



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

31 March - 13 April 2010

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 13 April

- 14 April: The Israeli authorities demolished two Palestinian houses and several commercial structures in Area C of the West Bank (in the Bethlehem and Salfit governorates), displacing nine people. These are the first demolitions in Area C since 14 March 2010.
- 15 April: The Hamas authorities carried out two executions in Gaza, the first such executions since its takeover in June 2007. According to Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, those executed were convicted of collaborating with Israel and are among a group of 16 who have been sentenced to death by the Hamas courts in Gaza.
- 15 April: The Israeli authorities allowed the entry of three truckloads of aluminium and three truckloads of wood into the Gaza Strip. This is the first time that aluminium and wood are allowed into Gaza for commercial purposes since June 2007 and October 2008, respectively.

West Bank

34 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces

In multiple incidents that occurred during the two-week reporting period, Israeli forces injured 34 Palestinians, including ten children; five Israeli soldiers and police officers were wounded during this period. Since the beginning of the year, 532 Palestinians and 64 members of Israeli forces were injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The majority of Palestinian injuries (24) occurred in the course of clashes with Israeli forces that erupted during several demonstrations held in the West Bank in protest of Barrier construction, settlement expansion, land access restrictions and calling for the release of prisoners. The bulk of these injuries (22) were inflicted by rubber-coated metal bullets shot by Israeli police officers. Among the remaining Palestinian injuries, five people, including three children, were injured during Israeli forces raids of two villages; in one of the incidents, the injured Palestinians were also arrested.

During the reporting period, Israeli forces conducted a weekly average of 87 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages, well below the 2010 weekly average of 103. As in previous weeks, the majority of operations took place in the northern West Bank (49 on average). Of note, in one of these operations conducted in 'Azzun village (Qalqiliya), Israeli soldiers raided the boy's primary school to search for children suspected of throwing stones at Israeli army jeeps in the vicinity of the village, however; no arrests were reported.

Israeli settler-related incidents continue; five Palestinians and two settlers injured

During the reporting period, there were 13 settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians and resulting in injuries or property damage, and multiple additional incidents involving intimidation, access prevention and trespass. An additional 16 incidents resulting in injuries or property damage during this period affected Israeli settlers, according to the Israeli military.

A total of five Palestinians were injured by Israeli settlers in incidents involving physical assault and stone throwing at Palestinian cars. Two Israeli settlers were also wounded in two separate incidents involving Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli-plated vehicles; following one such incident in the town of Huwwara (Nablus), Israeli forces conducted a search operation and imposed a curfew for ten hours (from 7 pm until 5 am). In addition, there were 16 cases of damage reported to Israeli-plated vehicles due to Palestinian stone throwing or Molotov cocktail-throwing on roads near Palestinian villages in the Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem, Salfit and Nablus governorates.

In an incident involving damage to Palestinian property, farmers from Mikhmas village (Jerusalem) reported that Israeli settlers uprooted 350 trees belonging to the village. According to the Israeli DCL, however, only 180 trees were uprooted and the identity of the perpetrators remains unclear. In other incidents, settlers cut metal fences and uprooted trees at the community of Umm al Kheir (Hebron), while sewage pipes from the Giv'at Ze'ev settlement, which run through the fields of Al Jib village (Jerusalem), burst, damaging at least 50 dunums of agricultural land, for the second time in 2010. Also, in two incidents of intimidation, settlers entered the village of Burin (Nablus) and attacked a Palestinian house and fired in the air to disperse herders while they were grazing their sheep near the Teqoa settlement (Bethlehem).

In the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, a group of Israeli settlers clashed with a Palestinian family, resulting in damage to the house of the Palestinian family; in 2009, a portion of the family's home was taken over by settlers who remain there. In the same area, two additional Palestinian families came under direct risk of displacement, as a settler organization, Nahalat Shimon, initiated legal proceedings to have the families evicted. This is the same organization that was involved in the eviction of two Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah in August 2009 and is currently involved in similar proceedings against six other families in the same neighbourhood, bringing the total number of eviction proceedings underway to eight.

