



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

7 – 13 OCTOBER 2009

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 13 October

- 15 October: Today, the Human Rights Council is holding a special session on the report of the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (the Goldstone report).
- 14 October: Israeli air strikes target and bomb two tunnels under the Rafah-Egypt border, injuring four Palestinians working in the tunnels.

West Bank

Multiple injuries in clashes in East Jerusalem

During the reporting period, 21 Palestinians and 14 Israeli policemen were injured in Israeli-Palestinian violence, the majority of them in clashes in East Jerusalem, compared to one Palestinian death and 29 Palestinian and four Israeli injuries last week. Since the beginning of 2009, 19 Palestinians and two Israelis have been killed and 721 Palestinians and 35 Israelis have been injured in Israeli-Palestinian violence in the West Bank.

In addition, this week a 17-year-old Palestinian boy died from wounds he sustained on 4 March 2009 during an Israeli raid into the town of Beit Ummar (Hebron). In the aftermath of his funeral, Israeli forces physically assaulted and injured two boys (aged 12 and 17), after a group of boys threw stones at them. Another 15-year-old boy was shot and injured by a rubber-coated metal bullet fired by Israeli soldiers following a stone-throwing incident near the town of Yatta (Hebron).

All but one of the other Palestinian injuries (17) took place during clashes occurring for the third week in a row between Palestinians and Israeli forces in and around the Old City of Jerusalem, spreading to the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Wadi al Joz, Ras al 'Amud, Al 'Isawiya, Sur Bahir Shu'fat checkpoint and Qalandiya checkpoint. Thirteen (13) Israeli policemen also sustained injuries during the clashes. Last week, the Israeli authorities restricted Palestinian access to Al Aqsa Mosque to men, aged 50 and over, holding Jerusalem IDs, along with women of all ages. In addition, all schools located inside the Old City were forced to close and restrictions on entry to the Old City have been applied at times. Tensions subsided on 11 October after the 150-200 Palestinian worshippers, who had maintained an ongoing presence in the Mosque since 27 September, left the compound, a development that occurred after a high-ranking Jordanian mediator secured a commitment from the Israeli authorities that those leaving would not be arrested.

The weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations continued to take place in the villages of Ni'lin, Bil'in (Ramallah) and Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem). While no Palestinian was injured this week during the protests, one Israeli border policeman sustained injuries in Ni'lin. Since the beginning of 2009, two Palestinians were killed and 285 Palestinians and 14 Israelis security forces injured during anti-Barrier demonstrations.

Israeli search and arrest operations into West Bank villages continued during the reporting period. This week, Israeli forces conducted a total of 69 search operations, the majority of which were in the northern part of the West Bank (42); 63 Palestinians were arrested. The weekly average of search operation and number of Palestinians arrested since the beginning of the year stands at 108 and 98, respectively.

Israeli settler violence remains high with the beginning of the olive harvest

During the reporting period, there were 13 settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians, the same as last week and almost twice the weekly average since the beginning of 2009 (7). Most incidents erupted in the context of the olive harvest, which officially began on 11 October; no casualties were reported. In addition, three incidents affecting Israeli settlers were reported this week, resulting in two Israeli injuries; in one of the incidents, an Israeli woman sustained a severe head injury when her car was stoned near Sinjil village (Ramallah).

According to the Israeli media, ahead of the olive harvest, the Israeli authorities adopted several measures to protect Palestinian farmers from settlers' attacks, including the mapping of potential conflict areas, the closing of specific areas to settlers, the issuance of expulsion orders from the West Bank to two Israeli settlers for a period of six months, and the deployment of a special Border Police battalion in sensitive areas. In addition, farmers have been informed on what days they could harvest their olives under IDF and Border Police protection.

Despite the abovementioned measures, several attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers affecting olive groves and produce were reported this week. Israeli settlers picked olives belonging to Palestinians, uprooted or damaged a number of olive trees, and harassed olive pickers on the way back from the harvest.

