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August Overview

This month, the fragile space for human rights and dignity left to Palestinians in the oPt was further affected by the increasing tension between the two Palestinian authorities in Ramallah and in Gaza, as well as by the military activities and restrictive practices by the Israeli authorities. The combination of these factors resulted in numerous cases of Palestinian civilians being killed or injured, denied access, arbitrarily arrested, displaced and denied basic services such as water and sanitation, health and education.

During August, 114 unarmed civilians in the West Bank, including 68 children, were injured by Israeli security forces during military activities, more than half of them in anti-Barrier demonstrations in Ni'lin and Bil'in villages (western Ramallah). In addition, 37 people were injured as a result of attacks carried out by Israeli settlers, the largest number recorded since January 2005. The inter-factional fighting in Gaza resulted in 14 fatalities (13 of whom were armed) and 103 injuries, including 17 children and six women. This constituted the highest monthly toll due to factional fighting since Hamas take-over in mid June 2007.

The population of Gaza was the most severely affected by the denial of services, occurring amidst political tension between Gaza and Ramallah. The first days of the new academic year in Gaza, which started on 24 August for PA schools were disrupted by a teachers' strike called by the Teachers' Union in Ramallah, in response to the decision taken by the Hamas authorities to transfer many school principals and teachers to other schools. In addition, approximately half of the health personnel in the Ministry of Health centers in Gaza joined a strike declared by the Health Workers' Union in Ramallah, starting 30 August, in response to the dismissal of a number of employees. As a result, hospitals postponed elective surgery and many health centres were forced either to close or suspend services. Finally, due to a dispute between two institutions responsible for running the water sector in Gaza, one reporting to Gaza and the other to Ramallah, fuel needed to run water facilities was not supplied, affecting the water supply to some 250,000 people.

Charities and Community-based Organisations (CBOs) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continue to be affected by harsh measures implemented by both authorities. In Hebron governorate, the PA raided and closed down six charity organisations allegedly affiliated with Hamas, affecting hundreds of children and patients. In the Gaza Strip, many CBOs raided by the Hamas authorities in the days following 25 July 2008, are still closed, thus depriving thousands of people of services and activities.



Some of the 30,000 participants in the Gaza Strip beach activities as part of UNRWA Summer Games. UNRWA Photo Archive, 2008.

The freedom of movement of the Palestinian population in the oPt remained severely constrained. In the West Bank, however, the Israeli authorities implemented three measures easing access on certain West Bank routes, including the dismantlement of one staffed checkpoint and the partial opening of another two. Despite these steps, people movement remained highly restricted by a variety of measures, including approximately 600 closure obstacles, the West Bank Barrier, roads prohibited for Palestinian use and areas closed by military orders. In Gaza, most of the population was still unable to move in and out of the Strip. The main exception to this was about 3,000 people who were allowed to cross Rafah out of Gaza and about 1,000 allowed into Gaza during the last two days of August, and some 560 patients who were granted permits to leave Gaza through Erez crossing.

Despite the re-opening of the Kerem Shalom commercial crossing, the amount of imports allowed to enter Gaza continued to decrease over the month, August imports constituted around 70% of July imports and 23% of the imports in May 2007, before the Hamas take-over. The lack of raw materials, combined with the continuous prohibition on exports prevented economic reactivation.

Table of Contents

Protection of Civilians.....	2
Access and Movement.....	5
Education.....	8
Water & Sanitation.....	8
Health	9
Food Security	10
Agriculture	10
Funding.....	10



Protection of Civilians

Inter-factional fighting in the Gaza Strip

The inter-factional fighting, which erupted following an explosion at a beachside restaurant on 25 July, resulting in the killing of one child and five Hamas members, as well as injuring 27 others, continued during August. On 2 August, serious armed clashes took place between Hamas forces and members of one family affiliated with Fatah who were suspected of perpetrating the bombing. As a result, 14 people were killed, including two Hamas security members and 11 armed men, and 103 others were injured, including 17 children and six women. This was the highest monthly toll due to factional fighting since the Hamas take-over in mid-June 2007.

Moreover, 292 Palestinians were arrested by security forces affiliated with Hamas during August, including some high profile Fatah political leaders. Various Palestinian human rights groups said that these arrests and detentions were politically motivated and are therefore arbitrary and contrary to the Palestinian Basic Law and the Penal Procedures Law.¹

Upon trying to flee from the Gaza Strip, a total of 188 men and children of the suspected family were stopped by the IDF at the Nahal Oz Crossing, where they were handcuffed and blindfolded, forced to undress down to their underclothes and kept undressed for a prolonged period of time. This humiliating treatment was filmed and broadcast worldwide. Of the 188 people who fled, 92 were allowed to enter the West Bank, 60 were returned to Gaza and 36 were either hospitalised or taken into custody.

An Israeli human rights organisation, Hamoked, filed a petition with the Israeli High Court of Justice requesting that Israeli authorities allow eight Fatah affiliated individuals, who were hiding in a citrus orchard near the fence

separating the Gaza Strip from Israel, without shelter, food or water, to leave Gaza. According to the organisation, these individuals fled their homes on 25 July, after security forces affiliated with Hamas entered their neighborhood and allegedly attempted to kill them. The Israeli authorities agreed to allow the eight to leave for the West Bank if the PA in Ramallah agreed. While the PA initially forwarded a request regarding five of the eight men to Israel, later on it retracted. Subsequently, the ICRC informed Hamoked that the eight men were arrested by Hamas forces, on the base of which Hamoked deleted the petition.²

More casualties due to the collapse and destruction of tunnels linking Gaza with Egypt