Demolition orders update

In Area C of the West Bank, the Israeli authorities delivered stop work orders against 14 Palestinian-owned structures, of which ten are located in Shi'b al Butum community, south of Yatta area (Hebron) and four in Al Jib village (Jerusalem), due to the lack of building permit. An additional verbal order against a new tent erected was given in Shi'b al Butum. No actual demolitions took place in Area C of the West Bank or East Jerusalem during the period. Since the beginning of 2010, the Israeli authorities have demolished a total of 57 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C, while three houses were self-demolished in East Jerusalem.

Access updates

The Israeli army imposed a general closure on the West Bank, running from 29 March 2010 through 6 April 2010, due to the Jewish holiday of Passover. With limited exceptions, this measure prevents West Bank ID holders with valid permits from accessing East Jerusalem and Israel. During this period, Israeli forces blocked the main roads of Silwan and Wadi Al Joz neighbourhoods in East

Jerusalem, only allowing the passage of pedestrians. As a result, most of the students in Silwan were unable to attend their schools on two days (31 March & 1 April). In the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2), the Al Ibrahimi Mosque was closed to Muslim worshippers for a period of two days, during which Israeli forces deployed heavily along the roads leading to the mosque. Also, Gilo checkpoint (Bethlehem), the main access point into East Jerusalem through the Barrier from the southern West Bank, was closed between 28 and 31 March following a demonstration that took place at the checkpoint. As a result, tourist buses were prevented from accessing Bethlehem City and Palestinian medical cases were not allowed into East Jerusalem through the checkpoint.

In an incident during the reporting period, a 63 year-old Palestinian man from the village of Deir Abu Da'if (Jenin) who was travelling to Jordan, died of a heart attack shortly after being delayed by Israeli soldiers for around one and a half hours at the Al Hamra checkpoint, which controls access to and from the Jordan Valley. The man, who holds French citizenship, was delayed due to the fact that foreign passport holders are not allowed to cross this checkpoint, but was finally allowed through on an exceptional basis.

On 11 April, the Israeli authorities announced that Shu'fat checkpoint, located at the main entrance of Shu'fat refugee camp, will be closed to vehicular traffic between the hours of 11 pm and 5 am daily, for a period of at least two weeks, in order to expand the checkpoint and road infrastructure. The pedestrian lane will remain open.

A new military order places tens of thousands at risk of deportation

A new Israeli military order, which came into force this week, defines any person present in the West Bank without a permit as "an infiltrator", who has committed a criminal offense (punishable with up to 7 years of imprisonment) and can be deported within 72 hours, without judicial review. Based on past practice of the Israeli authorities, those most at-risk due to the new legislation are Palestinians living in the West Bank whose home addresses, as recorded in the population registry, are in the Gaza Strip, as well as people born in the West Bank or abroad who, for various reasons, do not have residency cards. However, due to the ambiguity of the order's language, it could potentially be applied against a much broader category of people. Following the issuance of the order, Israeli human rights organizations sent a letter to the Israeli Defense Minister requesting the annulment of the order. The UN Special Coordinator has raised this matter with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his office will continue to monitor the situation.

Gaza Strip

Sporadic airstrikes and clashes continued

Sporadic airstrikes, incursions and clashes inside Gaza, continued during the reporting period, resulting in the death of two Palestinian armed faction members and the injury of four other Palestinians, including two children aged 18 months and two years. Thus far in 2010, 15 Palestinians, three Israeli soldiers and one foreign worker have been killed and another 63 Palestinians, including 51 civilians, and four Israeli soldiers have been injured in the context of Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel.

This latest wave of airstrikes began on 26 March, during the previous reporting period, in the aftermath of an armed clash that took place near the border and resulted in the killing of two Israeli soldiers and two Palestinian armed faction members. Sites targeted during this wave of airstrikes,

included a police station in central Gaza and a blacksmith workshop and a dairy factory in Gaza City. The latter resulted in the injury of two civilians, including the two children mentioned above, as well as in the total destruction of the factory and damages to a number of surrounding houses.

