



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

17 - 23 February 2010

West Bank

Military activities result in injury of 18 Palestinians and three Israeli soldiers

During the week, Israeli forces injured 18 Palestinians in various incidents throughout the West Bank, compared to a weekly average of 13 Palestinian injuries since the beginning of 2010. In addition, three Israeli soldiers were wounded by Palestinians.

Nine of this week's injuries were sustained during the weekly anti-Barrier demonstration in the villages of Ni'lin (three) and Bil'in (six) villages (Ramallah); four international and Israeli activists were also injured in the latter. The remaining nine injuries included: four Palestinians, including a 16-year-old boy, injured by Israeli forces when the latter intervened after clashes erupted between settlers and Palestinians (Nablus); two injured while trying to enter Israel without an Israeli-required permit (Hebron); and three when Israeli forces fired at a Palestinian vehicle in unclear circumstances near Husan village (Bethlehem).

Clashes erupted between Israeli forces and stone-throwing Palestinians in the city of Hebron after the Israeli cabinet's decision to add the Al Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs, located in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2), to a list of Israeli "national heritage sites". As a result, two Israeli soldiers were injured, while several Palestinian youths suffered from tear gas inhalation. A general strike was announced in the city. Similarly, a strike took place in the city of Bethlehem, protesting the Israeli decision to add the Bilal Mosque / Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem to the list. Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians also took place this week in the Old City of Jerusalem, while the former were escorting an Israeli delegation in this area, resulting in the injury of one Israeli border police.

Israeli forces conducted 132 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages, well above the 2010 weekly average of 113; the majority of these operations took place in the northern West Bank (78). Of note, three of these operations occurred in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem and involved the arrest of 18 Palestinian children, some of them as young as 13-years-old, suspected of throwing stones at Israeli settlers living in this neighborhood; the children were released the same day under house arrest conditions for a period of seven-ten days.

Demolitions and displacement in Area C and East Jerusalem

In Area C of the West Bank, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) demolished a house in the village of Ad Deirat (Hebron) due to the lack of ICA-required building permit, resulting in the displacement of 12 people, including eight children. The ICA also demolished a storage room in the same village and an animal pen in the village of Wadi Al Hussein (Hebron). In addition, the ICA delivered stop work and demolition orders against 17 Palestinian-owned structures, five of them residential, in the villages of Al Jiftlik (Jericho), Al Khader (Bethlehem) and Barta'a Sharqiya (Jenin), due to the lack of building permits.

Thus far in 2010, the Israeli authorities have demolished 47 structures, including 25 residential, in Area C, due to lack of building permit, displacing 121 Palestinians.

In East Jerusalem, hundreds of Palestinians held a protest in the Silwan neighbourhood against the Jerusalem municipality's plan to demolish some 90 Palestinian houses in Al Bustan area of the neighbourhood, placing more than 1,000 Palestinians at risk of displacement. Since the late 1970s, the Jerusalem municipality has designated all of the Al Bustan area of Silwan as an "open" or "green" area, where all construction is prohibited. Only 13 percent of East Jerusalem is currently zoned by the Israeli authorities for Palestinian construction, however, much of this land is built-up already. In 2009, the Israeli authorities demolished 80 houses in East Jerusalem due to the lack of building permit. Since the beginning of 2010, one house has been demolished due to the lack of a building permit.

Israeli settler-related incidents

Nine settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians were recorded throughout the week, almost the same as the weekly average of eight during 2010, resulting in injury to two Palestinians. One of the injuries is a seven-year-old boy, hit by stones thrown by Israeli settlers in the Wadi Hussein area of Hebron City. The other injury is a man assaulted by Israeli settlers, after being stopped while traveling on Road 60, near the evacuated settlement of Homesh (Nablus). Two of this week's incidents involved agricultural property: the seizure of about ten dunams of land, which reportedly belong to farmers from Sinjil village (Ramallah), and the damage of 38 olive trees near Burin village (Nablus). The remaining incidents entailed stone throwing at Palestinian vehicles (three) and intimidation (two).

During this week, 12 incidents involving Palestinians hurling stones (nine) and Molotov cocktails (three) at Israeli settlers near villages in the Ramallah, Qalqiliya, Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron areas were reported. As a result, three settlers were injured and damage to vehicles was reported. Israeli forces imposed curfews on nearby villages following some of the incidents.

Also this week, raw sewage flooded from the Sha'arei Tikva settlement into the yard of the secondary school in the adjacent 'Azzun 'Atma village (Qalqiliya) over a period of two days. As a result, 300 students studying at the school were not able to use the playground of the school. The sewage flooding was stopped after the intervention of the Israeli army. Since 2003, the 'Azzun 'Atma village has been isolated from the rest of the West Bank by the Barrier, forcing its residents to cross a checkpoint to access vital daily services; other Palestinians must obtain visitors' permits to access the village.

In the context of the 10-month freeze on new residential construction in West Bank settlements (excluding East Jerusalem) announced by the Israeli cabinet in late November 2009, the Israeli authorities demolished four concrete foundations in the Revava settlement (Salfit). This is the first time that foundations are demolished; only mobile houses have been so far dismantled. Also this week, around 35 settlers entered the city of Jericho to reach a synagogue inside the city, in defiance of the IDF ban on the entry of Israelis into Area A. The settlers were later evacuated and detained by Israeli forces.

