



## PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

28 OCT – 3 NOV 2009

### West Bank

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#### Level of Palestinian injuries decreases

During the reporting period, 11 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were injured in various incidents throughout the West Bank, down from 26 Palestinians and four Israeli forces injured last week and a weekly average of 15 Palestinians wounded throughout the West Bank since the beginning of 2009.

Six of this week's injuries, of whom five were women, occurred during clashes that erupted between Palestinians and Israeli forces in one incident in the village of Al Baqa'a (Hebron), located in Area C. The incident took place after officials from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) removed irrigation pipes laid down on land belonging to residents of the village; according to the ICA, the pipes were illegally connected to the water network, which supplies water for domestic use to the Hebron area.

Another three Palestinian injuries, all of them children, occurred in three separate incidents involving physical assault by Israeli forces: one in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2) while walking back from school, another during a military operation in Surif village (Hebron), and the third during the weekly anti-Barrier demonstration in Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem). Two other Palestinian men and one Israeli soldier were injured during anti-Barrier demonstrations in Bil'in.

Israeli forces conducted 92 search operations inside Palestinian villages, the majority of which took place in the north (63), resulting in the arrest of 63 Palestinians. This compares to a weekly average of 96 operations and 60 arrests since the beginning of 2009.

#### Demolition of houses and displacement continue in East Jerusalem

On 2 November, the Jerusalem Municipality demolished three houses in the Beit Hanina and Ath Thuri neighborhoods, resulting in the displacement of 42 people, including 23 children. Another demolition of a residence (carried out by the owner of the structure) occurred in the Sur Bahir neighborhood, affecting six people who rented the structure, of whom two are children. All of the demolitions took place after the issuance of demolition orders due to the lack of building permits. In the course of the past two weeks, the Jerusalem Municipality demolished eight structures leading to the displacement of 26 people<sup>1</sup>.

Concerns over displacement exist also regarding Area C of the West Bank. This week, the Israeli Civil Administration issued stop work orders against two inhabited houses in the town of Dura (Hebron), due to a lack of building permit, placing 14 people, including six children, at risk of displacement.

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1. 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 on their land without a permit and risk demolition and displacement. At least 28 percent of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem have been built without permits, and face the risk of demolition.

## Settler attempts to take over Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem

In two separate incidents during the week, armed Israeli settlers attempted to take over two Palestinian houses inside Palestinian neighborhoods, in the context of disputed ownership of property. In one of the incidents, on 30 October, a group of Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian family in the Beit Safafa neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, injuring four family members, one by a live bullet. The Israeli police was called to the scene, but the settlers had already left the area by the time they arrived. Two of the injured were taken for questioning after their wounds were treated.

On 3 November, a group of about 40 Israeli settlers, accompanied by armed guards, took over an uninhabited part of a Palestinian house in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. The house is located in the vicinity of another home taken over by Israeli settlers earlier in August, which resulted in the eviction of two extended families. Some members of the evicted families continue to stay in a tent opposite their house, which was raided and dismantled by Israeli forces this week for the third time.

Efforts by Israeli settler groups to settle in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem have intensified in recent years and are often accompanied by attempts to forcibly evict Palestinian families. The mechanisms used include reclamation of property, allegedly owned by Jewish residents of pre-1948 Mandatory Palestine, and controversial purchases of Palestinian property. These activities raise concerns about the potential fragmentation of these neighborhoods and the departure of Palestinian residents owing to restrictions on movement and a sustained Israeli security presence, as well as threats of harassment and intimidation by settler groups. Similar developments in the H2 area of Hebron since the year 2000 resulted in the abandonment of over 1,000 homes, while more than 1,800 commercial businesses closed their doors.

## Other settler-related incidents

Another five incidents of settler violence affecting Palestinians took place during the reporting period amounting to a total of seven incidents, compared to eight incidents last week.

In two separate incidents, settlers entered the villages of Iraq Burin and Madama (Nablus) and clashed with the residents. Afterwards, Israeli forces intervened, firing tear gas canisters and sound grenades, injuring one Palestinian man. The three remaining incidents included setting fire to olive trees (Jaba'-Bethlehem) and a Palestinian vehicle (Sinjil-Ramallah) and preventing the access of fire fighters en route to a burning building in the Old City of Hebron.

A further four separate incidents involved Palestinians hurling stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles driving near the villages of Yabrud, Beit Sira (Ramallah) and Husan (Bethlehem) were reported this week. Two of the incidents resulted in the injury of two Israeli settlers, including one child. Israeli forces conducted search operations inside the villages following the incidents.

Also during the week, the Israeli police disclosed the fact that, on 1 November, it had arrested an Israeli settler suspected of a number of deadly attacks against Palestinians and Israelis, including the killing of two Palestinians and two Israeli policemen and injuring others, spanning 12 years.

