

Humanitarian Update

18 December 2002 – 21 January 2003

occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)

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Overview

A double suicide attack took place at the old central bus station in Tel Aviv Sunday 5 January killing 23 people and injuring more than 100. This was the first suicide attack since 22 November 2002 when a fishing boat exploded near an Israeli naval patrol ship in Gaza. According to B'Tselem and Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in the six-week period between the suicide attacks some 83 Palestinians and 14 Israelis were killed in the oPt. The current uprising, which started 29 September 2000 has so far claimed 2006 Palestinian and 726 Israeli lives. Following the attacks the Israeli Government decided not to allow Palestinian officials to attend the London conference on Palestinian reform convened by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

In a statement issued on 8 January, the EU presidency called upon the Israeli Government to re-consider its decision to block the movements of senior Palestinians. The UN Secretary-General expressed his regrets at Israel's decision as well and voiced his concerns at the sustained level of violence and growing number of casualties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Two teenage Palestinians, one of them in a wheelchair, were killed in Gaza 12 January when a missile fired from an Israeli helicopter at a taxi carrying three Palestinians missed its target. In 2002 a total of 191 Palestinian children were killed, a 95 % increase as compared with 2001. In total some 387 Palestinian children have been killed since 29 September 2000.

The Israeli Government banned the travel through the border crossings of Allenby Bridge (to Jordan), Rafah and Taba (to Egypt) and Erez (to Israel) of Palestinian ID holders under the age of 35. The restrictions on travel between cities in the West Bank were tightened as well. According to the office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), only Palestinians working for international organisations are allowed to move within the oPt.

On 10 January the joint Israeli-Palestinian security liaison offices (or district coordination offices – DCO) in Tulkarm and Qalqilya were shut down. Joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols

operated from liaison offices to deal with security issues. However, after the start of the current uprising the mixed patrols ceased to function.

The IDF and COGAT have announced the appointment of new Liaison Officers/Contact points for international organizations in the areas of Jenin, Tulkarm/Qalqilya/Salfit, Nablus, Ramallah, Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron.

Over the period 19 December 2002 to 16 January 2003 the IDF continued their incursions into communities in the Gaza Strip in search of suspected militants and alleged weapon producing workshops. Twenty-two people were killed, 56 injured and 19 arrested in these raids that also left 54 houses destroyed and 81 badly damaged. Some 78 dunums of agricultural land were levelled. In retaliation to two "home-made" Palestinian Kassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip into the settlement area of Sderot, the IDF began the construction of a new 500 meter bypass road in the heart of Beit Hanoun (northernmost Gaza). The excavations have blocked roads, disrupted electricity and threatened the water and sewage systems.

The Middle East Quartet met in Washington DC on 20 December. In a statement issued after the meeting The Quartet called for an immediate ceasefire from Palestinian groups and individuals. The Quartet also called for increased efforts by the Government of Israel to ease the humanitarian situation in the oPt, and to avoid actions that undermine trust and create further hardship for Palestinian civilians.

On 30 December more than 100 International and Palestinian peace activists were attacked by the IDF with sound grenades and tear gas as they attempted to visit the "separation wall" construction site near the village of Jayyous in the West Bank. Many of the activists were in the oPt in connection to the the World Social Forum conference arranged by the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network PNGO-NET in Ramallah 27-28 December 2002.

Curfews & Closures

The closures in the West Bank were tightened after the suicide bombing in Tel Aviv 5 January. Following the double suicide bombing local sources reported an increase in the number of mobile checkpoints in the area of Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Jenin, Tubas and between Jerusalem and Jericho. On 8 January the alternative road to Azzun village outside Qalqilya and on 13 January the main road between Tulkarm and Anabta were bulldozed by the IDF. The tightened closures are making it almost impossible for civilians to move between population centres. The population's access to service providers remained severely limited. This has a devastating effect on rural areas that depend on urban centres for basic services such as health.

UNICEF reports that during the first term of the 2002-2003 school year more than 226,000 children and over 9,300 teachers were unable to reach their regular classrooms. Over the same period, at least 580 schools were closed due to Israeli military curfews, closures and home confinement.

In Hebron, the DCL towards Kiryat Arba is currently blocked, and only one checkpoint is open. In addition the small roads to Dura are blocked, leaving only one main road open. Access to Jenin remains difficult as most roads are blocked. On 17 January the IDF closed the roads into the villages of Wadi al Sara and Aba. NGOs report more flying checkpoints, blockages of a number of smaller roads.

