



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

13 - 19 October 2010

LATEST DEVELOPMENT

20 October:

- An explosion occurred inside a Hamas security compound in the Rafah area, reportedly resulting in the injury of 29 civilians, including 18 children (of whom 15 students injured inside their schools). More than 30 houses, four schools and one health centre, located in the vicinity of the compound, are reported to have sustained damage. The reasons for the explosion remain unclear.
- Israeli settlers allegedly set fire to a storage room at the Girls' Secondary School in the village of As Sawiya (Nablus), damaging the room and its content (furniture and equipment).

West Bank

23 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces; violence in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem continues

During the week, Israeli forces injured 23 Palestinian civilians, the large majority of them in the context of violent clashes in East Jerusalem. The number of Palestinians injured by Israeli forces since the beginning of 2010 is nearly 36 percent above the figure recorded for the parallel period in 2009 (979 compared to 720). Some 53 percent of Palestinian injuries in 2010 have occurred in East Jerusalem.

On 15 October, Palestinians clashed with the Israeli Police in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem, resulting in the injury of 15 Palestinians, including one child, the majority of them by rubber coated-metal bullets. According to local sources, the confrontations took place after Israeli forces fired tear gas canisters at worshippers performing Friday prayers in the area; many cases of tear gas inhalation were reported. In the course of the clashes, Israeli settlers began throwing stones at people and their residences, causing damage to two houses. In a related incident, Israeli border police officers physically assaulted and injured a man at a flying checkpoint erected at one of Silwan's entrances. The man was transporting his son, who had inhaled pepper gas sprayed by the policemen, to hospital.

Violence in Silwan has escalated in recent weeks in the context of increasing friction between Palestinian residents on one side, and Israeli settlers, their armed private guards (hired by the Israeli Ministry of Housing) and the Israeli Police on the other. The Municipality's intention to demolish a section of the neighborhood (Al Bustan) and displace its Palestinian residents in order to build a recreation park (officially announced in March 2010) has also contributed to the rising tensions.

Five other Palestinians were injured this week by Israeli forces in incidents throughout the West Bank, including one during a checkpoint incident in the Jericho area, one while working on his land in the Hebron area and three in a weekly demonstration against the expansion of a settlement in the Ramallah area. One Israeli soldier was injured in the latter.

Overall this week, Israeli forces conducted some 90 search and arrest operations throughout the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), around the weekly average of such operations in 2010 (93). In one of these operations in Ad Dhahiriya town (Hebron governorate), Israeli forces demolished a green house.

Settler-related incidents in the context of the olive harvest continue

This week, OCHA recorded 11 incidents, allegedly perpetrated by Israeli settlers, that resulted in either Palestinian injuries (seven Palestinians, including two children, injured), or damage to property. While the total number of incidents declined compared to the previous week (19 incidents), it is more than double the weekly average of incidents since the beginning of the 2010 (5). Thus far in 2010, one Palestinian child has been killed and 89 other Palestinians have been injured in the context of settler-related incidents.

Seven (7) of the 11 incidents recorded this week were related to the olive harvest, which officially began last week. According to the Israeli media, an internal document by the Israeli army has characterized the current olive harvest as one of the most violent in the past several years. This is despite the deployment of Israeli forces in the vicinity of some Israeli settlements at specific periods of time, during which, farmers can pick their olives under the protection of the Israeli army.

In one of this week's incidents, Israeli settlers physically assaulted Palestinians who were harvesting their olive trees in the village of Mikhmas (Ramallah), injuring three of them. In a separate incident in the same area, settlers attacked and injured another Palestinian picking olives and set fire to his field, causing damage to part of the land.

Another seven incidents resulted in damage to trees and agricultural property. In one of the gravest such incidents, Israeli settlers from the settlement outpost of Havat Gil'ad (Nablus) allegedly set fire to agricultural land belonging to the nearby village of Tel, damaging 2,000 olive trees. In four other incidents, settlers burnt and uprooted more than 300 olive trees in the villages of Al Lubban Asharqiya (Nablus), Husan (Bethlehem), and Mas-ha (Salfit); and stole from the villagers' olive trees in Kafr Qaddum village (Qalqiliya). Additional incidents related to the olive harvest involving prevention of access to land (not included in the above number of incidents) were reported during the week.

Also this week, in addition to the Silwan clashes reported in the previous section, Israeli settlers clashed with Palestinian youth in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. During the confrontations, settlers sprayed pepper gas and threw stones, injuring three Palestinians, including two children (aged 9 and 14). In the same area, the Jerusalem municipality dismantled a tent, erected to protest a recent decision by the Israeli Supreme Court establishing Israeli settler organizations' ownership claims over a section of the neighbourhood (Kubaniyat Im Haroun).

Demolitions and wave of stop-work orders continue

In addition to the demolition in Hebron (reported above), this week, the Israeli authorities demolished four Palestinian-owned structures in Area C of the West Bank. The structures included three residential shacks, an animal shelter and a fence in the Bedouin community of Arab Rashayida in the Bethlehem area. Regarding the latter, the Israeli authorities claimed that the community's residents are living in a "closed military zone". The demolitions resulted in the displacement of six families, comprising 36 people, including 23 children.

