Talking all the time about food coupons is undesirable. We need work, not coupons. If I had work, or my husband had work, we would not care about coupons” (Interview PR5).

A big part of most people’s daily life in Gaza is about coupons. The coupon’s contents and time are discussed in taxis, neighbourhoods and among friends. The issue of coupons has also received attention from Palestinian activists and bloggers.

Another consequence of the refugees’ aid dependency in Gaza is a distorted decision system. Sometimes, following restrictive mathematical calculations of income in the selection criteria, people are forced to reject a temporary job (which is usually the only kind of job available in Gaza) in order to stay eligible for aid, and their names are not cancelled from the assistance lists. The ‘New Humanitarianism’ approach is useless for dealing with this problem. It leads to structural impoverishment of beneficiaries instead of lending them a hand.

“When my coupon is delayed, I buy on credit until I receive my coupon” (Interview PR3).

Adversity has led to a changing pattern of food consumption in Gaza. Shifting to lower quality and quantity of food is a main coping strategy, and general decrease in the quality of food consumed is reported by households. Many parents reduce their intake to enable their children to eat. According to a survey conducted by WFP, FAO and UNRWA (2008), half the surveyed population had decreased their spending on food, 89 per cent had reduced the quality of food, and 75 per cent had reduced the quantity since January 2008. Almost all the people had reduced their consumption of fresh fruit, vegetables and animal protein to save money. Very few Palestinians now eat fresh (red) meat. The overwhelming majority of the households interviewed reported that they buy food

in very small quantities two or three times a week. This was confirmed by retailers, who also reported that consumers were buying less, which had forced many of the retailers to start selling bulk packages (ibid.: 10).

Seeking food aid more than before is another coping strategy. Utilization of food aid rations from UNRWA has increased, according to the WFP et al. (2008) survey. Additionally, refugees use aid food to increase variety in their diet. Selling of jewellery and other assets (if any are still left), use of life savings (if they have not already been exhausted) and borrowing are also common strategies to buy necessities. The most common coping strategy is to buy food on credit. People resort to borrowing food from relatives and neighbours or buy on credit from supermarkets and retailers. This strategy is not available to everyone; several retailers extend credit only to employed customers, or customers whose family members are known to have a regular job. The chronically unemployed, who have no regular source of income, such as the labourers who used to work in Israel, have a very limited capacity to buy on credit due to lack of regular in-kind or in-cash assistance. Having already sold their disposable assets, 59 per cent of households are now relying on credit to buy food (ibid). The poor, who have no alternative ways to get food, have to resort to scavenging in the trash bins of poulterers and retail stores.

Some of these strategies can be effective in the short term, but they lead to negative livelihood outcomes and reduce the households' long-term ability to cope with external shocks. Some of the strategies are only available to those with a reliable income.

3.6 Refugees' Perspective: Reasons for UNRWA Food Aid

“UNRWA is feeding us to keep us silent about what is going on; conflict and war. The Palestinian Authority does not do anything. The Fatah government went and the Hamas government came, there is no difference! Why did UNRWA give us food six months after the Nakbah? This is to keep us silent. Now UNRWA is cutting its assistance. This is better, then people will revolt and regain their lands” (Interview PR7).

Refugees have no expectations that UNRWA will provide total protection on the basis of total responsibility. They realize that the context of conflict is the major reason for what is going on in the oPt. They know that UNRWA will not give them more than the bare minimum they are receiving currently, and their hope is that the minimal necessities will not be reduced further. Their perception of UNRWA has shown up frequently in studies, even in the academic arena. For example, Abowed (2008: 731) describes her experience with a Palestinian feminist and refugee rights activist in her seventies, who told her that since 1948 she had been against the UN or any other external organization giving even “one bag of flour” to the refugees in Gaza. The activist was against classifying Palestinians as exiled and displaced because that might create a foundation for that status to be made permanent. Abowed's nuanced analysis, which fleshes out the “pluralized experiences” of the refugees, is illuminating. Referring to the multiple phenomena impinging on ostensibly isolated and contained locales in Gaza's persistent state of emergency, she provides potent insights into how services—as well as documents—“transform the relationships of places to each other” (2008: 178).

