



THE HUMANITARIAN MONITOR

MARCH 2010

March Overview

The sudden escalation of violence that swept across the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) in March highlights the overall fragility of the situation, and the vulnerability of the civilian population. Israeli-Palestinian violence resulted in the largest number of Palestinian casualties (deaths and injuries combined) in a given month since the end of the “Cast Lead” offensive.

In the West Bank, rioting and other incidents resulted in four Palestinians killed and 349 injured, as well as 44 injuries among Israeli forces. Most injuries occurred in clashes in East Jerusalem between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli police. Although the immediate trigger was the opening of a synagogue in the Old City and subsequent calls by some Palestinian political leaders “to protect” Al Aqsa mosque, other factors had contributed to heightened tensions. These include a series of decisions, reports and statements concerning the expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem, one of which would entail



Approximately 90 Palestinian homes are slated for demolition in the Bustan neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem. Recent Israeli announcements regarding Silwan have fueled tensions in East Jerusalem. Photo by Omar Abulhaj, OCHA

ISSUES COVERED THIS MONTH

West Bank: Sharp increase in casualties • Concern over plans for the expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem • Concern over plans for the expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem • Access to East Jerusalem and to some communities in the Jordan Valley severely restricted • Latest developments concerning the Barrier • New UN survey discloses high levels of food insecurity and child malnutrition in Area C herder communities • Update on house demolitions and demolition, stop-work and eviction orders

Gaza Strip: Significant escalation in violence results in increasing casualties • Concern about implementation of death sentences • Imports into Gaza • Movement of people in and out of Gaza remains restricted; Rafah Crossing exceptionally opened for five days • New initiative encouraging use of recycled materials • UN Mine Action begins the controlled destruction of UXO

Across the occupied Palestinian territory: Child Protection Box • Child Protection Box • UN Secretary General and the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs visit the oPt • Humanitarian Access • Humanitarian Access • CAP and HRF Update

extensive demolitions of Palestinian homes. The establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the oPt is illegal under international law and has also had a significant humanitarian impact on the Palestinian population, including a reduction in the space available to address Palestinian needs.

The Gaza Strip also saw a significant increase in casualties. The majority of the Palestinian casualties (four deaths and 39 injuries), as well as damages to civilian homes and agricultural property, occurred as a result of a series of airstrikes launched by the Israeli Air Force. The airstrikes followed the killing of a foreign national employed in southern Israel by a rocket launched by a Palestinian faction. Although this was the first fatality in Israel from rocket fire since the end of the “Cast Lead” offensive, indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza has been ongoing for years, endangering the lives of the Israeli civilians living along the border and exposing Palestinian civilians to the risk of Israeli retaliations. Also this month, three Israeli soldiers were killed in clashes with Palestinian militants; three others were injured.

As the Israeli blockade of Gaza continues, poor living conditions were exacerbated this month by deteriorating electricity supply. This was due to the continuing decline in the import of fuel to the Gaza power plant following a funding crisis that began in December 2009. However, in March, the

West Bank

Sharp increase in casualties

Widespread protests result in highest number of Palestinian casualties in a single month since OCHA began recording casualties in January 2005

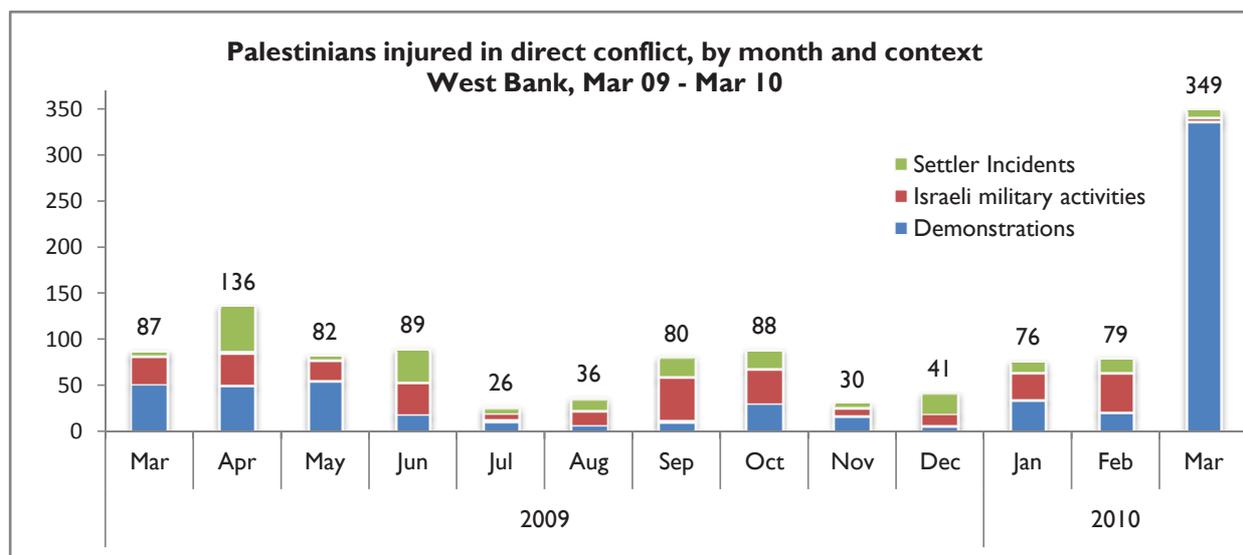
March 2010 had the highest number of Palestinian injuries recorded in the West Bank in a single month since OCHA began recording casualties in January 2005.¹ After a steady, three month increase in the number of Palestinians injured in the West Bank, the number of Palestinians injured and killed due to the

Israeli authorities implemented some relaxations in the blockade, including the approval of the entry of materials needed for a UN sewage project, spare parts for the repair and maintenance of the electricity network, and the continuation of the import of glass needed to repair shattered windows. Also this month, the Israeli authorities informed the UN Secretary General that the materials needed for the finalization of an UNRWA housing project (150 housing units), will soon be approved for entry. While welcome, these steps are still far from addressing existing reconstruction needs. The completion of the UNRWA housing project, for example, would only address less than one percent of the estimated housing needs in Gaza. These measures will not suffice either to contain the collapse of the private sector, or avoid continued erosion of livelihoods.

As emphasized by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, in his visit to the Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory this month, “people need to be given the opportunity to live normal and dignified lives. For this to happen, marginal improvements here and there are not enough. More radical changes of policy are required. In Gaza, the crossings must be fully reopened; in the West Bank, illegal demolitions and evictions should stop and natural development should be allowed in East Jerusalem and Area C.”