Israeli forces continue to enforce the ban on access of people to areas in the vicinity of the border. During the reporting, three incidents involving the opening of “warning” fire towards Palestinian farmers working in this area, as well as towards a demonstration protesting access restrictions in the so-called “buffer” zone, were reported. In addition, on six separate occasions, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered a few hundred metres inside the Gaza Strip and withdrew after conducting land leveling operations. One of these incursions, on 13 April east of Al Bureij refugee camp, evolved into a clash with armed Palestinian factions and resulted in the killing of two armed Palestinians and the injury of another two.

Palestinian armed factions have continued to sporadically fire rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military bases, resulting in no Israeli injuries or damage to property. Three Palestinians received shrapnel wounds when one of the rockets landed in Beit Hanoun, north of Gaza. According to media reports, some Palestinian factions announced that they will cease the firing of rockets towards Israel.

Tunnels-related incidents result in one fatality

On 6 April, one Palestinian died as a result of the collapse of a tunnel under Gaza’s border with Egypt, bringing the total 2010 death toll in tunnel-related incidents, including air strikes, tunnel collapse and electrocution, to 13. In spite of the risk they pose to the lives of people who work inside them, the tunnels constitute a lifeline for the Gaza population, providing goods which are unavailable through the official Gaza crossings.

Further decline in fuel; serious injuries in electricity-related incidents

Electricity supply remains extremely precarious due to the shortage of industrial fuel needed to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP). Until November 2009, when the latest deterioration began, the GPP produced approximately 30 percent of the electricity supplied to the Gaza Strip (60-65 megawatts). During the two weeks of the reporting period, fuel imports declined by one-half, compared to the previous period (a weekly average of 0.7 compared to 1.47 million litres), forcing the GPP to continue operating only one of its turbines, which leaves the majority of Gaza’s population with power cuts of 8-12 hours per day. On 9 April, the GPP was forced to shut down the remaining operating turbine and thus reduce electricity production to zero, due to the lack of fuel. This situation triggered longer scheduled rolling blackouts of up to 16 hours for 2.5 days in different areas in Gaza, with the exception of Rafah area, which receives the bulk of all its electricity from Egypt and experiences 4-8 hours of electricity cuts per day. In light of the protracted electricity crisis, the reliance on portable generators for household use has reportedly expanded, resulting in a parallel increase in generator-related accidents. During the reporting period, one accident resulting in the injury of three persons was reported. Local sources indicate that 17 people have died and 36 others were injured in the first three months of 2010 and another 62 throughout 2009 in similar accidents. In this context, Oxfam launched during the reporting period a campaign to raise public awareness about the safe use of generators inside houses in the Gaza Strip.

Cooking gas shortfalls continue

During the reporting period, a weekly average of 640 tonnes of cooking gas entered Gaza, representing only 46 percent of the weekly needs of gas, as estimated by the Gas Stations Owners Association (GSOA). As a result of the continued cooking gas shortfalls, a 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 need to be made in order to overcome the ongoing shortfall.

New items enter Gaza (28 March – 10 April)

A weekly average of 482 truckloads entered Gaza, a 21 percent decline compared to the previous period (612). Similar to previous weeks, food and hygiene items made up the majority of imported goods- 423 truckloads, or 88 percent of total imports. The remaining items included non-edible consumables, construction materials, including glass, and agricultural and medical inputs.

For the first time since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007, Israel allowed a total of 40 truckloads of clothing and footwear to be transported into the Gaza Strip.. According to the Palestinian Trade Centre (PalTrade), some of these items were damaged upon arrival to Gaza. PalTrade also indicates that an estimated 750 containers of both goods are still held by the Israeli authorities in storage in Israel and the West Bank. Also, UNRWA received 92 metric tonnes (MT) of aggregate and 25MT of cement for the upgrading of the Tel El Sultan sewage pumping station in southern Gaza. According to UNRWA, the cement permitted entry constitutes less than 0.0025 percent of the total amount of cement needed for reconstruction purposes in Gaza.

Limited exports leave Gaza

During the two week reporting period, five truckloads of cut carnations exited Gaza via Kerem Shalom Crossing. Since 10 December 2009, a total of 115 truckloads have left Gaza, including 82 truckloads of cut flowers (over 13 million stems) and 33 others of strawberries (52 tonnes). According to the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC), 30 million stems of cut flowers are expected to be exported by the end of this season (ending on 20 May 2010).