3.7 Conclusion

The strongly amplified feeling of insecurity among registered refugees is an outcome of the uniqueness of UNRWA as an organization acting like a government for a very long time, rather than like an aid agency. The authority that UNRWA enjoys as the oldest refugee aid agency in history makes it less subject to critical evaluation of its performance as a humanitarian agency by its target group or host governments. This, in turn,

enhances the bureaucratic tendency in its work. The losers in all this are the refugees, because turning the priority in UNRWA's work away from humanity and impartially principles results in the dignity of refugees being violated.

As long as UNRWA prioritizes donor-oriented programmes ignoring the real needs of the refugees, it violates the principle of impartiality, which requires humanitarian action to be carried out only on the basis of needs. UNRWA's priorities are determined by the donors, whose interests apparently lie in supporting continued occupation of the oPt. The fact that UNRWA's funding and strategies continue to be based on their being of an emergency nature, even though the agency has been targeting the same group of Palestinians for more than 60 years, raises questions about the seriousness of the donors.

UNRWA is responsible for a target group that has no other option for assistance. UNRWA acts under legal and political responsibility but disregards its humanitarian responsibility towards refugees. As an organization, UNRWA is located in a framework that does not allow it to operate independently. The reasons for this might lie in UNRWA's original foundation in the late 1940s. It was established and expanded without the existence of a real effective government in Palestine. It has been delivering assistance for over 60 years to people whom it considers to be voiceless. Consequently, it is accountable not to the people it supports, but to those who finance it and control its operations within the given political framework of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

UNRWA's transfer of most of its services from permanent programmes (such as construction, relief and social services) to the Emergency Programme financed through a fund separate from the core budget, has proved to be an inefficient strategy of refugee support. It has had a negative impact on refugees' human security. The expansion of the emergency services budget to USD 379 in 2010 (UNRWA, 2011c) at the expense of other services (USD 38.2 in 2010, according to UNRWA, 2011c) resulted in fragility of the core UNRWA programmes. By using emergency assistance schemas, UNRWA can transfer the blame to the donors. However, as an organization set up to ensure the welfare of Palestinian refugees, it has responsibilities that cannot be ignored. Moreover, the EP is still – after 60 years - working according to the early recovery phase, without considering long-term development. It is failing to address the causes and effects of the ongoing Israeli control over Gaza (through the economic blockade, border closure and periodic military attacks on Gaza residents) which is the main cause of the continuing humanitarian crisis. For example, it provides cash to compensate those who have lost their houses because of Israeli military actions in Gaza, while knowing very well that the Israeli blockade makes it impossible for people to purchase construction materials approved by it to rebuild their houses. UNRWA frames its responses to Gazan refugees in the context of conflict, and at the same time it ignores the conflict in its daily operations.

UNRWA's assistance is influenced by geo-politics, so it cannot change the poverty and unemployment problems without a change in the political context. While emergency food aid is important in the case of natural disasters, in a political conflict situation it just feeds the roots of conflict in different ways. The fluctuation of service level is strongly correlated with political strategies. UNRWA's inability to prevent budget cuts as well as to importing sufficient quantities of food on time shows that, in the current situation of political pressure from Israel and the donors, it is incapable of providing a satisfactory level of service.

Aid is used by the international community as a weapon in this conflict. As shown earlier in this study, this kind of official assistance leads to structural poverty that keeps the Palestinian population at the mercy of charitable organizations and Israel. This manipulation of funding is conducted while violating essential humanitarian principles and has become part of the 'New Humanitarianism' approach in which aid is used as a tool to achieve political goals. It violates the principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality and humanity.

