



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

18 - 24 August 2010

LATEST DEVELOPMENT

- Over half a million litres of industrial fuel entered the Gaza Strip on 25 August for the operation of the Gaza power plant. The fuel import allowed for resumption of operations of two turbines, reducing power cuts by almost half (4-6 hours versus 8-12 hours per day). Since the beginning of the year, the plant has been forced to run only one turbine due to fuel shortfalls.

West Bank

Three Palestinians injured by Israeli forces

During the reporting period, Israeli forces injured three Palestinians throughout the West Bank, compared to ten last week. One Israeli soldier was also injured. In 2010, eight Palestinians and two members of Israeli forces have been killed, and 790 Palestinians and 108 Israeli soldiers and policemen have been injured in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the West Bank.

A Palestinian boy (aged 16) was shot and wounded in Al 'Arrub refugee camp (Hebron governorate), when Israeli forces fired rubber-coated metal bullets at Palestinian youth during a stone-throwing incident near the camp. Another Palestinian and an Israeli soldier were injured in a weekly demonstration against the construction of the Barrier in the village of Bi'lin (Ramallah governorate). A number of other weekly protests were held, all of which ended without casualties. These included two protests in the Ramallah governorate (against Barrier construction and the expansion of Hallamish settlement) and another two in the Hebron governorate (one against the permanent closure of the main commercial street in the Old City of Hebron to Palestinian vehicles, the second against denial of access to agricultural land near Karmi Zur settlement).

Israeli forces conducted 58 search and arrest operations inside Palestinian towns, villages, and refugee camps – significantly below the weekly average of such operations since the beginning of 2010 (96). The majority of operations took place in the northern West Bank. Israeli forces physically assaulted and injured a Palestinian during one of these operations in 'Asira al Qibliya village (Nablus governorate).

Israeli settler violence

OCHA documented seven incidents involving Israeli settlers that resulted in either Palestinian injuries or damage to Palestinian property. A total of 179 such incidents have taken place in 2010, compared to 100 incidents reported in the same period last year. A number of incidents involving prevention of access, harassment and intimidation by Israeli settlers were also reported.

Two Palestinians and one Israeli were injured in the context of settler violence. In one incident, an Israeli settler physically assaulted and injured a nine year-old Palestinian boy in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. The boy is a member of one of two families evicted from their homes which was taken over by settlers a year ago in the area. Confrontations subsequently took place between settlers and

Palestinians, following which two Palestinians were arrested by the Israeli police. In another incident, a group of Israelis entered Nabi Samwil village (Jerusalem governorate) and physically assaulted and wounded the guard of the village mosque. Clashes subsequently took place between Palestinian villagers and the intruders, during which one Israeli was wounded.

This week saw five separate settler-related incidents of damage to property. In two of these incidents in the Nablus governorate, Israeli settlers from the Shvut Rachel settlement uprooted 150 olive seedlings belonging to Qusra village; and settlers from an outpost near the same settlement burnt around 70 olive trees belonging to four families from the nearby village of Jalud. The families in the latter community have been denied access to their land since 2002. In a separate incident, reports from the village of Beit Iksa (Jerusalem governorate) indicated that settlers allegedly set fire to approximately 20 dunums of land belonging to the village, burning around 200 olive trees. In one of the remaining incidents, settlers entered the community of Khirbet al Hamam (Tulkarm), setting fire to three dunums of land planted with wheat and burned another ten olive trees belonging to the community. According to the community, the settlers came from Israeli settlements in the Hebron governorate.

According to the village council of 'Awarta (Nablus governorate), Israeli settlers from the nearby Itamar settlement prevented village farmers and international activists from reaching an area of around 10,000 dunums of agricultural land near the settlement. The land constitutes the livelihood of the vast majority of the population of 'Awarta, which has a total population estimated at 5,600. Also this week, sewage from the Bitar Illit settlement (Bethlehem governorate) flooded four dunums of land belonging to Nahalin village. Sewage flooding has been taking place for several years in the area, twice a month on average.

Building demolished by their owners in East Jerusalem; no demolitions in Area C

During the reporting period, two families (15 members) were forced to demolish their building, which consisted of two housing units in the village of Sur Bahir in East Jerusalem, following an Israeli court decision to demolish the building on grounds that it lacked a permit. In 2010, Israeli authorities demolished 24 Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem, displacing 25 people; another six structures have been demolished by their owners, displacing 22 people.

For the second consecutive week, there were no records of demolitions by Israeli authorities in Area C of the West Bank. Israeli authorities have informed OCHA that no demolitions will be carried out during the month of Ramadan. Since the beginning of 2010, 247 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished in Area C (more than half of which were demolished in July), displacing 282 people. In comparison, 183 structures were demolished in the same period in 2009 and 319 persons displaced.

Age restrictions limit Palestinian access to Ramadan Friday prayers in East Jerusalem

Access to East Jerusalem for Palestinians holding West Bank IDs on the second Friday of Ramadan (20 August) was reported as more orderly than in previous years. According to Israeli authorities, approximately 77,000 Palestinians entered Jerusalem through four authorized checkpoints (Qalandiya, Gilo, Shu'fat Camp and Az Zeitoun) along the Barrier. Access continues to be permitted only to men over 50 and women over 45 years of age, who are allowed to pass without permits. Men between the ages of 45 and 50, and women between 30 and 45 are eligible for special permits. These age restrictions deny access to Friday prayers for the majority of the Palestinian population including

West Bankers not included in these age groups (or denied a permit), as well as the large majority of the population of the Gaza Strip. Israeli Security Forces and flying checkpoints were also deployed around the Old City for the duration of Friday prayers. The Directorate of Jerusalem Waqf indicated that around 100,000 people were able to access the Al Aqsa mosque compound in the Old City.

