“Humanitarian” area in southern Gaza announced today (Sept. 6, 2025) by Israeli army: spatial dataset and analysis

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ABSTRACT

This morning (September 6, 2025), the Israeli army spokesman tweeted a new map of a new version of the “Humanitarian Area” in southern Gaza. This designation, which quietly disappeared from IDF usage in January 2025, is declared as the intended destination for Gazans soon to be displaced by the threatened attacks on and evacuation of Gaza City and, potentially, the central camps of Gaza as well. This dataset consists of a spatial dataset (KML file) of this area extracted from the IDF web site, and a contextualization and analysis of this new designation and its shortcomings.

Context of the announcement

This morning, the Israeli army spokesman tweeted the designation of a "Humanitarian Area" in Khan Yunis.

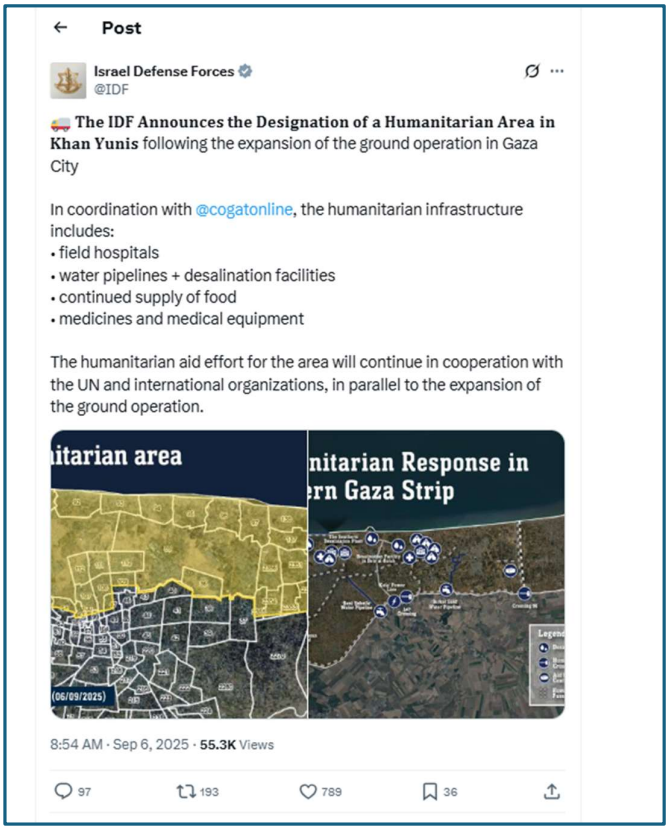

Figure 1: IDF tweet with new Humanitarian area and regime elements[1]

This tweet contained the following two images, a map of the Humanitarian area [sic] (Figure 2) and of elements of the IDF's "Humanitarian Response in the Southern Gaza Strip" (Figure 3). Both of these will be discussed, first in this initial posting and then in an update.

[1] Source: https://x.com/idf/status/1964205578982740267?s=48&t=qQsO3KSWiCS8b04BtxDgrg

