



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

19 - 25 May 2010

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 25 May

26 May: Following rockets launched by armed Palestinians, Israeli air strikes hit a military training base in the Beit Hanoun area of the Gaza Strip for the second time this week. According to Palestinian medical sources, 31 Palestinians, including seven children and six women, were wounded. The base and 26 houses sustained severe damage.

West Bank

Israeli forces injure nine Palestinians

This week, Israeli forces injured nine Palestinians, including four children, in various incidents throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. An Israeli soldier was also wounded. Since the beginning of the year, six Palestinians and one Israeli soldier have been killed, and 637 Palestinians and 75 members of Israeli forces injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Six Palestinians, including a 14 year-old mentally disabled child, sustained injuries in clashes that erupted in the context of weekly demonstrations. Three of these demonstrations were in protest of Israeli settler practices, including violence and intimidation (Iraq Burin, Nablus); restrictions on access to land (Beit Ummar, Hebron) and settlement expansion (Hallamish settlement, Ramallah). In another demonstration in Bil'in village (anti-Barrier), two dunums of olive trees were set on fire by tear gas canisters fired by Israeli forces. Three other Palestinians, including two children, were injured in two separate incidents of clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in the Jerusalem area (Qalandiya checkpoint and Beit Duqqu village). In Beit Duqqu, school children, who were on their way home during the clashes, suffered from gas inhalation.

Palestinian residents of Al 'Isawiya village in East Jerusalem clashed with Israeli forces, who were accompanied by Jerusalem municipality officials, after bulldozers entered the village to demolish an animal shelter; Israeli forces withdrew without carrying out the demolition. In the same village, Israeli forces conducted search operations on two consecutive days, during which they arrested 13 Palestinians, including five children, and set up flying checkpoints at the village's entrances. Israeli forces conducted 88 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages during the week, below the average number of weekly operations since the beginning of 2010 (102).

Israeli settler-related incidents

OCHA recorded six Israeli settler-related incidents that led to Palestinian injuries or damage of Palestinian property. Since the beginning of 2010, 114 incidents resulting in 42 Palestinian injuries and one child killed, or damage to Palestinian property were recorded, double the number of incidents in the equivalent period in 2009 (56). Several other incidents of trespass, access prevention, harassment and intimidation were also

reported.

During the week, Israeli settlers, who recently took over a house in Beit Safafa neighbourhood (East Jerusalem), physically assaulted and injured a 90-year-old Palestinian woman. The woman is from one of the four Palestinian families who were evicted from their houses following an Israeli court decision issued in December 2009 in the context of a dispute over ownership of the houses and the land between the families and Israeli settlers.

In the village of Beit Iksa in the Jerusalem governorate, 100 dunums of land were burned, allegedly set on fire by Israeli settlers, damaging 250 trees. In two separate incidents this week, Israeli settlers set fire to 19 olive trees in the Qalqiliya and Hebron governorates; According to Palestinians sources, the incident in Hebron occurred while settlers were being escorted by Israeli forces. In a separate incident, a settler uprooted ten olive seedlings belonging to a Palestinian from Kafr Qaddum village (Qalqiliya). According to the Palestinian owner, a similar incident took place earlier this year and he has filed complaints to the Israeli police on both occasions, however, so far he has not been informed of any result. In another two separate incidents, Israeli settlers prevented Palestinian farmers in the Tulkarm and Nablus governorates from continuing their work on their land.

Also during the week, settlers from the Abraham Avinu settlement in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2) threw stones and empty bottles at Palestinians while they were protesting the closure since 2000 of Al Shuhada Street, the main road leading to Al Ibrahimi Mosque. In the Ramallah area, Israeli settlers entered the Rawabi housing project, currently under construction and attempted to stop construction works.

During the week, Palestinians threw stones and a Molotov cocktail at Israeli-plated vehicles travelling on West Bank roads in the Ramallah area on four separate occasions; no damage to vehicles was reported. Additionally, according to Israeli media, an Israeli settler woman, who was travelling along with her husband in the Qalqiliya area, was wounded by stones thrown by Palestinians at their vehicle. The husband fired several shots at nearby olive grove and threw stones at a passing Palestinian vehicle.

