



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

5 - 11 May 2010

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 11 May

12 May: Egyptian naval forces pursued Palestinian fishing boats off the coast of Rafah and allegedly rammed one boat. As a result, one Palestinian fisherman was killed and three others were injured.

12 May: The Israeli army stopped its presence on Ras 'Atiya barrier checkpoint (Qalqiliya) after completing the rerouting of the Barrier around the Alfe Menashe settlement. The new route reconnects three villages (over 800 people) from the closed area but leaves some of their land within the Barrier enclave. Two communities will remain isolated between the Barrier and the Green Line.

West Bank

Israeli forces injure 24 Palestinians throughout the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem

Israeli forces injured 24 Palestinians during the reporting period, significantly above the number of Palestinians wounded the previous week (14). An Israeli soldier was also injured. Since the beginning of the year, six Palestinians and one Israeli soldier have been killed and 625 Palestinians and 74 Israelis injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Twelve of this week's injuries were sustained during demonstrations, which took place to protest land confiscation and Israeli settler violence in Iraq Burin village in Nablus (eight), the expansion of Hallamish settlement in the Ramallah area (one) and against the construction of the Barrier in the Palestinian villages of Al Walaja in Bethlehem (two) and Bil'in in Ramallah (one). In the latter village, 40 olive trees were partially burnt by a fire started when tear gas canisters were fired by Israeli forces during the protest; six Palestinians and two Israeli activists were also arrested. Two other demonstrations were conducted in the Hebron area, protesting against the restrictions on access to land near the settlement of Karmi Zur (next to Beit Ummer village) and the closure since 2000 of Al Shuhada Street – the main road leading to Al Ibrahim Mosque – in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2); no casualties were reported.

The remaining 12 Palestinians were wounded in the course of IDF search operations, nine of whom sustained injuries when clashes erupted between Palestinians and Israeli forces during a search operation in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Israeli forces conducted 137 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages during the week, significantly above the average number of weekly operations since the beginning of 2010 (100). As in previous weeks, the majority of these operations took place in the northern West Bank (72). According to Israeli sources, one Israeli soldier was wounded when Israeli forces attempted to prevent stone throwing from Palestinians towards Israeli settlers near Al Mazra'a ash sharqiya village (Ramallah).

Israeli-settler related incidents

During the week, OCHA recorded five Israeli settler-related incidents leading to the injury of Palestinians or to the damage of Palestinian property, compared to nine such incidents recorded the previous week; other incidents of trespass, access prevention and intimidation were also reported. In 2010, OCHA has recorded 97 incidents resulting in Palestinian injuries and damage to property.

Israeli settlers injured five Palestinians, including three children, aged five, nine and 12, in two separate incidents of stone-throwing and physical assault. Among those incidents that led to property damage this week was a fire set by an Israeli settler to three dunums of land belonging to the village of 'Izbet at Tabib village (Qalqiliya), which damaged seven olive trees and 13 olive seedlings, according to the head of the village council.

In addition, sewage from the Betar Illit settlement continued to flow onto agricultural land owned by Palestinians from Nahalin village (Bethlehem), for the second consecutive week, resulting in damage to agricultural property, allegedly due to the lack of capacity by the relevant treatment plant to process the volume of wastewater produced by the settlement.

Also this week, Israeli forces forced an elderly Palestinian couple to leave their olive grove near the settlement of Qedumim (Qalqiliya) while working inside it. The olive grove covers around 35 dunums of land and supports the livelihood of a family of eleven. In a separate incident in the context of the "price tag" strategy, a group of Israeli settlers closed Road 60 in the Ramallah governorate for a period of one hour, to protest the demolition of two structures in the settlement of Hashmon'im.

Tension ran high in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem during the week, when a group of right-wing Israeli parliamentarians visited the Beit Yonatan settlement, accompanied by a heavy presence of Israeli forces. During the visit, clashes occurred between Palestinian residents and Israeli forces, during which tear gas and sound grenades were fired and stones were thrown; no injuries were reported but one Palestinian was arrested. In addition, settlers from the Abraham Avinu settlement in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2) threw water at Palestinians while they were protesting the ongoing closure of Al Shuhada Street (see West Bank casualties section herein).

In three incidents affecting settlers, Palestinians threw a Molotov cocktail and stones at Israeli-plated vehicles driving near the villages of 'Azzun, Nabi Elias and 'Izbet at Tabib in the Qalqiliya governorate. In two of these incidents, one settler was injured and damage to one vehicle were reported. Also, Palestinians threw stones at Israeli settlers when 700 settlers, accompanied by Israeli forces, entered Nablus City to visit the Joseph's Tomb; no injuries were reported.