Palestinian-Israeli conflict dramatically increased in March; four Palestinian civilians, including two children, were killed and 349 injured, 346 were injured by Israeli security forces and three by Israeli settlers. In addition, 53 Israelis were injured, including 44 members of the security forces (mostly policemen) and nine Israeli settlers.

This month’s fatalities were in two incidents that occurred in the vicinity of Nablus City, where Israeli



soldiers shot and killed four Palestinian civilians, including two children. Two of the casualties occurred on 21 March, during or in the aftermath of a demonstration by the residents of Iraq Burin village, held in protest of the expansion of the Israeli settlement of Bracha (see background box herein); the two remaining fatalities occurred in an incident on the following day near 'Awarta village. Both incidents are clouded by unclear circumstances. In the case of Iraq Burin, the Israeli military initially claimed that the two victims were shot with rubber-coated metal bullets fired to disperse the crowd. However, investigations by two human rights organizations (B'Tselem and Al Haq) indicated that the two had been shot with live ammunition after the demonstration had concluded.² In addition, according to Israeli media reports, the Central Command of the IDF launched internal investigations into both incidents that concluded that "tactical errors" were made, and that the killing of the four Palestinians could have been avoided.³ A criminal investigation by the Israeli Military Police is currently underway.

The already tense environment in the West Bank resulting from the Israeli cabinet's February decision to add the Al Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs and the Bilal Mosque/Rachel Tomb in

Bethlehem to a list of Israeli "national heritage sites" was further aggravated in March by controversial Israeli decisions and statements focusing on East Jerusalem. The tension was reflected in numerous protests, riots and clashes, including the regular anti-Barrier demonstrations, resulting in the injury of 335 Palestinians, including 49 children.

More than half of these Palestinian injuries (174) occurred on 16 March during clashes that began in the Old City of East Jerusalem and later spread to nearby neighborhoods, as well as several localities in Ramallah, Hebron, and Bethlehem governorates. Although the clashes occurred on the background of a series of decisions and statements about the expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem made in the previous week, one of which (in Silwan neighborhood) includes extensive home demolitions (see also the following section), they were immediately triggered by the opening of a synagogue in the Old City of East Jerusalem the previous day, and subsequent calls by some Palestinian political leaders to protect Al Aqsa mosque. Unrest in East Jerusalem and surrounding areas prompted general closures by the Israeli authorities, which denied access of Palestinians holding special permits to East Jerusalem, and also contributed to the tension. (See also section on general closures). Approximately one quarter

FOCUS ON IRAQ BURIN

The deaths in the Palestinian village of Iraq Burin come against the background of continuous harassment and violence by Israeli settlers from the nearby settlement of Bracha. Since July 2009, when 10 dunums of cultivated land in the village were set on fire by Israeli settlers, OCHA has recorded almost weekly incidents of settler harassment of the villagers. In August 2009, the people of the village began protesting the expansion of the Israeli settlement, which encroaches on the village's lands. Since that time, Israeli settlers of Bracha and the Israeli army have clashed with the residents of the village and international activists 14 times resulting in at least 22 Palestinians and one Dutch national being injured, mostly from tear gas inhalation and rubber coated metal bullets.

of Palestinians injuries on 16 March were inflicted by rubber-coated metal bullets fired by the Israeli police; at least eight people were severely injured in the head. The remaining Palestinian injuries were caused either by physical assault, stun grenade, or tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment.

Regular demonstrations in Ni'lin, Bil'in, Deir Nidham (Ramallah) and Beit Jala (Bethlehem), against the Barrier and the expansion of settlements accounted for 13 percent of Palestinians injuries in clashes and demonstrations. In addition, the Israeli military distributed orders declaring the area between the Barrier and the built-up villages of Bil'in and Ni'lin as closed military areas on Fridays, from 8 am until 8 pm, for a period of six months, from mid-February until mid-August. The orders place non-residents who enter the area without permission from the Israeli military at risk of arrest.

Concern over plans for the expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem

Throughout March, there were multiple reports of plans for Israeli settlement expansion in and around East Jerusalem.⁴ According to the Israeli organization Peace Now, there are at least 19 different plans to build more than 9,000 housing units and 1,450 hotel rooms currently at various stages in the planning process.⁵ Other estimates indicate that as many as

50,000 settler housing units are being planned for East Jerusalem settlements.⁶

The establishment of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has had significant ramifications on the Palestinian population, including a reduction in the areas available for Palestinian use. Since 1967, Israel has expropriated some 35 percent of the land of annexed East Jerusalem for the exclusive use of Israeli settlements, which currently house some 200,000 Israeli settlers. At the same time, only 13 percent of East Jerusalem is currently zoned for Palestinian development, most of which is already built up. Anger over continued Israeli settlement activity in East Jerusalem was one of the key causes of increased clashes between Palestinian protestors and Israeli forces and rising casualties in March (*see Protection section herein*).

Of the plans identified by Peace Now, six are for the construction of settlement housing units in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. In March, such activity progressed further as the Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee granted final approval to the construction plan of 20 housing units at the Shepherd Hotel compound in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. Additionally, Israeli media reports indicate that the same committee gave "procedural approval" for the construction of 200 settlement apartments

in other areas of the neighborhood.⁷ Israeli settler organizations have made persistent efforts to take control of land and property and establish a sustained presence in Sheikh Jarrah, displacing, since November 2008, 55 Palestinians, and putting nearly 500 others at-risk of displacement.

