



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

28 April - 4 May 2010

West Bank

14 Palestinians injured throughout the West Bank

Israeli forces injured 14 Palestinians during the reporting period, compared to at least 49 Palestinians wounded in the previous period. Since the beginning of the year, six Palestinians and one Israeli soldier have been killed and 601 Palestinians and 73 Israelis injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Ten Palestinians were injured this week when physically assaulted in separate incidents at Israeli checkpoints in the Jerusalem and Jericho areas (three), at a Barrier gate in the Qalqiliya area (one), near Beqa'ot settlement in the Tubas area (one) and during a protest against land requisition in the Salfit area (five). The remaining four Palestinians, including a ten year-old child, sustained wounds inflicted by rubber coated-metal bullets and gas canisters in two separate weekly demonstrations against construction of the Barrier in Beit Jala (Bethlehem) and the expansion of the Hallamish settlement in the Ramallah area; an Israeli border police was wounded in the latter demonstration.

Israeli forces conducted 93 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages during the week, slightly below the average weekly operations since the beginning of 2010 (101). As in previous weeks, the majority of these operations took place in the northern West Bank (49).

Israeli-settler related incidents

During the week, OCHA recorded nine Israeli settler-related incidents either leading to the injury of Palestinians or to the damage of Palestinian property, along with other incidents of intimidation and harassment, the same number of incidents than the previous week. In 2010, OCHA has recorded 92 such incidents. There were no reports on incidents affecting settlers during the week.

One of this week's incidents resulted in an injury: a six-year-old child who was physically assaulted by an Israeli settler while grazing his sheep in an area isolated by the Barrier, near the Israeli settlement of Shani (Hebron).

One of the gravest incidents resulting in property damage this week involved a group of Israeli settlers from Yitzhar settlement, who entered Huwwara village (Nablus) and vandalized the municipal park; damages were sustained to park lights, sound amplifiers and toys for the park, as well as a number of olive trees located near the park. The assailants also hurled stones at a nearby house, breaking window glass. The Israeli army arrived at the site only after the settlers had left the area. This incident occurred in the context of the so-called "price tag" strategy, in which settlers attack Palestinians and their property in retaliation for measures adopted by the Israeli authorities; earlier that day the Israeli police raided the Yitzhar settlement and reportedly arrested 11 settlers.

In the southern West Bank, settlers from the settlement of Karmi Tzur cut down 20 almond trees owned by a Palestinian from Beit Ummar (Hebron) and settlers from Betar Illit settlement dumped sewage onto two dunums of land owned by Palestinians from Nahalin village (Bethlehem). The latter is the second such incident in the area in as many weeks: in the previous week, sewage from the settlement of Kfar Etzion damaged 70 dunums of agricultural land belonging to Palestinian farmers from Beit Ummar village.

On 1 May, thousands of Israeli settlers and right wing activists arrived to the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem for a religious celebration (Lag Ba'omer), and remained there until the following day under a heavy presence of Israeli forces. Earlier during the week, around 500 Palestinian, international and Israeli activists conducted a weekly demonstration in the neighbourhood protesting the eviction of Palestinians by settlers; no arrests or clashes were reported.

Also this week, two Palestinian men from East Jerusalem were physically assaulted and severely wounded by a group of Israeli men in the ultra-orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim in West Jerusalem, while en route to home (not included in the total number of incidents).

Mosque burned

In the early morning hours of 4 May, a fire broke out in a mosque in Al Lubban ash Sharqiya village (Nablus), damaging furniture and destroying copies of the Qur'an. Fire brigades from Nablus and Salfit were called and the fire was extinguished. According to the Israeli media, an investigation carried out later by the Israeli Fire Brigade Authority indicated that it is highly likely that the fire was started intentionally. However, currently, there is no clear evidence as to the identity of the perpetrators. The head of the village council believes that Israeli settlers set fire to the mosque, as part of the "price tag" strategy; the day before the Israeli Civil Administration demolished five structures under construction in the settlement of Shave Shomron (Nablus). Additionally, IDF officials have recently warned of Israeli settler intentions to vandalize mosques in response to the evacuation of outposts. This is the third act of vandalism targeting mosques reported in the northern West Bank since 11 December 2009.

Update on demolition orders in Area C

No demolitions were carried out in Area C of the West Bank this week. However, the Israeli Civil Administration delivered demolition and stop work orders against five Palestinian-owned structures, due to the lack of building permit. The structures included a health centre in Furush Beit Dajan village (Nablus), a school in Qabatiya (Jenin) and three other structures in the town of Idhna (Hebron). Since the beginning of 2010, the Israeli authorities have demolished a total of 65 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C, displacing 125 people, including 47 children, and one structure in East Jerusalem; three houses were also self-demolished in East Jerusalem, displacing seven people.

Two roads in Nablus area blocked

The Israeli military blocked access to two separate roads in the Nablus governorate that connect Palestinian villages with Road 60, the main north-south traffic artery in the West Bank. In one of the cases, the obstacle installed (an earthmound) blocks an entrance to a recently paved road that connects a neighborhood in Beita village to Road 60. In the other case, the Israeli military reinforced an old earthmound that had been gradually flattened. This latter obstacle blocks a dirt road connecting the villages of Qaryut, Talfit and Jalud villages (approx. 6,000 residents) to Road 60. As a result, residents of these villages need to make a 22 km-long detour in order to reach the main road.

