



## PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

3 - 9 March 2010

### West Bank

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#### **At least 72 Palestinians injured, over half of them in clashes in East Jerusalem**

This week saw the highest level of Palestinian injuries in a single-week since the first week of July 2008: at least 72 Palestinians were wounded in various incidents; over half sustained injuries in clashes that took place in East Jerusalem. Twenty-one members of the Israeli security forces were also wounded during the week.

On 5 March, at least 38 Palestinians and, according to Israeli media sources, 20 Israeli police officers, were injured during clashes that erupted at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of Jerusalem. The clashes occurred at Al Aqsa Mosque during a demonstration held by Palestinian worshippers after the Friday prayer, protesting the Israeli cabinet's decision to add the Al Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron and the Bilal Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem to the list of Israeli "national heritage sites". The clashes involved the firing of rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas grenades by the police and hurling stones by Palestinian demonstrators towards Israeli forces. According to Israeli media reports, the demonstrators threw stones at the Western Wall plaza below the compound.

Following the confrontations, the Israeli police restricted entrance to the Al Aqsa compound to Palestinians over the age of 50. The clashes later extended to other East Jerusalem areas, including Ras Al Amoud, Issawiyya, Qalandiya checkpoint and Shu'fat refugee camp, during which another six Palestinians and one Israeli border police were injured. At least 20 Palestinians were arrested during the confrontations and the following day. This is the second consecutive week clashes have erupted in and around the Old City of Jerusalem.

An additional 24 Palestinians, including eight boys, were injured during the week in other demonstrations held in the West Bank, in various contexts, including the above mentioned decision on the "national heritage" sites (eight injuries in Hebron City and Beit Ummar village); the expansion of Hallamish settlement in Ramallah area (11 injuries); and the construction of the Barrier (five injuries in the villages of Beit Jala and Ni'lin). The remaining four injuries occurred during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces, while the former attempted to stop a group of Israeli settlers from entering the village of Iraq Burin (Nablus).

Israeli forces conducted 108 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages throughout the week, slightly fewer than the 2010 weekly average of 117; as in previous weeks, the majority of this week's operations took place in the northern West Bank (71).

## Israeli settler-related incidents

This week, Palestinians clashed with Israeli settlers in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem after Palestinian children threw stones at settlers residing in a house, from which Palestinians have been evicted. In the course of the clashes, one settler was injured, the house and a vehicle belonging to the Israeli settlers sustained damages and three Palestinians were arrested. In the same neighborhood, 5,000 Palestinian, Israeli and international activists held a weekly demonstration against the settling of Israelis and the eviction of Palestinians living in this area. Also, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem announced during his visit to the neighborhood this week his intention to establish an office in one of the houses of the “evictees”, where settlers are now residing.

During the week, there were two stone-throwing incidents affecting Palestinians and one affecting Israeli settlers resulting in no injuries. In addition, according to Palestinian sources, Israeli settlers vandalized water pipes and set fire to a bulldozer in two separate incidents in the villages of Duma and 'Urif (Nablus).

While the 10-month freeze on new residential construction in West Bank settlements (excluding East Jerusalem) announced by the Israeli cabinet in late November 2009 is still in place, the Israeli Defense Ministry announced this week the resumption of construction work in 112 housing units in Betar Illit settlement, located in the Gush Etzion enclave in the Bethlehem Governorate. Also this week, the Israeli District Planning Committee for the Jerusalem district authorized the construction of 1,600 housing units in the settlement of Ramat Shlomo (also known as Rekhesh Shu'fat), located within the Israeli declared boundary of Jerusalem. According to reports in the Israeli media, some 50,000 new housing units in East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the Green Line are in various stages of planning and approval.

## Demolition orders in Area C

In Area C of the West Bank, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) delivered this week demolition and stop work orders against 30 Palestinian-owned structures, of which 24 are residences, due to the lack of building permits in the villages of Fasayil al Wasta, Al Jiftlik (Jericho), Beit Ar Rush Al Fauqa and the Bedouin community of Umm Al Kheir (both in Hebron). Thus far in 2010, the Israeli authorities have demolished 48 Palestinian-owned structures, of which 24 are residences, in Area C of the West Bank.

## Access update

During the reporting period, the Israeli army reduced its presence at the Barrier checkpoint controlling access between 'Azzun 'Atma, a community of 2,000 in the Qalqiliya governorate, and the rest of the West Bank. While checkpoint infrastructure remains intact, checks are now done only on an ad-hoc basis. Previously, the checkpoint was closed daily from 22:00 to 06:00, effectively locking in the entire community during these hours, while visitors and service providers were required to obtain special permits in order to access the village during the opening hours of the checkpoint. As a result, if this change is maintained, it will constitute a significant access improvement for this community. In addition to the main Barrier, 'Azzun 'Atma is surrounded by a secondary Barrier that isolates nine families from the rest of the village; a checkpoint along this secondary Barrier, which closes between 22:00 and 05:00, remains fully staffed.