International donors have formulated their policies in such a way as to keep the Gaza Strip dependent of Israel for all supplies, and that enables Israel to continue – and even extend – its violations of Palestinians' rights. Until the recent change of government in Egypt and that country's limited opening of the border with Gaza, Gazans managed to survive the Israeli blockade by bringing in some food and other supplies through secret tunnels between the two countries. The international community's reaction to this coping strategy was to condemn it, arguing that the tunnels would also enable Hamas to import arms. As a result of its budget vulnerability, UNRWA has been placed in a position where it is effectively colluding with Israel in its violations of international conventions and agreements on war, occupation and human rights. For example, the donors refuse to let any of the money given to be used to buy materials/commodities that have not been imported through Israel. While Mubarak was in power in Egypt, there was no attempt to persuade him to allow such imports through the border at Rafah. Nor, in the face of deliberate Israeli obstruction of UNRWA aid supplies, was there an attempt to import ma-

terials through Rafah. Even, now, after the Egyptian Revolution and reopening of the Rafah crossing, no attempts are being made to use this opportunity to ease the effects of the Israeli blockade.

The food recipients perceive food programmes as only an analgesic, a temporary pain killer. Their insecurity is amplified by such emergency schemas, which have had undesired outcomes with regard to their social and economic situation. UNRWA was created with a mandate to provide relief, but Gazan refugees have found themselves in the trap of hunger and poverty without work opportunities, relief or real resolution of the refugee problem.

Given all this, one has to conclude that, while many factors have contributed to UNRWA's failure to improve food security in Gaza, the main reason is political. If there is to be a solution, it has to be a political one. UNRWA's ability to deliver a satisfactory level of assistance is also limited by a combination of bad policies and bureaucratic dysfunction, in addition to the political constraints. The responsibility for failure does not lie with UNRWA alone, but also with the whole system of donors, donor states, the PA, and Israel.

The failures of specific interventions should not erase the spirit of humanitarian action. Humanitarian agencies should use their power to ensure that their organizations abide by principles and are accountable to their beneficiaries. Thus, UNRWA should continue providing basic services and humanitarian assistance to the world's largest refugee population, but without ignoring the larger political context in which it was created and operates. UNRWA should also try to influence the donors and highlight the refugees' priorities. Starting a dialogue with the refugees about their vision of implemented activities would help to change the perspective of beneficiaries towards the Agency's programmes. Sufficient food aid and, to a lesser extent cash aid, could play a major role in preventing a further increase in food insecurity and contribute to filling the shelves of the poorest groups. However, food aid alone cannot offset the decline in the socio-economic conditions affecting the Gazan refugees. A structural approach is needed to improve Gaza's economy, starting with support for increased productivity in the agricultural sector. More predictability and independency of aid resources to optimize safety nets and caseload coverage is important. Welcoming food recipients as vital stockholders and responding to their demands (such as effective social surveys, a complaints system and an updated database system) could help to diminish the non-inclusion of the "newly needy", so that they can be addressed quickly by the targeting systems, in order to dignify them as human beings. This would be in accordance with the spirit and the letter of humanitarian principles and actions. Complementing food assistance with livelihood support (providing refugees with self-sufficiency skills to grow their own food) would contribute to more secure livelihoods in exile. Above all, highlighting the urgent need for a just and permanent solution to the refugee problem should be a priority in conflict situations like Gaza.

Humanitarian agencies need to be aware that there is a conflict between traditional humanitarian principles on the one hand, and the conflict management principles underlying liberal peace and stability on the other. History shows that humanitarian assistance cannot fill the vacuum left by ineffective political engagement. Humanitarian action must be driven by the aim of alleviating suffering irrespective of colour and creed when all else has failed. In discussing relief agencies and their moral standing in war, Slim (1997) emphasizes the responsibility of any third-party relief organization to be transparent in its position and to preserve, rather than distort, traditional humanitarian principles and language. The challenge for aid agencies is to understand their role in the growing politicization of aid, to uphold the need for witnessing and the duty of care, and to craft a renewed consensus of humanitarian principles based on a universal respect for humanity. Otherwise, humanitarian intervention weakens the humanitarian imperative instead of

fulfilling the needs of victims. Awareness of how the 'New Humanitarianism' differs radically from the principles of humanitarian action can be the first step to counteracting the growing politicization of aid.

