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Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

25-31 March, 2009

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 31 March:

- A 13-year-old Israeli was killed and another 7-year-old was injured on 2 April by a Palestinian man in an attack committed in the Israeli settlement of Bat Ayin, West of Bethlehem City. Afterwards, Israeli authorities imposed a curfew in Safa village west of Gush Etzion settlement.

West Bank: Military activities affecting civilians

During the reporting period, Israeli military forces injured 13 Palestinians in the West Bank, including two children—less than half the weekly average of West Bank injuries in 2008 (27). All but one of the injuries occurred during demonstrations commemorating Land Day or protesting the Barrier in the villages of Jayyus (Qalqiliya), Ni'lin, Bil'in (Ramallah), Ma'sara (Bethlehem), and Hebron City (Hebron). Israeli forces are reported to have used sound bombs, rubber-coated metal bullets, and physically assaulted demonstrators. On 25 March, Israeli military personnel manning one of the main checkpoints around Nablus City (Huwwara), suspicious of a Palestinian man carrying a toolbox, shot and injured him in the leg. The man was arrested and is being treated in an Israeli hospital; his leg was amputated.

During the week, the Israeli army conducted 107 search operations throughout the West Bank, slightly higher than the 2008 weekly average of 103; Israeli forces arrested 84 Palestinians during the week—the same as the average number of weekly arrests during 2008.

West Bank access

Israeli response to stone throwing: harsh access restrictions on entire communities

In recent weeks, there have been increasing numbers of curfews and access restrictions imposed on entire Palestinian villages by Israeli forces in the northern West Bank following Palestinian stone-throwing incidents. The Haris village in Salfit governorate was among the most affected. On three consecutive days this week, the Israeli army conducted military operations and imposed curfews in the village after stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles on Road 5. During one of the operations, Israeli military forces interrogated all male villagers aged between 15 and 30; four residents were arrested. Overall during the reporting period, the entire village was put under

curfew for a total of 29 hours. Earlier this month, Israeli forces placed an earthmound at the main entrance to the village, cutting vehicular access to Road 5.

Israeli military forces also erected a new barbed wire fence north of 'Azzun village (Qalqiliya governorate) along Road 55, allegedly to prevent stones from being thrown at Israeli vehicles. Seven dunums of private Palestinian land had been requisitioned for that purpose earlier in 2008. The main entrance to the village had been blocked during the previous week, preventing vehicular access to Road 55.

During the week, on 31 March, one Israeli was injured near Al Funduq village after Palestinians threw stones at his vehicle while passing on road 55 near the village (Qalqiliya).

Road barrier being rebuilt along Route 317

During the reporting period, the Israeli military installed a guard-rail along a seven-kilometre stretch of Road 317 in the southern part of the Hebron governorate. The rail, which has no opening, prevents Palestinian herders from crossing the road with their livestock to access grazing areas. A 40-kilometre road wall along Road 317, built in 2005 to secure Israeli settler traffic along this road, was dismantled by the Israeli authorities in July 2007, pursuant to a court decision in favour of a petition filed by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) on behalf of Palestinians living in this area.

Key route in Hebron City to be partially opened

This week, Israeli authorities distributed leaflets signalling their intention to selectively ease access restrictions for a key route in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2). Palestinian traffic on Kiryat Arba Road will be allowed for those residing within the immediate vicinity of the route, after registration of their respective vehicles with the Israeli DCL. In the aftermath of the announcement, three armed Israeli settlers from the adjacent

Kiryat Arba settlement responded to the announcement by damaging Palestinian property in the area.

Freer movement within the northern West Bank; new checkpoint on route between Jenin and Ramallah

During the week, the Israeli army removed two obstacles in place since 2002, which blocked direct access between two villages to the west of Nablus City (Qusin and Sarra) and the city, significantly easing access between these areas. However, to travel to Qalqiliya, residents of both villages still need to go through Beit Iba checkpoint as the road directly leading from Qalqiliya to the two villages was recently closed near Jit Junction.

In the same area, the Israeli army finished relocating the Beit Iba checkpoint, which controls Palestinian movement into and out of Nablus City area from the west. The new site is located a few kilometres to the northwest, along the main route leading from Jenin, Tubas and northern Nablus governorate southwards. The new location allows for freer movement between the towns of Jenin and Nablus, but places additional restrictions on Jenin residents needing to travel further south to Ramallah.