Also this week, a road connecting a cluster of villages in the western Ramallah area to the city of Ramallah was closed due to the damages it sustained as a result of heavy rains in the area two weeks

ago. Residents of these villages now have to make a long detour in order to reach Ramallah City, their main service and economic centre. This road was paved by the Israeli authorities in 2008 as an alternative to Road 443, the main east-west traffic artery in the Ramallah area, on which Palestinian traffic was banned in 2002. While the Israeli High Court of Justice recently ruled that this ban is largely unlawful and must be lifted, it approved the continued ban on the access of Palestinians to Ramallah via the eastern end of the road.

## Gaza Strip

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### **No direct-conflict casualties; access restrictions to land and sea remain in place**

In Gaza, no Palestinian casualties were recorded this week in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, compared to a weekly average of two fatalities and four injuries since the beginning of 2010.

On four different occasions during the reporting period, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered a few hundred meters into the so called “buffer zone” inside the Gaza Strip and withdrew after conducting land leveling operations. On 9 March in the town of Beit Hanoun, the Palestinian Local Initiative, together with international activists, held a peaceful protest against the access restrictions enforced in this area by the Israeli military. The “buffer zone,” which was originally declared following Israel’s “disengagement” in 2005, was officially expanded from 150m to 300m in May 2009, though access restrictions have been reported up to one kilometer from the border.

Israeli forces have continued to enforce similar restrictions on Palestinian access to fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore. In this context, naval forces opened “warning” fire towards Palestinian fishing boats in two separate incidents this week. In one of these incidents, two fishermen were arrested and their boats confiscated; the fishermen were later released, without their boats. In a separate incident, on 7 March, the Egyptian naval authorities arrested two Palestinian fishermen and confiscated their boats when they entered Egyptian territorial waters. The two fishermen are still in detention. The Palestinian Fishing Syndicate indicates that since the beginning of 2010, Egyptian naval forces have arrested six fishermen and confiscated three boats; four of the fishermen were released without their boats.

Palestinian armed factions have continued to fire a limited number of rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military bases, resulting in no injuries or damage to property during the week; one rocket reportedly exploded prematurely and landed in the Gaza Strip, but did not result in casualties or damage.

### **Tunnels claim new lives; two Palestinian fatalities**

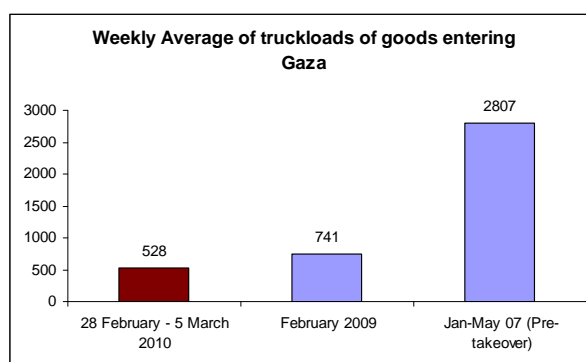
Two Palestinians died in two unconnected incidents involving tunnel collapse and electrocution while working inside tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. In addition, the Egyptian border police also located and destroyed a tunnel during the week; no injuries were reported. Since the end of Israel’s “Cast Lead” offensive, at least 75 people have been killed and 139 others injured in various tunnels-related incidents.

## Electricity crisis continues; five children sustained wounds in an electricity-related incident

Import of industrial fuel for the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) during the week declined further to approximately 1.3 million liters, compared to a weekly average of 1.6 million since December 2009 and 2.2 million litres prior. The GPP electricity production now stands at 30 megawatts (MW), or around 38 percent of its full capacity, leaving the majority of the population in Gaza with power cuts of 8-12 hours per day. The continued deterioration in power supply has increased the reliance of the population on electrical generators run by fuel. In this context, five children of the same family (ages between 5 and 15) sustained different injuries when a generator exploded in their home in Beit Lahia, north of Gaza. A similar incident that resulted in the death of three children from the same family, and the injury of five other members of the family, took place two weeks ago.

## Limited shipments of exports and entry of glass continue

Despite the continued prohibition on exports, this week, eight truckloads of cut flowers exited Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing. Since 10 December 2009, following a period of seven months of no exports, 87 truckloads have exited Gaza including 54 truckloads of cut flowers (over eight million stems) and 33 truckloads of strawberries (52 tonnes). The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) has indicated that 30 million cut flowers are expected to be exported during this season (ending on 20 May 2010).



Glass imports resumed this week after having stopped during the last two weeks. Since 29 December 2009, a total of 112 truckloads carrying over 70,000 sheets of glass were imported. Also this week, two truckloads containing wooden poles and electronic cables for the Gaza Electrical Company were allowed into Gaza.

## Shortages of cooking gas continue

This week, a total of 843 tonnes of cooking gas entered Gaza, which constitutes 60 percent of the weekly needs of gas, as estimated by the Gas Stations Owners Association (GSOA). As a result, the cooking gas rationing scheme introduced in November 2009 remains in place. The GSOA also indicated, at least 2,000 tonnes of cooking gas and an uninterrupted transfer of 200-250 tonnes each day have to be made in order to overcome the ongoing shortfall.