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September Overview

September events highlight a number of ongoing protection concerns and underscore the fragility of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). After four months of relative calm in the oPt, there was a sudden escalation of Israeli-Palestinian violence and a rise in related casualties, due mainly to clashes in East Jerusalem and increased settler violence.

In the West Bank, confrontations erupted in the Old City of Jerusalem when Palestinians attempted to stop a group of Israelis, accompanied by Israeli security forces, from visiting the Al Aqsa Mosque Compound; clashes soon spread to other areas of the city resulting in the injury of 38 Palestinians and 18 Israeli security forces. In other West Bank areas, Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians and their property resulted in 21 Palestinian injuries, most of them in one attack carried out in retaliation to the dismantlement of one settlement outpost by the



En route from West Bank to Friday prayers in Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem; Qalandiya Checkpoint. Photo by Patrick Zoll

Israeli authorities, which was later rebuilt. In the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces killed eight Palestinians and injured another 18. The majority of Gaza's casualties this month occurred as a result of Israeli air strikes, which included, for the first time since the "Cast Lead" offensive", the targeting of alleged Palestinian militants travelling in a car. Among this

ISSUES COVERED THIS MONTH

West Bank, including East Jerusalem: Clashes in East Jerusalem led to a sharp increase in Palestinian and Israeli injuries • Increase in Palestinian casualties from Israeli settler violence • Humanitarian intervention delayed due to insufficient water at filling points • The olive harvest and access concerns • The majority of Muslim Palestinians in the oPt denied access to Friday Prayers in East Jerusalem • Update on agricultural access in the Biddu area • No demolitions in either Area C or East Jerusalem but worrying legal developments otherwise • New loan program targeting refugee women was launched • Humanitarian Access in the West Bank

Gaza Strip: Significant increase in Palestinian casualties • Gaza blockade: imported truckloads hit a new low • Concerns about the state of water and sanitation infrastructure and resources • Concerns about the state of water and sanitation infrastructure and resources • Restricted movement in and out of Gaza • INGOs facing constraints in Gaza • New policy prevents Israeli human rights organizations from intervening on behalf of Palestinians

OPT-wide issues: UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict • Goldstone report highlights vulnerability of children in the oPt • HRF Fund

month's fatalities, there is a 14-year-old boy killed while walking with his family in the direction of the border with Israel, at over 600 metres away from the border fence.

During the month, access restrictions to East Jerusalem prevented the majority of the Palestinian Muslim population in the oPt from attending Friday prayers at Al Aqsa mosque during the holy month of Ramadan (22 August – 19 September), curtailing their right to religious freedom. Poor preparations at Israeli checkpoints along the Barrier separating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, resulted in long queues and overcrowding.

While September saw some improvements in Palestinian movement, with the Israeli authorities' removal of 41 obstacles (primarily earthmounds), other Israeli access and movement restrictions continue to prevent Palestinian use or development of large areas of the West Bank (mostly Area C). Most of the restricted areas lie within the Jordan Valley, where access is controlled by four checkpoints; restrictions at one of these checkpoints were re-imposed in September, shortly after they had been lifted.

In the Gaza Strip, following a reduction in the working days at the Kerem Shalom crossing since July 2009, and the closure of the crossing during the Muslim and Jewish holidays this month, September saw the lowest number of truckloads entered since December 2008. The lack of essential imports, including raw materials, coupled with the ongoing

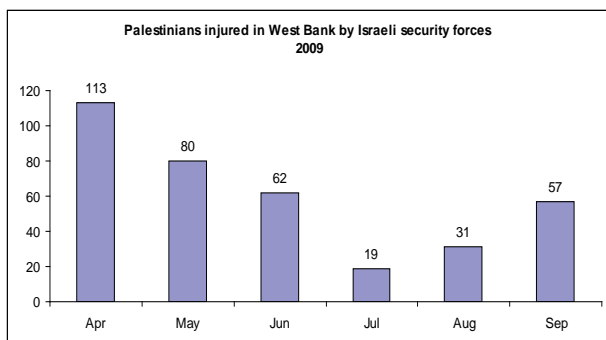
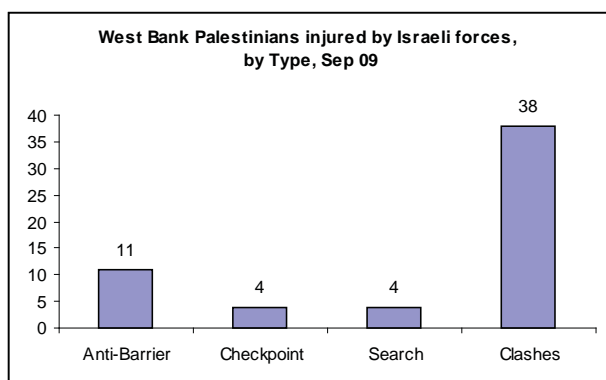
ban on exports, continues to hinder economic revival, contributing to unemployment levels of over 40 percent of Gaza's workforce. Although many goods are available in the market as a result of the tunnels under the Rafah-Egypt border, most are far too expensive for the population to afford. The ban on building material imports prevents the reconstruction of thousands of homes destroyed and damaged during the last military offensive. With the winter season approaching, there is growing concern for families who continue to live in damaged homes as well concern that, with heavy winter rains, electricity shortages and poorly-functioning pumps, sewage treatment plants will overflow and cause significant damage to surrounding property and contamination of water resources

Also in September, the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict released its report, which found evidence of serious violations of international human rights (IHR) and humanitarian law (IHL), including acts amounting to war crimes. The Mission urged the relevant authorities to launch investigations that are independent and in conformity with international standards into allegations of serious violations of IHR and IHL. The report concluded that "the Mission is firmly convinced that justice and respect for the rule of law are the indispensable basis for peace. The prolonged situation of impunity has created a justice crisis in the oPt that warrants action." On 16 October, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution endorsing the report and its recommendations.