Thousands of students affected by a shortage of classrooms

As the new 2010-2011 school year approaches, thousands of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem remain affected by a significant shortage of adequate educational facilities. According to a joint report released by two Israeli NGOs (the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and Ir Amim), at least 40,000 Palestinian children do not enjoy their right to free education and are forced to pay large sums in fees to attend various private or semi-private schools. This situation results from a chronic shortage of classrooms in the public school system run by the Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Education. According to the report, East Jerusalem is in need of an estimated 1,000 extra classrooms to meet existent demand. The report also estimates that over 5,000 Palestinian school-age children are not registered in any school.

Gaza Strip

Restrictions on access to sea and land continue; one fisherman injured

During the reporting period, Israeli forces injured one Palestinian inside the Gaza Strip. In 2010, 41 Palestinians (including 14 civilians), three Israeli soldiers and one foreign national have been killed in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. Another 178 Palestinians (including 154 civilians) and eight Israeli soldiers have been injured.

In the context of Israeli-imposed restrictions on access to fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from shore, the Israeli navy opened fire towards Palestinian boats, injuring one fisherman. Since the beginning of 2010, two fishermen have been killed and five others have been injured in similar contexts. In another two incidents, Israeli naval forces opened fire towards Palestinian fishing boats; no injuries were reported.

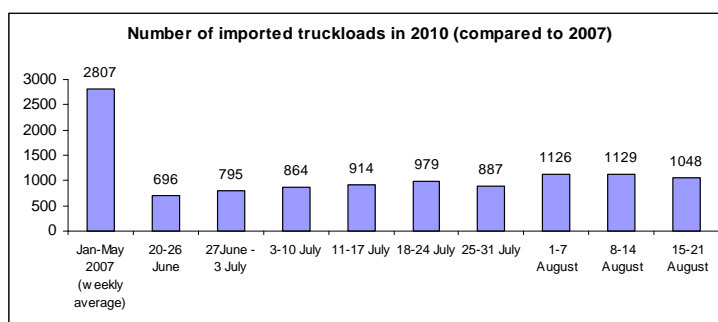
Similar restrictions continue to apply on Palestinian access to areas up to 1,000-1,500 meters from the fence dividing the Gaza Strip and Israel. Access-restricted areas are not clearly marked and in one fence-related incident, Israeli forces opened “warning” fire towards Palestinian farmers working their land, forcing them to leave the area. On a number of different occasions this week, Israeli forces launched incursions a few hundred metres into the Gaza Strip and withdrew after levelling land.

Palestinian armed factions launched a number of rudimentary rockets and mortar shells towards southern Israel, including at military bases located along the border; no Israeli injuries or damage were reported.

Gaza crossings: the impact of the recently initiated “easing” remains limited

Despite the increase of imports into the Gaza Strip in recent weeks, ongoing restrictions on the entry of construction materials, as well as on exports, continued to impede major reconstruction and development. A total of 1,048 truckloads of goods entered Gaza this week constituting only 37 percent of the weekly average of truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007, prior to the imposition of the blockade. The majority of goods entering were food items (63 percent).

The increase in the volume of imports became possible after Israeli authorities expanded the Kerem Shalom crossing, allowing for the number of truckloads that enter the crossing daily to increase from 100 to 250. While some raw materials and machinery used for local production also entered, local production remains limited due the ban on the export of any locally-manufactured goods and the low purchasing power of the population.



Fuel shortage and electricity crisis continue

There was a slight decline in the amount of industrial fuel entering the Gaza Strip for the operation of the Gaza power plant this week compared to last (0.95 vs. 1.12 million litres). This week's fuel quantities constituted only 30 percent of the quantity needed to operate the plant at full capacity (80 megawatts (MW)). As a result, the majority of the population in the Gaza Strip continues to experience power cuts of between 8 and 12 hours a day. It is worth indicating that even with the full operation of the power plant, which would bring the electricity supply in Gaza to around 220 MW (120 MW and 17 MW purchased from Israel and Egypt respectively, and 80 MW produced by the Gaza power plant), an electricity deficit of 25 percent would still exist. Demand for electricity this summer ranges between 280 and 300 MW.

Power cuts affect daily life throughout the Gaza Strip, including the provision of essential services including water supply, sewage treatment and removal, and the functioning of health services, thus affecting medical treatment. Public institutions providing these services continue to rely extensively on backup generators and other alternative devices, which are extremely vulnerable due to inconsistent spare parts supply.

In the peak of summer, access to running water for Gaza Strip households is severely limited due to power shortages. According to the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, 40 percent of households in the Gaza Strip now have access to running water for only six to eight hours per week; 30 percent receive water for only six hours once every five days; and 30 percent obtain water once every two days. The most affected population group is residents of high-rise buildings, as these require additional (electric) pumps to get the water onto their roofs where residential water supplies are stored. Water quality is also poor, forcing the population to rely on expensive tankered water for drinking.