Also of note, Jerusalem's mayor presented at a press conference his plan for developing a tourist complex in Al Bustan area of Silwan neighborhood. The plan would require the demolition of dozens of Palestinian homes and the relocation of the hundreds of displaced residents to other areas of the neighborhood. Currently, some 90 Palestinian houses in this area have pending demolition orders. Meanwhile, the residents' planner is in the process of submitting an alternative plan to the municipality that could avoid displacements while taking into account the zoning needs of the area. According to media reports, however, the mayor's plan has been frozen at the request of the Israeli Prime Minister.⁸ An additional settlement plan in a nearby site of Silwan (Wadi Hilweh), which is currently also under consideration, will provide for the expansion of the City of David settlement.⁹

Elsewhere in the West Bank, Israeli settlements continue to grow in spite of the partial freeze in new settlement construction announced by the Israeli Cabinet in November 2009. This month, the Israeli Minister of Defense approved the construction on 112 new housing units in the settlement of Betar Illit, southwest of East Jerusalem.¹⁰ According to recent data released by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of housing unit starts in West Bank settlements (excluding East Jerusalem) in the fourth quarter of 2009 was 593, a slight increase compared with the third quarter of the year (538), and a significant increase compared with the previous two quarters (321 and 339). In February 2010, the Israeli Ministry of Defense acknowledged

that one quarter of all settlements outside East Jerusalem breached the settlement's freeze.¹¹

Access to East Jerusalem and to some communities in the Jordan Valley severely restricted

Within the context of heightened tensions, protests, and riots in East Jerusalem, coupled with the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover, the Israeli authorities imposed a "general closure" on the West Bank on three separate occasions during the month, for a total of 11 days.¹² As a result, during these days all West Bank ID holders with valid permits were prevented from entering East Jerusalem and Israel, with exceptions made for several categories of permit holders including medical and other humanitarian cases. Access to East Jerusalem during the rest of the month was also difficult due the intermittent closure of some of the main Barrier checkpoints into the city, following clashes and violent incidents at or near them. For example, on 18 and 19 March, the Israeli army partially closed the Shu'fat checkpoint, the main access point through the Barrier between the nearby Shu'fat refugee camp and the rest of the city, prohibiting the movement of vehicles through it; Qalandiya checkpoint, which controls the main route into East Jerusalem available to Palestinians coming from the north, was closed for more than 23 hours on five days during the month. Within East Jerusalem, Palestinian men holding Israeli ID cards under 50 years of age were prohibited from entering Al Aqsa Mosque compound on three days during the month.

In the Jordan Valley, small Palestinian communities located in Area C continued to face multiple access restrictions to farming and grazing lands, most of which have been designated in the past by the Israeli military as "firing zones", as well as to the sites of the communities themselves. This month, on the main route linking the two communities of Al Hadidiya

ACCESS TO EDUCATION THROUGH RAS 'ATIYA CHECKPOINT PROBLEMATIC

The rerouting of a five-kilometre section of the Barrier around the settlement of Alfe Menashe southeast of Qalqiliya city is ongoing. When the re-routing is complete, three communities currently located within the Alfe Menashe enclave will be 'reconnected' to the West Bank. In the meantime, accessing basic services, such as education, health facilities, as well as workplaces and commercial centres remains problematic because of the need to pass through the Ras 'Atiya checkpoint to leave or enter this enclave. On 10, 11 and 14 March, Palestinian students held a sit-in at the checkpoint protesting the installation of new metal detectors. Teachers are required to pass through the scanners en route to the school in Ad-Daba'a village. When the teachers refused to submit to these new procedures, the soldiers refused to let them through. The school in Ad-Daba'a has 250 students and serves three villages, all located inside the Alfe Menashe enclave.

and Khirbet Humsa to their main service center in the town of Tubas was closed for the period of one week. As a result, the residents are forced to make a long detour and cross a permanent checkpoint (Hamra) to reach Tubas. Also this month, the Israeli army imposed curfews on two other communities in that area due to stone throwing at Israeli vehicles traveling on Road 90: in Az Zubeidat, for a total of 19 hours, and in Al 'Auja for six hours. During the curfews, the Israeli army forced all the Palestinian shops on Road 90 to close, and prevented teachers from reaching their school in Az Zubeidat.

Latest developments concerning the Barrier

During the reporting period a number of developments occurred concerning construction and re-routing of the Barrier, in addition to changes in the operation of Barrier checkpoints.

In the Qalqiliya governorate, asphalt of a section of the Barrier's military patrol road was removed. This followed an earlier rerouting of the Barrier, which had been ordered by an Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) decision. The land recovered by the removal of the asphalt will require reclamation, to be restored to its former condition. A HCJ decision to re-route another section in the same area is still on hold, due to objections submitted by Palestinian

farmers, whose land will be still left behind the Barrier.

Further south in Qalqiliya Governorate, the IDF had reduced its presence at the Barrier checkpoint controlling access between 'Azzun 'Atma village (population 2,000) and the West Bank. While the checkpoint infrastructure remains *in situ*, controls on persons and vehicles entering 'Azzun 'Atma are now only carried out on an ad hoc basis; visitors, farmers, and service providers are still required to obtain permits to access the village. Previously, the checkpoint was closed daily from 22:00 to 06:00, effectively confining the entire community during the night hours. This proved especially problematic for expectant mothers in labour, as the only medical facility available was a basic primary health care clinic which operates for two hours a day, twice a week. In addition to the main Barrier, 'Azzun 'Atma is surrounded by a secondary barrier that isolates nine families from the rest of the community; a checkpoint along this secondary barrier, which closes between 22:00 and 05:00, remains fully staffed, and requires visitors permits for Palestinians living outside the area who wish to enter.

In the Ramallah and Jerusalem governorates, Israeli military orders from 2009 requisitioning land from Palestinian landowners for construction of the

Barrier, have been renewed until December 2011. The Israeli authorities maintain that the Barrier is a temporary structure and the land seizure is for a limited period only, although the orders can be renewed indefinitely.

Also in Jerusalem, on 15 March, the HCJ ruled that the village of Ash Sheikh Sa'd will remain on the eastern, or 'West Bank' side, of the Barrier. Ash Sheikh Sa'd is located outside the Israeli-declared boundary of Jerusalem but is historically linked to the Jabal al Mukabbir neighborhood of East Jerusalem, where many of its health and educational services are located. Approximately half of its 1,500 residents hold Jerusalem ID cards. Residents of the community had petitioned the HCJ to have the Barrier re-routed to the east to maintain unhindered access to Jabal al Mukabbir. Acknowledging the adverse impact on residents of Ash Sheikh Sa'd, the HCJ ordered that the Barrier checkpoint next to the village be open 24 hours a day to allow access to East Jerusalem for Palestinian residents of the community who hold Israeli IDs or special permits.

