



## PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

14 – 20 OCTOBER 2009

### Latest Developments since Tuesday, 20 October

- After Israel allowed the import of necessary materials this week, UNICEF reported that it will immediately start installing two desalination stations in Rafah and Khan Younis. The equipment will support two wells, providing 50 cubic meters of drinkable, fresh water per hour to 40,000 people in Gaza.
- The Israeli High Court of Justice issued a decision declaring illegal the prohibition imposed by the IDF on the use of a 2 km-long segment of Road 3265 in the Hebron governorate by Palestinians. The decision is based on the Court's finding that the harm stemming from this prohibition on the everyday lives of Palestinians living in this area is disproportionate, compared to the security considerations that led to the imposition of the prohibition.
- In the framework of a petition to the High Court of Justice, the state informed the court that it will allow 20 families from Bir Al Idd, a community of cave dwellers in south-east Hebron, to go back to their homes and lands as of the 28th of October 2009. In 1999, these families were evicted from their homes by the IDF, and since then they were prevented to return due to systematic violence by Israeli settlers.

## West Bank, including East Jerusalem

### Level of Palestinian injuries decreases

During the reporting period, the number of Palestinian injuries in incidents involving Israeli security forces declined significantly, compared to the previous week, due primarily to the end of confrontations in East Jerusalem and adjacent suburbs that began on 27 September with clashes at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound.

This week, Israeli forces injured 11 Palestinians in the West Bank, including two children, compared to 21 Palestinian injuries last week and a weekly average of 17 injuries since the beginning of 2009. One injury occurred when Israeli soldiers assaulted a Palestinian man at the 'Azzun Atma checkpoint (Qalqiliya), after he allegedly tried to enter Israel without a permit. The remaining ten injuries occurred during the weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations in the villages of Ni'lin, Bil'in (Ramallah) and Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem) and were caused by rubber-coated metal bullets, physical assault, and being hit by tear gas canisters. During the demonstrations, two internationals and one Israeli border police also sustained injuries.

Also during the week, Israeli forces conducted 85 search operations inside Palestinian villages, the majority of which took place in the north (54); 62 Palestinians were arrested. This compares to a weekly average of 109 operations and 70 arrests since the beginning of the year. According to the IDF, some of this week's search operations were triggered by stone-throwing incidents by Palestinians at Israeli-plated vehicles.

The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem reported that the Israeli Military Police opened a criminal

investigation regarding vandalism by Israeli forces on eight Palestinian vehicles in the south Hebron area. The vehicles, which were allegedly used to transport Palestinian laborers into Israel without permits, were abandoned when the soldiers chased them. Two IDF officers responsible for this area were suspended pending investigation.

### **Olive harvest continues: Israeli settlers cut down Palestinian trees and attack harvesters**

The 2009 olive harvest season, which only began last week, is expected to end in the coming days, due to the extremely poor yield, which is estimated to be only 10 percent that of a peak season. A small yield was expected this year, given that this is the off-season of the two year cycle; however, the adverse weather conditions earlier this year have made this year's yield worse. As a result, the amount of time that Palestinian farmers spend in the field is significantly less than in previous seasons, thus reducing the likelihood of exposure to settler violence and access restrictions. In addition, the Israeli authorities have adopted several measures to protect Palestinian farmers from settlers' attacks, including the deployment of a special Border Police battalion in sensitive areas.

Nevertheless, during the week six incidents of settler violence in the context of the olive harvest were reported, none of which resulted in injuries. These incidents included harassment, olive theft and uprooting of trees, mainly in the central and southern West Bank. In one of these incidents, a group of 50-60 settlers from Ma'ale Levona settlement attacked Palestinian farmers from Sinjil village (Ramallah) en route to pick olives; Israeli forces, which were present in the area, subsequently evacuated the settlers, allowing Palestinians to pick their olives. In another incident, settlers from Adei Ad settlement outpost cut down 55 olive trees belonging to farmers from Al Mughayyir village (Ramallah), after Israeli soldiers arrested two of the settlers for stealing olives belonging to the Palestinian village.

Access to olive groves in the proximity of, or within, some settlements, and to land located near the Barrier gates continues to be restricted. In the northern West Bank, Israeli forces require prior coordination between farmers, the Palestinian DCL and the Israeli DCL (District Coordination Liaison Office). This week, Palestinians from 'Azmut village (Nablus) were denied access by the Israeli army to their olive groves in the proximity of Elon Moreh settlement because they had not coordinated their entry in advance.

In the southern West Bank, this is the first olive harvest that the permit system was implemented, following the declaration of land between the Barrier and the Green Line as closed ("seam zone") on January 2009. The Palestinian DCL reported that approximately half of the 420 permit requests submitted by Palestinians to access their olive trees located on land behind the Barrier were approved by the Israeli authorities in the Ithna area (Hebron).

### **Other settler violence incidents**

In addition to the incidents reported above, another five incidents of settler violence affecting Palestinians took place during the reporting period, two of which have resulted in the injury of 16 Palestinians.