The Israeli army has justified this closure by arguing that the dirt road is located in Area C and was originally done without a permit.

In a separate incident this week, the Israeli army delayed for two hours the staff of an electricity company at an ad hoc “flying” checkpoint, erected at the entrance of a village in the Jenin area (Zabuba), for unclear reasons. This delayed the repair of an electricity problem, which caused a blackout in six villages in the area. During the reporting period, Israeli forces erected 75 flying checkpoints throughout the West Bank, less than the weekly average of 92 since the beginning of 2010.

Gaza Strip

One Palestinian killed in a demonstration near the border areas

Israeli forces shot and killed a 19-year-old Palestinian civilian and injured one foreigner during a protest against restrictions on Palestinian access to the “buffer zone” area along the border with Israel. Since the beginning of 2010, 17 Palestinians (including six civilians), three Israeli soldiers and one foreign national have been killed and another 71 Palestinians (including 59 civilians) and four Israeli soldiers have been injured in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel.

Continued access restrictions to the border area in the Gaza Strip have sparked non-violent demonstrations throughout the Gaza Strip, organized on a daily basis by a group representing farmers and other Gazans living in border-adjacent areas. This week’s fatality occurred when Israeli forces stationed at the border in the Rafah area opened fire with live ammunition towards protestors as they approached the border fence. Also near the border this week, Israeli tanks and bulldozers launched incursions a few hundred meters inside Gaza on three different occasions and withdrew after conducting land leveling operations.

Access restrictions are enforced also beyond three nautical miles from the shore; in two different incidents this week, Israeli naval forces opened “warning” fire in the direction of Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them ashore; no injuries or damage to boats were reported.

Palestinian armed factions fired a limited number of rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military bases, resulting in no injuries or damage to property. In one incident, a mortar shell was fired from a military training camp and landed inside a house, located west of Khan Younis, killing one family member and injuring three others.

Five killed in tunnel-related incidents

In one incident this week, four Palestinians were killed and nine others injured from gas asphyxiation while working inside a tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border. In a separate incident, a Palestinian died in a tunnel collapse. Since the beginning of 2010, 19 Palestinians have been killed and 34 others injured in various tunnel-related incidents, including airstrikes, tunnel collapse and electrocution.

Imports remain below needs (25-31 April)

Imports increased this week by 31 percent, with a total of 625 truckloads of goods entering Gaza, compared to 434 truckloads last week. This week’s figure constitutes around 22 percent of the weekly average of 2,807 truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007, before the Hamas

takeover. Similar to previous weeks, food and hygiene items made up the majority of imported goods (456 truckloads or 74 percent of total imports).

The limited entry of items that have been recently allowed into Gaza continued this week, including a total of 11 truckloads of plastic pipes (PVC pipes), two truckloads of electrical cables for the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility and the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company, and four truckloads of glass. Also, since the beginning of April, 87 truckloads of clothing, 72 of footwear, nine of aluminum, and 14 of wood have been allowed into Gaza. However, entry of other major essential goods, including materials for reconstruction, such as cement, steel bars and paints, furniture, livestock, IT equipment and vehicles, remain either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry.

This week, UNRWA distributed over 2,000 laptop computers that were previously allowed entry by the Israeli authorities. The laptops, funded by a non-profit organization “One Laptop Per Child”, were distributed to children in the Rafah area as part of a project to distribute laptops to children throughout the Gaza Strip by 2012.

No exports exit Gaza; cut flowers season ends

With the end of the cut flowers season, there were no exports from Gaza this week. The season ended earlier than expected this year, primarily due to the low prices received for cut flowers on the global market. Between 10 December 2009 and 18 April 2010, a total of 118 truckloads of exports left Gaza, including 85 truckloads of cut flowers (around 13.8 million stems) and 33 truckloads of strawberries (52 tonnes). Prior to this, there had been no exports from Gaza for over seven months (since 27 April 2009).

Industrial fuel and cooking gas imports increased, but shortages continue

There was a 39 percent increase in industrial fuel imports this week, compared to the previous week (1.46 vs. 1.05 million litres). However, this week’s figure represents only 46 percent of the actual estimated weekly amount of fuel required for the Gaza Power Plant to operate at full capacity. As a result, the majority of the population in Gaza continues to experience power cuts of 8-12 hours per day.

Similarly, higher cooking gas quantities entered Gaza during the reporting period (925 tonnes compared to 503 tonnes during the previous period), however, these quantities represent only 66 percent of the weekly needs of cooking gas, as estimated by the Gas Stations Owners Association. While entry of commercial petrol and diesel continues to be banned through the official Gaza crossing, around 45,000 litres of petrol and 294,000 of diesel for UNRWA were transferred into Gaza this week. Around 100,000 litres of diesel and 100,000 litres of petrol continue to enter Gaza each day through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border.