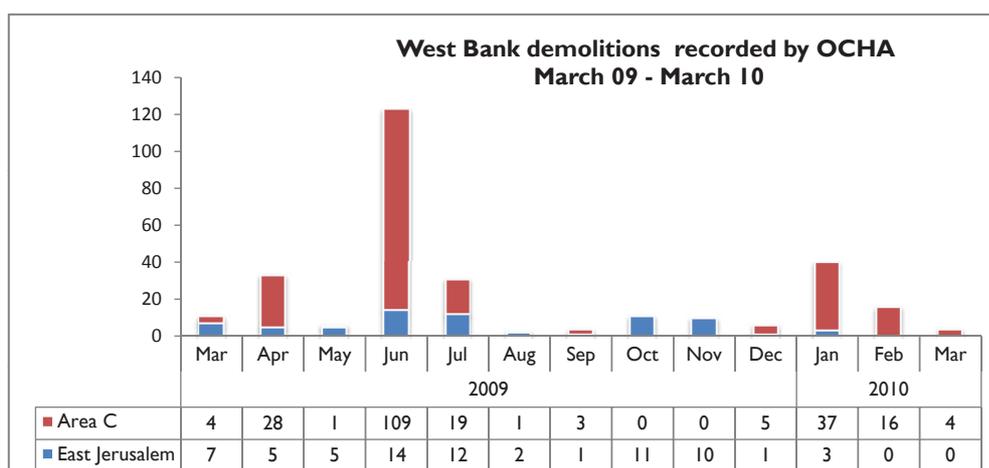
In the Bethlehem governorate in late February, the Israeli authorities resumed land leveling for Barrier construction, after it had been frozen for over three years. Overall, the construction of this section of the Barrier will require the seizure of some 300 dunums of land and the uprooting of some 2,000 olive trees, according to the municipality of Beit Jala. Following the resumption, Palestinians held a protest and clashed with Israeli forces. According to the officially-approved route, the area isolated by the Barrier to the west of the Bethlehem metropolitan area in the Gush Etzion settlement block comprises approximately 64 km², including some of the most fertile land in the governorate. Nine Palestinian communities with approximately 21,000 residents will face reduced access to Bethlehem City, the

area's main service centre for health, education, markets and trade. Bethlehem farmers who reside on the 'Palestinian side' of the Barrier will also face reduced access to their land behind the Barrier.

New UN survey discloses high levels of food insecurity and child malnutrition in Area C herder communities

In March, WFP, UNRWA, and UNICEF released the findings of a joint household family survey conducted in October 2009 among herding and Bedouin communities in Area C, showing alarmingly high levels of child malnutrition and food insecurity.¹⁴ The survey found that 5.9 percent of children under five years of age living in the communities suffer from acute malnutrition, 15.3 percent from underweight, and 28.5 percent from stunting. These figures are significantly higher than the parallel figures for the wider West Bank population, as reflected in the nutritional survey carried out in 2006 (1.4, 2.9 and 10.2 percent respectively). Also, 79 percent of surveyed households are food insecure, compared with 25 percent among the wider population in the West Bank and 61 percent in the Gaza Strip; only 5 percent of the households were found to be food secure. Of those surveyed, 81 percent reported a decrease in spending on food during the past six months, 94 percent a reduction in the quality of purchased food, and 93 percent a reduction in the consumption of meat.

According to the report, herding as a main livelihood activity is facing increasing challenges due to access restrictions to grazing lands, the prevention of movement of people and goods, and restrictions on the development of water infrastructure, compounded with multiple years of water scarcity. As a result of these physical and economic restrictions, access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food has become more difficult for many herding and Bedouin communities living in Area C.



UNRWA and WFP are currently conducting an emergency response addressing the nutritional needs of a total of 5,200 families living in 209 herder communities in Area C. This is the third of six planned rounds of food distribution.¹⁵ The food basket distributed contains cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, sugar and salt.

Update on house demolitions and demolition, stop-work and eviction orders

In March, OCHA confirmed the demolition of four structures in Area C, while there were no demolitions recorded in East Jerusalem. Thus far in 2010, OCHA has confirmed the demolition of 57 Palestinian-owned structures by the Israeli authorities, including 24 residential structures in Area C, displacing 118 Palestinians. OCHA has also

recorded three self-demolitions in East Jerusalem in 2010, displacing 7 Palestinians.

On 14 March, the Israeli authorities demolished four fruit and vegetable stands near Bardala village in Area C of the Jordan Valley and damaged the goods, due to the lack of construction permits. Also this month, OCHA recorded the distribution by the ICA of stop work and demolition orders affecting 20 structures, including 14 residential structures, due to lack of permit. These orders threaten to displace 121 Palestinians in parts of Area C located in the Bethlehem, Jericho and Hebron governorates. Also, this month, the ICA delivered an eviction order to a family of two in the Bedouin community of Al Hadidiya in the Jordan Valley, on the grounds that they are residing in a closed military area.

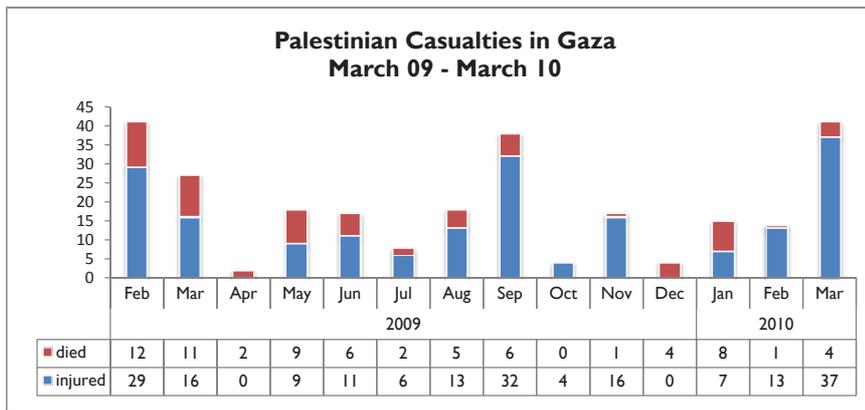
Gaza Strip

Significant escalation in violence results in increasing casualties

This month saw a serious escalation in Israeli-Palestinian violence, which resulted in the killing of four Palestinians, including one civilian, three Israeli soldiers and one foreign national; 39 other Palestinians, all but one were civilians; three Israeli soldiers were also injured. These figures represent a significant increase from February's casualties, when one Palestinian militant was killed and 13 other Palestinians were injured. Overall, in the

first quarter of 2010, 13 Palestinians and 2 Israelis were killed in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in Gaza and southern Israel, and 59 other Palestinians and four Israelis were injured. At least 83 percent of all Palestinian casualties were unarmed civilians; all Israeli casualties were soldiers.