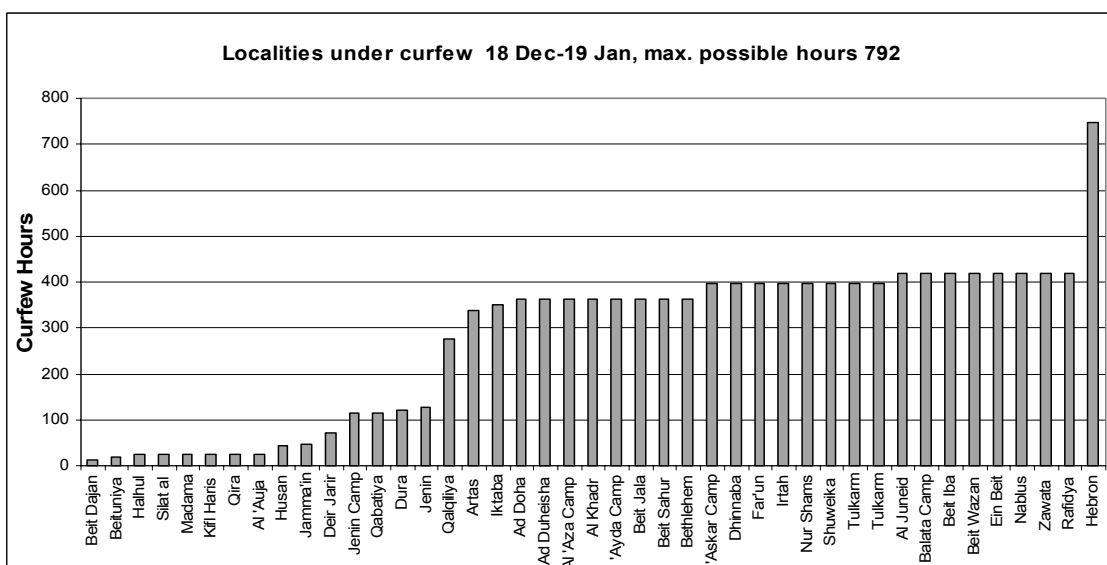
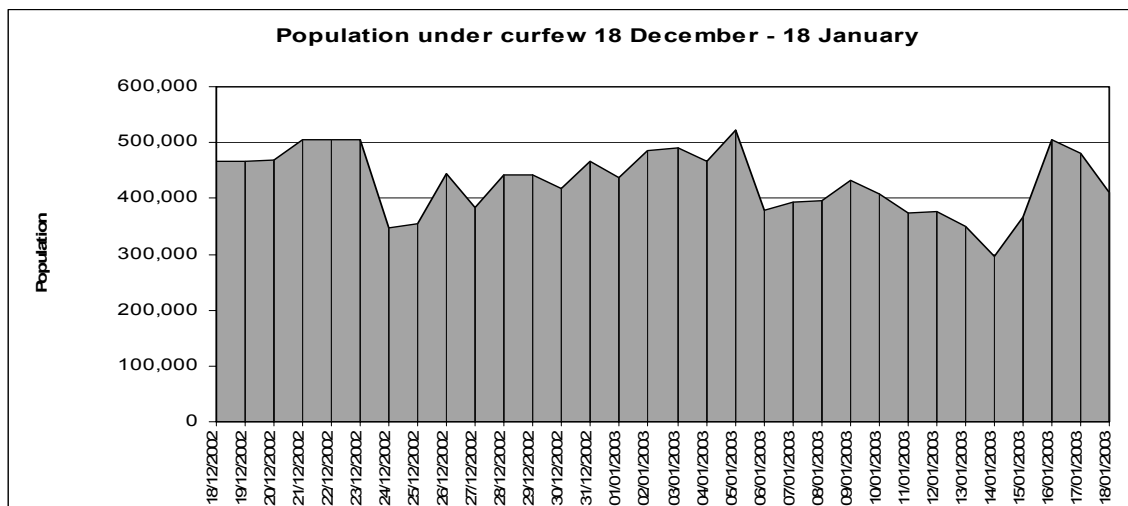
In Gaza, IDF closed the Abu Huli check point for hours denying access along Salah Edien Street, which connects Gaza City to the towns in the southern parts of the Strip.

In Al-Mawassi, a Palestinian enclave under Israeli military control, the movement restriction for men under 40 and women under 35 is still being applied. Those allowed to cross are banned from bringing in food except on Saturdays from 8-10am and from 2-4pm. In the Al Seafa area residents are only allowed to bring in food on Mondays and Thursdays from 7-9am and from 2-4pm. In addition a night curfew has been re-imposed on the area.

