



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

25 - 31 August 2010

LATEST DEVELOPMENT

1 September: Two Israeli settlers were shot and injured while driving in the Ramallah governorate, allegedly by Palestinian gunmen.

In the aftermath of the killing of four Israeli settlers (see below), settlers from the Kiryat Arba' settlement (Hebron) set fire to the vicinity of a Palestinian house, located east of Hebron city. The Palestinian residents barricaded themselves inside the house until Israeli forces intervened and removed the settlers.

West Bank

Settler related incidents: four settlers shot and killed

On 31 August, Palestinian gunmen shot and killed four Israeli settlers, including two women, who were driving on Road 60 near Bani Na'im village in the Hebron governorate. The settlers came from the settlements of Kiryat Arba' and Beit Haggay. The armed wing of Hamas movement (Izz ad-Din al Qassam) claimed responsibility for the attack. This is the first fatal shooting incident against settlers since 24 December 2009, when one settler was shot and killed while driving on a West Bank road in the Tulkarm governorate.

In response to this incident, Israeli forces took a number of immediate steps, affecting Palestinian movement in the Hebron area. The army sealed the entrances to the cities of Hebron and Halhul and to Al Fawar refugee camp for several hours, by deploying flying checkpoints at the entrances and along the roads leading to these areas. The movement of an estimated population of 192,000 was affected. In addition, Israeli forces imposed a curfew on Bani Na'im town (over 21,800 residents) for eight hours, during which they searched several houses and the hospital inside the town. Also, Israeli forces raided the adjacent town of Sa'ir and clashed with worshippers leaving a mosque; no injuries or damage were reported.

Also during the reporting period, OCHA documented four incidents involving Israeli settlers that resulted either in Palestinian injuries or damage to Palestinian property. Overall, a total of 183 such incidents have taken place in 2010, compared to 103 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.

In one incident, a group of Israeli settlers physically assaulted and injured a nine year-old Palestinian boy in the vicinity of the Al Aqsa Mosque compound (East Jerusalem). Also in East Jerusalem, Palestinian residents clashed with Israeli settlers in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem following settlers' attempt to break into the yard of a mosque in the area. The confrontations later escalated and involved Israeli forces, who intervened, firing sound grenades to disperse the two parties. While no injuries occurred, a number of cars belonging to settlers and Palestinians were either burnt or sustained damage. Israeli forces conducted search and arrest operations in the neighbourhood following the incident, one of

which escalated into new clashes with Palestinian residents. No injuries were reported; however, Israeli forces arrested seven Palestinians, including a woman.

In two separate incidents involving damage to property in the Nablus governorate, Israeli settlers from nearby settlements uprooted 17 olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers from Burin village; and a group of settlers vandalized a Palestinian-plated car near Jit junction. Also this week, a group of settlers from the Shavei Shomron settlement delayed some Palestinians near a spring in the village of Sabastiya (Nablus governorate) for two hours. The Palestinians were later released by Israeli forces. Also, following the fatal shooting incident (31 August), some settlers from the Kiryat Arba' settlement attempted to enter a Palestinian house in the nearby Baqa'a area, but were stopped by Israeli forces.

13 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces; clashes erupted in East Jerusalem

During the reporting period, Israeli forces injured 13 Palestinians throughout the West Bank, compared to three last week. All injuries occurred during weekly demonstrations. In 2010, eight Palestinians and two members of Israeli security forces have been killed, and 803 Palestinians and 108 Israeli soldiers and policemen have been injured in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the West Bank.

Thirteen (13) Palestinians, including seven boys, were injured in four separate weekly demonstrations, which took place against the construction of the Barrier in the villages of Bil'in (Ramallah governorate) and Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem governorate); against the expansion of Hallamish settlement (Ramallah governorate); and against the continued Israeli settler violence in 'Iraq Burin village (Nablus governorate). Most of the injuries occurred due to tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment. An international activist was also wounded in one of the protests.

Overall, Israeli forces conducted 79 search and arrest operations inside Palestinian towns, villages, and refugee camps compared to a weekly average of 95 such operations since the beginning of 2010. The majority of operations took place in the southern West Bank. In one incident in the Hebron governorate, Israeli forces raided Al 'Arrub refugee camp at midnight, during which they handcuffed and blindfolded three Palestinian boys (aged between 14 and 16); the children are still detained.

No demolitions in Area C; issuance of eviction and stop work orders continues

For the third consecutive week, there were no records of demolitions by Israeli authorities in Area C of the West Bank. The Israeli authorities, however, delivered eviction and stop work orders against five residential tents, which affected Bedouin families comprising at least 50 people (including 39 children) in the vicinity of Duma village (Nablus governorate). The orders were issued on the grounds that the tents are located in an area defined by the Israeli authorities as closed for military purposes.

