



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

26 January – 1 February 2011

West Bank

Escalation in settler violence: Two Palestinians killed and five injured

A significant escalation in Israeli-settler violence took place this week, during which OCHA documented nine settler-related incidents that led to Palestinian casualties or damage to their property, including the killing of two Palestinian youths by Israeli settlers. While Israeli settler attacks occur on an almost daily basis, incidents resulting in the loss of Palestinian life have been relatively rare until recently, with only one such killing in the past two years.

Both of this week's killings involved a quarrel between armed Israeli settlers and unarmed Palestinians herding or farming their land in the vicinity of a settlement, following which, the settlers shot and killed the Palestinians. The first incident occurred on 27 January near the Bracha settlement and resulted in the killing of a 18-year-old man from the nearby 'Iraq Burin village (Nablus). The second incident took place the following day in the vicinity of the Bat 'Ayin settlement, and led to the killing of a 17-year-old boy as well as the injury of another Palestinian man from the nearby village of Safa (Hebron).

Also this week, in three separate incidents, settlers physically assaulted and injured four Palestinians, including one child and a woman, in the areas of Ein al Hilwa (Tubas governorate) and Wadi Jihash (Hebron governorate) and in Al Fasayil village (Jericho governorate). In the former incident, the settlers also stole a number of cows.

Incidents of illegal take-over of Palestinian land located near the settlements, by means of leveling and/or planting it, continued. In the Hebron governorate, Israeli settlers uprooted 11 ancient olive trees and grapevines near Beit Ummar village in one incident, and planted trees on land belonging to Al 'Uddeisa village, in another. In the latter, Israeli forces came to the site, uprooted the trees and ordered the settlers to leave the area. In the Jenin governorate, settlers from Mevo Dotan settlement leveled land belonging to Ya'bad village. In another incident, settlers damaged the fence of a house in the village of 'Einabus (Nablus governorate), set fire to a car inside its yard and wrote graffiti on the walls of the house.

At least 26 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces

This week, Israeli forces injured at least 26 Palestinians during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Two Israeli border policemen were also injured this week. Thus far in 2011, five Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank and 118 have been injured, compared to no fatalities and 73 injured in the same period of 2010.

Six Palestinians, including two children (aged 10 and 11) and three women (one pregnant), were injured after being hit by a tear gas canister or after inhaling gas in two separate clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian residents of Silwan village in East Jerusalem. A house also sustained damage. This week, on 31 January, an Israeli court released a member of the Al Bustan Popular Committee, who had been arrested last week during a search and arrest operation in the area, on condition that he not return to Silwan, where he and his family reside, for a one-month period. The man was also fined 3,000 NIS and will be fined an additional 10,000 NIS if he violates the conditions of his release.

Also in East Jerusalem, one Israeli border policeman was injured by a stone and two Palestinians were injured while trying to throw a Molotov cocktail at Israeli forces during a clash between Israeli forces and residents of Ras Al 'Amud. Another border policeman was injured in a separate clash that took place near Qalandiya checkpoint, controlling access into East Jerusalem.

Also this week, at least 20 Palestinians were injured when Israeli forces clashed with Palestinians at the entrance of Beit Ummar village in the Hebron governorate during the funeral of the Palestinian youth shot by Israeli settlers this week (see previous section).

Overall this week, Israeli forces conducted a total of 52 search and arrest operations throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, less than half those recorded last week (107) and well below the weekly average during 2010 (92).

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator condemns demolitions

This week, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Maxwell Gaylard, issued a statement condemning the demolition of water cisterns by the Israeli authorities in Area C of the West Bank. In 2010, 27 such cisterns and other rain water collection systems were demolished. Mr. Maxwell indicated that the removal of such infrastructure forces the affected communities, where water is already scarce and drought is a constant threat, to become increasingly dependant on expensive and unsustainable water-tankering.

No demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures were recorded this week in Area C or East Jerusalem. Since the beginning of 2011, 28 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, displacing 70 people, including 40 children.

Gaza Strip

One Palestinian injured; relative calm continued

This week, the frequency of rocket launching towards Israel by Palestinian armed factions declined significantly and there were no Israeli air strikes reported for the second week in a row. One Palestinian was injured by Israeli forces. Since the beginning of 2011, three Palestinians, (two civilians) and one Israeli soldier have been killed in the context of Israeli-Palestinian violence in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel, and 12 Palestinians (all civilians) and four members of the Israeli forces have been injured.

On 30 January, Israeli forces injured a Palestinian worker collecting rubble and scrap metal in the vicinity of the fence dividing the Gaza Strip from Israel, northwest of Beit Lahiya, bringing the total number of Palestinian workers injured near the fence since the beginning of 2011 to five. In 2010, 52 Palestinians (including 12 civilians) were killed and 189 others injured in the access restricted areas near the fence. Such incidents occur in the context of Israeli restrictions on access to areas up to 1,500 metres from the fence (17 percent of Gaza Strip's territory). Also, on one occasion, Israeli forces launched an incursion with bulldozers and tanks a few hundred meters into Gaza and withdrew after conducting land leveling.

Access restrictions continue to be enforced on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore; in one incident, Israeli naval forces opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats, resulting in no injuries or damage to the boats.

