



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

10 - 16 February 2010

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 16 February

- 18 February: Israeli forces entered into the Gaza Strip east of al Maghazi in the middle area and conducted extensive land levelling operations in agricultural areas along the border. Clashes between Israeli soldiers and armed Palestinian groups are reported to have taken place in the area throughout the day.

West Bank

Military activities affecting Palestinians: one Palestinian and one Israeli killed; six Palestinians injured

During the week, one Palestinian and one Israeli soldier were killed and another six Palestinians were injured throughout the West Bank, compared to a weekly average of 15 injuries in 2010. Since the beginning of 2010, Israeli forces have killed one Palestinian and injured 93 others.

On 10 February, an Israeli soldier was stabbed to death by a Palestinian man near Tappuah checkpoint, south of Nablus City. The perpetrator was subsequently run over by an Israel settler at the scene and slightly injured. He was later arrested by the Israeli police. Following the incident, the Israeli army raided Al Khuljan village (Jenin), where the perpetrator lives and arrested six of his relatives.

On 12 February, Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian man in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2). According to the Israeli army, the man tried to stab a soldier. According to Palestinian eyewitnesses, the man did not attempt to stab the soldier and the knife he was carrying was one used for shoe repair, as he worked in a nearby shoe-making shop. Confrontations between Israeli forces and Palestinians took place in the aftermath of the killing; no injuries were reported.

Also during the week, Israeli forces injured six Palestinians in various incidents, including two Palestinians injured by rubber-coated metal bullets during the weekly demonstration held by Palestinian residents of Deir Nidham and An Nabi Saleh villages (against the expansion of Hallamish settlement in the Ramallah area); two were wounded when Israeli forces tried to disperse Palestinian and international activists while planting seedlings on village land located near the fence of the settlement of Karimi Tzur (Hebron); and two in other incidents involving physical assault (Hebron).

In East Jerusalem, the Israeli police ordered the closure of two Palestinian organizations in the Sur Baher neighborhood, for alleged affiliation with Hamas. The Israeli policemen confiscated computer equipment and a number of documents. Also this week, for the second time this month, the Israeli army raided the Ramallah office of the International Solidarity Movement, a group of Palestinian and international activists working with Palestinian grassroots organizations. The Israeli army confiscated a computer and files.

This week, Israeli forces conducted 114 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages, significantly above the 2009 weekly average (103); the majority of these operations took place in the northern West Bank (53).

Demolitions, demolition orders and eviction orders in Area C

In Area C of the West Bank, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) demolished five water springs and pumps as well as three rooms used by farmers on a seasonal basis in the area of Al Bassa, west of the town of Idhna (Hebron) due to the lack of building permits. An estimated 15 households, comprising 100 people, were affected by the demolitions.

The Israeli army delivered two eviction orders to two families (27 people) residing in the community of Ibziq (Tubas), on the grounds that they are located in an area declared closed by the Israeli military for training purposes ("firing zone"). According to the residents, the two families have been living in tents in the same area since before it was declared a closed military area after the beginning of the occupation in 1967. Similarly, in Al Jiftlik village (Jericho) this week, the Israeli authorities informed a family of six (including four children) to evacuate their house due to its imminent demolition because of the lack of building permit. This step came after the ICA's delivery last week of a renewed demolition order, originally issued in 2006.

Moreover, the ICA delivered demolition orders against nine structures in Barta'a Ash Sharqiya (Jenin) and the Bedouin community of Arab Ar Ramadin ash Shamali (Qalqiliya). The affected structures are seven uninhabited buildings under construction, including five residential structures, an olive press and a factory; a warehouse (400 square metres); and an animal shelter. Both communities are located in the closed area on the western side of the Barrier and, since October 2003, residents have required permits from the ICA to continue living in their homes; service providers and family members living on the other side of the Barrier must show "visitors" permits, which are difficult to obtain, in order to access these communities.

Thus far in 2010, the Israeli authorities have demolished 44 structures, including 24 residential structures, in Area C due to lack of building permit, displacing 109 Palestinians. These figures compare to the 2009 monthly average of 16 structures demolished due to lack of building permits in Area C and 27 persons displaced.