West Bank

Clashes in East Jerusalem led to a sharp increase in Palestinian and Israeli injuries

The period spanning April to August 2009 witnessed a general downward trend in the number of reported casualties, with July and August registering some of the lowest numbers of Palestinians injured in the West Bank since OCHA began recording casualties in January 2005 (19 and 31, respectively). This trend was broken in September, when Israeli forces killed two Palestinians, including one child,¹ and injured 57 others, including five children; 18 Israeli troops were also injured in clashes with Palestinian protestors.²



On 22 September, Israeli forces shot a Palestinian man from East Jerusalem at a gas station near the Israeli settlement of Betar Illit (Bethlehem) and killed him; circumstances surrounding the incident remain unclear and Israeli authorities are investigating. On 30 September, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was killed when hit by an Israeli army Jeep in the village of Ya'bad (Jenin). According to the IDF, the collision was accidental and occurred after

the driver lost control of the vehicle. The incident sparked Palestinian stone-throwing in the village.

The majority of Palestinian injuries, as well as all Israeli injuries, in September occurred on a single day: a total of 38 Palestinians and 18 members of Israeli security forces were injured on 27 September in clashes that erupted in Al Aqsa mosque compound in the Old City of Jerusalem, when Palestinians attempted to prevent a group of Israelis from entering the compound, and in clashes that occurred between Palestinian protestors and Israeli police forces following that incident in Al 'Isawiya neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. These clashes followed several weeks of tension in East Jerusalem, beginning on 2 August, when Israeli security forces forcibly evicted nine Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, displacing a total of 53 people. A few weeks later, on 23 August, the month of Ramadan began and Palestinian access to Al Aqsa Mosque was increasingly restricted. By the last week of Ramadan (ending on 19 September), Palestinians from all parts of the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem) were barred from entry into East Jerusalem for the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah).

Increase in Palestinian casualties from Israeli settler violence

Settler violence against Palestinian civilians and their property continued in September, with a significant increase in related injuries. During the month, OCHA recorded a total of 27 settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians and their property, down slightly from 29 in August, and the same as the monthly average (27) in 2009.

Settler violence resulted in the injury of 21 Palestinians in September, compared to five in August. The majority of September's injuries (15) occurred on one day, in the context of Israeli settlers' "price tag" strategy whereby settler attacks are carried out on Palestinian communities in response to the Israeli authorities' attempts to dismantle settlement outposts; on 9 September, a group of ten

Israeli settlers from Susiya settlement physically assaulted a group of Palestinians from the nearby village of Susya (Hebron), following the demolition of an outpost by Israeli security forces, west of the affected Palestinian community. The settlers reconstructed the outpost the same night.

In other incidents resulting in injuries, an Israeli settler opened fire at Palestinians in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, seriously injuring two, including a 13-year-old boy. Israeli police arrested the suspect at the scene and is investigating the incident. In addition, a group of settlers opened fire on two Palestinian brothers herding flocks near Yitzhar settlement (Nablus), hitting one in the chest. Also during the month, settlers cut down or uprooted over 300 Palestinian-owned fruit-bearing trees, including olive trees, attempted to take over a building in the Old City of Jerusalem, and threw stones at Palestinian-plated vehicles.

OCHA recorded nine incidents of Palestinian stone-throwing, along with two incidents of a Molotov cocktail thrown, at Israeli-plated vehicles in the West Bank. No injuries were reported; in two cases, damage to vehicles was reported.

Israeli media reports during the month indicated that the Israeli army has identified a trend of rising settler violence and established a rapid-response security team to prevent “friction and violence between Israeli settlers, security forces and Palestinians.”³ In their monitoring of Israeli investigations of Israeli settler violence, the Israeli human rights organization, Yesh Din, has reported a pattern of failure on the part of the Israeli authorities to prosecute Israeli settlers for attacks on Palestinians.⁴

The lack of law enforcement is an ongoing protection concern, particularly given the olive harvest set to begin in October. Settler violence generally increases during the olive harvest, particularly in areas adjacent to Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In September, Israeli media reported the circulation among Israeli settlements of a flyer calling on settlers to prevent Palestinians from entering settlement areas to pick their olives and

calling on settlers to harvest the trees in advance, to prevent Palestinians from doing so. The flyer also called for action against Israeli peace activists, the Israeli police, and the Israeli Civil Administration.⁵

Humanitarian intervention delayed due to insufficient water at filling points

The implementation of the coordinated response to the regional water scarcity by a number of humanitarian UN agencies and NGOs, which began the previous month (in August), is taking place at a slower pace than expected. This is related mainly to the lower quantities of water available at the filling points. To date, none of the nine additional filling points approved in July 2009 by the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee that could have supported the response has been installed. As a result, implementation is expected to end by mid-November, almost two months after the original deadline.

