



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

19 –25 AUGUST 2009

LATEST DEVELOPMENT SINCE TUESDAY, 25 August 2009

- On 27 August, one Palestinian fisherman was shot and killed and another one wounded by Israeli naval forces patrolling the sea along the northern area of the Gaza Strip coast.

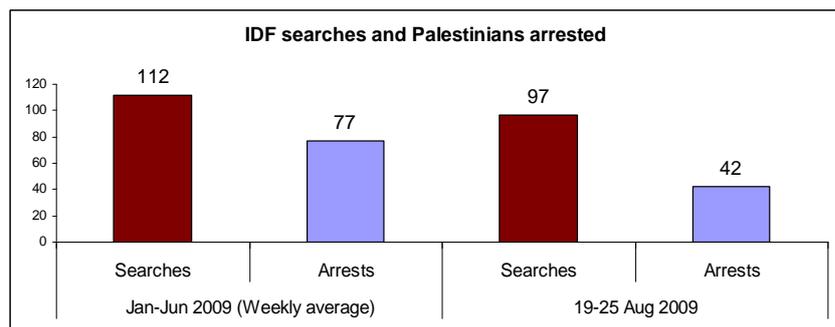
West Bank

Military activities affecting civilians

The declining trend of Palestinian injuries in the context of Palestinian-Israeli conflict observed since April 2009, despite minor fluctuations, continued this week. During the week, Israeli forces injured four Palestinians in the West Bank, significantly lower, than the 2009 weekly average of 21 injuries. One Palestinian was injured during confrontations between stone-throwing Palestinians from the town of Idhna (Hebron) and Israeli forces patrolling the area. The three others, including a 16 year-old boy, were wounded during confrontation with Israeli forces in anti-Barrier demonstrations in Al Ma'sara village (Bethlehem).

Also this week, in addition to the weekly anti-Barrier protest in Ni'lin and Bil'in villages (Ramallah), residents of Beit Surik and Biddu villages (Jerusalem), together with international and Israeli peace activists, demonstrated in front of several Barrier "agricultural gates", protesting restricted access to farming land isolated by the Barrier. In another demonstration held this week, residents of 'Iraq Burin village (Nablus), along with international peace activists, protested the ongoing expansion of the Bracha settlement; seven protesters suffered tear gas inhalation.

Israeli forces continued to conduct search and arrest operations inside West Bank cities and villages. The total number of operations increased slightly this week (97) compared to the last week (95). Of the total operations, 71 were conducted in the northern West Bank, 15 in the south and eleven in the central region.



Displacement and settlement expansion in East Jerusalem

Members of the nine Palestinian families evicted from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem on 2 August are divided between neighbours and relatives, while others continue staying on the sidewalk in front of their homes. Based on their refugee status, all the families have received emergency assistance from UNRWA, which included cash, tents and educational kits. During this week, a number of senior PA (Palestinian Authority) officials attended a Ramadan dinner (*Iftar*) in front of the homes of the evicted families.

Also in East Jerusalem, according to the Israeli media, a settler group submitted to the Jerusalem Municipality for consideration a plan calling for the construction of 104 housing units in the middle of the Palestinian neighborhood of Ras Al Amoud. Until recently, the headquarters of the “Judea and Samaria District” of the Israeli Police were located at the proposed site. According to the plan, the new settlement will be connected through a foot bridge to the existing settlement of Ma’ale Zeitim, on the opposite side of the road, forming the largest Israeli settlement in a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem. The approval and implementation of this plan would likely have a serious impact on the life of the thousands of Palestinians residing in this neighborhood.

In the Old City this week, a Palestinian man was forced to demolish his house after he received a demolition order from the Jerusalem Municipality, due to the lack of the required building permit, resulting in the displacement of two people. Since the beginning of the year, 43 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished in East Jerusalem, due to the lack of building permits.

Settler-related incidents

During the week, there were seven incidents involving Israeli settlers and affecting Palestinians, the same as the weekly average since the beginning of 2009, and resulted in one injury. Incidents included physical assault, access prevention, opening fire and trespassing. One additional incident targeted settlers in the stoning of cars in Ramallah. No injuries were reported.

Of note during the week: in the central area, Israeli settlers physically assaulted and injured a Palestinian near Jaba’ village (Jerusalem). Also, settlers opened fire towards a Palestinian vehicle near Silwad in Ramallah, resulting in no injury. In the south, tension escalated in the H2 area of Hebron City, when Israeli forces closed and prevented calls for prayers in Al Ibrahimi Mosque on 19 August, in order to allow settlers to celebrate a religious event. Also on 22 August in the H2 area of Hebron, Israeli settlers harassed Palestinian shop-owners.

Lack of adequate law enforcement on violent Israeli settlers by the Israeli authorities is an ongoing source of concern. This week, the Israeli media reported that the Israeli police closed the investigation file of an incident that occurred on 8 June 2008 in south Hebron, during which three Palestinian family members were severely beaten and injured by masked settlers. While the incident was videotaped, the police, according to the media report, failed to produce a single suspect, resulting in the closure of the investigation.