Israeli settler-related incidents

Seven settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians were recorded throughout the week (the same as the weekly average during 2009), resulting in injury to two Palestinians.

In two separate incidents, two Palestinian boys (ages 15 and 4) were injured when hit by stones in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2) and the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood (East Jerusalem); an elderly woman was also physically assaulted in the latter.

Also this week, according to Palestinian sources, a large group of Jewish worshippers, escorted by the Israeli army, vandalized a girl's school in Nablus city while they were visiting a religious site ("Joseph's tomb") inside the city; windows were broken and water tanks were punctured. The Israeli army denies that the damage occurred during the visit. The remaining four incidents involved trespassing of private property in villages in the Nablus governorate and harassment to Palestinian farmers while planting their land near Bar Ayin settlement (Bethlehem); one Palestinian was injured in the latter incident by Israeli forces, who were protecting the Israeli settlers.

During the previous reporting period, Israeli forces re-established a military base in the area of Ush Al Ghurab area near Beit Sahur (Bethlehem), which they evacuated in April 2006. Since the evacuation, a settler group called 'The Committee for a Jewish Shdema' has been attempting to claim the site, with the intention of establishing a settlement there.

Also this week, there were three incidents that involved Palestinians hurling stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles driving near villages in the Ramallah area. No injuries or damage to vehicles were reported.

Barrier and other access related developments

On 15 February, the Israeli army closed a Barrier checkpoint (Ras 'Atya), preventing 65 children living in an enclave behind the Barrier (the "Alfe Menashe enclave") from reaching their schools, located in Qalqiliya city and Habla town. According to Israeli forces, the checkpoint was closed for maintenance. The children tried to access a nearby Barrier gate (Habla gate), but the army denied their access and demanded that they use another checkpoint (Jaljoulia, north of Qalqiliya City). The children refused knowing that they will be searched and delayed.

South of this enclave, the Israeli authorities have begun works aimed at re-routing a section of the Barrier in the vicinity of the village of Bil'in (Ramallah). This is carried out in compliance with an Israeli High Court of Justice ruling issued two and a half years ago, which established that the current route is unlawful as it causes disproportionate harm to Palestinian farmers. The new court-approved route is not on the Green Line, but located entirely within the West Bank. With the rerouting, Palestinians will gain access to 650 dunums of land which had been located on the western side of the prior route. However, 1,300 dunams will still be cut off from the village. Since 2005, the village residents, together with international and Israeli activists, are carrying out weekly anti-Barrier protests.

Also this week, according to the Israeli media, the Ministry of Defense announced plans to resume construction of a four kilometer long section of the Barrier, south of Jerusalem. This section will leave the Israeli settlement of Har Gilo as well as the Cremisan monastery on the "Israeli" side of the Barrier.

During the week, Israeli forces opened the main road connecting the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron city (H2) with Kiryat Arba settlement to Palestinian public transportation (busses and taxis) on a trial basis. Access of Palestinians to this street, along which Palestinians live, has been gradually increasing; in Autumn 2009, registered private vehicles of Palestinians living in the area were allowed access for the first time since the road was closed to Palestinian traffic in late 2000. Currently, six busses are allowed access to the street.

Also this week, Israeli forces deployed throughout the West Bank erected a total of 117 "flying" ad-hoc checkpoints, compared to a weekly average of 110 since the beginning of 2010 and a weekly average of 68 during 2009.

Gaza Strip

Escalation in violence; one fatality and six injuries near the “buffer” zone

This week, violence escalated in areas along the Gaza-Israel border. As a result, one armed Palestinian was killed and another injured; and five other Palestinian civilians were injured. Since the beginning of 2010, Israeli forces have killed nine Palestinians and injured 13 others in Gaza; no Israeli casualties have been reported.