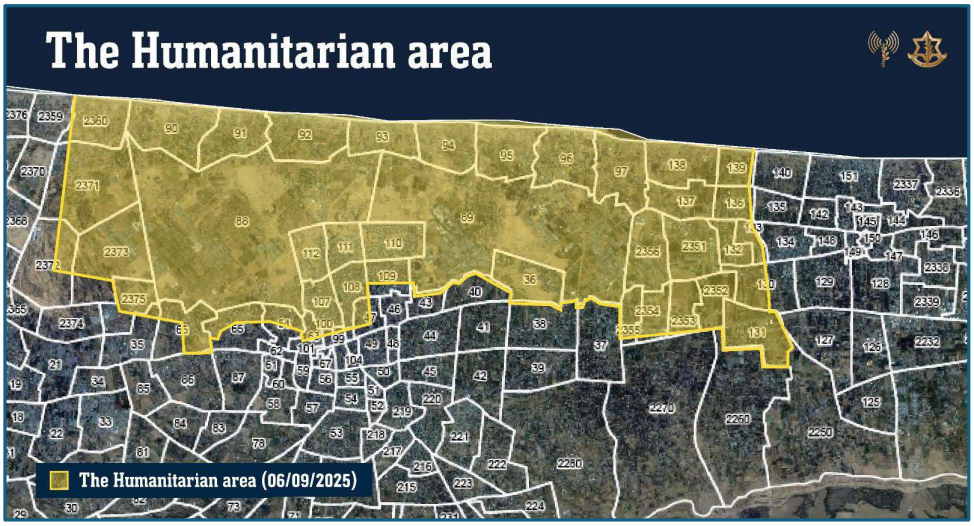

Figure 2: map of the Humanitarian area

Figure 3: elements of the IDF's "Humanitarian Response in the Southern Gaza Strip."

This map reinstates the humanitarian area that quietly disappeared from IDF communications in January 2025[2], and divides the Gaza strip into three areas (see Figure 4): the yellow humanitarian zone, the red "no go" zone, and the remainder, consisting of the densely populated areas of Gaza City, the central camps (notably Deir al Balah), which are presumably the target of the

[2] Garb, Yaakov, 2025, "The quiet January 2025 disappearance of the "Humanitarian Area" in IDF maps of Gaza", [https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/RR6KDO](https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/RR6KDO "https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/RR6KDO")

forthcoming attacks and population displacements, and the western part of the already vacated Netzarim corridor.

Figure 4: the new "humanitarian area," "no go" zone, and limbo area of Gaza, as of Sept. 6, 2025. Map: Y. Garb

In spatial terms, the yellow humanitarian area that presumably would contain Gaza's population of just over 2 million is 42.8 square kilometers (or just under 12% of the Gaza Strip's 365 kilometers squared). The current no-go area of 258.9 square kilometers constitutes the majority of Gaza (71%). The unmarked remainder, whose evacuation is hinted at by announcements of the last weeks and the text accompanying these maps, contains the densely populated areas with the majority of Gaza's population, constitutes 17.5% of the Gaza Strip.

The map of the humanitarian area

The boundary of the map was also contained in the IDF web site on which various iterations of spatial data have been made available in the form of an interactive leaflet map (Figure 5).[3]