Israeli authorities announced an easing of access restrictions

During the week, the Israeli authorities announced a number of steps that aim at easing access restrictions in the West Bank. These steps include the removal of 60 obstacles to movement, allowing the entry of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship through all West Bank checkpoints, free access and movement for tourists between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and allowing Palestinian vehicular traffic on a prohibited road (Keidar Road), south of Al 'Eizariya village (Jerusalem). The latter was opened for Palestinian vehicles for one day, on 25 May, during construction works that took place on Wadi Nar road. The Israeli authorities have informed OCHA that implementation of these measures will take place over the course of the next two weeks. Once implemented, these measures are likely to continue the trend of improved Palestinian movement between urban centres, observed during the past two years, and further its positive impact on access to services and livelihoods.

Israeli authorities continue to issue demolition orders in Area C and East Jerusalem

While no demolitions have been carried out in Area C for over one month, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) continues to deliver demolition and stop-work orders due to the lack of

building permit. This week, the ICA delivered such orders against two Palestinian-owned structures, including a house and a water cistern, and land leveling activities in Ar Rakeez and Al Mufaqqara villages in Hebron. The Jerusalem municipality also delivered demolition orders against three animal barracks belonging to families who were evicted from their houses in the Beit Safafa neighbourhood (East Jerusalem). 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.

Israeli forces leveled some five dunums of land and uprooted over 100 trees near the village of Nahalin (Bethlehem) under the argument that the land is "State Land". During the uprooting, the land was declared closed military zone.

Also this week, Israeli forces delivered a requisition order for a strip of Palestinian land in the area of Wadi Al Hussein, located near the settlement of Kiryat Arba in the city of Hebron (Hebron), for the establishment of a "military road". In effect, the order legalizes an already existing dirt road that settlers built in the aftermath of a Palestinian attack in November 2002. The road links the settlement of Kiryat Arba with "Worshippers Road", which leads to the Al Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of the Patriarchs.

Gaza Strip

Gaza-Israel border remains tense; two Palestinians killed

Israeli forces killed two Palestinian members of an armed group and injured two other civilians near the Gaza-Israel border. Since the beginning of 2010, 20 Palestinians (including seven civilians), three Israeli soldiers and one foreign national have been killed, and another 74 Palestinians (including 62 civilians) and five Israeli soldiers have been injured, in the context of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel.

In one incident on 21 May, two Palestinians were killed during an armed clash that erupted between Israeli forces and a group of armed Palestinians, when the latter allegedly attempted to plant an improvised explosive device near the border fence. According to Israeli media, an Israeli soldier was shot and injured later that day. The same day, Israeli air strikes targeted and hit a military training base in Beit Hanoun; no injuries were reported, but one building in the vicinity sustained minor damage.

Israeli forces continue to enforce restrictions on Palestinian access to the Israeli-declared "no go area", or "buffer zone", along the Gaza-Israel border. In this context, two Palestinian civilians were wounded in two separate incidents when Israeli forces opened fire towards a group of Palestinians while they were collecting scrap metal near the border. Also, Israeli tanks and bulldozers launched incursions a few hundred metres inside Gaza on three different occasions and withdrew after conducting land leveling operations. Similar access restrictions continue to be enforced on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore. In two separate incidents this week, Israeli naval vessels opened "warning" fire towards Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them ashore.

Throughout the week, Palestinian factions fired a number of rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military bases, resulting in no injuries or damage to property. Also, a donkey cart

packed with explosives was detonated near the border fence, north of Beit Lahiya, in an attack targeting an Israeli jeep patrolling the area; no human casualties occurred.

An UNRWA summer games camp vandalized

In the early morning of 23 May, dozens of masked gunmen entered an UNRWA summer games camp, west of Gaza City, and set it on fire, destroying its contents. This is one of 35 beach camps constructed for UNRWA's annual "Summer Games" programme, which will take between 12 June and 5 August. The identity of the perpetrators remains unknown. The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon condemned the incident and called upon the local authorities in Gaza to ensure the safety of UN operations and to allow UNRWA to carry out its activities unhindered. According to media, the Hamas authorities have opened an investigation and made some arrests.