The escalation began on 18 March, following the killing of a foreign national employed in southern Israel (Netiv Ha'Assara) by a rocket launched by a Palestinian faction in Gaza.¹⁶ This was the first



fatality from rocket fire since the end of Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive on January 2009. Following this attack and throughout the rest of the month, the Israeli Air Force carried out a series of air strikes inside the Gaza Strip resulting in the killing of one Palestinian civilian and the injury of 30 others, three of whom were children.

Among the targets of the air strikes were tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, installations at the Gaza Airport (not functional for many years), and agricultural structures in areas in the vicinity of the border. Two of the latter type of airstrikes (on 22 and 24 March) resulted also in damages to at least 13 nearby civilian homes, one school and one water reservoir. Another airstrike targeting a border area east of Khan Younis, which occurred on 26 March, resulted in the death of one civilian and the injury of six others, including a 13 year-old boy; this attack followed an armed clash between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants earlier that day, which reportedly erupted after Israeli forces identified a group of militants attempting to plant an IED, and resulted in the death of two Palestinian militants and two Israeli soldiers, as well as in the injury of three other soldiers.

Of note, in a separate incident, one Israeli soldier was killed by "friendly fire" that targeted three Palestinian civilians who were attempting to enter Israel.

Additional Palestinian casualties and property damage, as well as arrests of Palestinian civilians, occurred during the course of the enforcement of access restrictions to areas next to the Gaza-Israel border. In this context, two Palestinians, including a 15 year-old boy, were shot and wounded by Israeli forces while collecting

rubble near the border. Another 40 Palestinians, including ten children, who had been collecting rubble along the border, were detained by Israeli forces in the course of two separate incursions, 33 of whom were released shortly after questioning. Overall, in a total of 17 occasions during the month, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered a few hundred metres inside Gaza and withdrew shortly after conducting land leveling operations. In one of these operations, the Israeli forces destroyed one uninhabited house east of Khan Younis. Four other Palestinian civilians were shot and injured by Israeli forces in three separate locations along the border on 30 March, in the course of demonstrations carried out in commemoration of the "Land Day".

Similar access restrictions continue to be enforced on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore. This month, Israeli naval vessels opened warning fire towards Palestinian fishing boats in six separate occasions. In one of these incidents, a Palestinian fisherman was critically injured and his boat was severely damaged.

Tunnels under Gaza's border with Egypt continue to claim lives; two Palestinians were killed in tunnel collapse incidents during the month. The tunnels constitute a lifeline for the Gaza population, in spite of the risk they pose to the lives of people who work inside them, providing goods which are unavailable through the official Gaza crossings.

Since the beginning of 2010, at least 12 people have been killed and 21 others injured in various tunnel-related incidents.

Concern about possible implementation of death sentences

In an interview on 24 March, the Hamas Minister of Interior, Mr. Fathi Hammad, stated that prisoners convicted of “collaboration” will be executed. On 25 March, the Hamas Attorney General, Mr. Mohammed Abed publicly stated that the General Prosecution Office had initiated the process of ratifying the death sentences of those convicted of “collaboration” and murder; a few days later, he said the executions should be carried out. Although no executions are known to have been carried out in Gaza since 2005, these statements have raised concerns that executions may be imminent.

Hamas officials have not provided names or numbers of those who could face execution, but human rights groups have noted that 17 people have been sentenced to death in the last 15 months after convictions of “collaboration with Israel” or murder. All of those sentences were issued by Palestinian military courts after trials which did not meet minimal international standards, including nine verdicts reportedly handed down in absentia. Article 131 of the PLO Revolutionary Penal Code of 1979 provides for the death penalty for 42 separate offences, although this Code has not been ratified by the Palestinian legislature. Palestinian law requires the Palestinian Authority President to ratify death sentences before executions can be carried out, a measure which has not been taken. The Attorney General has reportedly said that since President Abbas’ term has expired, the President’s endorsement is not needed.

Reflecting the global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty, in December

Latest developments

The Deputy Minister of Social Affairs confirmed the execution of the two persons on 14 April.

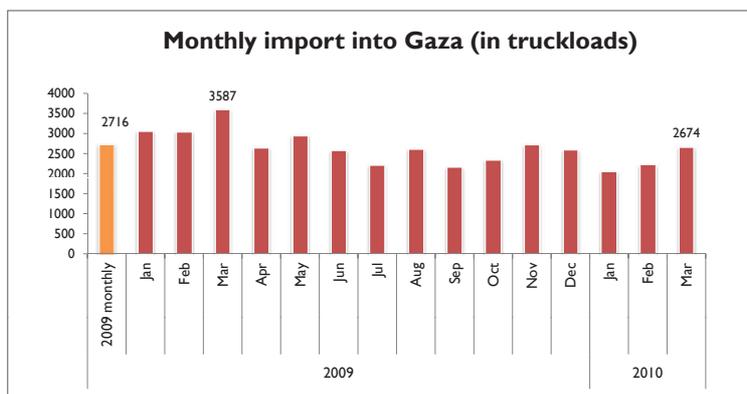
2007, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions for states that still had the death penalty and to progressively restrict its use and reduce the number of offences for which it could be imposed.

Imports into Gaza

Industrial fuel imports decrease for fourth consecutive month, and highest levels of cooking gas imported since July 2009

In March, the number of truckloads that entered Gaza increased for the second consecutive month with a total of 2,647 truckloads of goods; 81 percent of all imports were made up of food supplies and hygiene and cleaning materials. Twelve percent of this month’s imports were designated for humanitarian aid agencies. While the number of imported truckloads increased by 16 percent compared to the previous month, it remains almost the same as the monthly average of truckloads that entered Gaza in 2009, and 78 percent below the parallel figure in the first five months of 2007 (12,350), before the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip.

Glass continued to enter, with 44 truckloads recorded this month. Overall, since 29 December



2009, when the first delivery of glass was allowed into Gaza, a total of 142 truckloads carrying over 90,000 sheets of glass have been imported through the Israeli border crossings. This development resulted in a sharp decline in the price of glass in the market, previously supplied only through the tunnels under the border with Egypt, thus increasing its accessibility by the poorest segments of Gazan society.¹⁷ The import of wood and aluminum for window frames would allow many Gazan families to weatherproof their homes.

Also this month, a total of 2.5 truckloads of materials needed for upgrading an UNRWA sewage pumping station were allowed into Gaza. The UN Secretary-General was also informed by the Israeli authorities that the materials needed for the finalization of an UNRWA housing project in Khan Younis comprising 150 housing units will be soon approved for entry. Although this will be a positive step if implemented, the project represents less than one percent of actual housing needs, which are the result of the prolonged ban on the import of construction material imposed by Israel since June 2007, and later exacerbated by the widespread destruction of homes during the “Cast Lead” offensive.

