



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

21 – 27 OCTOBER 2009

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 27 October

- On October 28, Israeli police raided and dismantled the tent belonging to a Palestinian family in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, who was evicted from their home in August 2009. The contents of the tent were confiscated as well.

West Bank

Resumption of clashes in occupied East Jerusalem led to an increase in injuries

Most of the injuries this week occurred during clashes at the Al Aqsa Mosque Compound in East Jerusalem. Following almost two weeks of relative calm, clashes erupted again on 25 October when Jewish clerics called on their followers to perform rituals inside the compound and Muslim political and religious leaders called on Palestinians to protect Al Aqsa compound. As a result of the clashes, 18 Palestinians, including four children, sustained injuries caused by rubber-coated metal bullets and burns when hit by sound bombs, and dozens others suffered teargas inhalation and bruises due to physical assault. Three Israeli policemen were also injured. Clashes also spread to the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ras Al Amoud; no injuries were reported. In a separate incident the following day, a Palestinian woman stabbed an Israeli security guard at Qalandiya checkpoint, injuring him.

Among this week's other injuries, eight Palestinians, including three children, were wounded during the weekly anti-Barrier demonstration in Ni'lin village (Ramallah), three of them by plastic-coated rubber bullets and four by gas canisters.

In total this week, Israeli forces injured 26 Palestinians throughout the West Bank, compared to 11 Palestinians wounded last week and a weekly average of 17 injuries since the beginning of 2009. Four Israeli security officers were injured by Palestinians during the same period.

In a separate incident, a Palestinian man died in a car accident, which occurred after his vehicle turned over on the road between 'Awarta and Beita villages (Nablus), reportedly while trying to escape from an Israeli patrol.

Also during the week, Israeli forces conducted 75 search operations inside Palestinian villages, the majority of which took place in the north (47); 50 Palestinians were arrested. This compares to a weekly average of 109 operations and 70 arrests since the beginning of the year.

Six houses demolished in East Jerusalem; 26 people, including 10 children, displaced

On 27 October, the Jerusalem Municipality demolished three buildings in the East Jerusalem neighborhoods of Anata, Sur Bahir and Jabal al Mukkabbir, due to the lack of building permit. As a result, six families, comprising 26 people, including ten children, were displaced. In addition, two families comprising 19 people, including eight children, were affected by the partial demolitions of their houses in Jabal al Mukabbir.

Since the beginning of 2009, a total of 52 structures were demolished in East Jerusalem, resulting in the displacement of 227 people. An Israeli daily, *Yadiot Ahronot*, reported this week about a document produced by the Jerusalem Municipality, indicating its intention to implement in the near future 42 pending demolition orders issued against Palestinian-owned buildings and structures in East Jerusalem, as well as 17 demolition orders against Israeli-owned structures.

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian planning and development in occupied East Jerusalem, including bureaucratic requirements and high fees, make it extremely difficult for Palestinian residents to obtain building permits, leaving many families with no choice but to build “illegally”. Israel has allocated only an estimated 13 percent of annexed East Jerusalem for Palestinian construction in East Jerusalem, and much of this is built up already. This has caused a severe housing shortage. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem who move to the West Bank to meet their housing needs, risk losing their Jerusalem residency and their access to the city and services. Conservative estimates indicate that as many as 60,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem may be at risk of having their homes demolished.

Israeli authorities continue to issue demolition orders in the West Bank

In Area C of the West Bank, the Israeli Civil Administration distributed ten demolition and stop work orders against Palestinian-owned structures in Fasayil al Fauqa area (Jericho), due to the lack of building permit, placing 48 people, including 29 children, at risk of displacement. Since the beginning of 2009, a total of 180 structures were demolished in Area C of the West Bank, displacing 300 people. Half of these are children.

