



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

17 - 23 March 2010

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 23 March

- Israeli media reports indicate that the Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee has given “procedural approval” for the construction of 200 settlement apartments in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. (*See related developments herein*).

West Bank

Four Palestinians killed in Nablus; clashes in East Jerusalem continued

Israeli forces killed four Palestinians this week, bringing the total of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in 2010 to five. Israeli forces also injured 57 Palestinians, the majority of whom sustained injuries in clashes in East Jerusalem. In addition, five members of Israeli forces were injured. Thus far in 2010, 491 Palestinians and 59 members of Israeli forces have been wounded.

On 21 and 22 March, Israeli forces killed four Palestinians, three aged 19 and the fourth aged 16, in two separate incidents in the Nablus governorate. On 21 March, two Palestinians were killed in the village of Iraq Burin during clashes between residents and Israeli forces. The confrontations occurred after the latter arrived to disperse the residents during a clash with a group of Israeli settlers from Bracha settlement. Over the past four weeks, OCHA has recorded the injury of nine Palestinians as a result of settler violence in the village. On 22 March, Israeli forces shot dead two Palestinian farmers near ‘Awarta village. According to the Israeli DCL in Nablus, the Palestinians were killed after one of them tried to attack a soldier with a pickaxe. Israeli media reports following the incidents indicate that the IDF has found that both sets of killings require further investigation. The Judge Advocate General has opened an investigation into the Iraq Burin case, given conflicting initial testimony gathered. In the case of the ‘Awarta killings, media reports indicate that the IDF’s initial information suggests that the soldiers were not in a life-threatening situation.

Clashes continued in East Jerusalem this week, in particular at the checkpoints of Shu’fat and Qalandiya. During the clashes, 33 Palestinians, including 15 children, were injured; over one-quarter of the injuries were caused by rubber-coated metal bullets. One Israeli soldier was also wounded. Other protests were reported in the Hebron governorate and in Budrus village (Ramallah), where five Palestinian civilians and one Israeli soldier were injured.

According to the Palestinian Prisoners’ Club in Jerusalem, 300 Palestinians have been detained by Israeli forces within the context of clashes and search operations in various parts of East Jerusalem over the past two weeks, including 180 since 17 March. At present, 50 remain in custody, including 20 children. Among the released, 23 have been barred from entering the Old City or Al Aqsa Mosque for 15 days, and ten children have been placed under house arrest.

Also this week, eighteen Palestinians and two international activists were injured during the weekly demonstrations against the expansion of Hallamish settlement (Ramallah) and one elderly Palestinian man was injured while inspecting damages to land caused by Israeli settlers from the same settlement. Three Israeli soldiers were also wounded during the week by stones thrown by Palestinians in one incident in the Palestinian-controlled area of Hebron City (H1). In a separate incident, Palestinians threw a Molotov cocktail at Border Police in East Jerusalem, resulting in no injuries.

During the reporting period, Israeli forces conducted 94 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages, which is below the 2010 weekly average of 110. As in previous weeks, the majority of operations took place in the northern West Bank (46).

Israeli settler-related incidents continue

In addition to the above incident in Iraq Burin, OCHA recorded seven incidents, all of which resulted in damage to Palestinian property. This week's figure compares to a weekly average of three incidents since the beginning of 2010.

Of note, settlers uprooted around 50 olive and almond trees belonging to a Palestinian farmer and ploughed over five dunums of land belonging to Palestinians. According to Palestinian sources, settlers also cut down five olive trees belonging to Qaryut village, vandalized a Palestinian grove near Jit village and threw stones at three houses in Burin (Nablus), breaking some windows. In the Bethlehem governorate, settlers set fire to a number of olive trees in the Abu Rish Valle, where Palestinians, along with international activists, organize regular demonstrations to protest settlers' uprooting and damaging of trees. In this week's demonstration, Israeli forces arrested four international activists, all of whom were later released.

Six additional incidents during the week affected Israeli settlers, two of which resulted in the injury of two settlers in the Jerusalem and Bethlehem areas. The four additional incidents involved the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at settler vehicles driving on roads near Palestinian villages in the Ramallah area, resulting in no injuries.

Update on demolition and eviction orders

The Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) issued a stop work order against a residential structure in the Bedouin community of Al Hadidiya, located in Area C in the Jordan Valley, due to lack of building permit. The order places three families comprising 27 persons (including seven children), at risk of displacement. During the previous reporting period, the ICA delivered an eviction order to a family of two in the same community on the grounds that they are residing in a closed military area. Since the beginning of 2010, OCHA has recorded the demolition of 57 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and another three self-demolitions in East Jerusalem, displacing a combined total of 225 Palestinians.

The Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee granted final approval to the construction plan of 20 settlement housing units at the Shepherd Hotel compound in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Israeli settler organizations have made persistent efforts to take control of land and property and establish a sustained presence in Sheikh Jarrah. In total, some 475 Palestinians are at-risk of displacement due to Israeli settlement plans in the area; in 2009, 53 Palestinians were evicted from their homes in a nearby part of Sheikh Jarrah.

Access updates

In the context of continued clashes in and around East Jerusalem, Israeli access restrictions, including those limiting entry on Friday to the Al Aqsa Mosque compound to men over 50, remained in place. Passage through Qalandiya and Shu'fat checkpoints was also affected negatively. Traffic jams were reported at Qalandiya checkpoint, which was partially closed to vehicular traffic on at least one occasion. At Shu'fat checkpoint, residents report that the checkpoint was closed to vehicles for two days; the Israeli DCL has no record of an official closing.

On 18 March, vehicular access into and out of Hebron City was restricted by flying checkpoints, for a period of three hours. The checkpoints were removed following the arrest of three Palestinians inside the city by an Israeli undercover unit. Also this week, one of the earthmounds that had been removed along Road 35 earlier this year was re-established, restricting vehicular access to at least 50 dunums of agricultural land. In addition, on 21 and 22 March, Israeli forces closed the main road (Road 3526) connecting Dura and Beit Awwa villages, which runs below the settlement of Negohot and the settlement outpost of Mitzpe Lachish. According to Israeli sources, the road was closed after reports of shooting at an Israeli jeep in the area. This road was closed to Palestinian traffic between 2001 and January 2010, when it was re-opened following an Israeli High Court order.

In the Ramallah governorate, the Israeli military distributed two orders requisitioning a total of 173.2 dunums of land from the towns of Beituniya and Al Tireh for construction of a checkpoint and a fence along Road 443. These developments follow a December 2009 ruling by the Israeli High Court of Justice finding that the Israeli military's ban on Palestinian use of the West Bank section of Road 443 (25 km long) was illegal. The Court ordered the authorities to implement, within five months, an alternative arrangement for Palestinian use of this road, without determining the actual parameters of such an arrangement.

UN Secretary General visits Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)

The UN Secretary General (SG) visited Israel and the oPt from 21 to 22 March. During his mission, the SG stressed the UN's commitment to help the parties reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict within the next two years. The SG expressed deep concern about the "worsening humanitarian situation" for Palestinians and urged calm from all parties in response to the most recent violence and the death of civilians. He repeated the UN position that Israeli settlements, including in East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and called for a freeze on settlement activity, evictions and demolitions. The SG welcomed Israel's recent decision to allow the resumption of a UN housing project in Khan Younis, a water and sanitation project in Tel el Sultan, repair to the El Bader flour mill and to expand the list of imports to include aluminum. However, he also noted that this still fell well short of what is needed to address the needs of the population. The SG repeated his call for the immediate lifting of the Gaza blockade, referring to the closure as "counter-productive and causing unacceptable sufferings for human beings." The SG also condemned the launch of rockets by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza onto Israeli territory and called for a prisoner exchange that would see the release of Palestinian prisoners and Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Gaza Strip

One foreign worker dies and 25 Palestinians injured

After two weeks of relative calm, in which no casualties were recorded in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Israeli forces injured 25 Palestinians this week, of whom 24 were wounded as a result of air strikes. Since the beginning of 2010, Israeli forces have killed 10 Palestinians and injured 47 others in the Gaza Strip.

On 18 March, a foreign worker in the Netiv Ha Assara community (southern Israel) was killed by a rocket launched by Palestinian factions in Gaza. This is the first fatality from rocket fire since the end of Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive on 18 January 2009. In the aftermath of the killing, the Israeli Air Force carried out a series of air strikes inside the Gaza Strip. On 19 March, Israeli air strikes hit the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border in the Rafah area, injuring two Palestinians while they were working inside the tunnels. The same day, air strikes were launched against the Gaza International Airport, resulting in the injury of 14 Palestinian civilians. On 22 March, Israeli air strikes hit agricultural land east of Gaza City, resulting in the destruction of four agricultural structures and partial damage to at least ten nearby houses and a school. Eight civilians, including two children (aged 16 and 12) were wounded. The same day, Israeli tanks opened fire towards an area east of the village of Wadi al Salqa (Middle Gaza), targeting three Palestinian civilians who were attempting to enter Israel. During the incident, one Israeli soldier was killed by "friendly fire" and a Palestinian was injured. The three Palestinians who tried to enter Israel were detained.