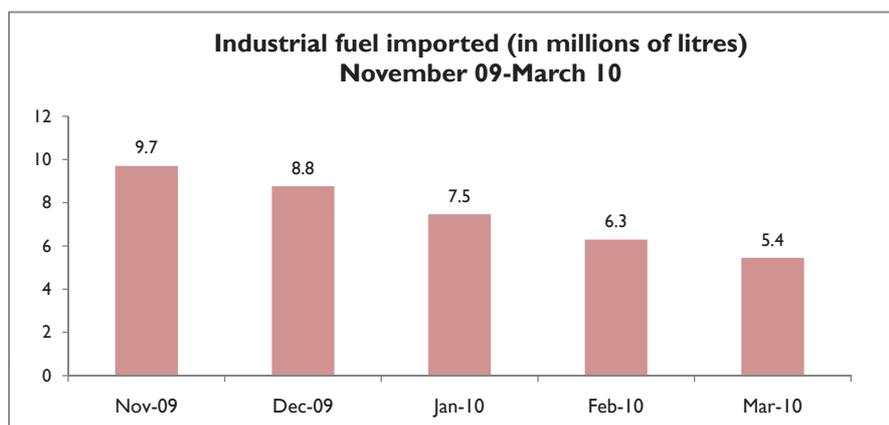
Electricity and Industrial Fuel

Industrial fuel imports designated to the Gaza power plant continued to decline in March for the fourth consecutive month to approximately 5.4 million liters, the lowest recorded since Jan 2009. This represents 41 percent of the estimated monthly

requirements of the power plant in order to operate at full capacity. As a result of the ongoing shortage of industrial fuel, one of the plant’s two turbines, which had been shut down in the previous month, remained non-operational. According to the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCo), since the beginning of 2010, the GPP has been forced to shut down one of two operating turbines for a total of 52 days, and to completely shut down both turbines for one day.

The majority of Gaza’s population (except in the area of Rafah) experienced rolling power cuts of up to 12 hours per day, every day. The decline in the fuel supply to the power plant since December 2009 followed the expiration of the European Commission’s commitment to financially support the Palestinian Authority, which is in charge of this purchase.

Of note, four truckloads of electricity spare parts designated to the GEDCo were allowed into Gaza. Since the beginning of the year, 19 truckloads of electric cable, transformer, dis-connectors, fuses, conductors, low voltage pillars, and wooden and steel poles have entered Gaza. Tools needed for the repair of electrical equipment have not been granted approval for entry into the Gaza Strip and are urgently needed to repair electricity turbines and other vital equipment subject to malfunction during the hot summer months. In total there are more than 50 truckloads of electrical equipment still awaiting access approval by the Israeli authorities.



ONGOING CONCERN OVER GENERATOR-RELATED ACCIDENTS

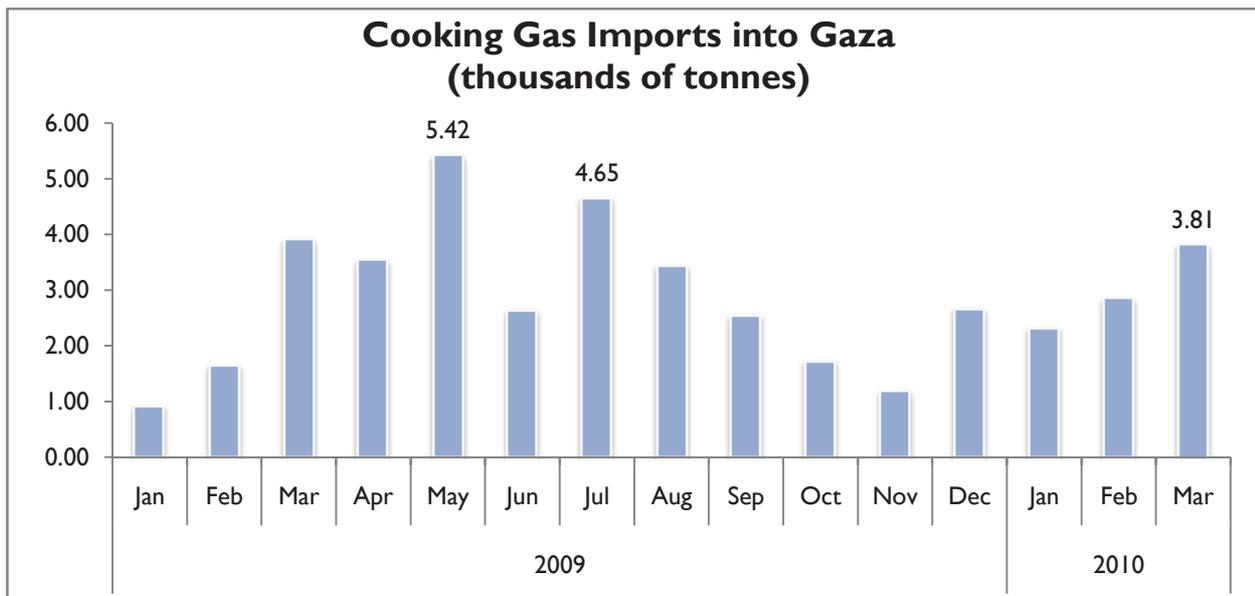


Continuing power blackouts have increased Gaza's reliance on electricity generators. So far, 17 people have died due to related accidents in 2010. Photo by Abeer Qita, OCHA

The ongoing electricity crisis has led to an increasing reliance by the population on low quality generators, fueled by low quality fuel, both of which are largely imported through the tunnels under Gaza's border with Egypt. This increase has reportedly resulted in an increase in accidents and related casualties from generator fires and carbon monoxide poisoning during the last two years than in previous years. According to the Director of the Emergency Services in Gaza, Muawiya Hassanayn, a total of 17 people have died in the first three months on 2010 in these circumstances; nearly the same rate, on a monthly basis, as the fatality toll in 2009, when 62 died in similar accidents, but well above the total of 13 fatalities in 2008. The Shifa Hospital in Gaza City has also reported that since the beginning of 2010, 36 people were treated due to injuries caused in generator-related accidents.