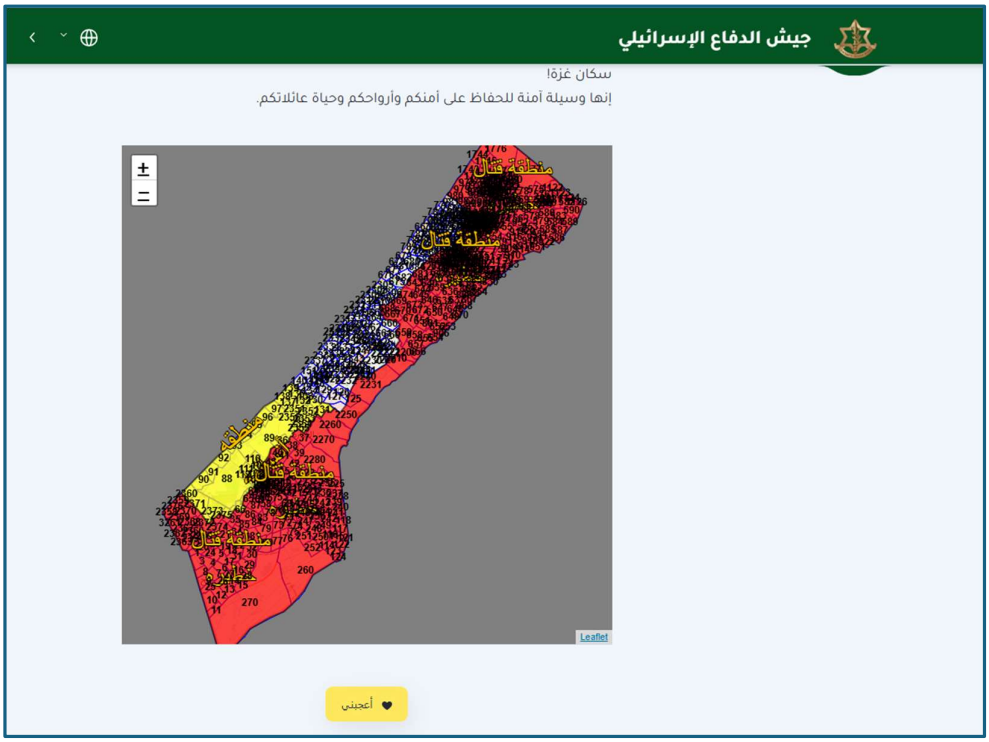

Figure 5: IDF web site with interactive map

Below, translated from the Arabic, is the text accompanying this interactive site, which, somewhat confusingly, refers to block numbers of past and possibly future evacuations, rather than of the new (yellow) area that is being announced.

[3] https://www.idf.il/ar/%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A/%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A/swordsofiron-181123-118/

Israeli Defense Forces

Based on the ethics and values of our military institution

The Defense Forces publishes a list of block numbers to guide Gaza residents in evacuating targeted areas 06.09.25

Dear Gaza residents! Please pay attention and examine this map carefully. Anyone who sees the number of the block they live in or are located near must follow and comply with the Defense Forces' instructions through various media outlets.

Gaza residents! This is a safe means to preserve your security, lives, and the lives of your families.

Since the beginning of the war in Gaza against the terrorist Hamas organization that uses the Strip's residents as human shields, planting its headquarters and military infrastructure in their residential areas, hospitals, mosques, and schools, turning civilian sites into military targets, thereby violating international law and the rules of war that explicitly prohibit using civilians as human shields. The Defense Forces takes all possible precautions to avoid causing civilian casualties or injuries, using all available means. Therefore, it always sends messages to Gaza residents by demanding they evacuate targeted areas that constitute targets for army activities, directing them through all possible means, including publishing a map containing a list of numbered blocks as a means of knowledge that Gaza residents can rely on for information and news to avoid harming them and preserve their lives. In the published map, block numbers in Gaza appear, with a clear call: Dear Gaza residents! Please pay attention and examine this map carefully. Anyone who sees the number of the block they live in or are located near must follow and comply with the Defense Forces' instructions through various media outlets. Gaza residents! This is a safe means to preserve your security, lives, and the lives of your families.

A version of the map was also distributed in leaflets dropped from the air.

Figure 6: screenshot from movie of leaflets dropped by IDF

The cartography in these static and interactive maps is deficient and confusing in the same manner as the previous maps released by the IDF spokesman since the start of the war, as I described in a series of reports released since 2023.[4] There are also some problems specific to the new map.

Some of these are minor. The static map in the tweet (Figure 2) uses a Google satellite basemap and includes parts of the sea in the humanitarian area (offshore from blocks 92/3, 95, and 97), as opposed to the interactive map, which has an OSM basemap. The interactive map, contains a label, "humanitarian area," (Figure 7) with small errors (hamza placement that changes the pronunciation, and missing taa marbuta dots), indicating that the text was probably written by a Hebrew speaker or generated with automated translation tools without review by a native speaker.

Figure 7: IDF site with label of "humanitarian area," with small errors

More fundamentally, the extent and boundary of the area would be difficult for Gazans or even humanitarian agencies to decipher based on the information the IDF has provided. This is especially important given that the humanitarian zone has been redefined several times by the IDF in the past (see Figure 8, and also my

[4] Garb, Yaakov, 2023, "Geospatial dataset of Gaza targeting polygons publicized by the IDF on December 1, 2023", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HUXOJ. Garb, Yaakov, 2024, "Geospatial dataset and analysis of usability for emergency communications of the official maps of Gaza "Humanitarian Area" and evacuation blocks", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/9CRVCJ. Garb, Yaakov, 2025, "Today's (May 15) IDF Rimal neighborhood IDF attack announcement: dataset, maps, and critique", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WUZNXO.

prior report for more detail on prior definitions and discrepancies[5]). In particular, the current map removes areas that were previously included to the north while including some additional area to the south. **And, strikingly, many of the "open areas" only recently (August 27) defined as being available as safe destinations for Gazans displaced from the north (see my August 27 report on this) are now excluded from the September 6 "humanitarian" area, as shown in Figure 8.**

