

Egypt sends building equipment to begin Gaza reconstruction

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Egypt has sent a convoy of engineers and building equipment to Gaza to begin reconstruction in the Palestinian enclave after the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Egyptian state television reported on Friday, 4 June.



A Palestinian boy sits in a tree near a building destroyed during Israeli-Palestinian fighting, in the northern Gaza Strip. Reuters/Mohammed Salem

Dozens of bulldozers, cranes and trucks flying Egyptian flags lined up along the border to begin crossing into the Gaza Strip, television pictures showed.

Palestinians lined the street on the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing to welcome the convoy as it rumbled into the small coastal enclave. A Palestinian border official said 50 vehicles had crossed.

"We rushed with all our money, equipment, and what we owned to join the Palestinians in the rebuilding. Every Muslim and every Egyptian wishes to take part in [the reconstruction]," Egyptian truck driver Mahmoud Ismail told Reuters in Gaza.

Eleven days of conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist rulers of Gaza, erupted on 10 May. More than 250 Palestinians were killed in hundreds of Israeli air strikes in Gaza. Rockets fired by Gaza militants killed 13 people in Israel.



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\$500m allocated to rebuilding

Egypt played a major role in brokering a ceasefire between both sides and has said it would allocate \$500m to fund the

rebuilding of devastated areas in Gaza.

Gaza's housing ministry said 1,500 housing units were destroyed during the fighting, another 1,500 housing units had been damaged beyond repair and 17,000 suffered partial damage. A ministry official put the cost of rebuilding at \$150m.

Egypt in February opened the Rafah crossing until further notice after Palestinian factions moved towards reconciliation following talks in Cairo.

It had previously been opening the crossing for only a few days at a time to allow stranded travellers to pass. The 365km² Gaza Strip, controlled by Hamas, is home to around 2 million Palestinians. An Israeli-led blockade has put restrictions on the movement of people and goods for years.

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