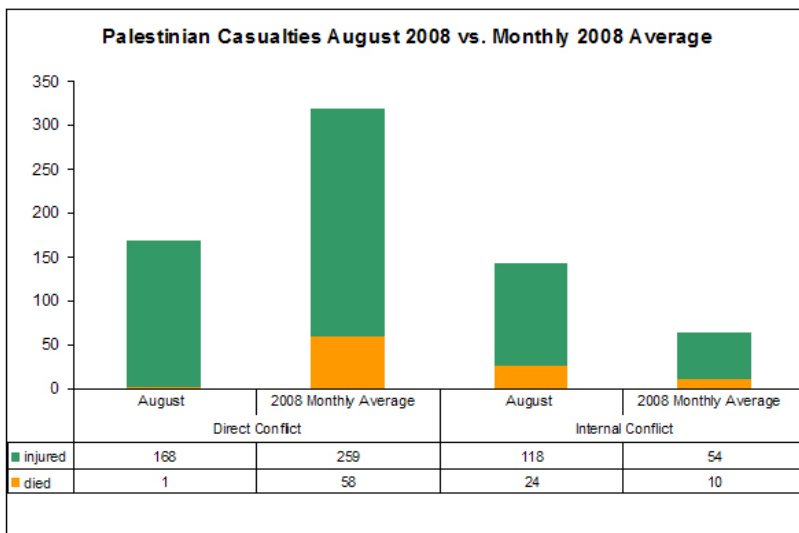
During August, ten Palestinians were killed and another 30 injured following the collapse of 31 tunnels constructed along Gaza's border with Egypt. Since the beginning of 2008, 22 people have been killed and 54 injured in similar circumstances. In addition, in two operations carried out on 5 and 7 August, the Egyptian security forces located and destroyed another 28 tunnels. During the latter operation, two additional persons were reportedly killed and four injured as a result of an armed clash that erupted between the Egyptian forces and tunnel operators. The identity of the casualties, however, remains unclear. Egyptian operations along the border, aimed at locating and destroying tunnels, are ongoing.

As a result of the restrictions placed on the official Gaza crossings, tunnels are reportedly being used as an alternative to smuggle commercial goods, as well as weapons, into Gaza. Against this background, the tunnels have become a vital lifeline for the economy of Gaza, and the only means to obtain some commercial goods that would otherwise be unavailable. In light of this, businessmen and others in Gaza have expressed concern over the destruction of tunnels and the impact on goods availability and price.

Anti-Barrier demonstrations: 96 injured this month

During August, 96 people were injured by the Israeli security forces in the West Bank during anti-Barrier demonstrations held in Nil'in and Bil'in villages of western Ramallah. This represents a decline of 15% compared to July (113). Injuries in anti-Barrier demonstrations constituted 64% of the total number of injuries in the West Bank in August.

On 4 August, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy from Nil'in died from an injury sustained on 30 July when he was shot in the head by the IDF with two rubber-coated metal bullets. This





took place during the funeral of a ten-year-old boy, killed following a demonstration on 29 July. On 21 August, a 20-year-old Palestinian male was detained and handcuffed by the IDF, while they were conducting a search and arrest campaign in the village of Ni'lin, after demonstrations had ended on that day. He was beaten by the IDF, and according to eyewitness reports, he was shot in the head at close range with a rubber-coated metal bullet. He remains in a critical condition with a fractured skull in a hospital in Ramallah.

The almost daily demonstrations in Ni'lin commenced in May 2008 to protest against the construction of the Barrier on the village land and the expected separation of 2,500 dunums of private agricultural land from the village. As in previous months, most of the demonstrations ended violently. The IDF and Israeli Border Police use tear gas and stun grenades, and fire rubber-coated metal bullets, and occasionally live ammunition to disperse the demonstrators. Protesters were also injured when they were physically assaulted by IDF and Border Police. Furthermore, since 8 August, the Border Police have been using a new device known as the "Skunk". According to the Israeli police, the "Skunk" is a foul-smelling liquid designed to repulse demonstrations. It is sprayed on protestors, causing the majority to immediately disperse in order to escape the smell, which induces vomiting.

Demolitions and displacement in East Jerusalem and in the Jordan Valley

Demolition of Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem due to the lack of building permits continued during August. The Jerusalem Municipality demolished two houses located in Beit Hanina after forcibly evacuating the two families using dogs. This has resulted in the displacement of 16 people, including 11 children. One of these two houses had been re-built by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN) in 2007 to replace a house which had been demolished in 2005. The family was not permitted to remove their furniture from the house before it was demolished. In addition, two houses under construction were demolished in At-Tur and Al 'Isawiya and one cement floor was destroyed in Wadi Qaddoum area. The At-Tur demolition affected a room, which had been rebuilt on the site of a demolition which was carried out on 22 May 2008, displacing seven people.

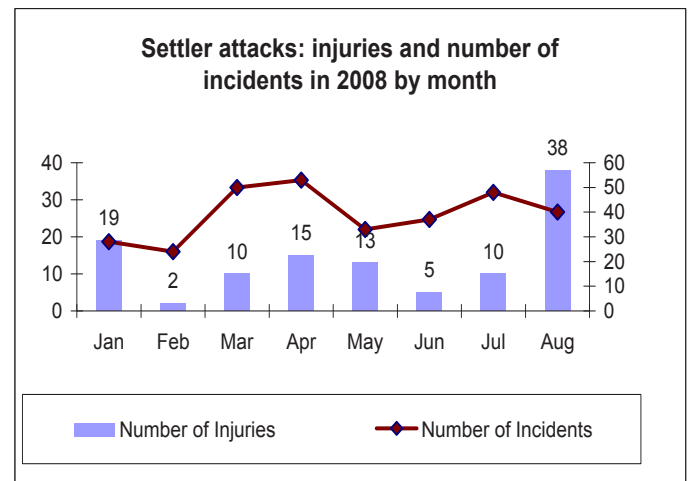
While no houses were reported to have been demolished because they lacked the requisite Israeli-issued construction permits in Area C of the West Bank since April 2008, on 12 August, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) demolished 29 fruit and vegetable stands belonging to Palestinian vendors in the Jordan Valley, along Road 90 between Jiftlik and Bardala localities. The ICA destroyed the tent structures using a bulldozer and burned the remains. The fruits and vegetables were confiscated. These stands, some of which

were operating for many years, were the major source of income for more than 30 families from the Jordan Valley. According to the owners of the stands, the demolitions were carried out one day after receiving a notice from the ICA, warning that the stands would be demolished within three days if not dismantled.

