



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

P.O. Box 38712, East Jerusalem, Phone: (+972) 2-582 9962 / 582 5853, Fax: (+972) 2-582 5841 ochaopt@un.org, www.ochaopt.org

Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

08 – 14 April 2009

West Bank Update

Military activities affecting civilians

During the reporting period, Israeli military forces injured 25 Palestinians in the West Bank, including five children—roughly the same as the weekly average during the previous month (24) and during 2008 (27). About half of the injuries (12) occurred during a single incident in the Bethlehem area where Israeli soldiers opened fire on Palestinians during a clash between Palestinians and Israeli settlers (*see Settler Violence section below*). Another six Palestinians were injured by the Israeli forces during the weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations in the villages of Ni'lin and Bil'in (Ramallah), while cases of tear gas inhalation were reported.

Israeli military measures affecting towns and hamlets with prevalent incidents of stone-throwing at Israeli vehicles continued; search operations were conducted and curfews were imposed on villages in the Nablus, Tulkarm, and Qalqiliya Governorates. In one operation, Israeli forces shot and injured a 17-year-old Palestinian boy with rubber-coated-metal bullets. In Burqa village (Nablus), Israeli forces detained twelve Palestinian men, forcing them to sign a commitment abjuring the throwing of stones at Israeli vehicles passing near their village; the detainees were later released.

In another search operation in Hizma village (Jerusalem), Israeli troops injured a 14-year-old Palestinian boy with live ammunition in the abdomen, allegedly for attempting to take an Israeli soldier's weapon.

During the week, the overall numbers of Israeli military search operations and arrests fell in comparison with both the previous week's figures and 2008 weekly averages. This week, Israeli forces conducted 96 search operations throughout the West Bank (compared to 145 searches in the previous week and the 2008 weekly average of 103), and Israeli forces arrested 66 Palestinians

(compared to 121 previously and 84 arrests/week in 2008).

Previously unreported, on 7 April, an Israeli settler was injured near As Sawiya village when Palestinians threw stones at his vehicle on road 60 (Nablus).

Settler violence and other settler-related incidents

During the reporting period, tensions ran high in the southern West Bank as Israeli settlers in the Hebron and Bethlehem Governorates stepped up attacks against Palestinians living within the vicinity of southern Israeli settlements. The heightened violence follows an attack on 2 April where a Palestinian killed a 13-year-old boy and injured another seven-year-old boy from the Israeli settlement of Bat Ayin, southwest of Bethlehem city.

On 8 April, clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinian residents of the village of Safa (Hebron) erupted when approximately 200 Israeli settlers from Bat Ayin settlement, approached the village. An exchange of stone-throwing between the Israeli settlers and Palestinians quickly escalated, and Israeli troops and armed settlers opened fire; six Palestinians were injured by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces, one seriously, another six were injured with rubber-coated metal bullets, and at least 23 others suffered from tear-gas inhalation.

In another incident on April 10, five Israeli settlers from the settlement of Karmel, located south of the town of Yatta (Hebron), assaulted three Bedouin women from the community of Umm Al Khair, resulting in the injury of a 33-year-old woman. Later in the day, Israelis from the same settlement prevented herders from Umm Tuba and Umm Al Khair from grazing in their lands.

Also this week, in the H2 area of Hebron City, Israeli settlers attacked and damaged the property of the Qurduba School and stoned a Red Crescent ambulance which

had prior access coordination arranged by the ICRC and Israeli authorities.

In the northern West Bank, Israeli troops enforced a two-hour closure on a section of road 55, the main road between Nablus and Qalqiliya, while Israeli settlers held a march.

Imminent eviction of East Jerusalem families

On 14 April, the Israeli police gave notice of eviction to two Palestinian families residing in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood (Jerusalem). The evictions are expected to take place any time, and will displace 51 family members including 22 children. The families facing eviction are in the same area as that of Al Kurd family, who were forcibly evicted from their home in November 2008. That eviction occurred after a Jerusalem court ruled in favor of a group of Israeli settlers claiming ownership of the land on which the house was built. The two Sheikh Jarrah families are affected by the same court decision, which is currently being contested.

Palestinians denied access to East Jerusalem

Due to the Jewish holiday of Passover, Israeli authorities imposed a general closure on the West Bank from 7 April through midnight of 18 April. All Palestinians with permits, with a few exceptions, are barred from entering East Jerusalem and Israel during the Jewish holiday.

Gaza Strip Update

Military activities affecting civilians

Despite clashes between armed Palestinians and Israeli forces near the Nahal Oz military base, and the explosion of a roadside bomb near a group of Israeli soldiers in the Beit Lahiya area, there were no Palestinian or Israeli casualties reported during the week. No Palestinian rocket-fire or Israeli air strikes were reported during the week.