Area C cistern maintenance halted by Israeli authorities due to lack of permits

An international NGO, cleaning water cisterns in a Bedouin community located in Area C in south Hebron Governorate (Dqayqa), received stop-work orders from the Israeli Civil Administration, citing the need for a permit to perform this activity. This is the first reported incident of a non-construction type project in Area C that has been halted citing permit requirements.

West Bank Land levelling

On 29 March, Israeli forces began leveling Palestinian land in the area of Deir Sharaf village for new road connecting Shave Shomeron settlement with road 57. Israeli forces requisitioned 78 dunums of land in 2005 for this purpose; the requisition order was renewed ten days ago.

On 31 March, Israelis from Efrat settlement began ploughing an 800 M² plot of land close the village of Al Nahla (Bethlehem). The settlers have been trying to cut a road through the land since January 2009. The property was declared "State Land" by Israeli authorities in February 2009. In the past two months, the Palestinian owner of the land has filed numerous complaints with Israeli

authorities; no assistance has been forthcoming.

Gaza Strip: Military activities affecting civilians

The reporting period witnessed intermittent fighting along the Gaza-Israel border. In two separate clashes the Israeli army killed two and injured two other armed militants as well as one Palestinian civilian east of Al Maghazi Camp. According to Israeli media sources, one Israeli soldier was injured.

Israeli patrol boats opened fire on five separate occasions targeting Palestinian fishing boats west of Rafah and Beit Lahia, forcing the boats to return to the shore. In one incident, four Palestinian fishermen were detained. In recent weeks, the Israeli military has reduced the fishing range allowed to Palestinian fishermen from six nautical miles to three, constraining the ability of fisherman to catch sardines, which are currently in season and mainly prevalent in deeper waters.

During the reporting period, there was sporadic Palestinian rocket-fire from Gaza towards Israel and Kissufim military base.

The Gaza-Ramallah Rift

Access for Gaza medical patients needing specialized treatment abroad further impeded

On 22 March, the Gaza Hamas authorities took control of the PA's Referral Abroad Department. The office assesses and processes referral applications for specialized medical treatment outside Gaza. The Ministry of Health in Ramallah no longer approves applications or funds medical treatment, and neither Israeli nor Egyptian authorities allow exit the Gaza Strip without approval by the Palestinian Authority. All Gaza patient referrals through the office have been halted due to this action, affecting many patients with serious and complicated conditions. During the reporting period, nine patients have existed Gaza, including seven children, one whom died while receiving treatment. All patients that exited Gaza since 22 March already had prior approval from the PA.

No new passports for Gaza's population

Last week, the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah began issuing a new edition of Palestinian passports. These passports are currently only being issued/renewed in the West Bank, and Gaza authorities are no longer able to print new passports. In addition, since the beginning of 2008,

Gaza has received limited numbers of new blank passports from Ramallah.

Only those able to send their application for passports to the West Bank can be issued new passports. Hamas authorities reported there are at least 1800 pending applications for new passports, including nearly 500 for medical cases for people needing to travel abroad.

Gaza Flooding

Unacceptable water and sanitation conditions persist in the Gaza Strip, posing serious risk to public health. 35,000 of Gaza's residents still do not have access to piped water, and overburdened wastewater treatment systems continue to expose several areas to contaminated water. On 27 March 2009, a temporary wastewater treatment lagoon, under pressure from rising wastewater levels, overflowed in the vicinity of Um Al-Nasser Bedouin Village, north of Beit Lahia. The flooding occurred approximately one kilometre away from the nearest residential areas; no casualties were reported. It is one of two disposal ponds set up north of the Bedouin village after wastewater basin collapsed in March 2007, killing two women and three children and injuring 35 residents of the area.

Barred food items allowed into Gaza

Following the recent announcements by the Israeli authorities of an easing of restrictions on food items entering into the Gaza Strip, new food items—namely tea, yeast, salt, and potato chips, were allowed entry through commercial channels for the first time since late October 2008. The import of goods from Israel, however, remains subject to non-transparent and inconsistent criteria at Israeli-controlled crossings.

Hamas authorities' remove security officers involved in detainee mistreatment

The Hamas Ministry of Interior in Gaza announced the conclusion of an investigation into the death of a Palestinian detainee in its custody on 16 March, resulting in the removal of eleven police and other security personnel.