Olive harvest continued amidst incidents of settler violence

Though the majority of the olive harvest for this year has been completed, the harvest continued in some areas this week. The season has been shorter than anticipated this year, due to the extremely poor yield, which is estimated to be only 10 percent that of a peak season. Consequently, time that Palestinian farmers spend in the field is significantly less than in previous seasons, reducing exposure to settler violence and access restrictions. As in the previous two years, the Israeli authorities have allocated forces to protect Palestinian farmers in “friction areas” in the vicinity of some Israeli settlements, on the basis of prior coordination.

Overall, there were eight settler incidents affecting harvesters reported this week, compared to six incidents in the previous week: two in the south (access prevention), two in the central area (stone-throwing and cutting down olive trees) and four in the north (intimidation and stone-throwing). In the north, field reports indicate that despite prior coordination with the Israeli authorities, in each of the four incidents, there was no Israeli army presence in the area at the time the harvesters arrived. In one of the incidents, next to Qaryut village (Nablus), six Palestinians were injured in a clash with soldiers, which erupted after the latter arrived at the scene of an incident.

In a separate incident during the week, settlers blocked the path of and attempted to attack Palestinian children en route to school in Tuwani village (South Hebron), when Israeli forces responsible for escorting them did not arrive on time. The children were forced to run back to their homes. Israeli soldiers began escorting the children in 2004, following repeated attacks by Israeli settlers.

Also this week, there were three separate incidents of stone and Molotov cocktail throwing at Israeli vehicles recorded by OCHA in the Ramallah area, resulting in no injuries. Another incident of Molotov cocktail throwing at an Israeli vehicle was reported by the IDF next to ‘Azzun village (Qalqiliya) in the same week.

Israeli Court orders the opening of a road to Palestinian use

The Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) ruled this week on a petition submitted by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), challenging the IDF prohibition on Palestinian use of a segment of Road 3265 in the western Hebron governorate. Due to the prohibition, this road has been used, almost exclusively, by Israeli settlers living in the settlement outpost of Neghohot. Approximately 25,000 Palestinians, living in 12 villages along the road, were forced to make a long detour to reach their service centres. Residents of one village (Fuqeiqis), who depend on this road to reach the nearby town of Beit Awwa, were eligible for a permit to use the road on specific times of the day.

In its ruling, the HCJ declared the prohibition illegal and gave the IDF three months to make the necessary arrangements before it opens the road for Palestinians. The HCJ found that the harm stemming from this prohibition on the everyday lives of Palestinians living in this area is disproportionate, compared to the relevant security considerations. The decision, however, does not address ACRI's argument that the prohibition is also illegal because it discriminates between the residents of an area on the basis of their national origin.

Children in the Bethlehem area affected by water-born parasite

Over the course of the previous reporting period and the beginning of this week, approximately 70 children from the Battir village in western Bethlehem governorate have been affected by amoeba, a water-born parasite that can potentially lead to serious diseases such as dysentery. The Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) confirmed the availability of enough medication to treat those affected.

An investigation launched by the MoH indicates that the source of the parasite is a contaminated water spring located in the vicinity of the village's boys and girls schools. The MoH has requested the Bethlehem Governor's office to place a fence around the spring to prevent further access to it. According to the investigation, the apparent source of the contamination is sewage from nearby cesspit pools, prevalent in the village due to the lack of a wastewater network. .

Gaza Strip

No fatalities for the third week in a row; Israeli airstrikes continue to target tunnels

For the third consecutive week, there were no fatalities reported in Gaza in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In two separate incidents during the reporting period, Israeli airstrikes targeted and bombed tunnels under the Rafah-Egypt border, injuring two Palestinians working inside the tunnels. There were no reports on casualties in other tunnel-related incidents for the first week since mid-August 2009. In another incident, the Israeli air force targeted with an air-to-ground rocket and totally destroyed a workshop, located in Gaza City. Also during the reporting period, Palestinian factions fired a few home made rockets towards southern Israel, resulting in no Israeli casualties or damage.

