



## OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

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## Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

18 - 24 February 2009

### West Bank

#### Military activities affecting civilians

There were relatively few incidents this week which resulted in casualties. A total of nine Palestinians, including two children, were injured by Israeli military forces. In one incident on 19 February, a 99-year-old man from Tamoun village (Tubas) was attacked and bitten by an Israeli military dog, and was subsequently transported to Rafidia Hospital for treatment. Two additional Palestinians were injured in Israeli settler violence.

During the week, Israeli security forces conducted 116 search operations throughout the West Bank, slightly higher than the weekly 2008 average of 101 searches, and arrested 84 Palestinians (same as the 2008 weekly average). The number of flying checkpoints reported during the week (87) was higher than the 2008 weekly average of 75 flying checkpoints/week.

**Anti-Barrier demonstrations:** Weekly anti-barrier demonstrations continued in the villages of Bil'in, Ni'lin (Ramallah), Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem) and Jayyus (Qalqiliya). In Ni'lin village, a 16-year-old Palestinian boy sustained injury from rubber -coated metal bullets shot by Israeli forces. Cases of tear-gas inhalation were also reported. In recent weeks, there have been numerous reports of Israeli military arrests and general harassment of residents of villages where the anti-Barrier demonstrations take place. This week in Jayyus village, for the first time, demonstrators were masked to prevent Israeli military forces from identifying the demonstrators.

#### West Bank demolition orders and property requisitions

#### *Entire communities at risk of displacement in East Jerusalem and in Nablus district*

On 17 February 2009, the Jerusalem Regional Committee for Planning and Construction rejected an alternative planning scheme submitted by the residents of the Bustan area of Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. The Committee's decision paves the way for the execution of pending demolition orders issued in 2005 against all of the 88 houses located in this area, due to the lack of building permits. The demolition of these houses will result in the displacement of an estimated 1,300 - 1,500 Palestinians.

In the Nablus district, six families living in Khirbet Tana, a community in Area C east of Beit Furik, received demolition orders against their dwellings, which were built without the required building permits issued by the Israeli authorities. The rest of the structures in the village (approximately 25) have similar demolition orders pending. Khirbet Tana is located in an area declared by the Israeli military as a "closed military zone". The issuance of the recent orders follows a decision by the Israeli High Court of Justice to reject a petition submitted by the residents, requesting the preparation of an adequate planning scheme for the village. If implemented the entire community (about 180 people) will be displaced. This community was already entirely displaced in July 2005 and later on rebuilt with the support of an Israeli NGO.

**Tree Uprooting in Bethlehem district** On 20 February the Israeli army uprooted 70 olive seedlings in a plot of land located in the village of Jaba'a in the Bethlehem district. The previous day, Palestinians and international activists had been prevented by

the army from planting additional olive seedlings. These incidents occurred against the background of a years-long dispute between a Palestinian claiming ownership of the land and the Israeli authorities, who in 1994 declared this piece of land “state land”. During the previous reporting period, an Israeli military appeal committee rejected eight of nine appeals submitted by Palestinians against the declaration of approximately 1,700 dunums belonging to Artas village, also in Bethlehem district, as “state land”. This land, which was added in the past to the municipal area of the Efrat settlement, has been reportedly allocated by the Israeli authorities for the expansion of the settlement by 2,500 additional housing units.

#### **Access and closures**

**Land leveling for Barrier re-route in Qalqiliya governorate** On 22 February, Israeli contractors began land-levelling in the area between the villages of Wadi Ar Rasha and Ras At Tira in the Qalqiliya governorate. The villages form an enclave of five Palestinian communities, currently isolated from the rest of the West Bank by the route of the Barrier around Alfe Menashe settlement. The Israeli DCL informed OCHA that this levelling is to re-route the Barrier in accordance with an Israeli High Court ruling of September 2005, following a petition filed on behalf of the communities by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI). In its judgement, the High Court agreed with the petitioners that the current route ‘creates a chokehold around the villages [and] severely injures the entire fabric of life.’ However, the re-routing will still leave two of the communities, ‘Arab Abu Farda and ‘Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi, isolated behind the Barrier and physically separated from the rest of the West Bank and from health, education and health services which are located to the east of the Barrier.

**Enav checkpoint expansion** On 24 February, the Israeli military began the process of expanding Enav checkpoint, installed to protect Enav settlement from terrorist attacks, and which controls all West Bank traffic into and out of the governorate of Tulkarm. Land levelling near the checkpoint took place with some trees being

uprooted. Residents of Ramin village, who had received land requisition orders in September 08, were given a one day notice to transplant their trees from land to be used for the expansion. The Enav checkpoint is to be expanded to two lanes in each direction, along with one VIP / humanitarian lane, purportedly to increase the flow of traffic.