On 20 October, clashes between settlers and Palestinians erupted in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, when the former attacked the tent of the Al Ghawi family, who was evicted from its house on 2 August 2009. As a result, 11 Palestinians were injured and some Palestinian property was damaged. The police subsequently intervened in the incident and arrested five Palestinians and

four settlers. This incident followed the intensification of settler presence in Sheikh Jarrah during the reporting period in the context of the end of the Jewish holiday season. In addition, a group of settlers from Gilo settlement in East Jerusalem, physically assaulted and injured five Palestinians from Bethlehem City, including three boys, while they were in a park, located near the settlement.

Also this week, four stone-throwing incidents by Palestinians at Israeli-plated vehicles in the Ramallah area were recorded by OCHA; one of the incidents next to Kharbatha Bani Hareth village resulted in the injury of one settler. In addition, the IDF reported 13 incidents of stone-throwing at Israeli vehicles, a few of which resulted in damage to cars. In a separate incident, a settler was seriously injured by a Molotov cocktail, thrown by Palestinians, while driving his vehicle near Al Fawar Refugee Camp (Hebron).

### **Concern over possible imminent eviction in Sheikh Jarrah**

There is increasing concern regarding the possible eviction of another Palestinian family of five members, including one child, from their home in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, as the deadline for the evacuation of the house specified in the eviction order issued previously occurred this week (15 October). On 31 December 2008, the Jerusalem District Court ruled in favour of a group of Israeli families claiming ownership of the land, on which the house is built. In early August 2009, 53 people belonging to two families were evicted from their homes in a different quarter of Sheikh Jarrah, under the same circumstances.

### **Demolitions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem**

Also in East Jerusalem, Palestinians self-demolished two structures, a house under construction and a bakery in Jabal Al Mukabber and Shufat neighbourhoods respectively, following the issuance of demolition orders by the Jerusalem Municipality, due to the lack of building permits. Since the beginning of the year 47 structures were demolished in East Jerusalem for this reason, resulting in the displacement of 201 people.

In Area C of the West Bank, the Israeli Civil Administration distributed nine demolition and stop work orders in the villages of Al Jiftlik and Nuwei'ma (Jericho), due to the lack of permit, putting at risk of displacement 70 people, including 44 children. Of these, four demolition orders were issued against residential structures and five stop work orders against two residential structures, two animal pens and a plot of land, the ownership of which remains disputed between Palestinians who cultivate the land and the Israeli authorities. Since the beginning of the year, 180 structures were demolished in Area C, resulting in the displacement of 319 people. While since July 2009, there have been no actual demolitions in Area C, there are over 3,000 outstanding demolition orders affecting Palestinian-owned structures in Area C that can be executed at any given moment.

### **Update on access and movement**

On 15 October, Israeli forces closed for several hours Huwwara checkpoint, which controls Palestinian access to and from Nablus City from the south, allegedly due to a high security alert around the city. As a result, long queues and major delays were reported at the checkpoint. Since 7 July 2009, all Palestinians have been allowed to cross this checkpoint with their vehicles, without a permit; Israeli forces conduct random checks of vehicles and people.

During the previous two weeks, OCHA recorded the removal of 12 movement obstacles along Road 60 and Road 325 in the Hebron area, the most significant of which allows approximately 2,500 residents of the Hawawra area, north of Halhoul, to access Road 60. Following a number of removals

in previous weeks, the total number of internal movement obstacles stands at approximately 580.

### **Re-routing section of the Barrier in Jerusalem; Lazarus checkpoint no longer operational**

A small segment of the Barrier around East Jerusalem, in the A-Shayyah area, was recently re-routed, following which, the Lazarus checkpoint, operating along this segment ceased to be operational. As a result, 30 families with Jerusalem IDs, living in an area separated from the rest of the city by the Barrier, must now make a 13-kilometre detour to access Jerusalem through the Zayem checkpoint.

## **Gaza Strip**

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### **No direct conflict fatalities for the second week in a row; injuries and deaths from tunnels continue**

For the second week in a row, there are no fatalities reported in Gaza in the context of Palestinian-Israeli violence. During the reporting period, the Israeli air force targeted and bombed a tunnel under the Rafah-Egypt border, injuring four Palestinians while working inside the tunnels. According to the IDF, the attack was in response to a rocket fired by armed Palestinians towards southern Israel. In addition, on two separate incidents, one Palestinian was killed and 11 others injured following the collapse of a tunnel. Since the end of the "Cast Lead" offensive, OCHA has recorded the death of 55 people in tunnel-related incidents.

Israeli forces have continued to prohibit Palestinian access to agricultural land along the border fence and to fishing areas within three nautical miles from the coast, by opening warning fire in the direction of farmers and fishermen. During the reporting period, Israeli naval vessels opened fire against Palestinian fisherman on at least four occasions, forcing them ashore. The current sardine season (which constitutes 70 percent of the fishing catch) is severely affected by the restrictions; due to the fact that sardine is available in larger quantities only beyond six nautical miles from the shore. As a result, in September 2009, the fishing catch declined by 53 percent compared to the same month during 2008, before the imposition of the three nautical miles limit.