The humanitarian response targets some 55,000 Palestinians living in vulnerable rural communities in the southern and eastern regions of the Hebron governorate, and areas of the Jordan Valley. The beneficiaries are entitled to 25 liters of drinking water per person per day, nine liters of water per sheep per day, and a total of one kilogram of fodder per sheep, for a period of two months.

The ongoing water scarcity crisis in the West Bank is directly affecting approximately 350,000 Palestinians, most of whom are located in the southern part of the West Bank, including some 230,000 people living in communities not served by a water network.⁶ As demonstrated in the course of the current intervention, humanitarian response to water shortages is mainly limited by the insufficient amounts of water allocated to Palestinians in the West Bank. Since this allocation has not increased over the past years, humanitarian interventions must necessarily resort to the redistribution of available water between communities and areas in order to address the most urgent needs. This practice has led to the emergence of new tensions between communities and individuals. Moreover, the ongoing water scarcity is a key factor behind the widespread phenomenon of illegal connections

to the water network by Palestinian farmers, which continues to proliferate.

Humanitarian interventions are also impeded by the access restrictions to and from some rural areas, imposed by the Israeli authorities. In the previous month, distribution of water and fodder in three communities in south-east Hebron (Halaweh, Mirkez and Jinba) had been prevented due to obstacles blocking the only route to them, resulting in the relocation of a third of the residents of one of these communities (Jinba) to the nearby town of Yatta. However, in September, closure obstacles impeding access were removed, and water was successfully distributed to the three communities.

The olive harvest and access concerns

The annual olive harvest begins in October 2009. The total area of cultivated land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is about 1.9 million dunums of which olive trees cover about 881,000 dunums, constituting up to 25% of the gross agricultural product. Traditional olive farmers are mostly poor and represent a marginalized part of the Palestinian population. Olive production provides the bulk of income for about 71,000 families, distributed over the different governorates of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (52 percent of families involved in agriculture). The olive sector in the West Bank and Gaza has grown in importance since the outbreak of the second Intifada as it offers one of the few reliable sources of income for thousands of the most vulnerable rural families and communities. However, movement restrictions and obstacles which reduce access to land and markets; the Barrier which separates many farmers from their olive groves; the closure of the Gaza Strip crossings and attacks by Israeli settlers against farmers and olive trees, all combine to undermine the economic benefits of this critical crop.

Most of the olive yield (up to 95 percent) is used for the production of olive oil, and the rest is used for olive pickles. The olive harvest follows a two-year cycle with significant fluctuations between alternative seasons: the average annual supply of olive oil can reach up to 36,000 tons in a peak season

compared to 6,000 tons in the off season. 2009 will be an off-season with the yield unusually low, estimated at only 10 percent of the peak season due to adverse weather conditions earlier this year in the growing season. Picking is manual and labour-intensive, involving the extended family, with more than half of the Palestinian population expected to participate. In recent years, West Bank farmers have been joined by international and Israeli solidarity groups to ensure protection in areas of friction and to complement the workforce in areas where Palestinian access is restricted behind the Barrier.

In the West Bank, the main friction points are the olive groves in the vicinity of Israeli settlements and settlement outposts, where Palestinian farmers working their fields have faced incidents of crop theft, tree uprooting, harassment and physical attack. According to the Israeli authorities, the IDF and the Police will be present at friction points for designated few day periods to ensure protection for Palestinian farmers from settler harassment, and the IDF has announced that Israeli access will be restricted in certain areas. As in previous years, Israeli human rights and solidarity groups have organised to accompany West Bank farmers at potential friction points and assist the harvesting efforts in the "seam zone" where Palestinian farmers have limited access.

The Barrier also presents a major problem as 85% of the route runs inside the West Bank, severing hundreds of agricultural roads and tracks and separating Palestinian farmers and their families from their olive groves. Since October 2003, Palestinians in the northern West Bank have been obliged to obtain visitor permits to access their land in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line (the "Seam Zone"). The IDF has installed approximately 60 gates to allow those granted permits restricted access to land in the closed area and the IDF has announced an allocation of extra permits and an extension of the gate opening times during the olive harvest. However, the majority of Barrier gates remain closed throughout year except during the olive harvest. This means that essential activities such as ploughing, pruning, fertilising,

and pest and weed management cannot be carried out, affecting the quantity and quality of the olive oil yield. Limited access to water supplies also hinders the ability of many farmers to provide partial irrigation at critical times, limiting the ability to increase productivity.

In January 2009, the “Seam Zone” was extended to the Ramallah, Hebron and parts of the Salfit, Bethlehem and Jerusalem governorates. Permits are now required for farmers wishing to pass through some of the agricultural gates in these areas. Some of the affected communities are protesting this new requirement and farmers have not applied for a visitor permit to date, raising concerns about the viability of the olive harvest in the closed area in these governorates.

Reduction in number of closure obstacles; access to land and resources remains heavily restricted

During the month, the Israeli authorities announced the removal of 100 unstaffed closure obstacles in the West Bank. Of the 100, 39 were included in OCHA’s regular database (almost all of them earthmounds), which includes all West Bank closure obstacles that have a significant impact on Palestinian movement and access. Based on GPS coordinates provided by the IDF and following completion of fieldwork, OCHA was able to confirm that while 35 of the 100 were removed, 22 remained in place. OCHA was unable to locate the remaining 43 obstacles on the list, either because no obstacle could be found at the coordinates provided (with no evidence of the existence or removal of an obstacle), or because the coordinates indicated a position outside the West Bank. In the course of its fieldwork, OCHA identified the removal of an additional six obstacles, not included on the IDF list.

