



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

29 JULY – 4 AUGUST 2009

LATEST DEVELOPMENT SINCE TUESDAY, 30 June 2009

6 August - Human Rights Watch released a new report on the launching of rockets by Palestinian groups in Gaza towards populated civilian areas in Israel. According to the report, since November 2008, rocket attacks by Hamas as well as other Palestinian armed groups have claimed the lives of three Israeli civilians and injured dozens of others, damaged property and forced residents to leave their homes. The unlawful launching of rockets from Gaza, which have targeted civilian populated areas of up to 40 kilometers into Israel, place approximately 800,000 Israeli civilians at risk. The report called on Hamas to renounce the launching of rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and hold those responsible accountable.

West Bank

Most Palestinian West Bank injuries in East Jerusalem this week

Sixteen Palestinians were injured by Israeli forces, compared to two injuries the previous week, but less than the weekly average of injuries during the first seven months of 2009 (19). Most of the injuries occurred in East Jerusalem: eight during an eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and five during a clash in Silwan neighborhood. Two anti-Barrier demonstrations were held in each of Ni'lin and Bil'in villages (Ramallah) this week; in Ni'lin, two Palestinians suffered from severe tear gas inhalation and needed medical attention.

Displacement in East Jerusalem and Area C

On 2 August, following a protracted legal battle, Israeli security forces forcibly evicted nine Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem. A total of 53 people, including 20 children, were displaced and dispossessed. The evicted families, all refugees, had been living in the area since 1956, following the construction of the homes by UNRWA on land granted by the Jordanian government. A group of Israeli settlers, authorized by Israeli courts and protected by Israeli security forces, entered the buildings immediately following the eviction. The personal belongings of the Palestinian families were loaded onto trucks and dumped in the street in front of the UNRWA compound. At least 24 other Palestinian homes in the area are at risk of eviction, potentially affecting over 450 additional people. Also this week, a protest tent, set up following a previous eviction in the neighborhood, was demolished for the sixth time.

In the tense atmosphere following the eviction, Israeli security forces arrested 28 people: nine Palestinians, eight Israelis and eleven internationals; all were released within one day. During and in the aftermath of the eviction, nine people were injured—eight Palestinians, including two members of one of the evicted families, and one Israeli. On several occasions during and immediately following the evictions, international observers, including UN staff, were prevented access to the area. Since the eviction, there has

been a continuous presence of Israeli security forces in the area, with entry to the neighborhood restricted to local residents, diplomatic and UN personnel, and service providers. On the night of 5 August, settlers threw stones at neighborhood residents and unsuccessfully attempted to enter another house in the neighborhood.

Tension also ran high in Al Bustan area of the Silwan neighborhood, as representatives of the Jerusalem Municipality distributed renewed demolition orders for five homes on 4 August. Five Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli security forces.

Additional stop work orders issued in Area C

Israeli authorities distributed 15 stop work orders in Yatma (Nablus) due to a lack of the required construction permits. Eight of the houses are inhabited and the remaining are close to completion. At least 45 people, including at least 20 children, are at risk of being displaced.

Sustained Israeli settler activities in the West Bank

A total of 14 settler incidents were reported this week (including East Jerusalem), compared to six the week before. Seven of these incidents occurred in the southern West Bank. In the Bethlehem governorate, settlers physically assaulted Palestinian farmers and prevented them from reaching their lands while others opened-fire on Palestinian herders.

In three separate incidents in the Israeli-controlled part of Hebron City (H2, following the opening of the Kiryat Arba Road to Palestinian traffic (see below), a group of Israeli settlers physically assaulted a Palestinian, destroyed the water tank of a Palestinian house in the Old City, and set fire to several dunums of grape orchards.