### **Over 800 Palestinian students still waiting to leave for studies abroad**

In a recent statement, the Israeli human rights organization GISHA reports that following the start of the academic year at many institutions of higher education around the world, 838 Palestinian students are still waiting to leave Gaza to study abroad. The students cannot leave due to the restrictive criteria for exiting Gaza via the Erez and Rafah border crossings, controlled by Israel and Egypt respectively. Figures by the Palestinian Interior Ministry in Gaza indicate that 1,983 students, who have been accepted into educational institutions abroad have registered for permits to exit via the Rafah Crossing since the start of the year, of whom only 1,145 managed to pass; 69 additional students left via Erez crossing. An additional unknown number of students were unable to apply for a Rafah exit permit, due to their inability to obtain a visa for countries which require a preliminary interview at their consulates in Jerusalem or the West Bank, due to Israel's refusal to issue the required exit permit.

### **Growing concern over reduction in the import of cooking gas**

The Chairman of the Gaza Petrol Company has expressed grave concerns over the decision taken by

the Israeli authorities to substitute the Nahal Oz fuel pipelines with new ones, located at the Kerem Shalom crossing. According to the Chairman, the new pipeline is logistically incapable of transferring sufficient amounts of fuel to meet the needs of Gazan residents, and is likely to result in a reduction of the amounts of industrial fuel and cooking gas being transferred, and leave no room for the transfer of diesel and gasoline. While most of the current diesel and gasoline supply is smuggled through the tunnels (see below), cooking gas and industrial fuel can only be imported through the crossings with Israel.

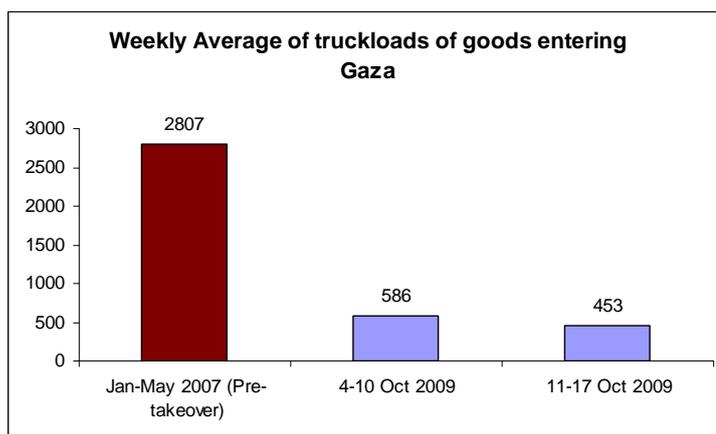
The chairman of the Gaza Petrol Company also raised particular concerns over the resumption of shortages of cooking gas since the beginning of October, following a reduction in the frequency of the supply from five to two times per week. Gaza currently receives a weekly average of around 500 tonnes of cooking gas, approximately 29 percent only of the estimated daily needs.

During the reporting period, a total of 2.15 million litres of industrial gas for the Gaza power plant entered, the majority through the Nahal Oz fuel pipeline, which opened on two days only; 350,000 litres entered via Kerem Shalom. In addition, 4.77 tonnes of cooking gas entered through Nahal Oz. The amounts of industrial fuel and cooking gas that entered this week make up 66 percent and 26 percent of Gaza’s weekly needs respectively. With the exception of last week, when no cooking gas entered Gaza, this week’s import of cooking gas was the lowest since mid-June 2009. The Gas Stations Owners Association indicated that they were forced to close on some days during the last two weeks due to a lack of cooking gas.

No Israeli petrol and diesel have entered during the reporting period. However, Egyptian petrol and diesel, which is transferred through the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, remain available on the open market with nearly 100,000 lit of diesel and 100,000 lit of petrol are being transferred into Gaza per day.

### Decrease in Gaza imports; weekly average of imported truckloads remain below needs (11 - 17 Oct 2009)

This week, a total of 453 truckloads of goods, including 64 truckloads (14 percent) designated for aid agencies entered Gaza, constituting an approximately 23 percent decline, compared to the number of truckloads that entered during last week (586). This week’s figure constitute about 16 percent of the weekly average of truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007 (2,807), before the Hamas takeover.



Similar to previous weeks, food and hygiene items made up the majority of imported goods - 412 truckloads or 92 percent of imported goods. The remaining eight percent included limited shipments of agricultural materials, packaging materials, medical supply and non-edible consumables. While major construction material remains almost totally barred from entering Gaza, this week, three truckloads of plastic pipes entered via Kerem Shalom crossing; this is the first shipment of plastic pipes since 11 May 2009.

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, IT equipment and vehicles remain either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry. While some of these materials are smuggled through the tunnels, the tunnels do not constitute a sustainable alternative to the resumption of the movement of goods through the official crossings. Furthermore, even if available in limited quantity, they are not accessible to the majority of the population due to high prices. No exports were allowed out from Gaza this week. Exports from Gaza were last allowed out on 27 April 2009.