On 11 February, three female children (ages 5, 11 and 12) were injured while in their house, when Israeli tanks fired shells in the direction of Johr El-Dik area (North Gaza). One shell landed inside the home of the three girls, damaging the home. The tank shells were fired at the civilian area after armed Palestinians opened fire at Israeli forces along the border. Later the same day, Israeli airstrikes targeted a group of armed Palestinians, west of Karni crossing, killing one of them and wounding another. In two separate incidents during the week, two Palestinians were injured when Israeli forces opened fire towards two Palestinians, who were reportedly approaching the border fence in Beit Hanoun (north Gaza) and at a group of Palestinian farmers working their land in Johr El Dik area. Several additional airstrikes, resulting in no casualties, were carried out during the week against the site of the Gaza International Airport (destroyed in 2001) and the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border.

Also this week, on five different occasions, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered a few hundred metres into the Gaza Strip and conducted land leveling operations. In one such incident on 11 February, Israeli forces arrested ten Palestinian civilians while they were collecting scrap metals near the border; the Palestinians were released.

Following the 2005 “disengagement”, Israel declared a “buffer” zone along its border with the Gaza Strip, in which Palestinian presence is prohibited. This “buffer zone” was officially expanded from 150 metres to 300 metres in May 2009, though restrictions on access have been imposed, at times, up to a kilometer from the border. The Israeli military enforces the prohibition of entry to the self-declared 'buffer zone' and beyond by opening live fire at persons approaching or entering the border areas as well as through land levelling.

Also during the week, Israeli naval forces continued to enforce access restrictions on Palestinian fishing areas, opening “warning” fire towards Palestinian fishing boats, detaining four fishermen and confiscating two boats. The fishermen were released later that day, without their boats. Since January 2009, Palestinian fishing has been restricted to three nautical miles (nm) from the shore, down from six nm previously.

Palestinian armed factions have continued to fire rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military bases, resulting in no injuries or damage to property during the week; one rocket reportedly exploded prematurely and landed in Gaza Strip, but did not result in casualties or damage to property.

Electricity crisis in Gaza continues

The electricity crisis continues, as power supply has been further reduced, and remains precarious due to a shortage of funds allocated for the purchase of fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP), and recently, recurrent technical failures caused by the lack of spare parts due to the Israeli-imposed

blockade. As a result, the GPP was forced to reduce its electricity production from 60 MW (megawatts) to 30 MW between 12 and 14 February, triggering long rolling scheduled blackouts of up to 12 hours during the two days. Production levels later resumed to 55-60 MW of electricity after the entry of fuel.

Since the beginning of the year, the quantities of fuel delivered to the power plant have declined from a weekly average of 2.2 to 1.7 million litres. The GPP authority has indicated that at least 2.2 million liters of industrial fuel are needed per week to maintain production levels of 55-60MW of electricity, which still leaves the majority of the population with power cuts of 6-8 hours, 4-5 days per week. According to GEDCO, the overall supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip stands now at approximately 197 MW (120 MW purchased from Israel, 60 MW produced by the GPP and 17 MW purchased from Egypt), some 70 percent of the estimated electricity demand (280 MW).

Cooking gas rationing continues (7-13 February)

There was a slight increase in cooking gas imports (682 tonnes) compared to last week (647 tonnes), and a more significant increase compared to the weekly averages during January (575 tonnes) and December 2009 (654 tonnes). However, this represents only 49 percent of the weekly needs of gas (1,400 tones), as estimated by the Gas Station Owners Association (GSOA). Since November 2009, quantities of gas available at the Palestinian General Petroleum Corporation (PPC) are being distributed to bakeries and hospitals first, as a priority, due to ongoing shortfalls.

Limited shipments of exports and entry of glass continue (7-13 February)

Despite the continued prohibition on exports, six truckloads of cut flowers and strawberries exited Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing this week. Since 10 December 2009, 62 truckloads have exited Gaza; 29 truckloads of cut flowers (around four million stems) and 33 truckloads of strawberries (52 tonnes).

Glass continues to be allowed entry to Gaza in limited quantities; since 29 December 2009, a total of 95 truckloads carrying 75,888 sheets have been imported. Of note this week, three truckloads containing one elevator with accessories entered via Kerem Shalom for Al Awda hospital in northern Gaza, after more than one year awaiting clearance.