In the northern West Bank, in Qalqiliya governorate, Israelis from Qedumim settlement twice attempted to take over a Palestinian residence adjacent to their settlement, setting fire to olive trees close to the house. In 2007 settlers had occupied the residence for a year before being evicted by Israeli authorities, following a decision by the Israeli High Court of Justice. In Nablus governorate, Israelis from Yitzhar settlement stoned and damaged Palestinian cars travelling on the Qalqiliya-Nablus road (Road 55). In Tulkarm governorate, Israeli forces removed tents that settlers had erected a few weeks ago in an area close to Avne Hefez settlement. Shortly after the eviction, the settlers returned and re-erected one of the tents. (*For settler-related incidents in East Jerusalem, see above section*).

Two new checkpoints erected along re-opened road in Hebron

On 2 August, the Israeli authorities opened the main Kiryat Arba road in the H2 area of the city of Hebron to Palestinians living along the road. The road had been closed to these Palestinians since 2001. To use the road, Palestinian drivers need a special permit; thus far, only five people have obtained one. Two roadblocks at each end of the road have been replaced by staffed Israeli checkpoints.

Water shortages trigger protests

The long running water scarcity in the region triggered several demonstrations in the Bethlehem district due to a lack of running water for over two weeks. Residents of the Aida and Deheishe refugee camps, and the villages of Tuqu' and Khamat An Nu'man blocked the streets and burned tires.

Gaza Strip

No casualties from Israeli military activities for second consecutive week

For the second consecutive week, there were no casualties due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza. Nevertheless, sporadic incidents of violence between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups continued – such as exchanges of fire, rockets launched towards Israel and limited incursions into Gaza.

Israeli military forces continued to enforce a three-nautical-mile fishing limit off the coast and a 300-meter buffer zone along the border with Israel. These measures severely impede the livelihoods of farmers and fishermen. On three occasions during the reporting period, Israeli forces opened fire on farmers and fishermen approaching the restricted areas. In two separate incidents, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered into the border areas and levelled land.

Unexploded ordnance injures two boys

Two brothers (eight and ten years old) were injured when unexploded ordnance detonated east of Al-Buraj refugee camp .

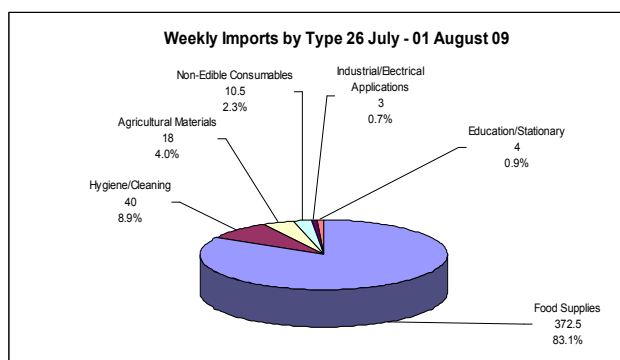
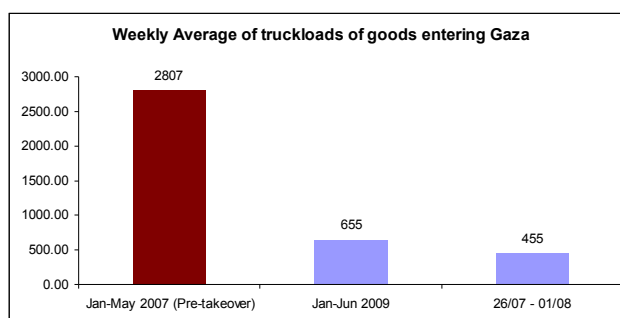
Tunnel incidents claim three more lives

The tunnels under the border between Gaza and Egypt pose a continuous risk to people working inside them: four people were killed and five injured during the reporting period. In the past two weeks, a total of 13 people have lost their lives in tunnel incidents, including collapse, fire and electrocution, bringing the total for 2009 to at least 28. Human rights activists in Gaza expressed concern over the high number of victims. According to Al Mezan Center for Human rights, most tunnel workers come from very poor families. Lacking other means to provide for their families, they take up the dangerous jobs underground. The tunnels are used for smuggling goods, primarily those not allowed in, or allowed in restricted quantities only, through the official crossings,

Imports through crossings remain low (26 July – 01 Aug 2009)

This week, a total of 455 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, less than 16% of the weekly average during the first five months of 2007, before the Hamas takeover in Gaza. This corresponds to a 30% reduction, compared to the weekly average during the first six months of 2009 (655).