For example, as can be seen in Figure 8,the September 6 "humanitarian" area extends further south than previous ones, but the IDF maps offer little guidance on the precise extent of this newly included safe area. People who want to check these extents, would find it impossible to do so based on the static maps distributed on social media and the dropped leaflets (see Figure 9). Even those rare few with internet access allowing them to navigate the bandwidth-heavy interactive site would find it difficult (Figure 10Figure 10). There are no orienting features is the static map, and very few in the OSM basemap of the interactive site, and these are even less relevant now, after almost two years of war that have eliminated all the structures and roads in many places (compare the prewar imagery of Figure 12 with the recent imagery of Figure 13.

[5] Garb, Yaakov, 2024, "Geospatial dataset and analysis of usability for emergency communications of the official maps of Gaza "Humanitarian Area" and evacuation blocks", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/9CRVCJ.

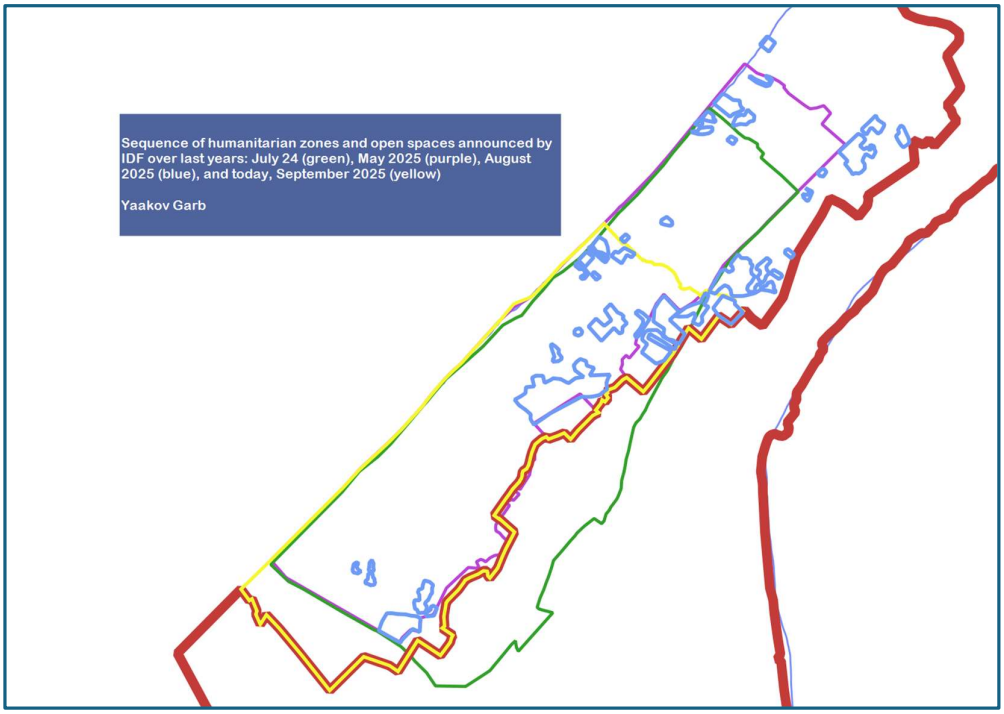

Figure 8: versions of "humanitarian" and "open" areas defined by the IDF over the course of the war