In the West Bank 652,027 people in 43 different localities were placed under curfew for between 24 and 748 hours out of 792 possible hours during the period 18 December to 19 January. The worst affected was Hebron (H2), where the curfew was lifted on 8 occasions the shortest lifting was reported 18 January when the curfew was lifted for a total of two hours.

The daily average of civilians confined to their homes due to curfew was 430,910 people between 18 December and 19 January.

In addition to Hebron H2, other areas hardest hit by the curfew regime are the main West Bank towns - Bethlehem, Tulkarm and Nablus and surrounding camps and villages. Curfews have also been imposed in Qalqilya and Jenin for several days during the period but not continuously as seen earlier. In the Nablus and Tulkarm Governorates the curfews have now been enforced for more than 220 days continuously.



House & Land destruction & Confiscation

Reports of house demolitions by the IDF in oPt were rife during the reporting period. In the West Bank alone 25 houses were reported demolished between 19 December and 15 January. The table below summarises the IDF house demolition activity in Gaza over the period during the same period.

District	No. of homes demolished	No. of homes partially demolished	No. of people made homeless
Gaza North	0	0	0
Gaza City	0	2	10
Gaza Middle	16	2	121
Khan Younis	0	21	33
Rafah	40	56	817
Total	54	81	981

Source (Al Mezan Center for Human Rights)

More than 4.7 hectares of land have been confiscated by the IDF for the construction of the Tulkarm section of the "separation wall" that will create a military zone between the Green Line and the "wall" home to 20,000 Palestinians. Around 80,000 olive trees, 60,000 citrus trees, and more than 4 hectares of fields planted with crops will be destroyed.

In addition 1000 dunums of land (1 dunum = 1000 m²) in Kafr Sur south east of Tulkarm were confiscated by the IDF 9 January; 500 dunums were confiscated in Burqa 24 December and another 10 dunums of land were confiscated in Bethlehem 30 December to establish security zones. In Gaza 78 dunums of agricultural land have been levelled to enlarge security zones destroying guava, olive and palm trees and vegetable crops.

19 and 20 January, in Nazlet Issa, located in area C near the green line in Tulkarm Governorate, a large number of shop owners received notices from the IDF that their businesses will be demolished to build the "separation wall" in that area. The IDF argues that the market in Nazlet Issa was built illegally. The demolition of the market will destroy the source of income of dozens of families in the area. The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights, B'Tselem sent an open letter to the Minister of Defense Mr. Shaul Mofaz 20 January urging him to revoke the demolition orders. On 21 January more than 60 shops at the market were demolished by the IDF.

The UN Special Coordinator Mr. Terje Rod-Larsen issued on 21 January a statement voicing serious concern at the demolition of Palestinian homes and commercial property in the West Bank town of Tulkarm. He called on the Israeli Government to stop further demolitions including those carried out in connection to the construction of the "separation wall".

Humanitarian Access

Reports of needless delays of staff members at checkpoints are almost a daily occurrence. Despite the commitment made by the Israeli Government to UN Secretary-Generals Special Humanitarian Envoy Ms. Bertini to fully facilitate assistance activities, relief agencies report that their operations continue to be hampered by curfews, checkpoints and closures in general. Several UNRWA schools, health and training centres have been closed due to curfews. Some of the incidents reported by UNRWA Field Office West Bank last month include:

- 30 December a UNRWA medical team travelling in a UN marked car from Nassariyah to Nablus was turned back at Male Efrayim junction.
- On 2 -6 January the IDF denied UNRWA's cars passage at Surda checkpoint.

- On several occasions UNRWA cars have been needlessly delayed at Beit Iba checkpoint in Nablus.
- Huwarra checkpoint 12 January, the IDF needlessly delayed UNRWA trucks carrying food for distribution and medical teams on their way to Beita and Al-Nasiriyah.

Ambulance operators and first aid providers continued to encounter formidable difficulties in reaching people in need of critical medical assistance:

- The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported 32 incidents, where ambulances were delayed for between 30 minutes and 3 hours during the period 22 December and 17 January. In addition the IDF denied a PRCS ambulance access to a patient in Nablus 13 January, and in Jenin 14 January IDF blocked an ambulance on its way to rescue children stranded in the midst of IDF gunfire. Full reports of the PRCS incidents regarding movement of medical teams and ambulances can be found www.palestinercs.org
- A Medical Relief Committee ambulance transporting an eight year-old cancer patient was turned back at the Hizma checkpoint 9 January. The boy was on his way to Bethlehem Hospital in order to receive treatment.
- In Gaza, on 2 January a Palestinian woman gave birth at the Al-Mawassi check-point because a MoH ambulance used to transfer her to hospital in Rafah was prevented from crossing for three hours.