Hopefully, understanding the context within which humanitarian organizations operate can help them to improve their analyses and motivate them to take better action by following the ethical framework of humanitarianism with its main principles.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Documents used in the Analysis

- Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions
- Medium Term Plan 2004-2009
- Medium Term Strategy 2010-15
- Emergency Programme (factsheet)
- Relief and Social Service program (factsheet)
- Social safety-net programme (factsheet)
- Refugee organization publications (BADIL)
- International conventions (UN papers and statements)
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics surveys
- Documents of other organizations such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN World Food Programme (UNWFP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Appendix 2: Food Security Group Descriptors

Table 1: Food Security Group Descriptors

Food Secure	Marginally Secure	Vulnerable	Food Insecure
Households with income and consumption above USD 6.2 per adult equivalent/day OR Households with income and consumption between USD 5.1 and USD 6.2 per adult equivalent/day and show no decrease in total food and non-food expenditures.	Households showing either income or consumption above USD 6.2 per adult equivalent/day (not both) OR Households with both income and consumption between USD 5.1 and USD 6.2 per adult equivalent per day with no decrease in expenditure patterns	Households showing both income and consumption below USD 6.2 per adult equivalent per day EXCEPT house-holds showing no decrease in expenditure patterns (categorize as marginally secure)	Households with income and consumption below USD 5.1 per adult equivalent/day OR Households showing decrease in total food and non-food expenditures, including households unable to further decrease their expenditure patterns

Source: WFP, FAO & UNRWA (2008).

Appendix 3: Interview codes

#	Code	Description
1	PR1	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 3 July 2011. 7-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
2	PR2	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 6 July 2011. 9-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
3	PR3	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 14 July 2011. 8-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
4	PR4	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 14 July 2011. 10-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
5	PR5	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 16 July 2011. 8-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
6	PR6	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 16 July 2011. 4-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
7	PR7	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 16 July 2011. 2-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
8	PR8	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 20 July 2011. 11-member family receives assistance from UNRWA RSS programme.
9	PR9	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 20 July 2011. 5-member family receives assistance from UNRWA RSS programme.
10	PR10	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 23 July 2011. 4-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
11	PR11	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 23 July 2011. 7-member family receives assistance from UNRWA RSS.

12	PR12	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 23 July 2011. 7-member family receives assistance from UNRWA RSS and EP programme.
13	PR13	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 23 July 2011. 7-member family receives assistance from UNRWA RSS programme.
14	PR14	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 23 July 2011. 9-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP programme.
15	PR15	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 24 July 2011. 2-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
16	PR16	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 24 July 2011. 1-member household receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
17	PR17	Interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on 24 July 2011. 7-member family receives assistance from UNRWA EP.
18	PR18	Telephone interview with a Palestinian refugee residing in the Gaza Strip, on [DATE?] August 2011.
19	UNRWAS 1	Interview with a staff member of UNRWA on 1 July 2011.
20	UNRWAS 2	Interview with a senior staff member of UNRWA on 18 July 2011.