Gaza Strip

Situation along the Gaza-Israel border remains tense; two civilian houses demolished, displacing 13 people

This week, following the detonation of an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) targeting an Israeli military patrol along the border area, which injured one soldier, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered a few hundred metres inside Gaza and razed a rural area east of Al Maghazi refugee camp. During the operation, Israeli forces demolished two civilian houses and one agricultural structure, displacing two families (comprising 13 people). In addition, according to Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, Israeli forces leveled 18 dunums of cultivated agricultural land, including approximately 520 olive and citrus trees, before withdrawing. In another four unconnected incidents during the week, Israeli forces opened “warning” fire at people collecting scrap metal close to the border fence and at Palestinian fishing boats. Access of farmers and fishermen to agricultural areas up to one km from the border and to sea areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore have significantly deteriorated since the end of Israel’s “Cast Lead” offensive in January 2009.

On 20 February, three armed Palestinians were injured during an Israeli airstrike east of Khan Younis, and another two were injured by mortar shells fired by Israeli forces, while reportedly planting an IED near the border fence, north of Beit Lahia. Since the beginning of 2010, Israeli forces have killed nine Palestinians, including four civilians, in the context of Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Another 18, including at least nine civilians, were injured.

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.

Also during this week, a Palestinian man died from electrocution while working inside a tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border. The tunnels constitute a lifeline for the Gaza population, in spite the risk they pose to the lives of people who work inside them, providing goods which are unavailable through the official Gaza crossings. Since the end of Israel’s “Cast Lead” offensive, at least 74 people have been killed and 134 others injured in various tunnels-related incidents.

Internal security incidents continue

This week, two IEDs were detonated in the vicinity of the house of the Prime Minister of the Hamas authorities, Ismail Haniyeh, in Gaza City. While no injuries were reported, a number of nearby houses sustained minor damages. Palestinian security forces in Gaza also safely detonated a third IED, which was planted in the same area. In addition, one armed Palestinian was killed and three others were injured during the week in incidents involving the explosion of IED’s in a military training camp in Gaza City.

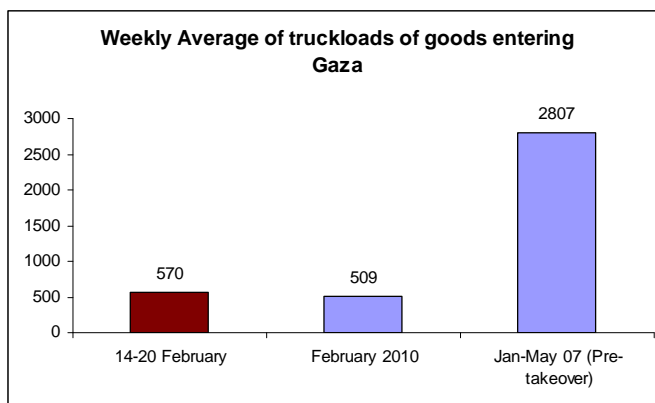
Electricity crisis continues; three children killed in an electricity-related accident

Import of industrial fuel for the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) during the week declined again, to approximately 1.5 million liters, compared to 1.7 million the previous week (and 2.2 million until December 2009, when the current funding crisis began). As a result, the majority of the population

continues to experience scheduled rolling blackouts that reach 6-8 hours, 4-5 days per week. The latest deterioration in power supply has increased the reliance of the population on generators run by fuel. In this context, three children of the same family (eight-year-old twins and one 13-year-old) were killed and five other members of the family were injured in an accident involving the explosion of a generator within a house in Khan Younis.

Last shipment of strawberry leaves Gaza and entry of glass stopped (14-20 February)

This week, seven truckloads of cut flowers (around one million stems) exited Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing; since 10 December 2009, 69 truckloads have exited Gaza including 36 truckloads of cut flowers (over five million stems) and 33 truckloads of strawberries (51 tonnes). The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) indicated that the last export shipment of strawberries took place on 10 February; all the shipments were designated for Europe, while some 250 tonnes designated for the West Bank were not allowed to exit Gaza.



Of note, glass imports stopped as of 17 February; since 29 December 2009, a total of 103 truckloads carrying 66,349 sheets have been imported. Of note this week, one truckload containing computers for UNRWA schools and two truckloads of electric supplies for the Gaza Electricity Company were allowed entry. Entry of other major essential goods, however, including materials for reconstruction, spare parts for water and sanitation projects, clothes, furniture and vehicles remain either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry.

Cooking gas rationing continues (14 - 20 Feb)

During this week, there was a slight decline in cooking gas imports compared to the weekly average since the beginning of 2010 (658 vs. 594 tonnes), representing only 47 percent of the required weekly needs of gas (1,400 tones), as estimated by the Gas Station Owners Association (GSOA). The GSOA also indicates that at least 2,000 tones of cooking gas need to be transferred into Gaza, in addition, to an uninterrupted transfer of at least 250 tonnes each day, to overcome the ongoing shortfall. 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.