Fisheries

The fishing industry in Gaza is still subjected to often severe and changing restrictions. On Friday 17 January in response to the Palestinian military operation that took place in the sea across from Gaza north area against an Israeli gunboat, the Israeli authorities have totally prohibited fishing in all the area of Gaza strip. Prior to the recent ban the following restrictions were in place;

- Rafah – The port is tightly controlled by the IDF and no fishermen have been allowed out since April 2002.
- Mawasi – Fishermen do have limited access to the sea though they are subject to restriction changes at short notice. Fishermen must leave for the fishing grounds by 6pm and are not allowed to return until 6am. This imposes a severe financial burden on them through excessive fuel and maintenance costs when no shoals are found. They are not allowed to mix with the fleets from Khan Younis or Gaza and are currently further restricted to a 3 mile limit. Catches that are landed are then subjected to searches. The problem is exacerbated when the fishermen have to pass through check-points to access their markets.
- Khan Younis – The port has been closed by the IDF since April 2002. As a result many boats have fallen into disrepair and are no-longer sea-worthy. Others have been damaged by settlers. There are approximately 700 fishermen in Khan Younis and they have no other source of income.
- Deir El Balah – The fishermen can fish north of the settlement and into the waters of Gaza but only out to 6 miles. This is sometimes further restricted to 3 or even 1 mile. There are reports of the marine police harassing boats while fishing and firing at vessels.
- Gaza and Gaza North – The restriction is out to 6 miles.

Fishing Output

Item	Before Intifada	During Intifada		
	1999	2000	2001	2002
No. of	2,654			Approx 1,654
Fish landed in	3,700	2,600	1,900	Expected ~
Monthly income	300\$	80-100\$	80-100\$	80-100\$
Fishing Area	20 miles	3-6 miles	3-6 miles	3-6 miles
Fishing Boats	814	722	722	722

Labour Mobility

Following the double suicide bombing in Tel Aviv COGAT tightened the issuance of work permits to Palestinian workers. Starting on 7 January no males under the age of 35 were allowed to cross into Israel or industrial zones resulting in a loss of approximately 3000 jobs. An average of 8,500 work permits are currently being issued to Gazan workers as compared to 11,500 permits prior to 5 January.

The new restrictions came in addition to the already difficult procedures for those Palestinians still able to work in Israel. The checkpoint for workers opens each day at 3am and, to ensure that they can reach their place of work in time, many start queuing at 2am. This is to ensure that they can pass through the slow security procedure and catch the bus to sites as far away as Akko and Haifa.

The workers queue in a long, narrow tunnel formed from corrugated iron. At the Israeli end this fans out to reveal approximately 30 turnstiles but normally only five or six are manned and in operation. Hence, each day, some 10-15,000 men have to be checked by six IDF soldiers.

Once through the checks the workers board the buses – if working in Israel - provided by their employers, for the trip to the work site. If they miss the bus then they miss work and have to return to Gaza with the possible forfeiture of their job. There is a growing concern amongst Palestinians about the number of foreign workers being drafted into Israel, notably Romanians and Thais.

Most work in agriculture (which can be seasonal work) or construction. In the former they can expect to earn up to US\$20 per day, and for the latter there are two categories: labourers will receive up to US\$40 per day and 'professionals' something more.

Health

The Italian Cooperation has completed the new version of the online health project database. The new version covers both development and emergency health projects; in total the site currently contains information about 301 health projects. The new version can be accessed at the following address <http://healthprojects.itcoop-jer.org>

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reports that it will soon be able to secure primary health care services to more than 35,000 people living in remote areas in the south of Hebron, the biggest town in the West Bank. Two mobile teams of doctors and nurses will visit each of the 39 concerned villages once a week to give consultations free of charge. Two clinics in Der Abu Mishaal and Tarqoumia villages are also to be provided with medicines and their medical staff to be trained. Hygiene kits will be distributed to the most vulnerable families and health education sessions organised for the communities. The nine-month project, worth 300,000 euros, is funded by ECHO.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) made a presentation on the National Emergency Plan during the Emergency Health Coordination meeting in Ramallah 15 January, for more information about the National Emergency Plan contact MoH or Healthinforum on Info@healthinforum.org

WHO is currently in the process of clearing 28 UNICEF shipments of different kind of vaccines such as Polio, Measles, Hepatitis B, inactivated Polio, inactivated rabies, BCG, DPT, MMR, and Tuberculin. The vaccines will be distributed between West Bank & Gaza to cover all the Palestinian Areas.