Family visits for Palestinian prisoners suspended

On 25 August, the Israel Prison Service (IPS) suspended the ICRC-organized family visits of West Bank Palestinians to their relatives held in two Israeli prisons (Hadarim and Shikma prisons). According to the Israeli media, the IPS decision was taken to avoid possible confrontations between the visitors and Israeli demonstrators protesting the conditions in which captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is being held in Gaza by the Hamas authorities, including the denial of ICRC and family visits. Visits to another prison (Megiddo) were conducted as schedule that day. Residents of the Gaza Strip have been prevented from visiting their relatives held in Israeli prisons since the imposition of blockade in June 2007.

Restricted access to East Jerusalem during Ramadan

The Israeli authorities announced that during the month of Ramadan that began this week, Palestinian men and women holding West Bank ID cards who are over the age of 50 and 45, respectively, as well as boys and girls under the age of 12 and 16 respectively, will be allowed entry into East Jerusalem for Friday prayers without a permit; married men between 45 and 50 and married women between 30 and 45 can apply and be eligible for an entry permit. Palestinians not included in one of the above categories, including the entire population of the Gaza Strip, will be barred from accessing East Jerusalem for Friday prayers.

Gaza Strip

Military activities; four unarmed Palestinians killed

After four weeks of relative calm and no casualties in Gaza, this week four Palestinian civilians were killed and another 11 were injured by Israeli forces, and one Israeli soldier was injured by Palestinians. Since the implementation of ceasefires on 18 January 2009, a total of 38 Palestinians and one Israeli were killed and 87 Palestinians and six Israelis were injured in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza and southern Israel.

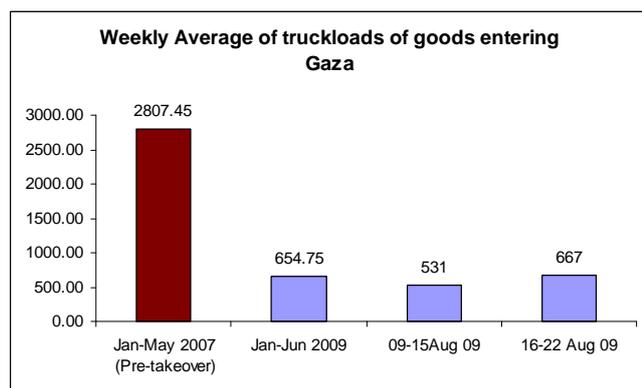
In one of this week's incidents, a 16 year-old Palestinian boy was killed and two other Palestinians were shot and injured by Israeli forces in Northern Gaza. According to an Israeli media report, the boy was targeted after he entered the so-called "buffer zone" near the border fence. In a similar incident, a 60 year-old farmer was shot and injured by Israeli forces while working on his land east of Beit Hanoun, 700 metres away from the border fence. In March 2009, the Israeli military dropped pamphlets warning the population to maintain a distance of 300 metres from the border, however, farmers have regularly reported being prevented from accessing areas as far as 1000 metres from the border by means of "warning" shots. Similar restrictions are imposed on fishermen, who are prevented from accessing sea areas beyond three nautical miles from the coast. On eight incidents during the week, Israeli patrol boats opened warning fire towards Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them to return to shore, but resulting in no casualties.

Also this week, three unarmed Palestinians were killed and seven others injured, when the Israeli Air Force targeted and destroyed a number of tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. This was the first aerial attack on tunnels since 2 May 2009. In addition, a 17-year old Palestinian boy died this week after falling down inside a tunnel.

Palestinian armed factions continued to fire sporadic rounds of rudimentary rockets and mortar shells towards southern Israel, including military bases. This week, an Israeli soldier was lightly injured after two mortar shells landed near a military base.

Weekly average of imported truckloads increases, but remains below needs

This week (16-22 August), there was a 25 percent increase in the number of truckloads that entered Gaza, compared to last week (667 compared to 531). This week's figure constitutes less than one-quarter of the weekly average of truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007, before the Hamas takeover. Similar to previous weeks, truckloads carrying food and hygiene items made up 95 percent of the imported truckloads, with the remaining five percent consisting of agricultural materials, medical supplies and non-edible consumables.



The entry of other major essential goods including materials for reconstruction (cement, steel bars, glass, wood and others), spare parts for water and sanitation projects, packaging material, industrial and electrical materials, livestock, IT equipment and vehicles remain either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry. No exports were allowed this week. Gaza's last shipment of exports was on 27 April 2009.

Frequent blackouts continue to impede public services in Gaza

Around 2.2 million litres of industrial fuel have been delivered this week to the Gaza Power Plant, representing approximately 70% of the amount of fuel needed to operate the plant at full capacity. As a result of the electricity deficit, Gaza's electricity company continued to implement scheduled blackouts lasting 6-8 hours a day, five days a week. These blackouts have continued to affect the normal functioning of public services, including water and wastewater pumping and management and health services at hospitals. According to the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, power cuts have limited the regular supply of running water throughout the Gaza Strip to 6-8 hours, one to four times a week.

Drug shortages disrupt treatment to chronically-ill patients

According to WHO, the number of drug items that are currently out of stock in the Ministry of Health's (MoH) Central Drug Store in Gaza has increased to 100. This increase has occurred due to a prolonged delay in the clearing process of a new shipment of drugs planned to be delivered by the MoH in Ramallah. Drug shortages are disrupting the medical treatment provided, among others, to chronically-ill patients, including 400 patients who depend on kidney dialysis and many cancer patients.