Israeli forces continued to enforce access restrictions to Palestinian agricultural land in border areas and fishing areas by opening fire towards Palestinian farmers and fishermen. In two separate incidents, Israeli soldiers opened-fire towards a group of farmers, forcing them to leave their land and damaging several houses. Israeli patrol boats opened fire on seven occasions

towards Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them to return to shore. Also during the week, Israeli patrol boats targeted a Palestinian boat carrying explosives, west of Beit Lahiya. Media reports indicate that a Palestinian armed faction claimed responsibility for the explosives.

Four people, including a five-year-old child, were killed in family dispute-related incidents. Also, a child and family-care centre was set on fire by unknown assailants, east of Khan Younis, destroying the centre's equipment.

The blockade on Gaza continues: the lowest number of truckloads enters Gaza since cease-fire

Imports into Gaza remain restricted and significantly limited to certain food items; construction materials, spare parts for public infrastructure and industrial and agricultural inputs remain barred from entering Gaza. The week between 5 and 11 April saw the lowest number of truckloads allowed into Gaza (499) since the ceasefires on 18 January 2009—compared to the weekly average of 785 truckloads since then. The closure of the crossings during the Jewish holiday of Passover is the main reason for the decline.

In the same week (5-11 April), Gaza received only 19% of its weekly needs of 1,750 tonnes of cooking gas (341 tonnes), as estimated by the Palestinian Gas Stations Owners Association (GSOA). The Gaza Power Plant Authority estimates the amount of industrial fuel received for operating the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) at only 70% of the GPP's weekly needs. Commercial benzene and diesel have remained barred from entering Gaza since 2 November 2008. However, the GSOA estimates that 100,000 litres of diesel and 70,000 litres of benzene enter daily via tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border.

In addition, one truckload of cut flowers was allowed out of Gaza through the Kerem Shalom Crossing. Since 12 February 2009, a total of 13 truckloads carrying 605,000 cut flowers have been exported.

Materials for rehabilitating electrical networks remain barred

The Gaza Electrical Distribution Company (GEDCO) reports that at least 430 electrical spare parts are currently under the minimum level or at zero quantity. According to GEDCO, the shipment of electrical transformers and cables that Israel allowed entry on 7 April was well below the company's needs to rehabilitate electrical networks, which sustained damages during the last Israeli offensive. The company also cites an urgent need for concrete, among other necessary materials.

Gaza - Egypt tunnels

In an incident on 13 April, Egyptian security forces destroyed six tunnels under the Gaza Strip to Egypt. In another incident on 11 April, five Palestinians experienced breathing difficulties for unknown reasons after being inside a tunnel near Al Brazil area south of Rafah.

The situation of Gaza's referral abroad patients remains unchanged

The processing of new referral abroad applications for Gaza patients remains suspended since 22 March 2009 when Hamas authorities took over the Referral Abroad Department, putting the lives hundreds of chronically-ill patients at risk. Four patients, who received approval from the PA in Ramallah prior to 22 March or had special coordination arranged with the assistance of human rights organizations, exited Erez during the week.

Acute watery and bloody diarrhea on the rise resulting from water contamination

Clinical records at UNRWA primary healthcare clinics in the Khan Younis area show that water and sanitation-related infectious diseases, such as watery diarrhea, bloody diarrhea and viral hepatitis are increasingly prevalent in 2009. During the first 14 weeks of 2009, acute bloody diarrhea showed a significant increase in comparison with its parallel period of 2008.

Improvement in population access to piped water

A total of 3,000 people residing in Johr El Dik area (south-east Gaza City) were reconnected to water networks during the reporting period. As a result, the number of people affected by the lack of piped water

declined to 132,000, down from 135,000. The improvement in access to water resulted after the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) completed the installation of an electrical transformer for one of the water wells feeding Johr El Dik area.

Of the 132,000 people affected, approximately 32,000 remain without water and 100,000 receive water every 2-3 days. Access to water will remain difficult unless necessary spare parts for repairing damage to the network, sustained during Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive, are allowed to enter Gaza. The last shipment of water pipes entered on 2 April 2009.

According to the WASH cluster, the current situation of the Wastewater Treatment Plant, east of Khan Younis, remains difficult due to restrictions on the entry of major construction materials for maintaining wastewater networks. The cluster reports that the storm water system in the area is contaminated by a continuous leakage of raw sewage. An outlet pipe is now being constructed leading from the main wastewater collection pools to the sea. This should be operational within a few months.