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 continue to limit Palestinian access to Ramadan Friday prayers in East Jerusalem

Access to East Jerusalem on the third Friday of the month of Ramadan (27 August) for Palestinians holding West Bank IDs was reported to be more orderly than in previous years. According to Israeli authorities, approximately 117,000 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 West Bank population not included in these age groups (or denied a permit), as well as almost the entire population of the Gaza Strip. Israeli forces and flying checkpoints were also deployed around the Old City for the duration of Friday prayers. The Directorate of the Jerusalem Waqf indicated that around 200,000 people were able to access the Al Aqsa mosque compound in the Old City.

Gaza Strip

Incidents along the Gaza fence continue; two Palestinians injured

During the reporting period, Israeli forces injured two Palestinians 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 180 Palestinians (including 156 civilians) and eight Israeli soldiers have been injured.

In one incident, two Palestinians were injured when Israeli forces opened 'warning' fire towards Palestinian civilians collecting scrap metal and rubble near the fence. Since the beginning of the year, 35 Palestinians have been injured in similar contexts. Also, 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. Such incidents continue to take place in the context of Israeli-imposed restrictions on access between 500 and 1,000-1,500 meters from the fence dividing the Gaza Strip and Israel. Restrictions are enforced by opening 'warning' fire towards people approaching or present in these areas.

Similar restrictions continue to apply to Palestinian access to fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore. In one incident, the Israeli navy fired 'warning' shots towards Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them ashore.

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.

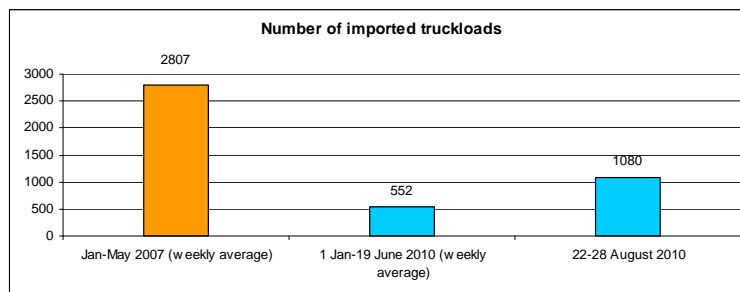
Tunnels continue to claim lives; three Palestinians killed

Three Palestinian workers were killed in two separate incidents when tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border collapsed while they were inside. Since the beginning of 2010, 36 Palestinians, including two children, have been killed and another 62 Palestinians have been injured in tunnel-related incidents, including air strikes, tunnel collapses, electrocution and the explosion of gas cylinders. Also, the Egyptian authorities located and detonated a number of tunnels; no injuries were reported.

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

Although recent weeks have witnessed an increase in the volume of imports into Gaza, major private reconstruction and the revival of the private sector continue to be limited by Israeli restrictions on both construction materials and exports.

A total of 1,080 truckloads of goods entered the Gaza Strip this week, constituting only 38 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 (66 percent).



The latest increase in the volume of imports occurred 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 industries also entered, local production remains limited due to the ban on the export of locally-manufactured goods and the low purchasing power of the population.

Despite some increase in electricity supply, electricity crisis continues

This week, an increased amount of industrial fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant entered Gaza, compared to last week (1.58 vs. 0.95 million litres). This increase took place after the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Ramallah paid for an additional amount of fuel, after the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) transferred the revenues collected from electricity bills. The PA has taken over the purchase of fuel since December 2009. The increase in fuel imports allowed for the resumption of two turbines at the plant; only one turbine has been operational since the beginning of the year, due to fuel shortfalls. As a result, power cuts were reduced by almost half (6-8 hours vs. 8-12 hours per day) throughout the Gaza Strip.

However, this week's fuel imports constituted only 50 percent of the estimated quantity needed to operate the plant at full capacity (80 megawatts (MW)). The operation of the power plant at full capacity would bring the total provision of electricity in Gaza to about 220 MW (120 MW and 17 MW purchased from Israel and Egypt respectively, and 80 MW produced by the Gaza power plant). This situation creates an electricity deficit of around 25 percent, as demand for electricity this summer ranges between 280 and 300 MW. The Israeli authorities have yet to approve the installation of a new power line, planned back in 2005, which could supply an additional amount of 30 to 60 MW of electricity per day.

The electricity crisis throughout the Gaza Strip continues to affect daily life, including the provision of essential services, such as 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 the irregular supply of spare parts. In addition, many Gaza households use portable generators which are prone to accidents; according to local sources, since the beginning of 2010 about 30 people have been killed and about 40 injured in generator related accidents.