Humanitarian agencies highlight the blockade's impact on the agriculture sector

In a press statement released on 25 May, humanitarian aid agencies called upon the Government of Israel to lift access limitations imposed on the entry and exit of materials necessary for the revival of the agriculture and fishing sectors, as well as to allow safe and unrestricted access to farm land and fishing areas. The statement stressed that these restrictions continue to suffocate the agricultural sector, directly contributing to rising food insecurity; over 60 percent of the households in the Gaza Strip are now food insecure. Of particular concern, farmers and fishermen's lives are regularly put at risk, due to Israel's enforcement of its access restrictions. In addition to the above, the humanitarian community urges the Israeli authorities to allow the entry of material required to upgrade Gaza's wastewater treatment infrastructure in order to avoid additional contamination of agricultural land and to create an alternative source of water for irrigation.

Rafah Crossing exceptionally opened; over 5,500 exit Gaza

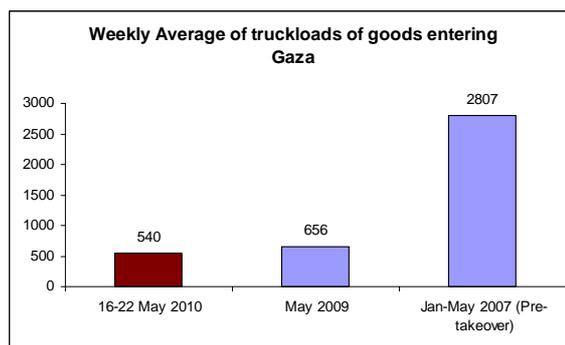
The Rafah border crossing with Egypt was exceptionally opened for six days, between 15 and 20 May, for the third time since the beginning of 2010. During the opening, a total of 5,526 Palestinians left the Gaza Strip and another 908 were allowed to return. Similar to previous openings, access via the crossing has been limited to humanitarian cases, including patients and their accompaniers, and other Palestinians, including students enrolled in universities abroad, businessmen and holders of visas to other countries. An additional 614 Palestinians who had registered their names with the local authorities to leave the Gaza Strip were denied exit by the Egyptian authorities.

Imports of industrial fuel and cooking gas remain below needs

Imports of industrial fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) increased by around 11 percent this week, compared to last week (0.94 vs. 0.85 million litres). This week's amount represents 30 percent of the actual estimated weekly amount of fuel required for the power plant to operate at full capacity. As a result, the majority of the population continues to experience 8 to 12 hours long power cuts per day. By contrast, imports of cooking gas further declined this week (646 vs. 899 tonnes), representing 46 percent of the average weekly needs, as estimated by the Gas Stations Owners Association. As shortfalls continue, the rationing scheme for cooking gas, introduced in November 2009, remains in place.

Limited entry of construction materials continues; imports decline (16-22 May)

The entry of new items of construction materials continued during the period, however in limited quantities. During the Gaza crossing reporting period (16-22 May), two truckloads carrying 40 tonnes of cement for the UNRWA housing project in Khan Younis were imported, while an additional 400 tonnes of cement for the same project entered on 24 and 25 May. About 13 percent of the needed materials for this project are scheduled to enter Gaza by the end of May. Also, one truckload of gravel for the rehabilitation of Al Quds hospital in Gaza City (which sustained severe damage during the “Cast Lead” offensive), five truckloads of plastic pipes for the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, and one truckload carrying spare parts for maintenance of the Gaza Power Plant, entered Gaza. Furthermore, for the first time since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007, three truckloads carrying mini buses for UNRWA were allowed into Gaza. Imports of clothing, shoes and wood continue; a total of 187 truckloads of clothing, 107 of footwear and 71 of wood have entered Gaza since the beginning of April. Following the entry of these new materials, the UN Secretary-General welcomed the “modest progress” that has been achieved in Israel’s facilitation of a number of priority projects and widening the list of commercial goods allowed into Gaza.



Gaza imports through the crossings declined further this week, by approximately 15 percent, compared to last week (540 vs. 637.5 truckloads). This decline could be attributed to an Israeli holiday, during which the crossings were closed for one day during the reporting period. This week’s figure constitutes around 19 percent 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 (400 truckloads or 74 percent of total imports). As with the past four weeks, no exports left Gaza.