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Humanitarian Monitoring Report – December 2004

The Humanitarian Monitoring Report is produced monthly by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It draws on information from the Access, Closure and Information System (ACIS) and other data sources that humanitarian agencies have submitted to OCHA. The report is provided to the Task Force on Project Implementation (TFPI) as a basis for discussions with the government of Israel. It is available on the website www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt.

Context

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Ms Catherine Bertini as his Personal Humanitarian Envoy to address the humanitarian needs arising from the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict since September 2000. Ms Bertini was requested to assess the nature and scale of the humanitarian needs, and to clarify the respective responsibilities of all actors involved.

This report monitors the humanitarian commitments made by the government of Israel to Ms Bertini during a mission to the region from 12 to 19 August 2002. It concluded that there were serious humanitarian problems linked to the ongoing conflict and, specifically, to the measures implemented by the government of Israel to safeguard its citizens from Palestinian attacks.

These security measures, including curfews, closures and roadblocks, led to a crisis of access and mobility, instigating a drastic decline in the Palestinian economy. A large part of the Palestinian population has difficulty accessing basic services such as health and education. Humanitarian service providers, such as UN agencies, NGOs, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) ambulances, have experienced problems providing assistance and services to beneficiaries.

Commitments made by Israel

Health

- Ambulances will wait no more than 30 minutes at checkpoints.
- Mechanisms will be set in place to ensure patients, seeking critical medical services (child delivery, dialysis, chemotherapy), can pass all checkpoints quickly.

Water

- Problems relating to water deliveries in Palestinian towns and villages will be addressed to ensure that daily provision of adequate amounts of water can be supplied by Palestinian water tankers.

Facilitation for International Humanitarian Organisations

- The government of Israel will fully facilitate the activities of international organisations, with particular reference to UNRWA.
- The government of Israel agreed to review and strengthen the liaison arrangements between international agencies and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Additional Commitments

On previous occasions, the government of Israel has made the following commitments, which were confirmed to the mission:

- The fishing zone for Palestinian boats off the Gaza coast will be extended to 12 nautical miles
- Olive farmers will be allowed access to their fields
- Increased shipments will be enabled at Karni crossing in the Gaza Strip
- The number of permits for Palestinian workers in Israel will be increased

The Bertini Commitments represent a minimum and specific set of humanitarian standards agreed to by the government of Israel. The Bertini Commitments are not a substitute for compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention. The maximum waiting period of 30 minutes for an ambulance at a checkpoint, for example, while an improvement on the situation in August 2002, falls short of the intent of provisions of IHL.

Executive Summary

Health

Palestinian ambulance operators reported a total of at least 25 access incidents in December 2004 (compared to 20 in November) in which the provision of first aid and/or medical evacuations were delayed, obstructed and/or prevented by the IDF. The fewest numbers of incidents were reported in November and December 2004, both far below the year's high of 93 incidents reported in May. On average, 46 incidents were reported each month.

Water

Palestinians continued to have difficulties accessing water and, in some areas, the water supply was reduced.

Facilitation for International Humanitarian Organisations

In December 2004, international relief agencies filed at least 49 reports in which the delivery of aid and/or the movement of personnel were obstructed by the IDF or Israeli Border Police. Most incidents reported included delays and disrespect by the IDF of international humanitarian organisations' mandates, privileges and immunities. A fewer number of incidents were reported in December than in most months in 2004. The highest number of incidents, 166, was reported in March, followed by 154 and 151 in April and May 2004 respectively.