In addition, the ICA issued demolition orders against two houses in 'Arab Ar Ramadin Al Janubi community, affecting ten people. The community is inside an enclave located between the Barrier and the Green Line ("Alfeh Menashe" enclave), in Qalqiliya governorate. In September 2003 this area was declared by the IDF as a closed military zone, forcing residents to obtain permits to continue living in their homes.

Escalation in Palestinian injuries from settler violence despite decrease in attacks

The number of reported incidents involving attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property in August decreased by 16% compared to July (40 vs. 48). However, the number of incidents leading to injuries doubled (7 vs. 14) during the month. Moreover, this month, the total number of people injured as a result of these attacks was almost four times higher than in July (10 vs. 38)—the highest figure reported since 2005. The majority of injuries (23) took place in Hebron governorate in 12 reported incidents.



Almost 80% of the casualties resulted from incidents that occurred in the H2 area of Hebron City. The attacks in this area were carried by Israeli settlers from Kiryat Arba' and Al Rajabi House settlements, generally teenagers, who are camping in three tents erected on a private Palestinian land in Wadi al Hussein neighborhood. In addition to physical assault, most attacks involved also verbal abuse, damage to private vehicles and house windows, and preventing Palestinians and internationals from accessing the so-called "Worshippers Road". In at least three of the incidents the Israeli settlers attacked the Palestinians with pepper spray and in one of them with paint. Settler on-foot convoys in



the area are usually protected by one or two armed settlers who point their rifles at passing Palestinians.

The lack of adequate law enforcement by the Israeli authorities seems to be a key factor contributing to the persistence of the settler violence phenomenon over years. Recent reports in the Israeli media and by an Israeli NGO suggest that as much as 80-90% of the files opened against Israeli settlers following attacks on Palestinians and their property are regularly closed by the Israeli police without prosecution.³

Another relevant factor contributing to this phenomenon is the continuous expansion of Israeli settlements, both in terms of area and population, which further increases the level of friction with the Palestinian population. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) reported that during the first half of 2008 there was a 42% increase in the number of 'building starts' of new housing units in Israeli settlements (excluding East Jerusalem), compared to the same period in 2007 (1010 vs. 709).⁴ Moreover, according to ICBS's estimates, during the first six months of the year, the population in West Bank settlements (excluding East Jerusalem) grew by 4.6%, compared to a 1.6% growth in Israel.⁵ Furthermore, the Israeli organisation 'Peace Now' reported that during this period no outpost (small settlements considered illegal under Israeli law) has been evacuated and 125 new structures, including 30 permanent houses, have been added to existing ones.⁶

Charities and community-based organisations continue to be affected by Palestinian internal strife

In August, charities and Community-based Organisations (CBOs) continued to be affected by restrictive measures implemented by Fatah and Hamas authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively. These measures, taken amidst the continuing tension between the two authorities, had a significant impact on thousands of beneficiaries.

Between 4 and 11 August, six charity organisations in Hebron governorate, allegedly affiliated with Hamas, were raided and closed down by the PA security forces: Al Anwar Cultural Center in Dura town, The Islamic Cultural Center in Tafuh village, the Charitable Society in Beit Ula town, the Orphan Society in Beit Ummar town, and the Jamiyyat Al A'amal Al Khayriya association in Hebron City. In addition, on 20 August the PA Security Forces closed down the main clinic supervised by the Islah Charitable Society in Jericho City, which provided health services to the Bedouin and other poor Palestinians. No written document specifying the reasons for the closures and their duration was issued by the PA. All the raids in Hebron governorate involved confiscation of office equipment, including files and computers. The head of one of the organisations was arrested.

OCHA is still assessing the impact of the closure of these organisations. As of the end of the month, OCHA confirmed that the closure of the charities interrupted the delivery of services to 550 orphans and 200 students enrolled at kindergartens and primary schools supervised by the charities; the closure of the Medical Centre in Jericho has affected approximately 2,400 people, who are served by the centre each month, including 1,000 receiving general health services and another 1,400 people benefiting from laboratory services.

In the Gaza Strip, most CBOs raided by the Izz ad-Din Al Qassam Brigades since 25 July 2008, are still closed. The raids followed a bombing, attributed by the Hamas authorities to a faction affiliated with Fatah, which resulted in the death of a girl and five Hamas members. Since the incident, an estimated 210 CBO/associations were raided, of which 185 were closed and many had their equipment confiscated.

The Hamas-led Mol in Gaza stated in a meeting with PNGO (Palestinian NGOs) representatives on 6 August that the majority of closed CBOs would be reopened upon reviewing their documents and activities, and that such raids would not occur again. As of the end of August, 62 associations had reopened including 37 CBOs working with UNRWA on their summer games activities, and three working with UNICEF. Some of the associations were ordered to sign documents stating they would not conduct any political activities and others were ordered to replace certain board members with Government affiliates. Only a few received back their confiscated items. The re-opening process has been slow and anxiety within the associations is evident. The closures have affected approximately 50,000 beneficiaries who were benefiting from various programmes including psychosocial, special needs, children's summer games and women's health.