In an accident that occurred last month, three children belonging to the Abu Jamaei family in the locality of Bani Suhila (Tanseem, 15 years-old, Tarneem, 10 years-old, and Baseem 10 years-old) died when caught in fire resulting from the spilling of a generator fuel in the kitchen; three other children were injured.¹⁸ Dr. Naseem Abu Jamaei, 48, the father of the six children stated to OCHA: "We experience electricity cuts for almost 12 hours a day ... we rely on the electrical generator and must store some fuel at our house to keep the generator functioning". He also stated that the frequent fluctuations in the prices of the fuel imported through the tunnels encourage people to store large amounts in their houses.

Also in February, a 17-year-old boy died when a fire ignited while he was pouring fuel into a generator at night using a light torch. His father, a 54-year-old university professor, said to OCHA: "I was always cautious and instructing my children to avoid pouring any fuel into the generator at night". He added that "the lack of electricity means ordinary Gazans cannot keep running their daily lives. We experience almost 6-8 hours of a power cuts per day, my children can't study, my wife can do the laundry only when the power comes back, she cannot keep perishable food because our fridge does not work, and I have problems in preparing my lectures without electricity".



Cooking gas increased to the highest levels since July 2009

In March, a total of 3,810 tonnes of cooking gas entered into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom fuel pipeline. This represents a 25 percent increase compared to the previous month, and is the highest level since July 09, when Israeli authorities began gradually transferring fuel imports from the Nahal Oz to the Kerem Shalom Crossing, until the final closure of the former on January 2010. This increase was made possible due to the upgrade of the capacity of the Kerem Shalom pipeline from the previous 80-100 tonnes per day to around 200 tonnes per day now. The latter level, however, was reached in March only during two days. If this capacity level is maintained on a daily basis, 80 percent of Gaza’s cooking gas needs could be met. Despite the improvement, due to the current shortfall, rationing introduced in November 2009 remains in effect.

Exports

This month, 34 truckloads of cut flowers were allowed out via Kerem Shalom, slightly higher than the 29 truckloads allowed out during the previous month. Since the beginning of 2010, 107 truckloads of cut flowers and strawberries were exported from Gaza. During the March 2007, before the imposition of the blockade, 1,138 truckloads of diverse items were exported.

Movement of people in and out of Gaza remains restricted; Rafah Crossing exceptionally opened for five days

Palestinian movement into and out of the Gaza Strip through the border crossings of Erez and Rafah, controlled by Israel and Egypt respectively, during March, remained restricted largely to medical and other humanitarian cases.

Between 1 and 5 March, the Rafah Crossing was exceptionally opened for five consecutive days, during which a total of 4,416 Palestinians left the Gaza Strip and another 819 were allowed to return. By contrast, 580 Palestinians who had applied to leave Gaza through Rafah were denied exit by the Egyptian authorities for unclear reasons. The uncertainty and unpredictability of the openings, along with vague criteria for approving passage and overcrowding, create difficulties for Palestinian travelers passing through Rafah Crossing.

During March, the number of Palestinians who obtained special exit permits from the Israeli authorities and subsequently succeeded in crossing Erez (2,463) slightly increased compared to February (2,037); over half of those (around 56 percent) were patients and their companions, while most of the remaining were Palestinians conducting family visits.

Medical referral abroad update

In March, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) in Gaza approved 1,197 applications by Gazan patients to be referred to medical facilities in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Israel, Jordan and Egypt. Of these referrals, 86 percent (1,029) were submitted to the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) for the issuance of permits to leave Gaza through the Erez crossing, of which 76 percent were approved, 22 percent were delayed and two percent were denied.¹⁹ While this month's rate of approval decreased compared to the previous month (76 vs. 80 percent) it remains above the monthly average of approval during 2009 (67 percent). In addition, despite the decrease in the rate of approval, the actual number of patients who actually crossed the Erez Crossing in March (766) slightly increased by six percent compared to the parallel figure in February. Also this month, 490 patients referred by the RAD for medical treatment in Egypt were able to cross Rafah Crossing, while 136 others were denied entry into Egypt by the Egyptian authorities.

New initiative encouraging use of recycled materials

To encourage the recovery of local industries, the Palestinian Federation of Industries (PFI) in Gaza organized the event, "Innovation under the Siege", which aimed to promote the use of recycled materials in local production. Such materials include, mainly, rubble and debris of glass, metal, plastic and concrete created as a result of the destruction of thousands of homes, government buildings and public infrastructure during Israel's "Cast Lead" military offensive. The exhibition was one among several initiatives undertaken by owners of local industries, to explore possible ways to resume industrial activities with focus on the use of locally available raw materials.²⁰

The blockade imposed by Israel on the movement of goods through the crossings since June 2007, has

resulted in a virtual collapse of the private sector, triggering a rise in the unemployment rate from 32 percent in the second quarter of 2007 to over 44 percent in the last quarter of 2009.²¹ The industrial sector has been one of the most badly affected by the blockade. According to PFI and PalTrade, by the end of 2009, 70 percent of the approximately 3,900 industrial establishments that operated in Gaza before the blockade were totally closed, 20 percent were operating at around 10 percent of their capacity, and 10 percent were operating at up to half of their capacity.²² Moreover, 324 industrial establishments were destroyed or damaged during the "Cast Lead" offensive, making their reopening more costly once conditions improve.

UN Mine Action begins the controlled destruction of UXO

At the beginning of March, the UNMAS began the destruction of unexploded ordnance (UXO) that had been previously uncovered and made safe since the beginning of the Mine Action programme that began in January 2009. So far, UNMAS has succeeded destroying 32 items of UXO, 24 of which were 155 mm White Phosphorus (WP) items. The programme is being done in collaboration with relevant authorities within Gaza and Israel. Demolitions should take place twice a week during the next three to four months, with the first priority being to the destruction of white phosphorus UXO given the particular threat they pose to the population and the environment. From January 2009 and 25 March 2010, UN Mine Action Team-Gaza Office teams have uncovered and safely removed a total of 345 UXO items, including 60 white phosphorus shells. Roughly half of the UXO were found in the rubble of destroyed buildings.