This week, in East Jerusalem, a Palestinian was forced to demolish his house, which was under construction in the village of Sur Bahir, after receiving a demolition order on the grounds that it lacked a building permit. Since January 2010, in total, 300 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; these have taken place mainly in Area C. This number is nearly the same as in the equivalent period in 2009, though the number of people displaced in 2010 remains lower (402 compared to 520).

Also in Area C this week, the Israeli authorities delivered stop work orders against 13 structures due to the lack building permits. The structures, located in the Qalqiliya and Tulkarm governorates, include eight residential structures (five under-construction), a stone cutting factory, a playground, a workshop and two animal shelters. In addition, the Israeli authorities verbally informed 13 families in the Bedouin community of Khirbet Ar Ras Al Ahmar (Tubas governorate) to evacuate the area on the grounds that it is a “closed military zone.” The families were given 24 hours to evacuate; no eviction had taken place as of the end of the reporting period. In July 2010, 12 structures were demolished in the community.

Gaza Strip

Air strikes and incidents along Gaza’s fence continue; two killed and two others injured

During the reporting period, Israeli forces killed two Palestinian militants and injured two civilians (both children); no Israeli casualties were reported. In 2010, 54 Palestinians (including 22 civilians) have been killed and another 210 Palestinians (including 185 civilians) have been injured in conflict-related incidents in the Gaza Strip.

On 17 October, Israeli air strikes targeted and killed two Palestinian members of an armed group, who were present near a tile factory on the outskirts of Jabaliya City in northern Gaza. The building also sustained damage.

Incidents along the fence dividing Israel and Gaza continue in the context of access restrictions to areas up to 1,500 metres from the fence (17 percent of Gaza’s territory). In two separate incidents (13 and 14 October), Israeli forces opened fire towards Palestinians collecting scrap metal, north of Beit Lahiya, injuring two children (16 and 17 year old). Also, in one incident, Israeli forces opened ‘warning’ fire at farmers working on their land near the fence, forcing them to leave the area. In addition, Israeli troops launched incursions into Gaza on a number of occasions, and withdrew after leveling land.

Palestinian armed factions launched a number of rockets and mortar shells towards southern Israel, most of which dropped short inside the Gaza territory. No injuries or damage were reported. The Gaza authorities reportedly arrested a few members of armed groups in relation to these incidents.

Baby girl dies after her permit application was delayed

A two year-old Palestinian baby girl from Gaza, who suffered from leukemia, died this week after her permit application was not approved by the time she was supposed to receive treatment at an Israeli hospital, to which she had been referred. Following the intervention of the Israeli NGO, Physicians for Human Rights, the Israeli authorities issued the requested permits four days after the original appointment, however, due to a severe deterioration in her situation, the girl could not be transferred to the Israeli hospital; she died two days later.

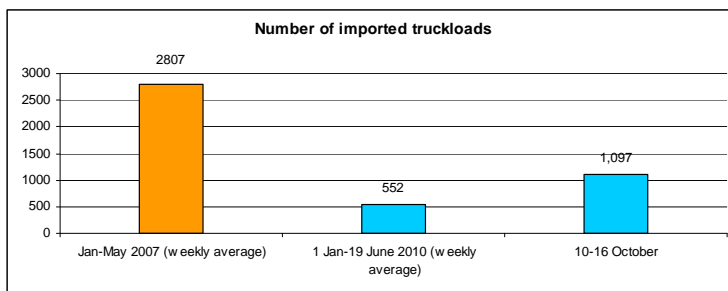
About 900 patients in need of specialized treatment unavailable in Gaza are referred every month to hospitals in Israel, the West Bank (including east Jerusalem) or Jordan, and require exit permits from the Israeli authorities. While the rate of approval has increased in recent months (currently about 85 percent), a worrying development is the increased proportion of applications that do not receive an answer by the time of the scheduled appointment. These “delayed” applications increased from seven percent in August 2010 to 13 percent in September.

Little progress in implementation of UN building project

Import of most construction materials into the Gaza Strip continues to be banned, except for projects under international supervision, which were approved by the Israeli authorities.

Since the easing of the blockade, announced on 20 June, the Israeli authorities have approved 17 UNRWA building projects (mainly schools and clinics), representing only three percent of the total building plan submitted by the agency. Despite approval, actual entry of materials for these projects has been significantly delayed, partially due to capacity constraints of the conveyor belt functioning at the Karni crossing, which is used for the transfer of aggregates and wheat. This week, only ten of 124 truckloads of materials requested by UNRWA for these projects were able to enter Gaza; overall, since the approval in principle of the 17 projects less than one percent of the total number of truckloads needed have been received.

This week (10-16 October), a total of 1,097 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, nearly the same as last week, and less than 40 percent of the weekly average of truckloads that entered Gaza in the first five months of 2007, before the imposition of the blockade. Food items continue to make up the majority of goods entering Gaza (54 percent), which before the blockade constituted less than 20 percent of total imports.



Shortage of fuel continues; power production remains below demand

Imports of industrial fuel for the operation of the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) slightly declined this week compared to the previous week (1.93 vs. 2.2 million litres). This week’s amount represents around 60 percent of the estimated weekly needs of fuel needed to operate the plant at its full capacity (80 MW). The majority of the population in Gaza continues to experience electricity outages of 4-6 hours per day. Despite ongoing shortages, fuel supply to the GPP significantly increased since early September, following an agreement reached between Gaza and Ramallah authorities, allowing an increase in the collection of electricity bills.