Update on demolition orders in Area C

While no demolitions were carried out in Area C of the West Bank for the fourth week in a row, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) continues to deliver stop-work orders, the administrative measure preceding the issuance of a demolition order. During the week, the ICA delivered stop work orders against 21 Palestinian-owned structures in the communities of Bani Na'im (Hebron) and Sinjil (Ramallah), due to the lack of building permit. The structures include 18 houses, of which 14 are inhabited and the remaining are under construction. 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 Jerusalem, displacing seven people.

Checkpoint incident impedes access to the Jordan Valley

The Israeli army closed Al Hamra checkpoint, which controls access from Nablus to the Jordan Valley in the northern West Bank, for three hours from 9 am to 12 pm while arresting three Palestinians including two 17 year-old boys, for allegedly carrying pipe bombs. Long queues and delays were reported on both sides of the checkpoint. This is one of four permanently staffed IDF checkpoints controlling all movement to and from the Jordan Valley north of Jericho, of which three are accessible to Palestinians. With the exception of people registered in their IDs as residents of the Jordan Valley (including Jericho), Palestinians remained prohibited from crossing these checkpoints with their private vehicles, unless they have obtained a special permit.

Gaza Strip

No direct-conflict casualties; Israeli restrictions on land and sea continue

The situation remains relatively calm in the Gaza Strip, with no reports of conflict-related casualties. Although Israeli air forces resumed air strikes targeting tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, after a two-week lull, no casualties were reported. 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.

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian access to land inside the “buffer zone” along the Gaza-Israel border continue. During the week, a number of demonstrations protesting these access restrictions took place in border-adjacent areas, without casualty. Israeli tanks and bulldozers, under the cover of heavy shooting, launched incursions a few hundred meters inside Gaza on four separate occasions, withdrawing after conducting land-leveling operations.

Access restrictions also continue to be enforced beyond three nautical miles from the shore; in one incident this week, Israeli naval vessels opened “warning” fire towards Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them ashore. As a result of restrictions on sea access, the Gaza fishing catch continues to deteriorate, affecting the livelihoods of over 3,000 fishermen and their families. According to recently-released figures from the World Food Programme, the fishing catch deteriorated in the first quarter of 2010; for example, declining by one-third in March 2010 (59.1 metric tonnes (mt)) compared to the parallel figure for March 2009 (88.8 mt). Fishing limitations are also expected to affect this season’s overall sardine catch, which runs from March to June and makes up almost 70 percent of the annual fishing catch.

Palestinian armed factions fired a number of rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military bases located on the border, resulting in no injuries or damage to property.

Also this week, the Israeli authorities deported to the Gaza Strip a Palestinian man originally from Gaza, who was living in Beer Sheva in southern Israel. This is the fourth Palestinian deported to the Gaza Strip since 22 April 2010.

Tunnels continue to claim lives

One Palestinian died this week when a tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border collapsed while he was working inside it. Since the beginning of 2010, 20 Palestinians have been killed and 34 others injured in various tunnel-related incidents, including air strikes, tunnel collapse and electrocution.

Imports remain limited to certain types of goods; no exports leave (2-8 May)

A total of 713 truckloads of goods entered Gaza this week through the crossings with Israel, a 14 percent increase compared to the number of truckloads allowed entry last week (625). This week's figure constitutes around one-quarter of the weekly average (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 (490.5 truckloads or 69 percent of total imports).

This week, 15 truckloads of plastic pipes for use by the Palestinian Water Authority, as well as 15 truckloads of wood, ten of aluminum and three of glass entered Gaza. Imports of clothing and shoes also continued; since the beginning of April, a total of 125 truckloads of clothing and 89 truckloads of shoes have entered. Entry of other major essential goods, remain either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry. For the second consecutive week, no exports left Gaza.

Fuel and cooking gas imports remain below needs

Imports of industrial fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) declined slightly; approximately 1.35 million litres of fuel entered Gaza this week, compared to 1.46 million litres last week. This week's figure represents 43 percent of the actual estimated weekly amount of fuel required for the GPP to operate at full capacity. As a result, the majority of the population continues to experience power cuts of 8-12 hours per day. Because of the shortage of electricity, many Gazan households rely on generators run by fuel, posing risks to the population. According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, 29 people were killed and 37 others injured during the first four months of 2010 in generator-related incidents, including generator explosions, carbon monoxide poisoning and fires.

Almost the same quantities of cooking gas entered Gaza this week compared to last week (920 tonnes vs. 925 tonnes). According to the Gas Stations Owners Association (GSOA), this week's cooking gas imports represent 66 percent of the estimated weekly gas needs. As the cooking gas shortfall continues, the rationing scheme that has been in place since November 2009 continues. The GSOA indicates that the demand on cooking gas has declined as the weather got warmer; an estimated daily demand of 200 tonnes of cooking gas are needed in summer compared to 350 tonnes in winter.