Also during the month, the Israeli authorities removed the remaining infrastructure at Asira al Shamaliya checkpoint, which controlled one of the main access routes into Nablus City from the north. This was one of the four checkpoints that in June 2009 ceased to be permanently staffed, but preserved its infrastructure.⁷ While the immediate

impact of this removal is limited, it reduces the uncertainty generated by the possibility of finding the route blocked by the IDF at any given moment and without previous warning; as such this is a significant and welcome step.

On 2 September, Israeli authorities removed part of the infrastructure at the Ma’ale Efrayim checkpoint, one of four staffed checkpoints controlling access to the Jordan Valley, and reported that the checkpoint would no longer be regularly staffed. This was a significant development as it would enable Palestinian-plated vehicles belonging to people residing outside the Jordan Valley, to enter the area through this checkpoint without a permit. However, this easing was reversed later in September. At present, all cars are checked and pre-existing permit requirements for vehicles are in effect. As a result, movement and access to the Jordan Valley remains heavily restricted to the majority of the West Bank population.

As of the end of the month and following these developments, there were 592 movement obstacles in the West Bank (excluding eight Green Line checkpoints), down from 619 at the end of August 2009. Of the 592, 69 are permanently staffed checkpoints, 23 are partial checkpoints and 500 are unstaffed obstacles (earthmounds, road gates, roadblocks, earthwalls, trenches and road barriers).

Since April 2008, the Israeli authorities have carried out a series of relaxation measures that have significantly eased Palestinian movement between major West Bank urban centres, with the exception of East Jerusalem. These measures have not improved Palestinian access to land and resources in the West Bank, large parts of which remains restricted to Palestinian use and development.⁸ In addition, the relaxation measures have taken place alongside a process of entrenchment of some of the mechanisms used to control and restrict Palestinian movement. This process includes, among other elements, the expansion of the alternative (“fabric of life”) road network and of key permanently staffed checkpoints.

The majority of Muslim Palestinians in the oPt denied access to Friday Prayers in East Jerusalem

As in past years, all of Gaza's population, in addition to over 40 percent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank, was prohibited from entering East Jerusalem for Friday prayers during the month of Ramadan (22 August – 19 September). Access for West Bank ID holders was restricted by the Israeli authorities to men over 50 and women over 45 years of age, and boys and girls under 12, who could pass without permits; men between 45-50 and women between 30-45 years of age were eligible for special permits. Access to East Jerusalem for West Bank ID holders is severely obstructed by the Barrier and is limited to only four of the 17 checkpoints installed along the Barrier (Qalandiya, Gilo, Shufat Camp and Az Zeitun). In addition, Israeli security forces and roadblocks were deployed around the Old City on each Friday during the month.

Following relatively smooth access on the first Friday (28 August), the situation worsened considerably on the second Friday and remained that way through the end of the month. Access was particularly problematic for women and children at Qalandiya checkpoint, due to inadequate preparations for handling a large amount of people and subsequent overcrowding.⁹ In order to ensure that those eligible, could cross Qalandiya in a safer and dignified manner, OCHA submitted recommendations of a practical nature to the District Coordination Liaison Office (DCL), none of which were implemented.

During the four Fridays of Ramadan, at least 100 Palestinians were injured due to overcrowding at crossing points and received on-the-spot medical treatment, including one Palestinian male who suffered a heart attack while crossing and died a few days later. In addition, at least 40 others, predominantly women and children, were transferred to hospitals for medical care. Most injuries occurred on the second and third Fridays of Ramadan.

During the first, second and third Fridays, the Israeli authorities report that 60,000, 130,000 and 190,000 people entered, respectively. While official figures are not yet available, observers report that fewer people were able to enter on the last Friday of Ramadan than the previous week, due in large part to the imposition of a closure for the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah. Overall, access to Jerusalem during Ramadan this year was more poorly organized and allowed fewer numbers of Palestinians to reach Al Aqsa for prayers than last year.

Update on agricultural access in the Biddu area

As reported in last month's Humanitarian Monitor, three gates which control access to agricultural land located behind the Barrier in Biddu and Beit Izja villages in the Jerusalem governorate, were closed on 27 August, following the detonation of an explosive device at one of these gates. The gates remained closed until 23 September, seriously affecting the grape crops of local farmers. The gates have reopened for four days per week for landowners and their family members who have been approved by the Israeli District Coordination Liaison (DCL) Office. New security procedures are now in place, including the use of dogs to check the gate.

No demolitions in either Area C or East Jerusalem but worrying legal developments otherwise

For the first time since OCHA began its Protection of Civilians database in mid-2005, OCHA recorded no demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures in either East Jerusalem or Area C in September. Thus far in 2009, the Israeli authorities have demolished 223 Palestinian-owned structures, including 92 residential structures, in East Jerusalem and Area C,¹⁰ displacing 515 Palestinians, including 262 children. An additional 504 Palestinians, including 303 children, have been affected.

In September, OCHA continued to receive reports of the Israeli authorities' distribution of stop work and demolition orders due to lack of permit. At least 18 such orders were distributed; three in the village of Al Jiftlik (Jericho), two in Khirbet Makhoul, near Al Hadidiya in the northern Jordan Valley, eight in Azzun village (Qalqiliya), four in Kisan village (Bethlehem) and one order in Al Ma'sara village (Bethlehem).