Events in Egypt affect movement of goods and people to and from Gaza

Tunnel activity declined significantly

Due to the ongoing events and tension in Egypt, activity through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border came to an almost complete halt as a result of the inability to transfer goods and fuel through the Sinai to the Egyptian side of the border area, near the tunnels. Tunnel activity had already declined after the Israeli decision to ease the blockade on 20 June 2010, however, it remains a vital channel for the transfer of items, primarily building materials and fuel, that are either restricted through the official crossings with Israel or can be purchased at a lower price through the tunnels.

Until 29 January, some 100,000 litres of petrol and 600,000 litres of diesel per day were reportedly transferred to Gaza through the tunnels. As a result of reduced quantities of fuel entering through the tunnels, long queues were reported this week at gas stations. While prices of diesel and petrol have not increased, a rationing system was introduced by which each person can only purchase 20 liters at a time. Nevertheless, if diesel and petrol fuel stocks deplete, Gazans will be compelled to use fuel purchased from Israel, which is three times more expensive than Egyptian fuel. Fuel shortages could also affect services inside Gaza, including the provision of electricity, water, waste-water treatment and health.

Rafah Crossing closed

The Rafah Crossing, controlled by the Egyptian authorities, did not open as scheduled on 30 January and has remained closed since. The crossing was partially re-opened in early June 2010 (operating five days a week since December 2010), after its closure three years ago, following the Hamas takeover of Gaza. Access is limited to authorized humanitarian cases, including patients, students studying in universities abroad, and people with foreign passports. Since the closure of Rafah on 30 January, no patients have left the Gaza Strip through the crossing; on average, 500 patients exit per month, mainly those with chronic diseases, but also those who have had permits refused by the Israeli authorities to leave through Erez. Since June 2010, a daily average of around 360 people have crossed through Rafah in each direction, compared to 650 people who crossed each way in the first five months of 2006, before the partial closure of the crossing.

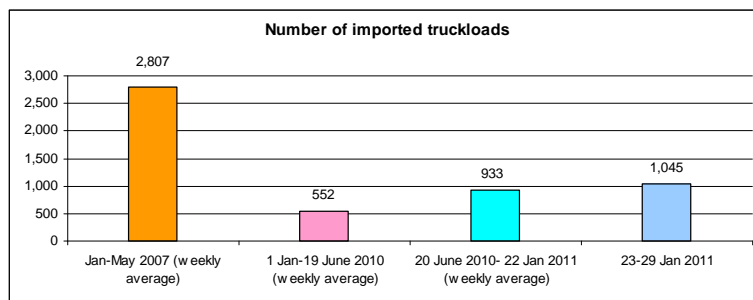
Crossings with Israel: wheat reserves increase at the expense of gravel

Increased quantities of wheat continued to enter Gaza. As of 1 February, wheat stocks inside Gaza are sufficient to last 15 days, the same as the previous week, but half the amount normally held in reserve by Gazan mills.

Because the conveyor belt at Karni Crossing, which operates only two days a week, is used for the transfer of both grain and aggregates, this week's increase in the entry of wheat came at the expense of the transfer of gravel. As a result, UNRWA had to suspend another of its 26 approved building projects due to the lack of gravel, which has not entered for the past two weeks. This brings the total number of suspended projects to three. Entry of gravel is restricted to a number of approved humanitarian projects implemented by international organizations.

This week, a few shipments of strawberries and cut flowers, along with one truckload of sweet peppers were allowed out of Gaza. Since the beginning of the season, from 28 November until 29 January, a total of 199 truckloads of strawberries (328 tonnes; 175 truckloads), cut flowers (3.6 millions stems; 22 truckloads), and sweet peppers (4.3 tonnes; 2 truckloads) have been allowed to

leave Gaza. The 8 December 2010 announcement by the Israeli authorities to allow additional types of exports (e.g. agricultural products, furniture and textiles) from Gaza remains largely unimplemented. Since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007, only 459 truckloads of exports (strawberries and cut flowers) have left Gaza, compared to a monthly average of 1,086 in the first five months of 2007.



Daily power cuts remain up to 6 hours; cooking gas shortages continue

For the third consecutive week (since 9 January 2011), no industrial fuel deliveries were requested by the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) Authority from Israel. Industrial fuel has been replaced by diesel fuel (normally used for vehicles), brought from Egypt through the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, and purchased at a lower price than industrial fuel (See current concerns regarding fuel supply from Egypt in above section). In the last six weeks, the GPP has continued operating two turbines, producing a total of 60 megawatts (MW) of electricity, up from 30 MW produced in previous months. The total provision of electricity throughout the Gaza Strip is less than 200 MW (including electricity purchased from Israel (120 MW) and Egypt (17 MW)); i.e. about 30 percent below the estimated needs. Since mid-December 2010, the majority of the population continues to experience power cuts of 4 to 6 hours a day, down from 8 to 12 hours per day during past months.

This week, there was a significant increase in the amount of cooking gas that entered Gaza (888 tonnes), compared to last week (421 tonnes). However, these quantities of gas are estimated at three-quarters of the required weekly amount of 1,200 tonnes. According to the Gas Stations Owners Association, due to increased winter demand, a rationing scheme introduced in November 2008 remains in place, with less than 10 out of 28 cooking gas stations partially operated at any given time and priority given to hospitals and bakeries. The primary reason for cooking gas shortages remains the limited capacity of the Kerem Shalom crossing, which lacks a storage facility on the Palestinian side; such a facility existed at the Nahal Oz crossing, which was closed by the Israeli authorities at the beginning of 2010.