Update on family unification requests for Palestinians in the oPt with spouses or family members holding foreign passports

The issuance of a Palestinian ID to a foreign national wishing to live in the oPt requires the approval of a "family unification" application by the Israeli authorities. However, following the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, Israel stopped processing such applications. More than 120,000 applications were pending and additional thousands have been submitted since then. This policy affected spouses, children and siblings of Palestinians living in the oPt, with some of them relying on temporary permits to enter the oPt, while others were forced either to relocate abroad or live separated. Many of those who obtained temporary permits did not receive renewals overstayed their allotted time to remain with their families. They lived under constant threat of deportation and face severe limitations to their freedom of movement and their ability to access healthcare, education and work.⁷



This policy has been modified in October 2007. Since then and until August 2008, the Israeli authorities approved nearly 32,000 outstanding family unification requests, as a good-will gesture to the PA President. According to the new criteria, only those already residing in the oPt, who overstayed their visas, are eligible. The new policy implemented by Israel has had a positive impact on those families whose application was approved. However, over 90,000 other applicants are still waiting and continue to be severely affected.⁸

Children continue to be affected by lack of adequate protection

In August, two Palestinian children were killed, one of whom was killed in the West Bank (see anti-Barrier demonstrations) and the other in the Gaza Strip in family feud. In addition, 73 children were injured throughout the oPt, 56 of them in the West Bank and 17 in the Gaza Strip. Over 70% of the West Bank injuries occurred during anti-Barrier demonstrations and another 20% resulted from attacks by Israeli settlers, mainly in the H2 area of Hebron city. All child injuries in the Gaza Strip occurred on 2 August in the course of armed clashes between Hamas forces and members of one family affiliated with Fatah. Since the beginning of 2008, a total of 81 children (77 Palestinians and four Israelis) were killed and 395 (387 Palestinians and eight Israelis) were injured due to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

In addition, a total of eleven children were displaced following the demolition of two houses in the Beit Hanina area of East Jerusalem. Furthermore, the raids on charity institutes this month interrupted the delivery of assistance for few hundreds of orphans and schoolchildren.

As of the end of August, 293 Palestinian children were reportedly being held in custody in Israeli prisons, including five girls. Over 90% of them were between 16 and 17 years old. This represented a 6% decline compared to July, when 313 children were held in custody. Of the total, 276 children were held in Israeli Prison Service (IPS) and 17 in IDF

interrogation and detention centres. Of those held in IPS, 13 children (including two girls) were held in administrative detention; that is incarceration without charge or trial, compared to 11 in July.

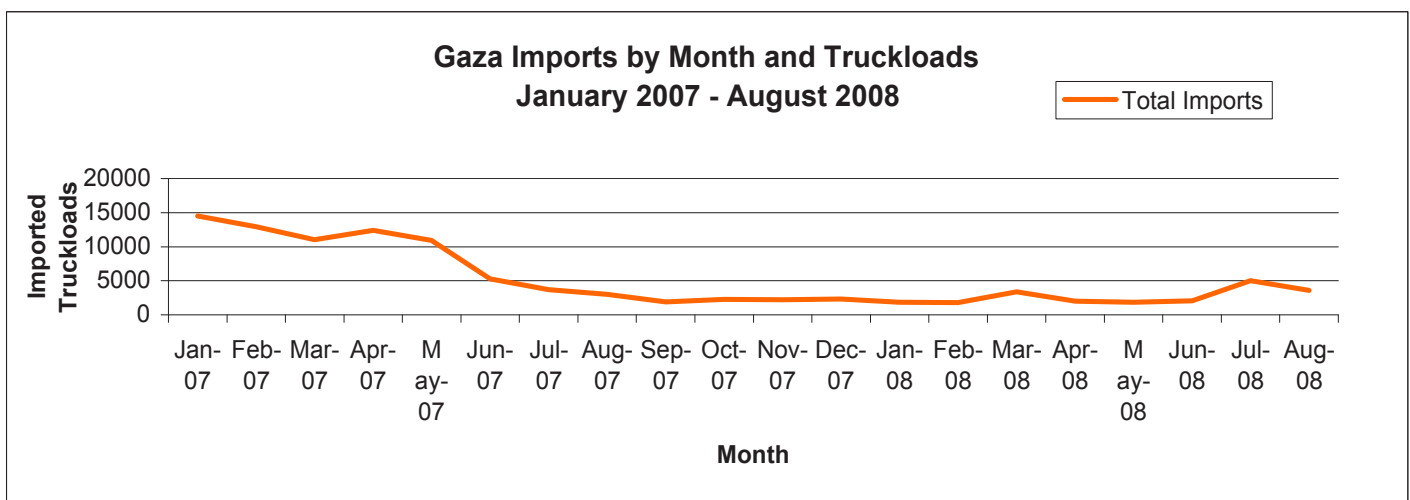
Protection of children during the 2008-2009 academic year is an issue of concern, particularly in light of casualties and school attacks reported in the previous school year. Between July 2007 and July 2008, there were at least 23 reported attacks on schools, 15 of which perpetrated by the IDF and eight by Israeli settlers. Since January 2008, 21 UNRWA students and three teachers were killed during IDF operations. Further, during the 2007-2008 academic year, 256 UNRWA school days were disrupted due to IDF operations. Education access is also a concern for children in Israeli detention; only two out of twelve detention centres provide basic education.

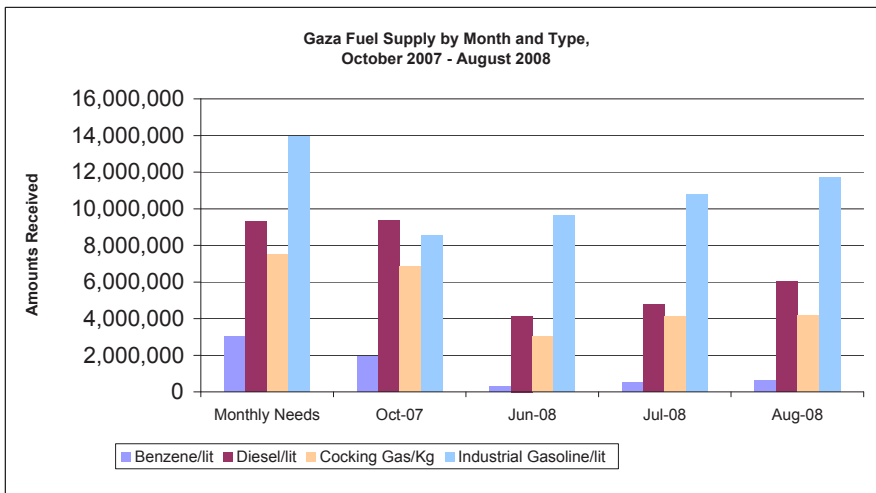
Access and Movement

Decrease in commodities allowed into Gaza

During August, the population of Gaza continued to see little dividend from the 19 June truce, with almost no signs of improvement in living conditions. A decline was recorded in the number of truckloads carrying commercial goods allowed into Gaza since mid-July. During August, the amount of truckloads declined by about 29% compared to July (5,028 in July vs 3,565 in August). Moreover, August imports represented only 27% of December 05 level (before the Palestinian elections) and 23% of May 07 level (before the Hamas take-over).