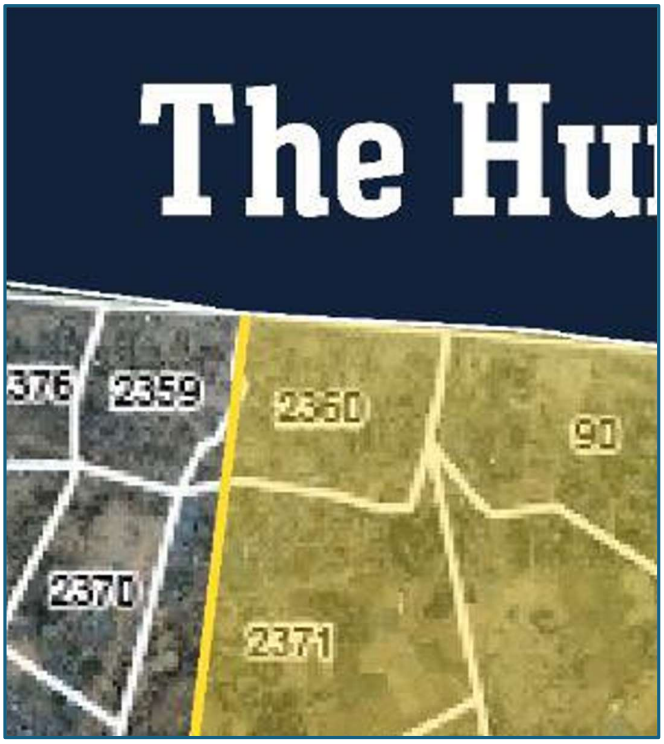

Figure 9: section of southern part of "humanitarian" area map distributed in social media and print—map quality renders it unusable for determining the extent of humanitarian area.

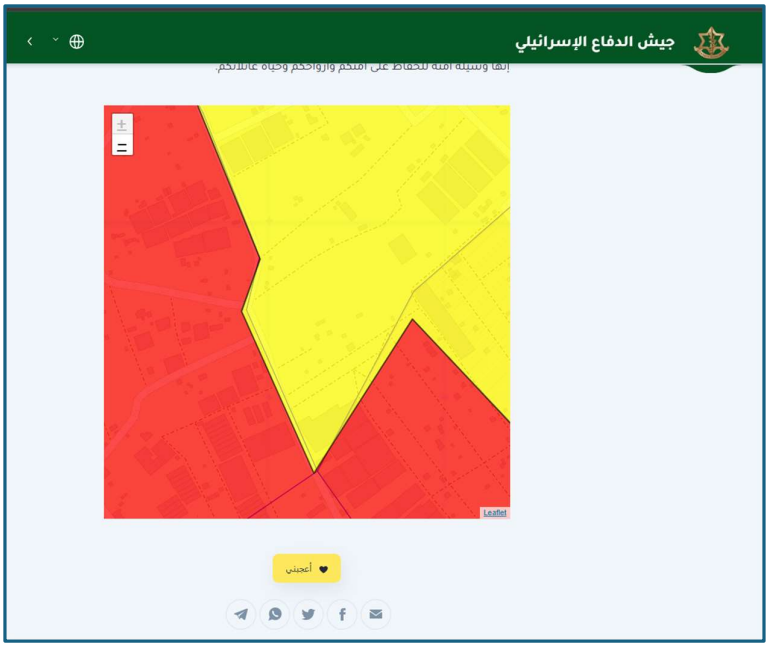

Figure 10: same section in interactive IDF site. Only streets and building footprints available for orientation, and these are barely visible beneath polygon shading.