In Kafr Qaddum village (Qalqiliya), settlers from the Mitzpe Ami settlement outpost burned 250 olive trees following evacuation of the outpost by the Israeli army and police. This incident came in the context of the "price tag" strategy, where, for every attempt to dismantle a settlement outpost, settlers attack Palestinian communities. According to Israeli media, the Israeli police arrested 13 Israeli settlers after the latter refused to leave the area.

Access to olive groves in the proximity of, or within, some Israeli settlements is subject to "prior coordination" between the farmers, the Palestinian DCL and the Israeli DCL (District Coordination Liaison Office). During the reporting period, Israeli forces denied farmers from the villages of: Al Lubban ash Sharqiya, Sabastya, An Naqura, 'Azmut (Nablus), Kafr Qaddum (Qalqiliya) and Yasuf (Salfit), access to their olive groves next to Eli, Shave Shomoron, Elon Moreh and Kfar Tappuah settlement, due to the lack of prior coordination. In the Ramallah area, the Israeli Civil Administration informed Palestinian farmers from Al Mughayyir, Turmus'ayya and Sinjil villages that the time of picking olives in groves near the Adei Ad settlement outpost will be postponed until 26 October. This decision came after two separate incidents of stone throwing and shooting towards settlers' vehicles, resulting in the injury of four settlers (one incident resulting in two injuries occurred during the previous week).

Demolition of Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem resumed

During the reporting period, the Jerusalem municipality demolished two Palestinian-owned structures, including a residence and an animal pen, in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Beit Hanina, due to the lack of permit. As a result, a family of five members, including three children, was displaced. Also in Beit Hanina, foundations of two buildings under construction were damaged; one of the structures was intended to provide eight large housing units. The last demolition of a Palestinian-owned structure by the Israeli authorities in East Jerusalem took place in July 2009. Since the beginning of the year 127 Palestinian structures have been demolished in East Jerusalem due to lack of building permits.

Update on the removal of closures

On 12 October, the Israeli army removed an earthmound blocking the main entrance of Azzun village (Qalqiliya). This obstacle was installed by the Israeli army on 18 August 2009 following a series of stone-throwing incidents at vehicles traveling on Road 55, next to the village. It had impeded access for over 15,000 people from three villages (Azzun, Kafr Thulth and Saniriya) to their main service centre, Qalqiliya City. This removal occurred after the Palestinian police increased their presence in the area. Another earthmound obstructing movement between Azzun and Kafr Thulth, as well as a fence along a section of Road 55 next to Azzun, remain in place. There are some 592 closure obstacles throughout the West Bank as of 29 September.

Gaza Strip

A week of relative calm in the Gaza Strip

This week, there was a decrease in Israeli-Palestinian violence; one Palestinian was wounded by Israeli forces, compared to one death and 12 injuries in the previous week. In addition, a Palestinian man died from injuries he sustained during the “Cast Lead” offensive. The number of Palestinian rocket and mortar shells fired from Gaza towards southern Israel, including at military bases, continued to be low; no Israeli casualties or damage were reported.

Israeli forces continued to prohibit Palestinian access to farming land along the border fence and to fishing areas within three nautical miles from the coast by opening “warning fire”. In addition, on two separate occasions, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered a few hundred meters into Gaza and conducted levelling and excavation operations.

Also this week, after four consecutive weeks with a total of eight fatalities, no Palestinian died in incidents involving tunnels under the Rafah-Egypt border.

Education system continues to be disrupted by the ongoing lack of materials

Ongoing Israeli restrictions on the entry of school supplies have continued to affect over 240,000 students in public and private schools in Gaza and a further 207,250 students studying at UNRWA schools. According to a spokesperson for the Gaza-based Ministry of Education, schools are facing a severe shortage of stationery, ink, and paper. UNRWA has been unable to print 10 percent of the required textbooks due to shortages of ink and paper. Also, Israel has not approved the entry of

5,000 school desks and 4,000 tables and chairs for teachers to UNRWA schools. On 11 October, Human Rights Watch called on the Israeli authorities to immediately lift restrictions on school supplies. In addition, none of the schools that incurred minor and severe damage (at least 280 schools), and the 18 schools that were destroyed in the “Cast Lead” offensive, have been repaired or rebuilt due to Israeli restrictions on the entry of construction material.