While food items were the largest category of imported goods, their share increased from 33% in July to 56% of all imports in August. Gravel constituted 23% (compared to 42% in July), and cement, together with other construction materials, made up just 4% of all imports. As was the case in July, a large part of the imported gravel cannot be used until a





proportionate amount of cement and other related building materials are also allowed to enter. Despite the reduction in the number of truckloads, small quantities of a few new items were allowed entry during August, including juice, clothes, shoes, PVC pipes, and some agricultural materials. Vital commodities, including spare parts needed for the maintenance of the public health and water infrastructure sectors, raw industrial materials, furniture, electronics and school uniforms, did not enter Gaza. During the month the Israeli authorities continued to ban all exports.

Fuel imports remained below actual needs. In August, only 22% of petrol, 65% of diesel, 56% of cooking gas and 84% of industrial gas daily needs were met. Authorities in Gaza continued to enforce the coupon rationing system, which was introduced in April 08, to cope with the reduced and irregular amounts of fuel supplied to Gaza. The local authorities banned the use of cooking gas in vehicles as a substitute for benzene due to the shortage in supplies. Long queues were seen at cooking gas outlets. Due to a shortage of industrial gas, Gaza's power plant output ranged between 60-65 MW, which is considerably below 80 MW capacity.

Access for people in and out of Gaza remains unchanged

The ability of the population to move in and out of the Gaza Strip continued to be restricted during August. Rafah Crossing, which links Gaza with Egypt, remained closed, except during the last two days of the month, when 3,341 people were allowed to leave Gaza and 1,052 were allowed to enter. The majority of those leaving were patients, students with places to study abroad and foreign nationals. For unclear reasons, the Egyptian Authorities sent back an additional 1,140 passengers, who were not allowed to enter Egypt. The number of people who crossed out of Gaza in August represented around 35% of the number recorded in both May 2007 and December 2005, and those who crossed into Gaza represented 12% and 6% of May 2007 and December 2005 figures respectively.

Erez Crossing remains restricted to the movement of medical cases, merchants, diplomats and internationals. Of the 874 applications for permits to obtain medical care in Israel and the West Bank, submitted to the Israeli authorities during August, 606 (69%) were approved, 32 (4%) denied, and the rest (236) were, as of the end of the month, still being processed. In practice, 560 patients crossed Erez during the month. In addition, 326 merchants and Palestinian businessmen with permits were allowed to leave through Erez.

In protest at the blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel, and its effect on the Palestinian people, two boats carrying 46 internationals from the "Free Gaza Movement", representing 17 countries, including Israel, managed to sail into Gaza's harbour on 23 August 08. The boats were not intercepted by the Israeli authorities, which control access to the waters of the Gaza Strip, and became the first boats to break the sea blockade. The boats brought in 200 hearing aids, a few medical supplies and 5,000 balloons. The group visited hospitals, schools and public-service institutions and accompanied fishermen. The boats left on 28 August carrying with them seven Palestinians, including a disabled ten year old boy and one woman awaiting family unification. Nine of the activists remained in Gaza.

Removal of one and easing at two checkpoints in the West Bank

In the central West Bank, one IDF staffed checkpoint (Rafat-Masyoun), which was established a year and a half ago on the road from Ramallah to Bir Nabala near Rafat village, was dismantled on 21 August. This has allowed over 40,000 Palestinians living in the Bir Nabala and Biddu Barrier-enclaves, northwest of Jerusalem, to travel to and from Ramallah without crossing a checkpoint. On the other hand, the IDF established a new staffed checkpoint on 4 August at the entrance to Ni'lin village (Ramallah) in response to the almost daily demonstrations against the Barrier construction. On days when demonstrations are planned, the IDF permits only residents of Ni'lin to enter the village from Road 446.

In the northern West Bank, one key staffed checkpoint, Shave Shomeron, has been opened for Palestinian traffic every day from 06:00 to 18:00, since 9 August. This change has eased the movement of around 330,000 Palestinians who use their vehicles to travel from the northern parts of the West Bank into the central and southern parts and vice versa.

In the southern West Bank, on 7 August, the IDF partially opened a gate located on Road 35, which blocked the northwest access to Hebron City. The gate is scheduled



to open for six hours a day, Sunday through Thursday, for commercial traffic traveling to and from the Tarqumiya commercial terminal on the Green Line. While the opening of the gate has reduced the travel time between this terminal and Hebron City from 45 to 20 minutes, the limited opening hours and checking procedures have generated long delays and uncertainty causing some Palestinian trucks to prefer the longer alternative route. In addition, UN vehicles, as well as ambulances and private vehicles, are not permitted to cross this gate.

While this type of steps is certainly positive and increase the freedom of movement of Palestinians, recent experience demonstrates that in places where the infrastructure remains intact, restrictions are likely to be re-imposed after a period of time. Furthermore, despite these recent measures, the West Bank territory remains deeply fragmented by several layers of access restrictions, including over 600 physical obstacles; an average weekly of 92 random (flying) checkpoints, the West Bank Barrier, hundreds of kilometers of roads which are prohibited or severely restricted for Palestinian use, inaccessible areas following their declaration as closed military zones (over 20% of the West Bank) or their inclusion within the outer limits of Israeli settlements (over 3% of the West Bank).