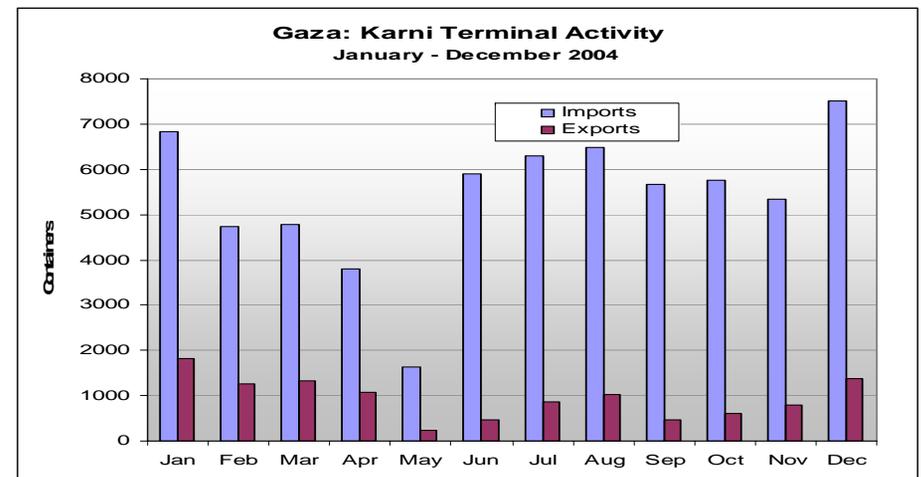
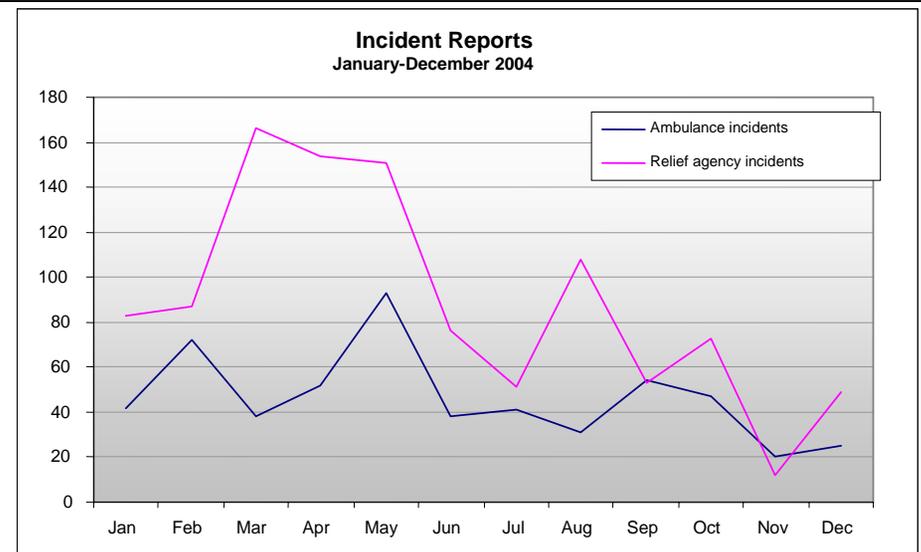
Additional commitments

The total number of containers entering the Gaza Strip in December 2004 increased with 7,506 units arriving from Israel and elsewhere compared to 5,331 in November and 5,754 in October¹. The largest number of imports was reported in December 2004. The fewest number of imports was recorded in June – 1,626.

The number of containers exiting the Gaza Strip in December 2004 also increased. In total 1,380 containers were exported, compared to 793 in November, 615 for October and 475 in September. December figures were the second highest for the year 2004 after January when 1,830 containers were exported. May, with 239 imports, was the month with the lowest number of containers.

On average in 2004, 5,391 containers were imported each month and 946 were exported.

The movement of Gaza Strip fishermen remained subject to strict restrictions.



¹ Trade figures are reported by Palestinian officials at Karni to OCHA. These figures represent the most accurate figures available to OCHA at the time of publication.