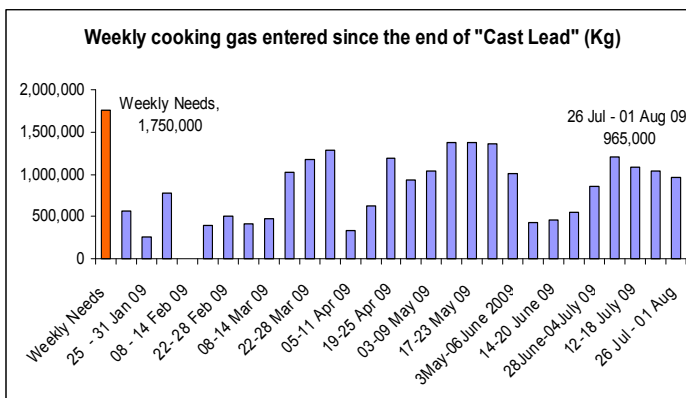
Food items made up 82% of all imports. The entry of other essential goods, including reconstruction materials, spare parts for water and sanitation projects, industrial and electrical materials, and livestock, remain barred or restricted to limited quantities. Despite Israeli media reports to the contrary, concrete and



construction materials needed to implement the United Nations proposal for housing, health and education projects have not yet been allowed entry by the Israeli authorities .

Ban on import of fuels partially lifted

The Palestinian General Petroleum Corporation indicated that Israel has partially removed the ban on petrol and diesel imports to Gaza. However, given the lower prices of Egyptian fuel entering through the tunnels (5,90 NIS/lit for Israeli vs. 2.70 NIS/lit for Egyptian petrol), the level of demand for Israeli fuel remains unclear.



The amount of cooking gas entering this week (965 tons) decreased slightly compared to the previous week (1,032 tons). According to the Gas Stations Owners Association GSOA, the amount entered this week represents only 55% of the estimated weekly needs.

Rolling blackouts to increase due to limited fuel supplies for Power Plant

The electricity supply in Gaza continue to be constrained by the limits on imported industrial fuel. During the week, Israel allowed 2.2 million liters to enter Gaza – approximately 73% of what is needed to operate at full capacity. Israel has curtailed imports to this level since November 2007. In the previous three weeks, the power plant was able to increase its production to 70 MW using fuel that was stored during an earlier maintenance period. However, stored fuel is almost depleted and the Gaza Power Plant authority will soon shut down, again for maintenance, one of the power generating units, thus reducing output to 55-60 MW. Scheduled rolling blackouts will increase from 4-6 hours to 6-8 hours on four days per week.

Gaza healthcare deteriorates due to blockade

On 30 July, WHO presented three reports that address the state of the healthcare system in Gaza. Public health in Gaza is undermined as a result of the combined effects of the Israeli blockade and poor internal organization and management. In one report, WHO found that neonatal mortality in Gaza was still high compared with regional standards and the West Bank, and represented two thirds of all infant deaths.

People’s access to and from Gaza continues to be severely restricted

The passage of people into and out of the Strip remains strictly limited. Only medical or humanitarian cases (including students or people having to renew documents abroad) with special authorization are allowed to leave or enter Gaza. Rafah Crossing, which has mostly been closed since June 2007, was exceptionally opened for medical cases and students on 3 August and was expected to remain open for three days. The opening of Rafah crossing is limited to a few days each month. Prior to the Rafah crossing’s closure in June 2007, 650 people crossed per day each way (average of first six months of 2006). By comparison, in the first seven months of 2009, an average of only 62 people entered and 67 exited via Rafah per day.