Issues throughout occupied Palestinian territory

Child Protection	February 2010	March 2010
Palestinian children killed	0	2
Israeli children killed	0	0
Palestinian children injured	15	57
Israeli children injured	0	0
Palestinian children displaced from home demolitions	8	0
Palestinian children in Israeli prisons	343	342

The UN Secretary General and the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs visit the oPt

From 28 February until 5 March, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes visited the occupied Palestinian territory to review the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza. During the visit, Holmes met a number of Palestinian and Israeli officials, representatives of the civil society and the private sector, and members of the humanitarian community. Holmes called for the lifting of the Israeli blockade over Gaza to allow for the beginning of reconstruction and reactivation of the private sector and noted that the present situation only helps to perpetuate smuggling through tunnels and to undermine the legitimate economy of Gaza. Holmes also expressed his concern about the situation in Area C of the West Bank, where Palestinian construction and development are effectively prohibited. He noted that besides endangering peace efforts, the Barrier, settlement expansion, forced evictions and continued demolitions had a severe humanitarian impact on Palestinian communities.

The UN Secretary General (SG) visited Israel and the oPt from 21 to 22 March. During his mission, the SG stressed the UN's commitment to help the parties reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict within the next two years. The SG expressed deep concern

about the "worsening humanitarian situation" for Palestinians and urged calm from all parties in response to the most recent violence and the death of civilians. He repeated the UN position that Israeli settlements, including in East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and called for a freeze on settlement activity, evictions and demolitions. He also welcomed Israel's recent decisions to allow the entry of materials to complete a number of UN projects, noting that this still fell well short of what is needed to address the needs of the population.

Humanitarian Access

This month, UN and international NGO staff members reported 61 access incidents (delays or denied access)²³ at Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank. Although the number of incidents was roughly the same as that of the previous month (59 incidents), humanitarian agencies lost approximately 40 percent more staff hours in March (320 hours) in comparison with February (191 staff hours). Approximately half of the reported incidents were the result of Israeli forces' demands to perform internal searches of UN vehicles. Most of this month's incidents (73 percent) occurred at checkpoints located at the Barrier, mostly around or leading into East Jerusalem; 66 percent of the incidents involved Israeli Border Police.

During the month of March, approximately 1,450 staff members from humanitarian organizations entered and exited the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing. Only 36 percent were UN staff members; the rest were from other humanitarian organizations. A total of 14 access incidents were reported while crossing through Erez. As a result, the humanitarian community lost 44 staff hours, or the equivalent of six working days, while attempting to transit through the terminals.

UN Agencies submitted a total of 45 requests for national staff members to enter/exit the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing. The Civil Liaison Administration (CLA) approved 36 percent of the requests. Although none were denied, 64 percent remained pending at the time of this report. It remains difficult, if not impossible, for West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israeli ID holders to enter Gaza. Only four staff members with West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israeli ID were granted such approval in March.

CAP and HRF Update

The 2010 CAP in the occupied Palestinian territory appeals are for US\$ 664.4 million. As of 29 March funding levels stand at US\$70.4 or 11 percent of total requirements. Sectors which have attracted

contributions so far are Agriculture three percent (of sector's total requirements), Cash for Work and Cash Assistance (nine percent), Food Security (eight percent), Health and Nutrition (six percent), Protection (seven percent) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (three percent).

During March, the HRF funded one project by Community Bridge Initiative, which responds to the humanitarian needs following the unforeseen emergency caused by the floods in Wadi Gaza. The project involves emptying flooded latrines and health promotion in the Wadi Gaza area. Overall funding in the HRF amounts to \$7 million.

Endnotes

1. The second highest number of injuries occurred in February 2007, when 251 Palestinians were injured in direct Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the West Bank.
2. See B'Tselem http://www.btselem.org/english/firearms/20100328_army_to_investigate_killing_of_youths_in_iraq_burin.asp, Nablus hospital, which conducted an autopsy of the bodies, has claimed that live ammunition was used, disputing the IDF claim that only rubber-coated metal bullets were used.
3. Ha'aretz <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1160984.html>, and Ynet <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3871823,00.html>
4. See, for example, Nir Hasson, "Israel planning 50,000 housing units in East Jerusalem," Ha'aretz, 11 March 2010, Ofer Petersburg, "Laying the foundations of the next crisis," Yedioth Ahronoth, 11 March 2010, p.4. Translation of Hebrew text.
5. Peace Now, "Future construction plans for Jews in East Jerusalem," 11 March 2010. Available at: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=66&docid=4597>. Among these are 1,600 housing units planned for the Israeli settlement of Ramat Shlomo, which received considerable media attention in March; during the month, the Regional Committee approved the "depositing" of these plans for public review.
6. See Nir Hasson, "Israel planning 50,000 housing units in East Jerusalem," Ha'aretz, 11 March 2010. Also see the 11 March 2010 response of the Jerusalem municipality refuting the figures from the Israeli organization Ir Amim, cited in the article.
7. Yaacov Lapin, "E. J'lem Jewish homes get early ok," Jerusalem Post, 24 March 2010.
8. The plan was formally submitted to the local planning committee on 11 April 2010
9. Included among the above mentioned 19 plans identified by Peace Now.
10. Israeli Army Radio, 8 March 2010, 9am broadcast.
11. Peace Now, "Ministry of Defence Acknowledges: One Quarter of all Settlements Breached the Settlements Freeze," February 2010. URL: <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&docid=4564>.
12. 1 March (this general closure began on 26

February) from 12 to 18 March, and between 29 March to 6 April.

13. See OCHA oPt, "Five Years After the International court of Justice Advisory Opinion, July 2009, p. 17.
14. WFP, UNRWA, and UNICEF, Food Security and Nutrition Survey For Herding Communities In Area C, March 2010.
15. Each round takes about two weeks to actually carry out, on a three monthly distribution cycle.
16. Prior to this incident, on 1 March, Israeli forces killed one Palestinian militant and injured another near the Gaza-Israel border.
17. Immediately after Cast Lead the price of glass was 150-180 NIS per square meter. Since the relaxation of the ban on glass prices have dropped to 20-50 NIS per square meter.
18. This incident was mistakenly reported in the February issue of the Humanitarian Monitor as caused by a malfunctioning of the generator.
19. Of the 226 patients whose applications were delayed by the Israeli authorities, 30 were called for interview with the Israeli General Security Services (GSS)
20. See also OCHA, The Humanitarian Monitor, February 2010, p. 11.
21. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Survey, various years, relaxed definition.
22. PFI and PalTrade, One year after the military operation: An Outlook on Gaza Strip Crossings & Damaged Industrial Establishments, January 2010, p.8.
23. This is roughly 13 percent less than the monthly average of incidents in 2009 (69).

CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for

Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), Al Haq, Badil, Save the Children (UK), Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI-PS), Oxfam GB, Palestine Hydrology Group (PHG), Campaign for the Right to Enter, ACF-E, AAA, ACP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

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