Throughout the week, a number of rudimentary rockets were fired by Palestinian factions towards southern Israel, including military bases, resulting in no damage to property. Two rockets reportedly exploded prematurely inside Gaza near the border fence.

Israeli access restrictions to land and sea continue; 20 Palestinians detained near the border

Israeli forces continue to restrict Palestinian access to the "buffer zone" along the border with Israel by opening fire on people entering or approaching this area.

On five different occasions, Israeli tanks and bulldozers launched incursions a few hundred metres inside Gaza and withdrew after conducting land leveling operations. During one of these incidents, on 22 March, Israeli forces penetrated the Beit Hanoun area, accompanied by heavy shooting, and detained 20 Palestinians, including six children; 18 were released after being interrogated and two remain in detention. Also during the week, demonstrations were held against the access restrictions on four separate occasions. In two of these protests, Israeli troops opened warning fire at the demonstrators; no injuries were reported.

The "buffer" zone on the Gaza side of the border with Israel was originally declared by the Israeli authorities following Israel's "disengagement" in 2005. In May 2009, it was officially expanded from 150m to 300m, though access restrictions are enforced, at times, up to 1 km from the border. Israeli forces also continued to enforce similar restrictions on Palestinian access to fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from shore.

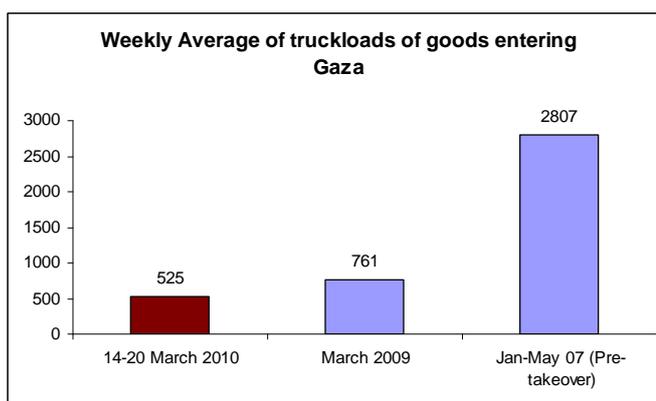
Shortages of fuel continue

Imports of industrial fuel required to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) declined for the seventh consecutive week. This week's import of approximately 1.04 million liters represented only 33 percent of the estimated weekly requirement of 3.15 million liters needed for the power plant's full operation. Since 3 March 2010, the power plant has continued to operate on one turbine, producing only 30 MW (megawatts) of electricity, or 38 percent of the GPP full capacity. As a result, the majority of Gaza's population is experiencing long rolling blackouts of 8 - 12 hours per day; additional power cuts frequently occur due to the extensive overloads on the already overstressed electrical network. The Gaza Electricity Distribution Company also estimates that a population of nearly 10,000 living in south-east Gaza city, East Jabalia and west of Beit Lahia remain without electricity, due to the inability to rehabilitate the electrical networks damaged during Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive.

Cooking gas shortfalls also continued: 840 tonnes of cooking gas entered Gaza, compared to 890 tonnes last week; this constitutes only 60 percent of the weekly estimated needs (1,400 tonnes), according to the Gas Stations Owners Association (GSOA). The cooking gas rationing scheme introduced in November 2009 remains in place. The GSOA also indicated that at least 2,000 tonnes of cooking gas to re-fill thousands of empty canisters, and an uninterrupted transfer of 200-250 tonnes each day have to be made in order to overcome the ongoing shortfall.

Limited exports and glass imports continue (14-20 March)

This week, 525 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, around 19 percent of the weekly average that entered during the first five months of 2007, before the Hamas takeover. The majority of imported goods (87 percent) was food and hygiene items. Glass imports also continued during the week; since 29 December 2009, a total of 142 truckloads carrying over 90,000 sheets of glass were imported. This week, eight truckloads of cut flowers were exported from Gaza via



the Kerem Shalom crossing. Since 10 December 2009, 104 truckloads have exited Gaza, including 71 truckloads of cut flowers (over 11 million stems) and 33 truckloads of strawberries (52 tonnes). Also during the week, it was announced that Israel has approved the entrance of a limited amount of reconstruction items to be used for the completion of a UN housing project and a UN sewage treatment plant.