Israeli-imposed blockade continues to affect livelihoods

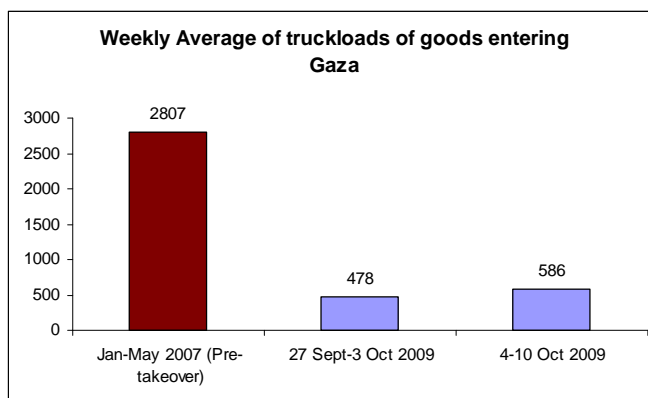
According to a statement issued by the Israeli Human Rights organization, Gisha, continued Israeli restrictions on exports from the Gaza Strip has denied livelihoods to merchants and growers of the traditional trade of lulav (palm leaves associated with the Jewish festival of Sukkot). Though there was a shortage in the supply of lulav this year and extra shipments were ordered that could only be supplied from Gaza, farmers obtained permits to export lulav only a few days ahead of the beginning of Sukkot (2 October), leaving them insufficient time to prepare the needed shipments. Israel has largely banned Palestinian exports since the beginning of the blockade in June 2007, causing severe damage to the local economy. Gaza’s last shipment of exports (cut flowers) was on 27 April 2009.

Israeli authorities continue to refuse engagement with human rights organizations regarding exit permits

Since 15 September, the Israeli District Coordination Office (DCO) for Gaza has refused to receive applications of Gazans for permits to enter Israel through Israeli human rights organizations. Under the new policy, all applications must go through the Palestinian Civil Affairs Committees. According to three Israeli human rights organizations (Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement; Hamoked, Center for Defence of the Individual; and Physicians for Human Rights – Israel), this new policy infringes on the right of Gazan residents to representation before the authorities, which have the exclusive power to grant or deny their permit requests. Combined, these organisations report 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, protesting the new policy.

Despite slight increase in the number of truckloads, imports remain below needs - (4 - 10 Oct 2009)

This week, a total of 586 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, including 44 truckloads (8 percent) designated for aid agencies, constituting a 23 percent increase compared to the number of truckloads that entered during the last week (478). This week's figure constitutes around 21 percent of the weekly average of truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007, before the Hamas takeover (2,807).



Similar to previous weeks, food and hygiene items made up the majority (96 percent) of imported goods. The remaining four percent included limited amounts of agricultural materials, packaging

materials, medical supplies and non-edible consumables. The entry of other major essential goods including materials for reconstruction (cement, steel bars, glass, wood and others), spare parts for water and sanitation projects, packaging material, industrial and electrical materials, IT equipment and vehicles remain either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry.

Fuel imports remain below estimated needs

The Nahal Oz fuels crossing was closed during the entire week. A total of 135,000 litres of industrial gas used to operate the Gaza Power Plant entered through a new pipeline, recently installed at the Kerem Shalom Crossing. This amount is well below the usual 2.2 million litres allowed since October 2007 and the lowest since the beginning of 2009. However, the resulting deficit was partially compensated by the exceptionally high amount of 3.5 million liters that entered Gaza the previous week. Egyptian petrol and diesel, which are transferred through the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, remain available on the open market with an estimated amount of 100,000 litres of diesel and 100,000 litres of petrol entering Gaza every day, according to the Gaza Stations Owners Association.