This month, legal developments from the Israeli High Court of Justice raised concern over intensified pressure to carry out Area C demolitions. In response to a petition submitted by a settler organisation ("Regavim"), the Israeli High Court of Justice ordered the Israeli authorities to update it within 45 days about the steps they have taken against dozens of Palestinians structures constructed without permits in the Area C sections of the Al Sawiya and Yatma villages (Nablus governorate). The settler organisation also petitioned the High Court in September, requesting the demolition of 257 structures belonging to a Bedouin community located in the vicinity of the Kfar Adumim settlement (Jerusalem governorate), which were built without permits. While these petitions are still pending, they have raised concerns among the affected communities about possible demolitions and displacement.

In Area C, thousands of Palestinian-owned structures located in Area C have been built without permits and have been served demolition orders by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) that

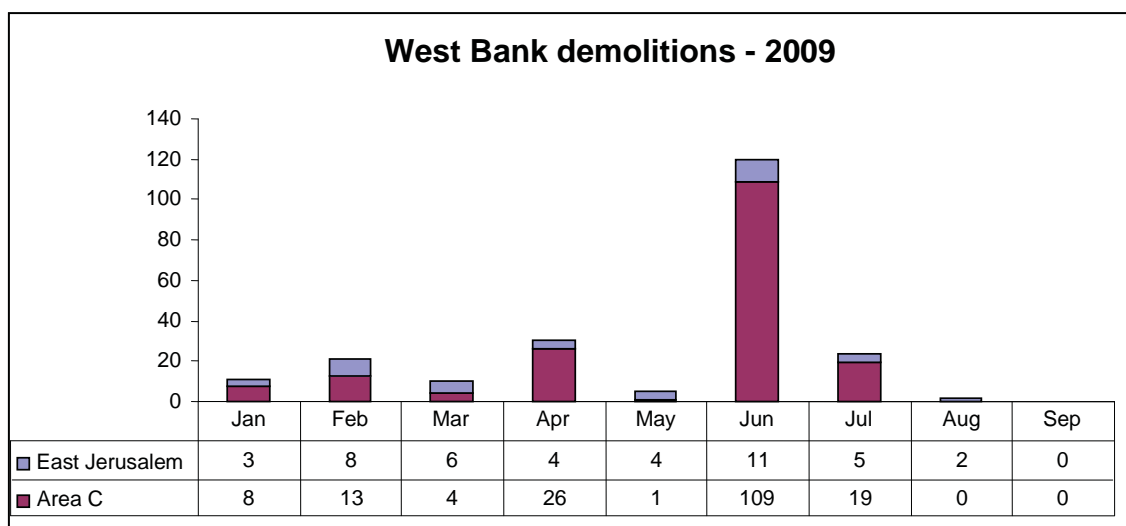
can be executed at any given moment. Under the existing planning policy implemented by the ICA, it is virtually impossible for a Palestinian to obtain a building permit in Area C, forcing many of them to build "illegally" to address their housing needs and face the risk of demolition and displacement.

New loan program targeting refugee women was launched

By end of September, UNRWA's Microfinance Department launched a new program aimed at meeting the needs of business women with household based income generating activities, and women with household consumption needs. The first two loans, valued at US\$ 1,200, were disbursed in Tulkarm at the beginning of October.

The Microfinance Department started its activities in the West Bank in 1996 and currently operates through seven branch offices. Its main objective is to improve the quality of life of poor and small entrepreneurs refugees, through the provision of five loan products (including the recently launched women's loan) directed at business development, income-generation and building household assets. As of September 2009, the Microfinance Department has 7,677 active loans at a value of nearly eight USD millions.

As in other humanitarian interventions, unhindered access is a vital condition for the operation of this department and the business activities of its beneficiaries. While the relaxation measures implemented by the Israeli authorities in the



past months have had a positive impact on the activities of the department, some of the remaining restrictions continue to hinder its ability to operate; for example, in September, UNRWA reported that due to movement restrictions around the village of Azzun, half of the village's 14 micro-enterprises financed by UNRWA were forced to shut down their business.

Humanitarian Access in the West Bank

Although access restrictions, particularly at Israeli Barrier checkpoints continue to hinder UN operations in the West Bank, in month of September 2009, UN staff members reported a 26 percent decrease compared to August (50 vs. 63 incidents). As a result, the UN lost 430 staff hours or the equivalent of 57 UN staff days—29 percent less compared with August.

Gaza Strip

Significant increase in Palestinian casualties

In September, Palestinian casualties in the Gaza Strip increased significantly compared to August; during the month, Israeli forces killed eight Palestinians, including one boy, and injured another 18, of whom two were children, compared to five killed and 12 injured in August. Three of the fatalities and 16 of the injuries were unarmed civilians. Since the implementation of the "Cast Lead" ceasefires on 18 January 2009, a total of 51 Palestinians and one Israeli have been killed and another 115 Palestinians and seven Israelis have been injured in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza and southern Israel.

The Israeli military continues to enforce access prohibitions to a 300-metre-wide strip of land along the border fence, often shooting at Palestinians who enter or approach that area. On 4 September, Israeli forces shot and killed a 14-year-old Palestinian boy walking, along with his family, towards his land in an agricultural area more than 600 metres away from the border fence. Investigations by two

The majority (64 percent) of reported UN access delays or denials were a result of Israeli forces demands to perform an internal search on UN vehicles. While outside visual inspections are often conducted by Israeli forces manning checkpoints, Israeli checkpoint personnel often insist on invasive car searches unless a diplomat is present in the vehicle. According to the United Nations Convention on Privileges and Immunities (1946), UN property and assets are immune from search and UN staff are instructed not to allow vehicle searches.