Reduced access to agricultural lands behind the Barrier in the Biddu Enclave

Access to agricultural land isolated by the Barrier, in the vicinity of the Biddu, Beit Surik and Beit Ijza villages, is possible through one of five agricultural gates, which are staffed by the Israeli Border Police. Since 1 July 2008, the Israeli authorities have reduced the number of weekdays that the gates are opened, from five to three days per week, due to an alleged lack of need.

Only landowners and their family members, whose names appear on a list drawn up by the local village councils and approved by the Israeli District Coordination Office (DCO), are allowed to use these gates. Despite coordination, the Border Police frequently arrive at the gates before or after the scheduled opening times, and then only open the gates for few minutes. Access for agricultural vehicles and

equipment is also limited. Tractors are permitted to pass through three of the five gates only. These restrictions had limited the types of work which can be carried out and undermined both the quantity and quality of the harvest. As a result, many farmers have reduced the occasions they attempt to cross to their land.

The reduction in the number of opening days coincided with the peach, grape and fig harvest season. One farmer interviewed by UNRWA in mid August at one of the gates, reported that due to access restrictions, during this season he was able to spray his crops (400 peach trees and 500 grapevines) only once, out of the five times needed. As a result, this season he expects a 25,000 NIS loss in revenue from the sale of his produce. Other farmers reported to UNRWA that sometimes they have no choice but to illegally cross through the last remaining gap in the Barrier.⁹ During harvest this is particularly risky since the crop may be confiscated. One farmer complained that crossing illegally made him feel as though he were a thief, forced to steal his own grapes.

The impact of the Barrier on access to health: Barta'a ash Sharqiya enclave

Barta'a ash Sharqiya is an enclave of seven Palestinian communities located between the Barrier and the Green Line in the Jenin governorate. Residents of this enclave, about 3,600, can reach services, jobs, relatives, markets elsewhere by crossing two Israeli-controlled gates: Reikhan Barta'a and Tura. The first opens only between 06:00 and 21:30 and the second even for a shorter period.

All those entering and leaving the enclave, including patients and health staff, are subject to strict and time-consuming body and vehicle searches (including ambulances). In the event that a patient needs to reach secondary health services in Jenin while the gates are closed, coordination with the Israeli DCL (District Coordination Liaison) Office needs to be done through the representative of the Village Council. In cases of emergency, including women in labour, some patients try to enter Israel and obtain health care in Nazareth within Israel, 30 kilometres away, to avoid delays at the gate. In doing so, they risk imprisonment or fines for entering Israel without a permit.

Inside the enclave, the Village Council has opened a private medical centre, which operates between 09:00 and 22:00 five days per week, providing dentistry, ophthalmology and gynecology services at NIS 50 (US\$14) per visit. The Ministry of Health also runs a clinic providing preventive services.



A farmer waiting for the opening of a gate in the Biddu enclave



Education

Gaza: Palestinian internal tensions and the continuing Israeli blockade impact education

The first days of the new 2008-2009 academic year for the Palestinian Authority's (PA) schools in the Gaza Strip were disrupted by a teachers strike called by the Teachers' Union in Ramallah. The strike was a response to the decision of the Hamas authorities to move about 30% of principals and many teachers to new schools. About 50% of teachers adhered to the initial strike call. In response, the Hamas authorities contracted more than 3,000 unemployed teachers, as well as secretaries and school guards for four months, to replace those on strike. Despite the strike about 90% of students attended school during the reporting period. On 31 August, administrative staff in Al Aqsa University in Gaza City, reportedly joined the strike.

In addition, according to UNICEF, in the course of the last year, the prices of school uniforms and supplies have gone up by 50-100% due to the blockade imposed by Israel.¹⁰ Given the unavailability of school uniforms in the market of Gaza, the local authorities waived the rule on uniforms and many pupils started the school year in their every day clothes. An NGO has reported that it has stationery and 4,000 school bags waiting in the West Bank for entry to Gaza. Furthermore, more than \$93 million of UNRWA and other UN-supported building projects including schools remain suspended due to the lack of building materials in the Gaza Strip.

UN support to the education sector in the oPt

UNICEF, together with UNRWA and MOEHE (Ministry of Education and Higher Education), held a press conference and released a report,¹¹ listing UN support to the MoEHE for the new academic year to further enhance the quality of education and raise the enrolment rate at schools:

- UNRWA runs 308 schools and employs over 9,000 teachers for nearly 250,000 students in grades 1 through 9.
- UNICEF will provide training and supplies to the 100 lowest-performing schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; remedial opportunities for students in need of extra help; and equip around 500 schools with emergency learning materials.
- UNDP/PAPP is implementing a programme to build five schools and rehabilitate ten; provide teaching and learning supplies including computer labs and libraries to 190 schools; and train 4,370 teachers.
- UNESCO will launch a three-year programme for a National Teacher Education Strategy and will support the MoEHE in implementing its five-year Strategic

Development Plan. In support of TVET (technical vocational education and training), UNESCO will assist in establishing a national vocational guidance and counseling system. UNESCO will also expand the provision of micro-science kits to schools in remote areas and provide related teacher training.

- Together with UNICEF and MoEHE, UNFPA has developed protocols and guidelines for an inter-sectoral referral system for youth-friendly health services that will be piloted in the upcoming school year.
- OHCHR will establish a committee focusing on human rights education and provide support to the MoEHE in the ongoing curriculum review and evaluation process. In Gaza, human rights training was provided for UNRWA teachers, and a training of trainers course is to be planned for more staff members.

Gaza: 250,000 children attended UNWRA Summer Activities

By the end of August, UNRWA concluded its Summer Games programme, which operated over ten weeks targeting 250,000 refugee and non-refugee children aged between eight and 15. Swimming, arts and crafts, sports, music and drama activities, as well as trips to Gaza's first archaeological museum, were conducted in 324 locations across the Gaza Strip in the most comprehensive youth initiative in Gaza to date. A series of festivals were held to mark the end of the programme, including an event for 11,000 children in Gaza's open air stadium, which was attended by former Liverpool/England football player John Barnes.

