



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS WEEKLY REPORT

16 - 29 March 2011

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no weekly Protection of Civilians report next week due to internal capacity

LATEST DEVELOPMENT SINCE 15 MARCH

- On 30 March, an armed Palestinian man was killed, and another was injured, when an Israeli military drone fired a missile targeting them while driving a motorcycle northeast of Rafah.
- On 30 March, a Palestinian civilian was injured when an Israeli army observation post, positioned on the security fence east of Rafah, opened fire towards Palestinian workers collecting rubble in the area.

West Bank

47 Palestinian injured by Israeli forces

During the reporting period, Israeli forces injured 47 Palestinians, including 10 children, in various incidents throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; five members of Israeli security forces were also reportedly injured in the oPt. (See also West Jerusalem bombing)

In the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan, clashes erupted between Palestinian residents and the Israeli Police, resulting in seven Palestinians injured, including five children with ages ranging from three weeks to 12 years old. One of those injured was a photographer who was hit in the head with a tear gas canister. An Israeli border policeman was also injured with a Molotov cocktail thrown by Palestinians during the clashes. Clashes in Silwan between its Palestinian residents and Israeli settlers and authorities occur in the context of continuing settler activity in the neighborhood and the threat of house demolitions by the Jerusalem Municipality.

In addition, clashes that occurred on 17 and 19 March in other parts of East Jerusalem, including Shu'fat Refugee Camp and Qalandiya checkpoint, resulted in 11 Palestinians injured, including three injured by rubber-coated-metal bullets, and one woman injured by a sound bomb. An Israeli border policeman was lightly injured by Palestinians stone throwing.

Three Palestinians, including two children (15 and 17 years old), were shot with live ammunition and injured in three separate incidents that took place during confrontations between Palestinian children and Israeli Border Police in the vicinity of the Barrier in Qatanna village (Jerusalem governorate). One of the children remains hospitalized in intensive care. This is the second time that this child has been injured in the same place and circumstances. Incidents of friction between Palestinian children from Qatanna and Israeli forces patrolling the Barrier, which runs close to the built-up area of the village are frequently reported, and, since January 2009, have resulted in the injury by live ammunition of at least nine children.

Another nine Palestinians, including one child, sustained injuries during weekly demonstrations held in protest of the isolation of land by the Barrier, in Ni'lin and Bil'in villages (Ramallah), and settlement expansion and take over of land in Deir Nidham (Ramallah) and 'Arrub (Hebron) villages. Four of the six injuries were from rubber-coated-metal bullets.

Bombing in a West Jerusalem bus station

On 23 March, an explosive device detonated in the vicinity of West Jerusalem's Central Bus Station, killing a 59-year-old woman of British nationality, and injuring at least 30 Israelis, including a number of children. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. This was the first bombing attack against an Israeli civilian location since February 2008, and the first bombing in West Jerusalem since 2004.

Rising settler-violence in the West Bank

The wave of Israeli settler violence in the West Bank that followed the 11 March killings in Itamar settlement continued. During the two week reporting period, OCHA recorded 32 settler-related incidents leading to 16 Palestinian injuries (12 incidents) and significant property damage (20 incidents). With an average of 16 incidents in the period, the number of settler-related incidents resulting in Palestinian casualties and damage to their property was considerably higher than the weekly average since the beginning of 2011 (9) and in 2010 (6).

The gravest two incidents occurred on 21 March in the Hebron district: in one of them, an Israeli settler opened fire at a funeral procession in the town of Beit Ummar injuring two men; in the other incident, a 30-year-old Palestinian man was stabbed and seriously injured by Israeli settlers while in an area close to At Tuwani village.

Numerous incidents of stone-throwing by Israeli settlers at Palestinian vehicles were recorded during the reporting period, resulting in the injury of six Palestinians and damage to 15 cars. In a separate incident, settlers allegedly set fire to two Palestinian vehicles near Qedumim settlement in the Qalqiliya governorate.

Five separate incidents involved leveling of Palestinian agricultural land and uprooting of trees. The most significant of these occurred in Awarta village, where settlers leveled and fenced in at least 20 dunums of land belonging to 35 farmers from the village and installed three caravans and two tents in the fenced-in area. In a separate incident, Israeli settlers vandalized three water tanks and uprooted about 100 olive seedlings belonging to three farmers from Aqraba village.

Demolitions in Area C of the West Bank

During the reporting period, 19 structures in were demolished in Area C of the West Bank, resulting in a total of 51 people displaced, including 32 children.

Eighteen of the demolitions were of structures in the Hebron and Bethlehem districts, resulting in the displacement of 45 people, including 28 children. An additional 45 people were affected by the demolitions. All of those displaced were from the Hebron village of Susiya, where Israeli forces demolished 12 residential structures, one animal pen and three bathrooms, due to lack of Israeli-issued building permits. The demolished structures included four tents distributed by ICRC following the Israeli authorities' previous demolitions in the community in February 2011.

In the Bethlehem governorate, the Israeli authorities also demolished two water cisterns in the village of Ar Rashayida. The two cisterns, which were located in a closed military area, had recently been rehabilitated by an international NGO. They were used by two extended families with a population of 45 people.

In the northern West Bank district of Salfit, the Israeli authorities destroyed a 1.8 km road leading to the village of Qarawat Bani Hassan. This is the second time since November 2010 that the road has been demolished. The road was established and fully funded by the Palestinian Ministry of Finance.