Ten percent of access delays occurred because of Israeli-declared comprehensive closures during Jewish holidays, twelve percent occurred due to permit issues affecting local staff, and fourteen percent for a variety of other reasons.

human rights groups in Gaza found that Israeli forces reportedly opened fire in the direction of the family without any prior warning. In another incident on 24 August, another boy was killed by Israeli forces near the border fence in northern Gaza while collecting scrap metal. Also in September, two farmers sustained wounds when Israeli forces opened fire at them while working on their land next to Beit Hanoun in an area close to the border. Israeli naval forces have continued to enforce the access of fishermen to sea areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore and opened warning fire on at least seven occasions towards Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them to return to shore.

Five of this month's fatalities and 12 of the injuries occurred in various incidents involving air strikes. On 25 September, the Israeli Air Force targeted and hit a militant's car east of Gaza City, killing three armed militants and injuring another one. This was the first air strike targeting a car since the end of the "Cast Lead" offensive. According to the Israeli media quoting IDF sources, the targeted Palestinians were about to launch a rocket towards Israel. On 30 September, Israeli air strikes targeted tunnels under

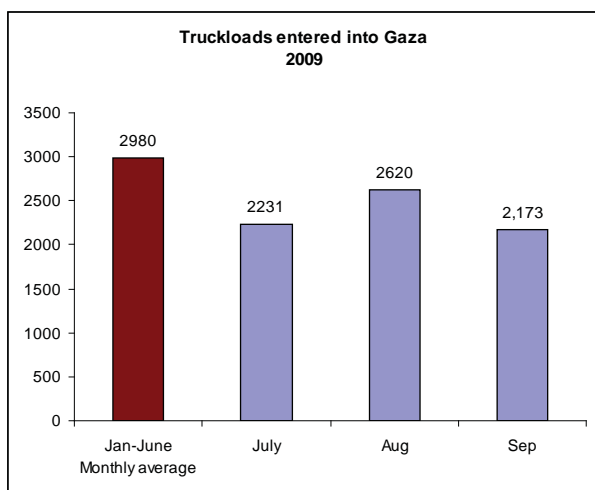
the Rafah-Egypt border, killing two Palestinian civilians and injuring 11 others while working in the tunnels.

Palestinian factions have continued to fire sporadic rudimentary rockets and mortar shells towards southern Israel, including military bases; no Israeli casualty or damage was reported during September.

Gaza blockade: imported truckloads hit a new low

Since July 2009, the average monthly number of truckloads entered into Gaza from Israel decreased by about 21%¹¹ in comparison with the monthly average of 2980 truckloads in the first six months of 2009. This is partially due to the fact that, since July, Kerem Shalom crossing has been rescheduled to operate five days per week instead of six. In addition, increasing supply of items entering through the tunnels, effectively lowering demand for items entering through the Israeli crossings may also be a factor.

Also, in September, crossings were closed for the Muslim and Jewish holidays. Combined, all of these variables likely have contributed to lowered imports. Indeed, September 2009 saw the lowest number of truckloads entering since December 2008, with a total of 2,173 truckloads of goods including 321 truckloads (15 percent) designated for humanitarian aid agencies allowed entry. The amount which entered was 78 percent below the



monthly average of truckloads that entered Gaza in the first five months of 2007 (12,350), before the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip.

Similar to previous months, food supplies made up the highest proportion of total truckloads--83 percent. The remaining truckloads consisted of fuel supplies, including cooking gas (six percent), hygiene and cleaning materials (four percent), agricultural raw materials (two percent), and other miscellaneous items (five percent). In addition, both the Karni grain conveyer belt and Nahal Oz fuel pipelines operated on fewer days in September in comparison to the previous month (open on 07 and 11 days respectively compared to 09 and 15 days in August).

In contrast, during September, approximately 11.8 million liters of industrial fuel (not included in the truckload count) were delivered to the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) – approximately 22 percent higher than the amount delivered during the previous month, and the highest recorded since September 08. This amount represents 85 percent of the estimated monthly amount the GPP needs to operate at the full capacity. Although the increase was significant, it should not be seen as a change of Israeli policy, rather, the increase in industrial fuel allowed entry into Gaza was likely to compensate for the closure of the crossings during the Jewish holidays in October.

On 24 September, in an experiment, fuel was piped in through newly installed fuel pipelines at Kerem Shalom crossing, delivering nearly 90,000 liters of industrial fuel. Once the new pipelines are functional, those at Nahal Oz crossing are likely to be closed.

Gaza still largely relies on fuel being transferred from Egypt through the tunnels at Rafah-Egypt border, with nearly 100,000 liters of diesel and 100,000 liters of petrol transferred into Gaza every day. According to the Gas Station Owners Association (GSOA), although Israeli authorities have expressed their willingness to allow the entry of approximately 75,000 liters of petrol and 800,000 liters of diesel per week, local companies made no

delivery request during September, as the price of Israeli petrol is still more than twice the price of Egyptian petrol (5.90NIS/lit vs. 2.70NIS/lit).