References

- Abowed, T. (2008) review of I. Feldman, 'Governing Gaza', Durham: Duke University Press, in *Anthropological Quarterly* 81(3): 727-32. Accessed 15 July 2011 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/anthropological_quarterly/v081/81.3.abowd.pdf.
- Alesina, A. & D. Dollar (2000) 'Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?', *Journal of Economic Growth* 5: 33-63. Accessed 1 July 2011 <http://pirate.shu.edu/~gokcekom/Dollar_and_Alesina.pdf>.
- Alexander, J. (2007) *Conflict, Economic, Closure, and Human Security in Gaza*. Oxford: Oxford Research Group.
- Al-Majdal (2006) *Ongoing Nakba*. Bethlehem: BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights.
- Handmaker, J. (2005) 'International Response to Human Rights Violations with Particular Reference to Palestinian refugees', S. Asfaw, P. Weiderud and G. Kerber (eds.) *The Responsibility to Protect: ethical and theological reflections*, pp. 70-82. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- ICRC (1996) *The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent*. International Committee of the Red Cross. Accessed 10 October 2011 <http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0513.pdf>.
- ICRC (2009) *Professional Standards for Protection work*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Committee of the Red Cross.
- BADIL (2005) *Closing Protection Gaps, Handbook on Protection of Palestinian Refugees in States Signatories to the 19951 Refugee Convention*. Bethlehem: BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights.
- BADIL, (n.d.) *Refugee & IDP Rights*. Accessed 17 May 2011 <<http://www.badil.org/en/refugee-a-idp-rights>>.
- Bocco, R. (ed.) (2010) 'UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees: A History Within History', *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28(2 & 3): 229-252.
- Brynen, R. (2000) *A Very Political Economy : Peacebuilding and Foreign Aid in the West Bank and Gaza*. Washington, D.C. : United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Duffield, M., J. Macrae & D. Curtis (2001) 'Editorial': Politics and Humanitarian Aid', *Disasters* 25(4): 269-74.
- Fox, F. (2001), 'New Humanitarianism: Does It Provide a Moral Banner for the 21st Century?', *Disasters* 25(4): 275-89. Accessed 15 August 2011 <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-7717.00178/abstract>>.
- Fox, F. (2002), 'Conditioning the Right to Humanitarian Aid? Human Rights and the "New Humanitarianism"', in D. Chandler (ed.) *Rethinking Human Rights: Critical Approach to International Politics*, pp:19-37. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- GHA (n.d.) *Global Humanitarian Assistance report 2010*. Accessed 17 May 2011 <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/GHA_Report8.pdf>.
- Hupkes, D. (2007) 'What Constitutes Occupation?', in *Strengthening Protection in War*. Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross.
- Jahn, M. (2004) *User Needs in a Maslow Schemata*. Vienna: Technical University Vienna Institute for Geoinformation.
- Macrae, J. & N. Leader (2001) 'Apples, Pears and Porridge: The Origins and Impact of the Search for "Coherence" between Humanitarian and Political Responses to Chronic Political Emergencies', *Disasters* 25(4): 290-307.

- Ma'an News Agency (2011) 'UNRWA responds to Gaza Protests'. Accessed 1 August 2011 < <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=407732> >
- OCHA (2010) *What are Humanitarian Principles?*. Accessed 20 September 2011. <http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/OOM_HumPrinciple_English.pdf>.
- ODI (2001) *Politics and Humanitarian Aid: Debates, Dilemmas and Dissension*, HPG Report 10, reports of a conference organised by Overseas Development Institute, POLIS at University of Leeds and CAFOD, London.
- Palestinian Monitor Factsheet (2008) *Poverty*. Accessed 18 June 2011 < www.palwstine-monitor.org/spip/spip.php?article13 >
- Palestine Monitor (2009) *Palestine Monitor Factbook*. Accessed 10 April 2011. <http://www.palestinemonitor.org/spip/IMG/pdf/factbook_Final_online-2.pdf>.
- PCBS - Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2011) *Poverty in the Palestinian Territory, 2009-2010*. Accessed 10 April 2011. <<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabID=1&lang=en>>.
- PCBS-WFP-FAO (2009) *Quantitative Food Security and Socio-Economic Survey in the West Bank, National Household Quantitative Survey*. oPt.
- Petrik, J. (2007) 'EU Official Development Aid to the Palestinian Authority and the Rise of Hamas' *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 1(1). Accessed 1 August 2011 <http://www.cejiss.org/sites/default/files/Jaroslav_Petrik_EU_Official_Development_Aid_to_the_Palestinian_Authority_and_the_Rise_of_Hamas.pdf>.
- Quartet (2006) *Quartet Statement*. Accessed 16 May 2011 <http://www.consiliun.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/declarations/89495.pdf>.
- Randel, J., T., German & D. Ewing (2002) (eds) *The Reality of Aid 2002: An Independent Review of Poverty Reduction and Development Assistance, Development Initiatives*. Manila, Philippines: IBON Foundations.
- Reliefweb (2010) 'UN Humanitarian Coordinator: Gaza Blockade Suffocating Agriculture Sector, Creating Food Insecurity'. Accessed 10 April 2011. <<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/MDCS-85SDHW?OpenDocument>>.
- Roy, S. (2011) 'Gaza After the Revolution'. Accessed 17 July 2011 http://mideast.foreign-policy.com/posts/2011/03/16/gaza_after_the_revolution>.
- Schiphorst, F. (2011), 'Sampling, and Research Quality, Methods for Social Development Research', lecture notes, 28 April 2011.
- Sen, A. (1999), *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sharif, I. (2009) *Building a Targeting System for Bangladesh Based on Proxy Means Testing*, SP discussion paper no. 0914, the World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Slim, H. (1997) 'Relief Agencies and Moral Standing in War: Principles of Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Solidarity', *Development in Practice* 7(4): 342-52. Accessed 22 September 2011 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/4029000.pdf?acceptTC=true>>.
- Slim, H. (2002) 'Not Philanthropy But Rights Rights-Based Humanitarianism and the Proper Politicisation of Humanitarian Philosophy in War', Centre for Development and Emergency Practice, Oxford Brookes University. Accessed 20 September 2011 <<http://www.odi.org.uk/events/documents/2103-rights-based-humanitarianism-proper-politicisation-humanitarian-philosophy-hugo-slim-revised-may-2001.pdf>>
- Sommaruga, C. (1999) 'Humanity: Our Priority Now and Always: Response to "Principles, Politics, and Humanitarian Action"', *Ethics & International Affairs* 13(1): 23-8. Accessed 23 September 2011 <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-7093.1999.tb00323.x/pdf>>