Also in the north, the Israeli authorities demolished a Palestinian tent in the community of Ein Al Hilwe in the Tubas district, after declaring the area in which the tent was located a closed military area; the demolition resulted in the displacement of a family of six, including four children.

In Jenin governorate the Israeli authorities issued 18 stop-building orders for 18 coal workshops in the village of Ya'bad. The orders will affect the livelihoods of at least 15 households. Also, in Salfit governorate, stop-building orders were given to two houses under construction in the village of Bruqin.

So far, since the beginning of 2011, 165 structures have been demolished in Area C, resulting in the displacement of 329 people including 158 children.

Gaza Strip

Escalation in Israeli-Palestinian violence in Gaza

After a period of calm in the previous two weeks, this two-week reporting period saw a significant increase in violence in Gaza and southern Israel, with extensive Israeli airstrikes and shelling, alongside increased Palestinian rocket and mortar fire into southern Israel. As a result, a total of 14 Palestinians, including six civilians, were killed and another 52 Palestinians, including at least 40 civilians (19 children), and three Israeli civilians were injured.

All the civilian fatalities and 19 of the Palestinian injuries occurred as a result of Israeli tank shelling and mortar fire. The deaths occurred in two incidents: in the evening of 20 March, two children, both 14-year-old UNRWA students, were shot and killed by Israeli fire while walking in the vicinity of the perimeter fence (within approximately 400 meters), north east of Al Bureij Camp. Two days later, four civilians, including two children, were killed, and 11 others were injured (seven from one family), when a number of Israeli mortar shells fell in a residential area east of Gaza City, located approximately 1.5 kilometres from the fence. According to the Israeli media, an IDF spokesman said that the Israeli shelling and mortar fire was in response to mortar rounds fired by armed groups in the area.

Numerous Israeli airstrikes conducted during this period resulted in the deaths of eight armed militants and the injury of 32 Palestinians, including at least nine children. These air strikes targeted military training bases, commercial structures, tunnels, and warehouses—one of which contained equipment and supplies for the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU). In addition, two schools in Gaza City sustained minor damage.

On at least seven occasions, Israeli forces penetrated into Palestinian areas in the Gaza Strip to conduct search and land leveling operations. On 17 March, Israeli airplanes dropped flyers reiterating the prohibition on accessing areas closer than 300 meters from the perimeter fence. Incidents of 'warning shots' as well as leveling operations have been regularly recorded over the past two years in areas up to 1.5 kilometres from the fence. In addition, Israeli naval forces opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats on six separate occasions during the reporting period, forcing them ashore; one Palestinian fisherman was injured as a result.

During the period, Palestinian armed groups fired six Grad rockets as well as more than one hundred rudimentary rockets and mortar shells at numerous civilian and military locations alongside the fence and in southern Israel. As a result, two Israelis civilians were injured on 19 March in communities near the Israeli-Gaza border, and another one on 23 March in the city of Be'er Sheva.

In three separate incidents this period (24, 26 and 29 March), Palestinian projectiles dropped short and hit factories and homes in residential areas in the Gaza Strip, resulting in the injury of six Palestinians, including an infant, and causing damage to the buildings.

Death sentence in Gaza

On 29 March, one Palestinian man was sentenced to death, and another was sentenced to 15 years in prison, after being accused of collaborating with Israel. Since 1994, 114 people have been sentenced to death in the oPt; the last person sentenced to death was on 3 February 2011.

Crossings with Israel

Between 13 and 26 March, a total of 2,691 truckloads of goods entered Gaza. While the two-week average (1,345 truckloads per week) is roughly 35 percent higher than the weekly average for the rest of 2011, it is still well below the (weekly) average of 2,807 truckloads that entered Gaza during the first five months of 2007, prior to the imposition of the blockade in June 2007.

Although the entry of basic construction materials for commercial purposes remains barred, 543 truckloads of building materials, most of them aggregates, entered via Sufa Crossing for approved building projects by UNRWA, the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA). Although Sufa Crossing was shut down in September 2008, this month, it has reopened on a temporary basis to allow for the transfer of large quantities of aggregates that had been stored at the crossing since the imposition of the blockade in 2007. The reopening follows the shutdown of the conveyer belt facility at the Karni Crossing earlier this month. Karni Crossing was used for the transfer of aggregates, and the alternative facility at the Kerem Shalom Crossing that has been designated to replace it is not yet operational.

Exports from Gaza remain limited to specific authorized agricultural crops. Overall, 13 truckloads were allowed to exit via Kerem Shalom Crossing, including 10 of flowers and two of cherry tomatoes. The 8 December 2010 announcement by the Israeli authorities to allow additional types of exports (e.g. agricultural products, furniture and textiles) from Gaza remains largely unimplemented.

The total closure of Karni crossing on 1 March and the subsequent shifting of to the Kerem Shalom crossing has compounded existing shortages of wheat grains. As of 29 March, wheat stocks were sufficient for only nine days, well below the usual 30 days of reserves held.

Movement of people through Rafah Crossing

Between 16 and 29 March, approximately 2,020 Palestinians crossed into Gaza, and 2,492 were able to leave for Egypt. However, 349 people, mainly students and visas holders were denied entry to Egypt. On 21 March, 34 Palestinians returned to Gaza from Libya. They had been granted entry permits into Egypt on humanitarian grounds.