In addition, UNRWA administered Summer Learning classes for 45,000 children from grades four to nine who failed Arabic and/or Mathematics in the second semester examinations. The students were provided with a six-week remedial programme and were given the chance to re-sit exams. Over 80% of the students who enrolled in the programme passed their exams.

Water and Sanitation

Palestinian internal tensions impact water supply in Gaza

The tension between Fatah and Hamas authorities has exacerbated an ongoing conflict between the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) in Gaza, receiving instructions from Ramallah, and the Ministry of Agriculture in Gaza, now controlled by Hamas, and officially in charge of PWA. This conflict resulted in PWA staff in Gaza having to leave their office and stay home and not authorizing the payments of the fuel needed by the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) to operate water wells, waste water pumping stations and waste water suction trucks.



The initial impact of the interruption in fuel supply was limited, as stations used reserve supplies, and switched to electricity when possible. However, towards the end August, the impact became acute. The CMWU reported that as much as half of the water wells were out of fuel and could operate only if there was an electricity supply. In five wells in Middle Gaza there was neither fuel nor electricity, resulting in approximately 250,000 people being supplied with water only for a few hours every four days. Concerns heightened with the threat of flooding from sewage pumping stations, as fuel reserves reached critical levels.

As of the end of August, negotiations between the PWA and the Hamas authorities aimed at resuming fuel supply to CMWU, were still ongoing. In the meantime UNRWA responded by supplying 20,000 litres to cover the most urgent needs.

Bedouin communities in the West Bank severely hit by water crisis

Bedouin communities throughout the West Bank, those located in Area C in particular, are among the most hardly affected by the ongoing water crisis triggered by the current drought.

The case of Al-Maleh, a Bedouin community located in the Jordan Valley, 13km east of Tubas City, is illustrative of the situation. This is a herder community composed of approximately 1,000 permanent residents living in 135 households. Most of the grazing areas historically used by this community have been gradually seized by the Israeli authorities since the beginning of the occupation and allocated for the construction of five Israeli settlements and four IDF military camps. Other areas were declared as closed military zones and became largely inaccessible. In addition, a large number of shelters (mainly tents) in Al-Maleh are under a threat of demolition due to the lack of building permits, which are required by the Israeli authorities for any structure located in Area C. The combination of these factors forced many of the residents of the community to relocate elsewhere, reducing the population by as much as 50 percent compared to the year 2000.

The current water crisis has exacerbated the pressure on the community's livelihoods. While the community is not connected to a water network, in the vicinity of the village there are five springs that, historically, enabled the people to meet their water needs. However, the discharge of these springs has decreased significantly over the last years due to the over-exploitation of groundwater resources by the Israeli authorities. In addition, the difficulties that people faced in accessing these springs have increased. On top of that, the current drought has led to an almost complete depletion of some of these springs. As a result, residents of Al-Maleh are trucking water from Ein Al Beida village, located at a distance of 13 km, at a cost of 50 NIS per cubic

meter, around ten times more than the price of piped water paid by households connected to the network in the West Bank. For some families, expenditure on water became as much as 30 percent of their total income.

According to the head of the Village Council, this acute situation can be alleviated to a large extent by relatively simple measures, such as the installation of a so-called 'filling point' in the vicinity of the village, which can be connected to the water pipe supplying the settlements in the area, and the rehabilitation of the local springs.

Health

Gaza: Medical staff announce an open-ended strike

On 29 August, the Health Workers' Union in Ramallah called a strike for four days in the Gaza Strip, starting from 30 August until 2 September, in response to the dismissal of 40 MoH employees by the Hamas authorities in Gaza. It called for a suspension of all health services.

Approximately 48% of health personnel are on strike in eight MoH hospitals surveyed; out of which 31% are doctors, 24.9% are nurses and 44% other professionals. Three MoH hospitals, Kamal Edwan, Dora and Beit Hanoun hospital declared emergency status and suspended all non-emergency health service. Seven MoH hospitals maintained full capacity even with a shortage of staff. At Primary Health Care (PHC) centres approximately 65% of personnel are reportedly on strike. As a result, 12 out of 56 PHC, are reportedly completely closed and the remaining facilities have limited their services to sick baby and non-communicable diseases clinics. Antenatal clinics, family planning, preventive medicine and epidemiology are completely closed in many places. (Impact of the strike will to be reported in the September issue of the Humanitarian Monitor)

Slight improvement in power supply to MoH hospitals in the Gaza Strip

A very slight improvement was noted in electricity supply for most hospitals during August. Hospitals reported an average power shortage of two hours daily, compared to five hours in July, resulting in an increase in the level of fuel storage at health facilities to about 30% of their capacity compared to 23% in July. As a result of this improvement, all hospitals have been working at full capacity during the month, except for the last two days of the month, during which health services were disrupted by the strike of medical staff (see above), and except in the Gaza European Hospital, which suspended half of the elective surgeries due to a limited amount of stored fuel (11.5%).



Availability of drugs and medical and pharmaceutical supplies in the oPt

There was no tangible change in the availability of drugs at the Central Drug Store (CDS) in the Gaza Strip. As of mid-August, the number of drug items available at zero level¹² was 45 out of 416 essential drug items, in addition to 50 drug items with less than three months stock, as reported in July. The same was observed for the medical supplies, as the number of medical supply items at zero stock remained 102 out of 596 items and 157 with less than three months stock. On 26 August, WHO managed to coordinate the entry of a three and a half pallet shipment that contained mainly drugs and solutions used for haemodialysis and kidney failure patients, special milk formulas and Insulin. In the West Bank, 73 out of 416 essential drug items were at zero stock, whilst 45 items were below one month stock, as of 21 August.

Food security

Availability and prices of basic commodities

In the first seven months of 2008, the average food prices increased by 20% increase in the West Bank and a 23% increase in the Gaza Strip, compared to 2007 average prices. Prices of food commodities could further inflate in the Gaza Strip as the demand on traditional food items increases during the month of Ramadan and while restriction on imports remains in place.