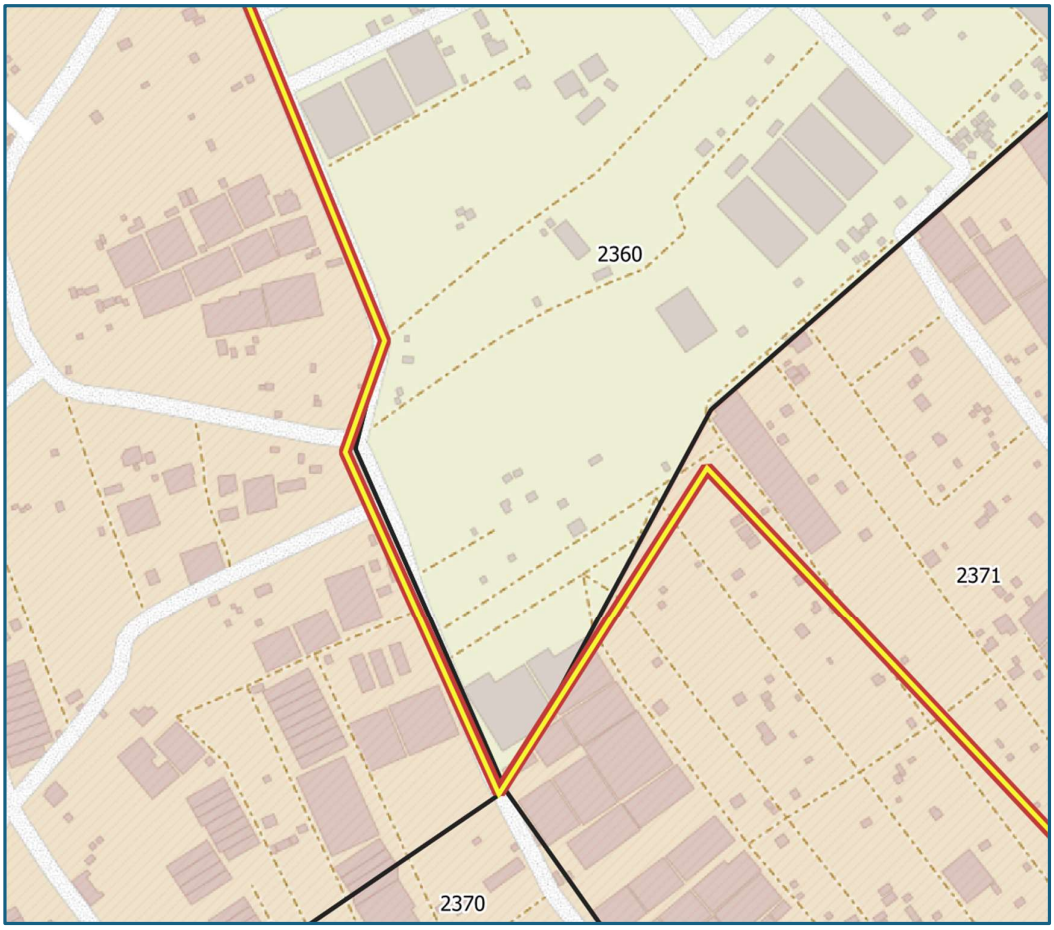

Figure 11: same area using spatial layer (KML) in this data release overlaid onto OSM, but now without arbitrary limit on zoom and not obscured by polygon shading. Map by Yaakov Garb.

Figure 12: same area using spatial layer (KML) in this data release overlaid onto prewar map (Bing satellite). Image allows identification of familiar orienting objects (greenhouses, fields). Map by Yaakov Garb.

Figure 13: same area using spatial layer (KML) in this data release overlaid onto PLANET high resolution image of August 31. Allows navigation within current radically modified landscape. Map by Y. Garb.

The block numbers, which appear in the interactive map and served as partial guide to inclusion/exclusion in past, are no longer relevant, as many blocks are now bisected, lying both inside and outside the "humanitarian" area (Figure 14).