Food

A FAO-WFP Food Security Assessment Mission, funded by the EU and USAID is scheduled to start at the beginning of February. The work plan and logistic arrangements are being established and recruitment of consultants and field staff is currently ongoing.

The WFP food price monitoring in Gaza shows that the prices for basic commodities and fresh food in Gaza remained stable in general since November 2002, see table;

Commodity	Qty/ units	23-30/11/02	1-7/12/02	8-15/12/02	16-22/12/02	23-31/12/02	1-7/1/03	8-15/1/03
Wheat flour	60 Kg	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Rice	25 Kg	62	62	62	63	63	65	65
Sugar	50 Kg	77	85	80	76	77	77	77
Vegetable oil	4.6 kg	22	22	23	22	22	22	22
Milk powder	2.5 Kg	85	85	85	85	85	85	85
Lentils	1 Kg	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

In the West Bank WFP reports that the prices of basic food commodities remained practically unchanged.

ICRC distributions between 6-19 January.

Under ICRC's The Urban Relief Program in the West Bank vouchers were distributed to 500 families in Salfit. In Hebron, the distribution of vouchers to some 2900 beneficiaries that was hampered due to curfew, only 275 families could receive their vouchers. In rural areas, the ICRC is running a relief program in co-ordination with the World Food Programme. This week, 2,433 families in 35 villages of Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Ramallah and Salfit districts received flour, rice, sugar, pulses and oil. In the Old City of Hebron (H2), 1064 families received food parcels. This is part of the assistance given to 2,000 families in this vulnerable area of the city. In addition ICRC distributed ad-hoc emergency food assistance in Ramallah, Qalqilya and Salfit. In six Ramallah villages, 575 families received food parcels and flour bags, and in Qalqilya and Salfit, another 570 food parcels were handed out.

UNRWA Gaza emergency food distribution for the period 19-30 December 2002:

District	No. Of Parcels	Parcel content
Gaza North	1,683	50 kg wheat flour. 5 kg rice. 5 kg sugar. 5 kg lentils. 1 kg milk. 2 litres corn oil
Gaza City	3,794	
Gaza Middle	367	
Khan Younis	2,887	
Rafah	1,397	
TOTAL	10,128	

WFP food distribution in Gaza through implementing partners for the period 16 December - 31 December:

Date	IP's	Area	No. of Families	Content
19/12/02	PARC	El-Qarara	290	Wheat Flour Rice Oil
21/12/02		El-Nuseirat & Birka	315	
22/12/02		Wadi Salka	111	
23/12/02		Zawaida	119	
24/12/02		El-Mahata	85	
16/12/02	CRS	Deir Ballah	228	
17/12/02		El-Nuseirat	180	
18/12/02		Wadi-Salka	336	
18/12/02		Beit-Hanon	251	
16-31/12/02	MSA	North Gaza	4,379	
16-31/12/02		Middle area	1,237	
16-31/12/02		Khan-Younis	4,959	
16-31/12/02		South (Rafah)	1,614	
Gross Total (MSA and NGOs)			14,104	

Islamic Relief/UK has distributed 250 one-off food parcels, see table:

District	No. Of Parcels	Parcel content
El Mawasi Area	100	1 kg tea. 2 kg hummus. 3 kg beans. 5 kg rice.
Gaza City	150	5 kg sugar. 5 kg lentils. ½ kg jam. ½ kg tomato paste. 1 kg hallawa. 1 litre olive oil. 1 kg Dates. 5 cans luncheon meat.

UNRWA Field Office, West Bank emergency food distribution between 1 and 15 January:

District	No. Of Parcels	Parcel content
West Bank	33,865	30 kg wheat flour. 7 kg rice. 7 kg sugar. 4 kg powdered milk. 4 litres oil

WFP Food distribution by implementing partners in the West Bank between 1 – 15 January:

Governorate	Families	Content
PARC		Wheat Flour Oil Sugar Rice
Tubas	43	
Tulkarm	220	
CRS		
Jenin	1,751	
Hebron	2,096	
MSA		
Nablus	1,195	
Total	5,305	