The WFP Safety Net Mission, which was held in July 2008, found that scaling up safety net interventions is the most appropriate way to respond to the soaring food prices, where agriculture is very limited and the industry has almost completely collapsed due to the closure of Gaza's borders. Following the findings and recommendations of the Mission, WFP intends to put in place an emergency food support scheme to target additional 55,000 non-refugees, particularly residing in urban areas, who constitute the poorest unemployed segment. This would be done through a voucher scheme, in which coupons of bread and cheese for local bakeries and grocery stores are to be distributed. In addition, WFP will scale-up support to women's centres in the production of snacks to feed an additional 20,000 schoolchildren through a cash-for-work scheme.

Agriculture

New appeal to support agricultural communities affected by the drought

On 25 August 2008, in an extraordinary meeting of the Agricultural Sector Working Group, the PA Ministry of Agriculture, supported by FAO, launched a US\$26.8 million appeal for emergency funding to support herder

communities worst affected by weather crises and soaring food prices. The planned intervention aimed at enabling these communities to sustain a minimum level of food security and livelihood, and mitigate the risk of severe interruption of the next planting and production season. As part of this intervention, around 55,000 rain-fed crop farmers and herder families could benefit from the provision of seeds for cereals, feed for small ruminants, fertilizers and water for livestock.

Since November 2007, the oPt has witnessed a series of weather shocks (prolonged frost waves, drought and dry winds), causing severe damage and losses for farmers and herders all over the country. Total rainfall last season reached only 55 percent of the annual average in the southern West Bank and 65 percent in the north, drastically affecting the growing season of crops and grazing plants. The impact of the drought was particularly acute given the existing water scarcity in the region and the dependency of Palestinian agriculture on rainfall: 85.7 percent of cultivated land is rain-fed and livestock is largely grazed on pastures relying on rainfall. In addition to the weather shocks, increased fodder prices have exacerbated the ongoing crisis caused by the rise in food and input price.

The current drought and resulting disruption of the grazing season has forced around 200,000 small ruminants' herders in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip to buy expensive fodder rather than graze their herds on the green pastures. Direct losses in the main rain-fed crops (cereals, field crops, vegetables, olives and fruit trees) attributable to weather conditions were estimated at US\$113.5 million (MoA, August 2008), while indirect income losses due to soaring prices of production inputs and animal feeds are likely to be much larger. Many small rain-fed crop farmers and herders are being driven to pursue destructive coping mechanisms, such as distress sales of agricultural assets; land, machinery, livestock and reserve seeds and olive oil. The tight cash flow may not enable them to continue farming next season.

Funding

CAP, HERF and CERF

The 2008 Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) Mid-Year Review (MYR) stands at US\$448 million, which resulted from a reduction of US\$14 million in the total financial requirement of the original CAP (US\$462 million). The most significant decrease emanates from economic recovery and the water and sanitation sectors, which decreased their financial requirements by US\$44 million. The food sector was revised upward its requirements, from 158 to US\$198 million, mainly due to the global increase in the food prices, which contributed to the deterioration in the food security situation in the oPt. The revised CAP is currently 50% funded.



In 2008, the CERF (Central Emergency Response Fund) has funded two food aid projects for UNRWA and WFP in the West Bank. UNRWA has more than doubled the scale of its food aid through the CERF, by providing food parcels to more than 32,000 families. WFP is using CERF to fill a one-and-half-month gap in food assistance pipeline in the West Bank. This is benefiting 98,000 Palestinian non-refugees.

The HRF (Humanitarian Response Fund) is designated for supporting immediate response to unforeseen emergencies affecting the Palestinian population. Since its launch in August 2007 in the oPt, the HRF has supported 11 projects responding to various needs arising from humanitarian emergencies. In 2008, assistance was delivered to 3,200 families who were affected by the frost and snow during January, by providing them with heating and bedding. The whole population in the Gaza Strip benefited from HRF four projects, which targeted health, water and the sewage sectors. One of the projects was to ensure the delivery of health services to people living in vulnerable areas, mainly those under continuing military attacks.

The following UN Agencies, local and international NGOs and organisations participate in sector working groups and regularly provide information to the Humanitarian Monitor: 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), ACF-E, AAA, ACPP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

End Notes

1. See Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Press Release, 28 August 2008, available at: <http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/PressR/English/2008/80-2008.html>; see also Al Haq, Press Release, 2 August 2008, available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/etemplate.php?id=385>.
2. Further details on Hamoked's legal action are available at: http://www.hamoked.org/news_main_en.asp?id=571
3. See Yesh Din, "Law Enforcement upon Israeli Civilians in the OPT"; Data Sheet, July 2008. See also the response of the Judea and Samaria Division of the Israeli Police to Yesh Din's report published in Ynet, 9 July 2008, available at www.ynet.co.il.
4. ICBS, Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, available at: http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/o4_e.htm.
5. The estimate at the end of 2007 was 276,100, while at the end of June 2008 was 282,500. Information available at: http://www.cbs.gov.il/population/new_2009/table1.pdf.
6. Peace Now, "Israel is Eliminating the Green Line and Continuing to Build in the Isolated Settlements", August 2008, available at http://www.peacenow.org.il/data/SIP_STORAGE/files/5/3775.pdf
7. For further details on the freeze policy on family unification see: B'Tselem and Hamoked, "Perpetual Limbo: Israel's Freeze on Unification of Palestinian Families in the Occupied Territories", July 2006, available at: http://www.btselem.org/Download/200607_Perpetual_Limbo_Eng.pdf.
8. More updates on this topic are available at the website of the Coalition on the Right to Entry to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, at <http://www.RightToEnter.ps>.
9. Since the beginning of August, this option became no longer available as a Border Police patrol jeep started manning a flying checkpoint near this incomplete area.
10. UNICEF. Children and Education Fact Sheet. "Unite for Children" Back-to-School press conference. Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Ramallah, 21 August, 2008.
11. United Nations support to education. "Unite for Children" Back-to-school press conference. Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Ramallah, 21 August, 2008.
12. Items at zero level mean a stock of 0-1 month, which is below the security level.