#### **Closure of Dahiyat Al Bared checkpoint**

On 19 February, the Israeli military dismantled Ar Ram checkpoint in northern Jerusalem after the checkpoint became redundant following the closure of the gate in the barrier between Dahiyat al Bared and Ar Ram on 16 February. While the removal of the checkpoint and the related checkpoint infrastructure will now allow free movement on road 1 between downtown Jerusalem and Qalandiya checkpoint, the closure has greatly increased the volume of traffic moving north through Qalandiya checkpoint. Ar Ram Checkpoint permitted access into Jerusalem only for residents of the immediate area around the checkpoint, but did not control north-bound (direction of Ar Ram) traffic from Jerusalem. All vehicles travelling to Ar Ram are now forced to travel through Qalandiya checkpoint. Delays of half an hour or longer are now regularly reported for travel north through Qalandiya checkpoint.

#### **West Bank drought**

On 22 February, the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture reported that the percentage of average rainfall in overall in the West Bank for the time period of October 08 to February 09 was only 45% of the historical average, while some areas registered an average of only 32% of the historical average.

## **Gaza**

#### **Military activities affecting civilians**

During the reporting period, armed clashes, Palestinian rocket-fire, and Israeli strikes from air and sea continued to weaken the already fragile ceasefire. On 20 February, two Palestinian members of an armed group were killed by Israeli tank fire east of Johr El Deek area in Central Gaza. Three civilians, including one female, and five militants were injured during the week by Israeli fire. Two of the civilians were injured in two separate

incidents when Israeli forces reportedly opened fire on Palestinian farmers. The third civilian, a Rafah crossings official, was injured on 19 February in an air-strike targeting a Gaza – Egypt border area, south of Rafah. During the previous reporting period, a 20-year-old Palestinian militant died on 16 February of wounds sustained on 13 February, as a result of an air strike targeting his motorcycle in Abasan, east of Khan Younis.

On 18, 19 and 23 February, IAF fighter jets and helicopter plans carried out approximately five airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, during which at least 18 Israeli air-to-ground missiles were fired targeting tunnels on the Egypt-Gaza border, a police station south of Khan Younis and a vehicle carrying two Palestinian militants near the border fence south-east of Maghazi Camp; both militants were injured. Armed Palestinians launched approximately 21 rudimentary rockets and mortar shells from Gaza towards Israel and IDF units operating inside the Gaza Strip. According to Israeli media, two Qassam rockets fired from Gaza landed in Israel on 23 February.

#### **Tunnel incident**

On 21 February, five Palestinians were killed and three others were injured when a tunnel on the Egypt-Gaza border collapsed.

#### **Gaza water and sanitation**

The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) reported that 50,000 people still do not have access to piped water, and an additional 100,000 Gaza residents receive water only every 7-10 days, including in parts of Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Gaza City and Rafah.

Between 1 and 21 February, the Gaza Ministry of Health's Public Health Lab collected 248 water samples from water wells, water networks and water treatment plants throughout the Gaza Strip. Of these, 45 samples were contaminated, mainly in North Gaza and Gaza districts. According to UNRWA, watery diarrhoea and acute bloody diarrhoea remain the major causes of morbidity among infectious diseases affecting the refugee population in the Gaza Strip. In its 19 February bulletin, UNRWA's Health Department highlighted the need to

focus in coming weeks on watery diarrhoea among children under three years of age, as the number of cases breached the alert threshold between weeks four and six of 2009.

#### **Gaza food security**

The Gaza authorities have imposed partial price controls on essential food commodities to alleviate some of the hardships faced by Gaza's population stemming from food price fluctuations. Although market prices for basic commodities and vegetables in Gaza have stabilized, in some cases price controls have introduced other problems. In recent weeks, WPF reported a shortage of sugar in shops due to price restrictions imposed by authorities, which were too low to provide enough incentive for retailers to sell sugar in stock. Food items without price controls are available on the open market, albeit at inflated prices: fruit, notably bananas, apples, oranges and strawberries, and fresh meat. Due to high prices, frozen meat is commonly used as a substitute for fresh meat.

Five out of six mills in Gaza are open. Five bakeries in the middle and southern areas are now reselling bread procured from other bakeries in the Gaza Strip due to shortage of cooking gas.

The Israeli navy continues to prevent Gazan fishermen from sailing and fishing further than 3 nautical miles from the shore, limiting the types of fish available on the open market.

#### **Gaza education**

According to UNICEF, destruction of schools and other educational institutes during the Israeli "Cast Lead" operation has greatly affected the education sector. Schools in the North Gaza district and border areas were the most affected. School attendance in these areas initially reported at 86% in the first week of school after the end of operation gradually improved to 98% during the reporting period. Approximately 4,711 students from six severely damaged PA schools are being accommodated in seven alternative schools; classroom shortage, student overcrowding, and longer student commutes are additional burdens. Restrictions on the amount and type of

materials being allowed into Gaza continue to hinder efforts to support education in Gaza, resulting in a continued shortage of textbooks and other materials for school children. In addition, many schools are experiencing a shortage in piped water.