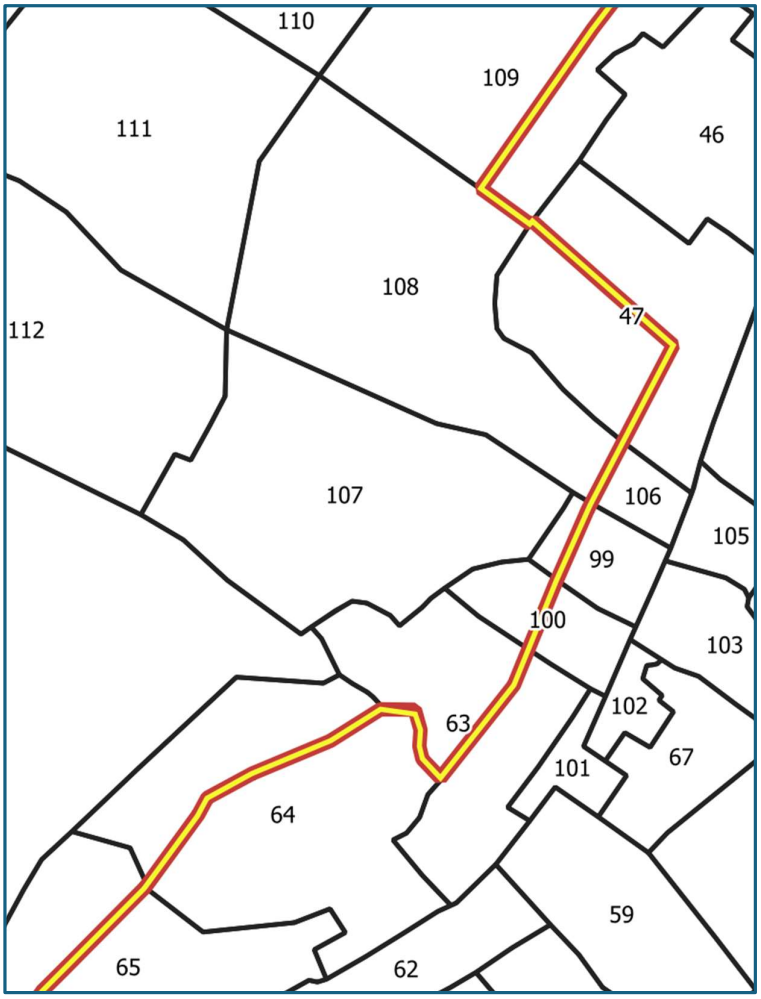

Figure 14: new humanitarian area does not conform to the "block system" typically used over course of the war

Humanitarian elements in southern Gaza

The elements of humanitarian response available in southern Gaza (Figure 3) were elaborated in a press release to journalists, in parallel to the tweet, as follows (translation from Hebrew). An update to this posting will contain these elements as an additional data layer, and evaluation of their viability as functioning infrastructures for humanitarian needs.

Good morning and Shabbat Shalom,

Following the message distributed regarding the humanitarian space along with the attached map of humanitarian infrastructure in the area, attached for your use is a detailed breakdown of the humanitarian measures promoted so far as part of preparations for moving the population southward for their protection:

Essential Infrastructure:

- Activation of the Emirati water line from Egypt to the Al-Mawasi area. The line connection enables a supply of 15 liters per person per day for 600,000 people
- Connection of the 'Kela' power line to two desalination facilities in the Gaza Strip. Connecting the two lines enables daily production of 26,000 cubic meters per day, instead of the 3,500 that were supplied before connecting the line to the two desalination facilities
- Work continues on repairing the water lines from Israel 'Bani Suhaila' and 'Birkat Said' which together will expand the water supply in southern and central Gaza Strip by approximately 28,000 cubic meters of water per day
- Coordination of ongoing fuel deliveries for refueling desalination facilities and operating water wells

Medical Response:

- There are 3 institutional hospitals in the humanitarian space (excluding the European Hospital), 8 field hospitals, and 3 central clinics
- Work has begun on restarting operations at the European Hospital by local and international teams
- Over 1,500 tons of medical equipment and medicines were brought in over the past two weeks in cooperation with international organizations to strengthen health systems in southern Gaza Strip alongside expansion of existing field hospitals
- Initial consultation was conducted with medical personnel in northern Gaza Strip to formulate plans for transferring infrastructure from north to south
- In planning phase - access corridor for patient and escort movement in coordination with the Emirati field hospital

Shelter:

- Over 5,000 family tents and tarpaulins were brought in in cooperation with international organizations and donor countries
- Tens of thousands of additional tents were recently purchased by aid organizations and are expected to enter southern Gaza Strip over the next two weeks
- Forward planning - introduction of 100,000 new tents in the coming weeks for the population moving from north to south. It should be emphasized that the population from the north is moving based on existing tents in their possession, therefore this is an ongoing effort parallel to the population movement

Food:

- Daily, between 300 to 400 aid trucks entered southern Gaza Strip. About 80% of their content contained food
- Three distribution complexes are operating alongside work to establish two additional distribution complexes in the south of the Strip. So far, through the distribution complexes, over 2.6 million weekly food packages have been distributed to families
- Airdrops of food packages according to countries' requests, in cooperation with Jordan, Egypt, UAE and additional countries. So far, over 2,500 food packages have been airdropped by 14 countries worldwide