## Orders restricting Palestinian movement in Hebron city extended

During the reporting period, the Israeli army extended military orders, originally issued in 2006, until 30 April 2010. The orders restrict Palestinian movement within the old city area in the Israeli-

controlled part of Hebron (H2), where three Israeli settlements were established during the 1980's. According to the orders, five segments of this area are "closed military zones" in which Palestinian movement is either totally prohibited or restricted to pedestrians only; the opening of Palestinian-owned shops is also restricted. One of the most affected areas is the Ash Shudada Street, which leads to the Al Ibrahim Mosque. Many families that lived along this street were forced to vacate their houses and some of those who are still residing there must make a long detour to reach other areas of the city. The orders do not apply to the Israeli settlers living in this area.

## Gaza Strip

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### **No direct conflict fatalities for the fourth week in a row; tunnels continue to claim lives**

For the fourth consecutive week, no fatalities have been recorded as a result of Palestinian-Israeli armed confrontations. By contrast, this week three Palestinians died and six others were injured in three separate incidents while working inside the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. The precarious nature of the tunnels places the lives of people working inside them at constant risk. The Palestinian human rights group Al Mezan reiterated its call on the local authorities to take all the necessary measures to protect tunnels' workers. Tunnel activities have gradually increased since the onset of the Israeli blockade on Gaza in June 2007, in order to compensate for the loss of access to goods previously entering through the official crossings.

Israeli forces continued to prevent access to a 300-metre-wide strip of land along the border fence, through firing warning shots towards people approaching the area. In this context, Israeli forces shot and injured a mentally handicapped Palestinian this week near the border fence. In addition, on four separate occasions, Israeli forces entered with tanks and bulldozers a few hundred metres into the border areas and conducted leveling operations. Also during the reporting period, Palestinian factions fired a number of home made rockets towards southern Israel. There were no Israeli casualties or damage to property.

### **Gazans face harder living conditions with the winter season**

Heavy rains in Gaza, which flooded the streets in the past few days, exacerbated the dire living conditions of some of the families whose houses were destroyed during the Israeli "Cast Lead" offensive. The worst affected are those living in tents. The Shelter Cluster estimates that more than 100 families are living in tents nearby or inside the remains of their severely damaged homes. The ongoing prohibition on the import of building materials into Gaza, imposed by Israel as part of the blockade, is preventing the reconstruction of over 6,000 houses that were destroyed or sustained severe damage during the last offensive.

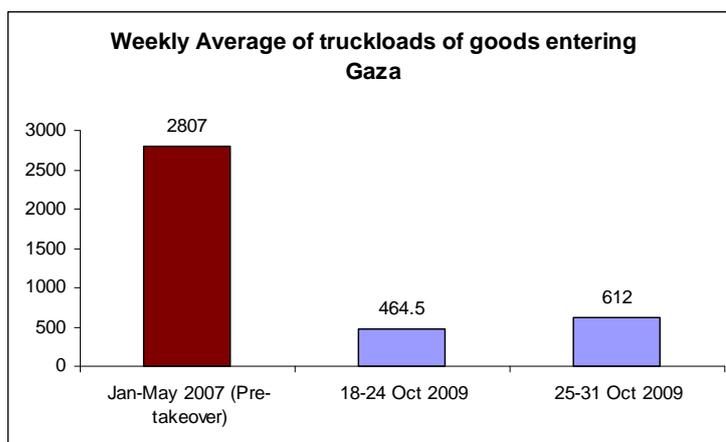
In addition, the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) warned that electricity supply to some areas may stop during the winter season due to the fragility of some network components that sustained damage during the Israeli offensive. These components have not been repaired or replaced due to the current import restrictions. When power outages occur, they cover an entire area, including public services facilities located in that area, such as water and sanitation, health, and education facilities.

## Despite increase in the number of truckloads, imports remain below needs (25 - 31 October 2009)

During the week, a total of 612 truckloads of goods, including 76 truckloads (12 percent) designated for aid agencies, entered Gaza, constituting an approximately 32 percent increase, compared to the number of truckloads that entered during the last week (464). This week's figure comprised around 22 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 - 588 truckloads or 96 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 almost all goods are available in the market as a result of the tunnel activities under the Gaza-Egypt border, most are far too expensive for the population to afford. No exports have been allowed out from Gaza since 27 April 2009.

Israeli clearance procedures for imports remain unclear, including the lack of rules indicating which goods are allowed into Gaza and which are not. This week, the Israeli human rights organization Gisha, filed a petition with an Israeli court, requesting the government to answer an information request submitted by the organization under the Freedom of Information act, asking for details about the criteria used for the regulation of imports into Gaza.



## 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 operated on three days, during which Nahal Oz was closed. The amount of cooking gas that entered this week (579 tonnes) increased compared to the previous week (454 tonnes). In addition, nearly 2.2 million litres of industrial fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant were allowed close to the weekly average quantity that Israel is allowing into Gaza since November 2007. No Israeli petrol and diesel entered during the reporting period. 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 reported transferred into Gaza per day.