The amount of cooking gas allowed into Gaza during this month decreased by 26 percent (2,554 tonnes), compared to the previous month (3,443 tonnes). This figure represents a 15 percent lower rate than the January-June 2009 monthly average. GSOA indicated that there has been no significant shortage of cooking gas during the month.

During September, no exports were allowed to exit Gaza. The last shipments of exports, which consisted of 15 truckloads of cut flowers, were made during the period from 12 February 09 - 27 April 09. According to the Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA), between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, the number of export trucks per day should have reached 400 by end-2006.

Concerns about the state of water and sanitation infrastructure and resources

Difficulties in the implementation of humanitarian projects in Gaza's water sector were highlighted by Maxwell Gaylard, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for the oPt, at a press event organised by the WASH Advocacy Task Force on 3 September in Gaza. During the event, the HC stated that "the deterioration and breakdown of water and sanitation facilities in Gaza is compounding an already severe and protracted denial of human dignity in the Gaza Strip". Along with the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), the HC added his voice to an increasingly strong international call for Gazans to be allowed to implement water projects, thus enabling them to address some serious health hazards emerging from the current state of affairs in this sector.

A serious concern about the situation of the water and sanitation infrastructure and water resources in Gaza was also raised in a new report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), entitled "Environmental Assessment of the Gaza Strip".¹² In

his introduction Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, stated that "the most urgent and challenging finding [of the report] is the state of the underground water supplies, upon which the Palestinian people – and to a large extent the people of Israel – rely for drinking and agricultural irrigation water". In addition to the years-long damage to the aquifer due to over-extraction, the report addresses the environmental damage directly attributable to the Israeli offensive Cast Lead, such as the extensive damage to farmland by sewage floods caused by a direct hit to the embankment of a lagoon at Sheikh Ajleen Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Restricted movement in and out of Gaza

Palestinian movement into and out of the Gaza Strip through the two main Gaza border crossings of Erez and Rafah remains restricted and controlled by the Israeli and Egyptian authorities. Approximately 11,000 people crossed in and out of Gaza through both Erez (4,000) and Rafah (7,000) in September.

Erez crossing remains generally closed for Palestinians' movement, albeit with some exceptions—mainly limited to authorized medical and other humanitarian cases. In September, a total of 386 patients accompanied by 359 companions exited through Erez crossing for medical treatment outside of Gaza. In addition, approximately 1,000 staff from humanitarian organisations entered and exited the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing; 30% of these were UN staff members.

Since June 2007, the Egyptian authorities have opened Rafah between 2 and 4 days per month for the entry and departure of Palestinians. During September, the number of people allowed through Rafah crossing declined by 36% compared to the previous month, with 4,312 Palestinians allowed to enter Egypt and 4,001 allowed to return back to Gaza. Prior to June 2007, an average of 650 people crossed each way per day via Rafah crossing. This is compared to a daily average of only 133 people who entered and 143 exited via Rafah during this month. In addition, the Gaza Ministry of Interior indicated

that only 320 out of 627 students waiting to exit Gaza were allowed out. The remaining 307 students must wait until the next opening of the crossing.

INGOs facing constraints in Gaza

According to the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), international NGOs (INGOs) in Gaza are regularly subject to a number of requests from local authorities to share beneficiary lists, as well as requests to register, provide staff lists, and to share confidential financial data. In addition, protocols and rules for importing goods into Gaza are constantly changing, which create operational problems for NGOs.

While these requests are sometimes perceived as pressure and therefore are a source of concern, according to AIDA, as of now, they have not yet interfered with the execution of INGO missions; authorities in Gaza have not closed any INGOs, and no INGO staff, local or international, has been affected. In the few cases where INGO local staff have been called in for questioning, the reports are that questioning was civil and that individuals were promptly released.

New policy prevents Israeli human rights organizations from intervening on behalf of Palestinians

Since 15 September, the Israeli Civil Liaison Administration (CLA) for Gaza has refused to process or reply to interventions done by Israeli human rights organizations on behalf of Gazans, regarding applications for permits to enter Israel. Under the new policy, all applications for permits by Palestinians, or appeals following denials of permits, can be submitted only through the PA's Civil Affairs Committee. According to three Israeli human rights organizations which were involved in this type of interventions (Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement; Hamoked, Center for Defence of the Individual; and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel), the new policy infringes on the right of Gazan residents to representation before the Israeli authorities, which have the exclusive power to grant or deny their permit requests. Combined, these organizations reported that last year they assisted 1,600 Gazans in their permit applications, including many in need of immediate access to medical care in Israel. This new policy, they argue, risks leaving dozens of people with urgent humanitarian needs without assistance. This week, the organisations submitted a letter to the Israeli Ministry of Justice, demanding the revocation of the new policy, which if unsuccessful, will lead to the filling of a petition with the High Court of Justice.

OPT-wide issues

OPT Child Protection figures at a glance

	August 2009	September 2009
Palestinian children killed	2	1 ¹³
Israeli children killed	0	0
Palestinian children injured	6	8
Israeli children injured	0	0
Palestinian children displaced from home demolitions	0	0
Palestinian children in Israeli prisons	367	326

UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict

The report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (Goldstone Report) was presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council at its 12th regular session at Geneva on 29 September. The 575-page report contained a number

of specific recommendations, among others, to the Human Rights Council, the Security Council, Israel, Palestinian armed groups and the Palestinian Authority.

