



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

5 – 11 AUGUST 2009

LATEST DEVELOPMENT SINCE TUESDAY, 11 August 2009

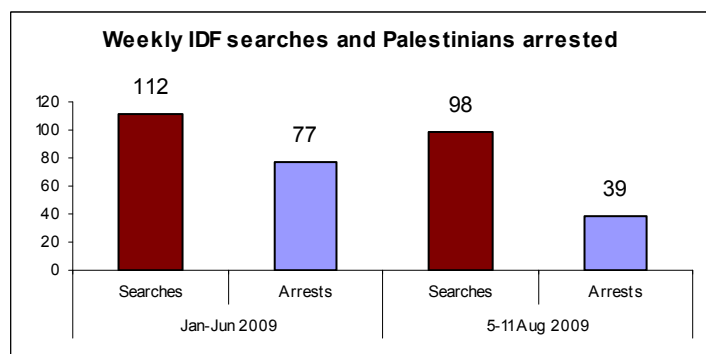
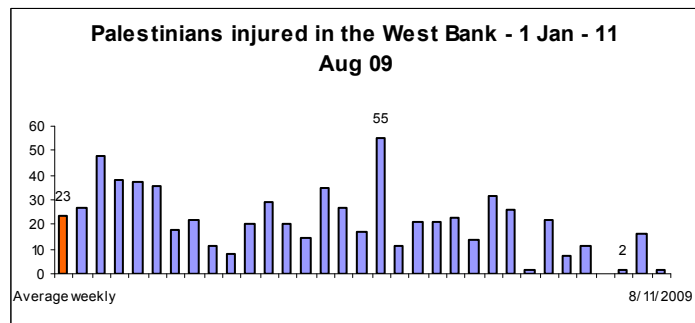
- On 13 August, Human Rights Watch published a report documenting seven incidents where Israeli soldiers fired on civilians waving a white flag during the “Cast Lead” military operation in Gaza. According to the organization, these attacks claimed the lives of eleven civilians, including four children, and injured at least eight others.

West Bank

Military activities affecting civilians

Since mid-June of 2009, there has been a significant decrease in the weekly numbers of Palestinians injured due to Israeli military activities in the West Bank. This week, the trend continued: two Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy, were physically assaulted in Hebron city (H2), compared to 16 Palestinian injuries of the previous week and a weekly average of 21 Palestinian injuries since the beginning of the year. In an incident on 9 August, Israeli troops detained a 16-year-old Palestinian boy at ‘Awarta commercial checkpoint in Nablus. According to Israeli authorities, the boy was carrying an explosive devise, which was detonated safely. The boy was handed over to the Palestinian police.

On 7 August, the weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations were held in Bil’in and Ni’lin village (Ramallah) ending with no casualties. Israeli forces reportedly used “skunk bombs” to disperse the crowds.



Palestinian detainee dies while in custody of PA security forces

On 10 August, a Hamas-affiliated Palestinian detainee from Asira Al Shamaliya village (Nablus) died in Al Juneid prison in Nablus. According to PA sources, the prisoner committed suicide; family members and human rights organizations have called for an independent investigation. Also, on 4 August, another Hamas-affiliated prisoner, who had been held in a Palestinian prison from 15 September 2008 until 30 June 2009, died in a Jordanian hospital. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), alleges that the prisoner's health deteriorated due to torture inflicted while in custody, and has called for an independent investigation.

Tension and clashes following the Sheikh Jarrah evictions in East Jerusalem

Tension ran high this week in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem following the 2 August evictions of the two extended Hanoun and Al Ghawi families (nine family units) from two residential structures. Several confrontations occurred during the week between Palestinian residents of the neighbourhood and the residences' new Israeli occupants, with Israeli settlers harassing Palestinian residents of the neighbourhood, throwing stones, physically assaulting pedestrians, and in one incident, firing live ammunition into the air. On two occasions, unarmed clashes occurred between Palestinians and Israeli settlers resulting in the injury of five Palestinians and one Israeli settler. During the week, seven Palestinian residents of the area were arrested; all but one were released shortly thereafter.

On 10 August, hundreds of Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists held a peaceful demonstration in the area to protest the evictions. The crowd dispersed after Israeli security forces present in the area repeatedly warned that the demonstration was illegal.

Other Israeli settler related incidents

There were nine settler-related incidents reported throughout the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, none of which resulted in casualties. In the north, on 8 August, approximately 500 Israeli settlers under the protection of Israeli forces entered Kifl Haris village in Salfit governorate to visit a religious shrine, and stayed in the village for more than 12 hours. Prior to the settlers' arrival, Israeli forces entered the village and ordered shops to shutdown. Two days later, a group of Israeli settlers entered the village of Iraq-Burin in Nablus, threw stones and harassed village residents. On the same day there were also reports of Israeli settlers throwing stones at Palestinian vehicles near Yitzhar settlement (Nablus) and near 'Ein Ayyoub junction (Ramallah). No injuries but some vehicular damages were reported.

In addition, according to the IDF spokesperson, there were incidents of Palestinian stone throwing at Israeli vehicles traveling near the settlements of Karne Shomeron and Ma'ale Efrayim the Qalqiliya and Nablus districts; one vehicle was reported damaged.

Under the protection of Israeli military forces, a group of Israelis from Kiryat Arba settlement planted 60 pine seedlings in Al Baqa' Valley (Hebron) on eleven dunums of land belonging to a Palestinian family. This was the second consecutive week in which settlers have targeted the same plot of land. Later, Palestinian residents of the area removed the saplings. In the Bethlehem and Hebron governorates, on 10 August, Israelis from Bat Ayin and Suseya settlements prevented Palestinian farmers and herders from accessing agricultural and grazing lands in the vicinity of these settlements.