**PA teachers strike:** At the beginning of the school year (24 August 08) the Ramallah-based Teachers' Union called for an education strike in protest of the Gaza authorities' decision to transfer a large number of school head masters and teachers to schools in other areas. In its

early days, the number of teachers adhering to the strike was approximately 40%, but reached approximately 60% in mid to late September. Since then, the number of teachers on strike has gradually decreased: as of 25 February, 57.2% of the PA School teachers are working while the remaining 42.8% continue to strike. The total number of PA school teachers is 9,799, with contracts for approximately 4000 temporarily appointed teachers expiring on 25 February. According to MOEHE, the contracts will be renewed until the end of May, 09.

**Gaza crossings**

From 18-24 February, 635 truckloads entered into Gaza, mostly through Kerem Shalom.

Of all trucks entered through Kerem Shalom between 18 and 24 February, 248.5 truckloads were designated for humanitarian aid agencies; 231 truckloads were food items. The remaining truckloads included medical supplies, educational supplies, industrial/electrical items, and non-food items.

The Israeli criteria used for processing import requests into Gaza remain unclear. During the reporting period the Israeli authorities rejected entry to 30 metric tonnes of chickpeas, 43 pallets of macaroni, 137 pallets of wheat flour, 131 recreational kits, 68 pallets of stationary items for students, 150 school-in-a-box kits, 33 boxes of medicine, 22 freezer appliances, 3 generators, and 4 water pumps.

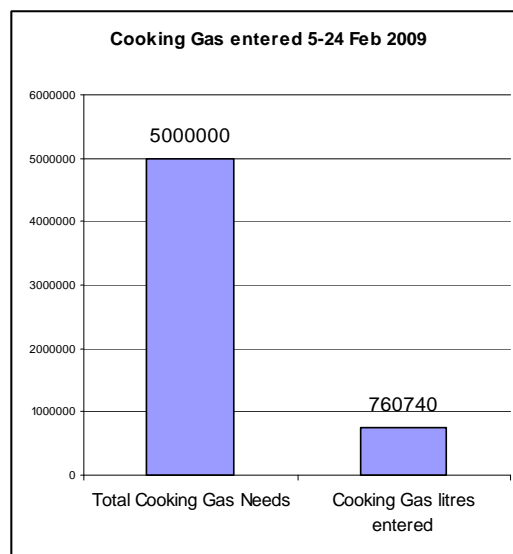
**Rafah Crossing** On 22, 23 and 24 February, Egyptian Authorities reopened Rafah crossing in both directions for Palestinian patients, Palestinians holding residency permits/valid foreign passports, students, and stranded Palestinians in Egypt. Approximately 2,274 were allowed entry to Egypt and 574 Palestinians returned to Gaza. Additionally, 16 members of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliament and representatives of the League of Arab States entered Gaza through Rafah.

From 18 to 21 February, Rafah crossing was partially open for urgent medical cases.

**Fuel imports** The Nahal Oz pipeline was open during the reporting period, allowing 2,222,000 litres of industrial fuel and 760,740 litres of cooking gas. For the reporting period, the amount of cooking gas entered was approximately 43% of Gaza's daily needs.

**Truckloads entered into Gaza 18-24 February**

CROSSING	Import Type	Total
Karni	Animal Feed	74
	Human Food Products	50
Karni Total		124
Kerem Shalom	Agricultural Raw Materials	3.5
	Animal Feed	1
	Education/Stationary	7
	Human Food Products	418
	Hygiene/Cleaning Supplies	38
	Industrial/Electrical Applications	1
	Medical Supplies	13.5
	Non-Edible Consumables	28
	Packaging Applications	1
Kerem Shalom Total		511
Grand Total		635



However, because no cooking gas was allowed into Gaza from 5 – 17 February, the total amount of cooking gas entered into Gaza represents only 15% of Gaza's cooking gas needs for the period from 5 – 24 February.

### **Gaza electricity**

According to GEDCO, Gaza's power utility, with the exception of ten percent of the population who still have no access to electricity due to grid damage, electricity has been restored to pre-“Cast Lead” operation levels—i.e. most of Gaza's population are receiving intermittent power. As of 22 February, the power deficit in Gaza stands at 19 percent, with the highest deficits reported in Khan Younis (22.7%) and Middle Area (21.2%). In addition to unscheduled power cuts, the following scheduled rolling power blackouts remain in place: 8 hours three times per week in the Gaza and North Gaza governorates, 8 hours of power cuts every third day in Middle Area and Khan Younis, and 4-6 hours of power cuts every third day in Rafah.