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Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p>1. Health</p> <p>Palestinian ambulances will wait no more than 30 minutes at any checkpoints</p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p> <p>Effective mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that Palestinians seeking critical medical services (child delivery, dialysis, chemotherapy, etc) can quickly pass all checkpoints</p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p>	<p>Instructions issued to all checkpoint commanders concerning maximum time for ambulance delay at checkpoints</p> <p>Palestinian Ministry of Health, PRCs, UNRWA and hospitals no longer report ambulance delays at checkpoints</p> <p>Mechanisms established and Palestinian public informed</p> <p>Explicit instructions issued to all checkpoint commanders</p> <p>No more reported instances of Palestinians in need of critical medical services being denied passage at checkpoints</p>	<p><i>West Bank and the Gaza Strip: 25 incidents</i></p> <p>Palestinian ambulance operators reported a total of at least 25 access incidents (compared to 20 in November), in which the provision of first aid and/or medical evacuations were delayed, obstructed and/or prevented by the IDF.</p> <p><i>Ambulance Access Denials</i></p> <p>Of the 25 incidents reported, at least 11 included humanitarian access denials. Included in the incident reports is the example below.</p> <p>28 December: A PRCs ambulance was denied access at At Tuffah checkpoint in the Gaza Strip while transporting a woman in labour. The woman delivered in the ambulance. A second ambulance arrived at the other side of the checkpoint and the woman and baby were transported using a back-to-back system of transportation.</p> <p><i>Ambulance Delays</i></p> <p>There were nine documented incidents of delays, in excess of 30 minutes. In one incident, on 8 December 2004 an ambulance was delayed for four hours.</p> <p><i>Other Reports</i></p> <p>In December, six incidents were reported in which medical crews came under IDF attack (direct or indirect).</p> <p>In one reported incident on 17 December 2004 in Khan Younis, an MoH ambulance was subject to direct fire while the medical crew was attempting to evacuate injured people. As a result, one of the medical crew was injured and the ambulance sustained some damages.</p>	<p>During this reporting period, Israeli forces continued to restrict the freedom of movement of ambulances and medical crew. Delays and denials of access had a negative impact on the sick and wounded in the occupied Palestinian territory.</p>
<p>2. Water</p> <p>Problems related to water deliveries to Palestinian towns and villages will be addressed to ensure that daily water</p>	<p>Instructions issued to all checkpoints allowing for the easy transfer of water tankers through all checkpoints</p>	<p><i>West Bank and the Gaza Strip</i></p> <p>In December 2004, three main factors continued to affect the existing critical water supply situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: the ongoing closure regime/movement restrictions of maintenance teams and water tankers; significant</p>	<p>Palestinians face difficulties accessing safe water.</p>

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<p>deliveries in proper quantities can be supplied by Palestinian water tankers.</p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p>	<p>The IDF removes barriers that prevent the access by water tankers to villages that rely on tankered water</p> <p>No reports on lack of water or delay/stoppage of water tankers at checkpoints</p>	<p>reduction in water supply to Palestinian communities by the Israeli Mekorot water company; and the damage/destruction of water networks.² For example:</p> <p>During the military operation in Khan Younis, between 12 and 17 December 2004, rainwater harvesting ponds and an agricultural well near Morag settlement were destroyed.</p> <p>Jit in Qalqiliya Governorate was affected directly by the damage in the water network, which affected supply of water to 20% of the population.</p> <p>Twenty-two communities out of 34 surveyed received all or a considerable part of their water supply from the Israeli Mekorot Company; 20 communities out of the 22 faced reduction in water supplies, according to the Wash and Sanitation, Hygiene (WaSH) Monitoring Project.</p> <p>Increases in the price of water were also reported in some governorates.</p>	
Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p>3. Facilitation for International Humanitarian Organisations</p> <p>Israel will fully facilitate the assistance activities of international organisations with particular reference to UNRWA</p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p> <p>Israel agrees to review and strengthen the liaison arrangements between international agencies and the IDF to facilitate assistance activities</p>	<p>Free access for all international staff of international organisations throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and at international crossings, at all times</p> <p>Free access for all Palestinian staff of international organisations throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at all times</p> <p>No delays/ stoppage of international organisations' transport of development and humanitarian goods at any point (that is, at international borders, borders between Israel and the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, within the West Bank or the Gaza</p>	<p>In December 2004, international relief agencies filed at least 49 reports³ in which the delivery of aid and/or the movement of personnel were obstructed by the IDF or Israeli Border Police. Most incidents reported included delays and disrespect by the IDF of international humanitarian organisations' mandates, privileges and immunities.</p> <p><i>Access by UNRWA staff</i></p> <p>UNRWA⁴, the largest humanitarian organisation operating in the oPt, reported 48 incidents in which there were access problems at IDF checkpoints (compared to 12 in November 2004).</p> <p><i>Other reports</i></p> <p>In December 2004, international humanitarian NGO agencies filed one incident report. Two Oxfam GB national staff members reported an incident at Beit Iba checkpoint. Both were detained and interrogated by the IDF and Israeli Police. After a delay of four and a half hours, and following coordination with the Nablus DCL, staff members were released but not allowed to travel into Nablus.</p>	<p>UN staff members continued to report incidents where IDF soldiers at checkpoints refused to cooperate with DCL officers and/or accept the validity of UN identity cards, insisting instead that UN staff show their national passports.</p>