- UNs (2011) 'Consolidated Appeal Mid Year Review 2011 Occupied Palestinian Territories'. Accessed 29 August 2011 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_report_200.pdf>
- UNGA - United Nations General Assembly (2009) *Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations*. Accessed 17 May 2011 <http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/un/63/A_RES_63_139_EN.pdf>
- UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (n.d.) 'Where UNRWA Works: Gaza'. Accessed 16 May 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=64>>
- UNRWA(2007) 'The United Nations and Palestinian Refugees'. Accessed 16 May 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011791015.pdf>>.
- UNRWA(2009) 'Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions'. Accessed 18 May 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011995652.pdf>>.
- UNRWA (2011a) 'Emergency Appeal 2011'. Accessed 28 July 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010121464938.pdf>>.
- UNRWA (2011b) 'Emergency Appeal 38th Progress Report January-December 2010'. Accessed 28 June 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011071851440.pdf>>.
- UNRWA (2011c) 'UNRWA in Figures as of 30 December 2010'. Accessed 28 June 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011080123958.pdf>>.
- UNRWA (2011d) 'UNRWA Gaza's Poverty Survey'. Accessed 30 June 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/publications/gaza/UNRWA%20Gaza%20Poverty%20Survey.pdf>>.
- UVIN, P. (1992) 'Regime, Surplus, and Self-Interest: The International Politics of Food Aid', *International Studies Quarterly* 36: 293-312.
- Verdirame, G & B. Harreil-Bond (2005) 'Rights in Exile: Janus-Faced Humanitarianism', *Studies in Forced Migration, volume 17*.
- Volberg, T. (2006) *The Politicization of Humanitarian Aid and Its Effect on the Principles of Humanity, Impartiality and Neutrality*, Masters Thesis, Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict.
- Weiss, T. (1999) 'Principles, Politics, and Humanitarian Action', *Ethics & International Affairs* 13(1): 1-22. Accessed 25 September 2011 <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-7093.1999.tb00322.x/pdf>>.
- WFP, FAO and UNRWA (2008) *Rapid Socio-economic and Food Security Assessment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. Accessed 4 September 2011 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/20100118155248.pdf>>.
- WFP& FAO(2011) 'oPt 2010 Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey'. Accessed 25 July 2011 <<http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp232398.pdf>>.