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 sea, through firing warning shots in the direction of farmers and fishermen. During the reporting period, Israeli forces opened fire against Palestinian fisherman and farmers on at least three occasions. In addition, in three separate incidents, Israeli forces entered with tanks and bulldozers a few hundred metres into the border areas and conducted levelling operations.

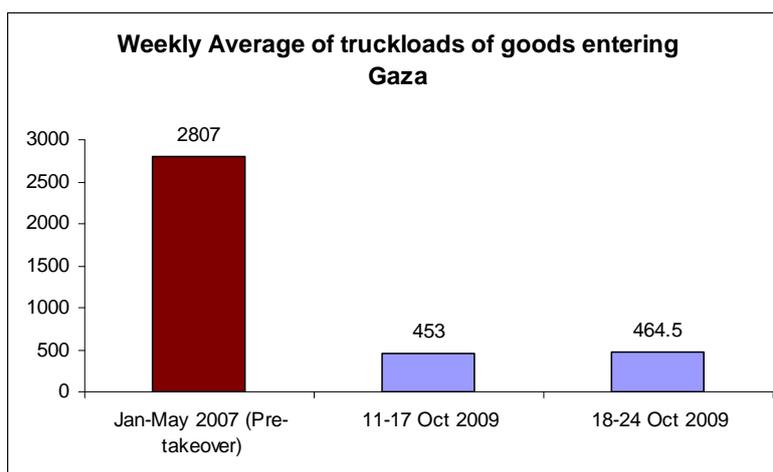
Growing concern over living conditions in Gaza as winter approaches

With the winter season approaching, there is growing concern for families who continue to live in houses that incurred damage during the last Israeli offensive. The ban on building material imports is preventing the reconstruction of thousands of damaged homes inside the Gaza Strip; over 6,000 houses are currently in need of major repair or total reconstruction. There is also a concern that sewage treatment plants will overflow and cause significant damage to surrounding property and contamination of water resources, due to heavy winter rains, electricity shortages and poorly-functioning pumps. In a press release issued on 26 October, the director of operations in Gaza for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), John Ging, called for an immediate opening of all Gaza border crossings before winter.

Limited entry of new items (18 - 24 October 2009)

During the week, a total of 464.5 truckloads of goods, including 60.5 truckloads (13 percent) designated for aid agencies, entered Gaza, constituting an approximately three percent increase, compared to the number of truckloads that entered during the last week (453). This week's figure constituted around 17 percent of the weekly average of truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007 (2,807), before the Hamas takeover.

Limited numbers of truckloads carrying new items were allowed entry into Gaza this week. These included seven truckloads of materials needed for water projects (three for the Palestinian Water Authority and four for UNICEF), including cement (one truckload), plastic pipes (one), tar (one) and water desalination devices and filters (four). Also, 32 truckloads of tea and coffee, which were last allowed entry into Gaza on 27 March and 30 June 2009, respectively, entered this week.



Similar to previous weeks, however, food and hygiene items made up the majority of imported goods - 412 truckloads or 92 percent of total imports. 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. Although many goods are available in the market as a result of the tunnels under the Rafah-Egypt border, most are far too expensive for the population to afford. No exports were allowed out from Gaza this week. Exports from Gaza were last allowed out on 27 April 2009.

Fuel imports remain below needs

Nahal Oz fuel pipeline was opened on only two days during the week, while the newly-installed fuel pipelines at Kerem Shalom crossing have continued to operate. A total of 36,500 litres of petrol, 2.2

million litres of industrial fuel for the power plant and 454 tonnes of cooking gas were allowed into Gaza. These amounts included around 32 percent and 9 percent of industrial fuel and cooking gas, respectively, that entered via Kerem Shalom Crossing. This is the first shipment of cooking gas through the crossing. Egyptian petrol and diesel, which are transferred through the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, remain available on the open market, with nearly 100,000 litres of diesel and 100,000 litres of petrol being transferred into Gaza per day.