² 34 communities were surveyed in December 2004 from a total of 643 communities. The incidents reported here relate only to 34 communities.

³ These figures apply only to the humanitarian aid organisations that reported incidents at checkpoints to OCHA.

⁴ The number reflects access related incidents at checkpoints in the West Bank only. These figures apply only to reported incidents involving UNRWA staff travelling in humanitarian agency vehicles, which is only a small fraction of UNRWA staff in the West Bank.

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<p>(Government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p> <p>Israel will improve the situation at checkpoints, including the deployment of more experienced IDF personnel</p>	<p>Strip) at any time</p> <p>Palestinian drivers (with either Jerusalem or West Bank IDs) allowed to drive humanitarian vehicles for international organisations, in particular UNRWA, WFP and ICRC</p> <p>Procedures will be established that provide direct access by international organisations to operational and command structures within the IDF</p>		
Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p>4. Additional Commitments</p> <p>The fishing zone for Palestinian fishing boats off the Gaza Strip coast will be extended to 12 nautical miles</p>	<p>Extension of fishing zone fully implemented</p> <p>No arrests of fishermen or confiscation of fishing boats within the 12 nautical mile zone</p>	<p>Restrictions remained over a large stretch of the Gaza Strip coastline. Fishing was permitted up to 6 nautical miles from the coast, and to an area between Deir El Balah in the central Gaza Strip up to Dugit settlement in the northern Gaza Strip.</p> <p>Since 19 October 2003, no fishing has been permitted from either Khan Younis wharf or Rafah wharf, both located inside Al Mawasi, in the southern Gaza Strip.</p>	<p>Gaza Strip fishermen are consistently denied the right to fish up to the 12 nautical mile limit, as was agreed by the Israeli government. Under the Oslo Accords, Gaza Strip fishermen are entitled to fish as far as 20 nautical miles from the coast.</p>
<p>An increase in shipments at Karni crossing, Gaza Strip</p>	<p>Quantifiable increase in humanitarian aid shipments permitted through the crossing</p>	<p>The total number of containers⁵ entering the Gaza Strip in December 2004 increased with 7,506 units arriving from Israel and elsewhere compared to 5,331 in November and 5,754 in October. The December figure also exceeded July and August figures of 6,290 and 6,477 units respectively.</p> <p>The number of containers leaving the Gaza Strip in December also increased. In December, 1,380 units left the Gaza Strip compared to 793 in November and the considerably lower figures of 615 for October and 475 in September.</p>	
<p>Increase in the number of work permits for workers in Israel</p>	<p>Quantifiable increase in the number of work permits issued for workers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to work inside Israel</p>	<p>The number of workers entering Israel in December was 1,388 while 742 were able to return to the industrial estate. The total number of merchants entering Israel was 1,094.</p>	

⁵ Trade are figures reported by Palestinian officials at Karni to OCHA. These figures represent the most accurate figures available to OCHA at the time of publication.