West Bank Access

During the week, Israeli forces placed three earthmounds in the south eastern section of Hebron governorate (Massafer Yatta), on the main road connecting the village of Twani with the hamlet of Isfey Al Foqa. The new closures isolate at least 900 residents of Massafer Yatta from their main water and animal fodder providers. To bypass the closure, residents of the area have to travel through longer routes in difficult terrain to reach Road 317. The additional time needed to travel from Massafer Yatta to the adjacent Yatta town is estimated to be at least an hour.

The addition of the Hebron earthmounds notwithstanding, over the past few months, Israeli authorities have implemented several steps that ease the flow of Palestinian traffic to and from four West Bank cities: Nablus, Qalqiliya, Ramallah and Jericho, and have thus far generally reduced the amount of time required for Palestinians to access these cities. There are currently 613 closure obstacles, including 68 permanently staffed checkpoints—five fewer than in May 2009. In addition, the number of unstaffed obstacles decreased from 541 in May 2009 to 522 today. These easings have taken place alongside a wider process of Israeli entrenchment of mechanisms used to control Palestinian movement, including the expansion of the “fabric of life” road network and of key staffed checkpoints.

Gaza Strip

Military activities in Gaza: no casualties for third consecutive week

For the third consecutive week, there were no casualties in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza. However, exchanges of fire, rockets launched towards Israel, and limited IDF incursions into Gaza continued to be reported, and for the first time since 14 June 2009, the Israeli Air Force fired two missiles targeting the tunnel areas at Rafah-Egyptian border.

Israeli military forces continued to enforce access restrictions on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the coast and agricultural areas in the 300-meter “Restricted Area”, along the border with Israel. On six separate incidents, Israeli patrol boats opened warning fire targeting Palestinian fishing boats, forcing the boats to return to shore; in one incident west of Khan Younis, Israeli forces arrested three fishermen and confiscated a fishing boat.

According to UNICEF, since 18 January, unexploded ordnance (UXO) has claimed the lives of at least 12 people, and have caused injury to 23 others. Half of those killed have been children. The average age of those killed by UXO explosions is 17.5 years.

One person killed in tunnel collapse

The transfer of basic goods through underground tunnels along the Gaza-Egypt border continues to endanger the lives of those working inside them. The tunnels are used for the transfer of goods restricted by Israel from entering Gaza. This week, a 25-year-old man was killed inside a tunnel; at least 30 people have been killed in tunnel related incidents in 2009.

Weekly average of imported truckloads remains below needs - (26 July – 01 Aug 2009)

This week, a total of 455 truckloads of goods entered Gaza—less than 16% of the weekly average reported during the first five months of 2007, before the Hamas takeover and approximately 31% below the weekly average of truckloads entered in the first six months of 2009 (655).

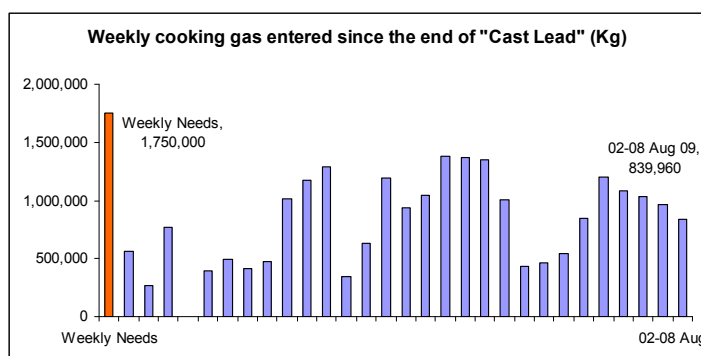
Food and hygiene items made up the majority of imported goods - 395.5 truckloads or 88% of total imports; other imported items included agricultural raw materials (23 truckloads - 05%), non-edible consumables (17 truckloads - 04%), and education/stationery (02 truckloads - 01%), and three truckloads of construction materials designated for the rehabilitation of water projects. (See below)

Water and sanitation

Three truckloads of construction materials, including two truckloads of cement (75 tons) and one truckload of steel bars (25 tons) were allowed entry for the Palestinian Water Authority's (PWA) north Gaza wastewater treatment plant project. The Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) indicated that it urgently needs a minimum of 2,000 additional tons of cement and 200-300 tons of steel parts to build/complete or to rehabilitate a number of vital water and wastewater projects in Gaza. This includes the restoration of three water reservoirs in Rafah and Gaza City and networks destroyed during the "Cast Lead" military operation. Since Nov 2008, Israel has restricted the entry of construction materials into Gaza.

Decrease in the import of cooking gas

For the fifth consecutive week, imports of cooking gas continue to decrease. Despite this, cooking gas is available on the open market but with occasional shortages.



Gaza Power Plant forced to decrease electricity output

The power plant shut down this week one of the power generating units, thus reducing output to 55-60 megawatts (MWs), or around 70% of its capacity-80 MWs). This has triggered an increase in rolling blackouts from 4-6 hours to 6-8 hour five days per week. The previous increase in power production to 70 MW lasted for only 3 weeks and was due to an increase in the amount of industrial fuel stored during maintenance activities, a surplus that have been recently depleted. Since November 2007, Israel has curtailed imports of fuel designated for the Gaza Power Plants' fuel to 2.2 million liters per week— roughly 67% of Gaza's estimated weekly needs of fuel of 3.15 million liters. Due to lack of fuel, the Gaza power plant was forced to decrease electrical output by nearly 25%. In addition, due to the lack of necessary spare parts and construction materials, electrical networks damaged during the "Cast Lead" military operation have not yet been completely rehabilitated; nearly 150,000 people of the Gaza population are currently unconnected to the electrical network.