The report stated that the fact-finding mission had found evidence that Israel had violated international human rights (IHR) and humanitarian law (IHL) during Operation "Cast Lead", including acts amounting to war crimes. In addition, the Mission found evidence of a number of apparent violations of IHL and IHR resulting from Israeli measures implemented before "Cast Lead" in the Gaza Strip (e.g. the blockade) and in the West Bank (e.g. movement and access restrictions). The Mission also found that Palestinian rocket attacks against Israeli

population centers should be investigated as war crimes. Among its recommendations, the Mission called for independent and impartial investigations to be conducted into the conduct of both parties.

On 2 October, however, the Human Rights Council decided to defer voting on the report and the recommendations until its next session, in March 2010. The delay met widespread criticism, including from civil society in the oPt, arguing that the delay was the result of political pressure on Council members, who demonstrated a lack of will to pursue accountability for serious violations of international law. Civil society groups called for members of the Human Rights Council to press all parties to commence credible investigations at once and for the Council to refer the report to the UN Secretary-General without delay.¹⁴ On 16 October, the Human Rights Council endorsed the report, and referred it to the UN General Assembly for consideration.

Goldstone report highlights vulnerability of children in the oPt

The Goldstone report emphasizes, among other aspects, the high vulnerability of Palestinian children in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Approximately one quarter of those killed in the recent Cast Lead operation in Gaza were children. The 1612 monitoring group on grave violations against children has reported approximately 350 Palestinian children killed during Operation Cast Lead. In addition, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, over 1,800 children were injured, some of them permanently; according to Handicap International, half of those in need of prosthetics are still waiting to receive them. Children remain at risk of death or injury from unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Over eight months after its end, the effects of the “Cast Lead” offensive are still immediately visible to child protection agencies: some 20,000 civilians remain displaced; schooling is disrupted as schools have been damaged and destroyed, and reconstruction and recovery are impossible as essential construction materials are prohibited owing to the continued blockade.

The report also drew attention to the rise in children from the West Bank detained by the Israeli authorities during and following Israel’s operation in Gaza. The situation of children in prison was given particular emphasis, with the Mission expressing concern over the practice of detaining children; their conditions of interrogation and detention, including reports of torture and ill treatment, denial of due process; and a pattern of arrest that “appears to aim at exercising control, humiliating, instilling fear, deterring political activity and serving political interests.”¹⁵

HRF Fund

In September, two projects totalling USD 186,404 were funded. The first project, designated for Mine Action Group (MAG), aims to reduce the immediate threat to life and limb from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and other related hazards to the civilian population of Gaza and emergency workers operating there.

The second project funded through HRF is for the Swedish Cooperative Center, addressing the water scarcity crisis (drought) in the most vulnerable areas in the South of Hebron. This project will assist in providing clean water, decrease water expenditures, and prevent the depletion of income for two months for these poor beneficiaries. The project aims at sustaining the lives of selected Yatta and Samou area residents, saving these families from the current drought wave affecting the oPt through distribution of life-saving drinking water.

From the beginning of January to the end of September 2009, US\$ 5,227,703 has been disbursed to a total of 35 projects in the West Bank and Gaza. Of these, US\$ 4,401,565 went to 28 projects in Gaza and US\$ 826,138 went to 7 projects in the West Bank. The sector breakdown for this funding is 27% health, 19% food, 13% WASH, 9% Agriculture, 9% Shelter, 8.5% NFI, 6% psychosocial support, 4% protection and 4.5% other. The breakdown for agencies was roughly 43% to National NGOs, 43% to INGOs and 14% to UN agencies.

Endnotes

1. One additional Palestinian died due to injuries sustained on 26 August
2. From January 2005 to June 2009, a monthly average of 98 Palestinians were injured by the Israeli military.
3. Yaakov Katz, "New IDF Unit to Combat Extreme Settlers," *Jerusalem Post*, 24 September 2009.
4. For example, the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din's monitoring of investigations of files on settler attacks, filed primarily in 2005 and 2006, found that more than 90 percent of files are closed by the Israeli police without indictment. *A Semblance of Law, Law Enforcement Upon Israeli Citizens in the West Bank, June 2006*.
5. Roi Sharon, Document in the Settlements: "Don't allow Arabs to pick olives", *Maariv* newspaper, 27 September 2009, pg. 6.
6. World Bank "Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development", April 2009,
7. See OCHA, West Bank Movement and Access Update, June 2009.
8. For example, 28 percent of the West Bank, mostly in the Jordan Valley and eastern Bethlehem and Hebron governorates, are still designated by the Israeli authorities as either "fire zones" or "nature reserves," where Palestinian access is severely restricted and any use or development by Palestinians is prohibited.
9. For additional details on the situation at Qalandiya during this year's Ramadan, see the August issue of the Humanitarian Monitor.
10. Please note that the August Humanitarian Monitor reported in error the demolition of two partially-built cisterns. There were no demolitions in Area C in August.
11. The average number of truckloads from July-September 2009 is 2341 truckloads per month
12. Environmental Assessment of the Gaza Strip – following the escalation of hostilities in December 2008 – January 2009, UNEP, September 2009
13. One additional Palestinian child died as result of an IDF vehicle collision.
14. For responses from civil society, see Amnesty International press release, "UN Must Act Now on Goldstone," 2 October 2009; Statement from Palestinian human rights NGOs, "Justice Delayed is Justice Denied," 3 October 2009; and Human Rights Watch, "UN: US Block on Goldstone Must Not Defer Justice," 2 October 2009.
15. Para 1535

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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