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Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

11-17 JANUARY 2012

Key issues

- There are concerns over respect for human rights in the Gaza Strip: this week, two men were sentenced to death; a religious group was attacked and taken for questioning by security forces; and a human rights defender was attacked by unknown groups on two separate occasions.
- Settler violence, including "price tag" incidents by Israeli settlers, continues to affect Palestinians' lives and livelihoods. This week, three Palestinians were injured and 40 olive trees and eight vehicles were vandalized by settlers.
- Nine Palestinian-owned livelihood structures demolished this week, affecting the livelihoods of over 30 Palestinians.

WEST BANK

"Price tag" attacks and clashes with Israeli forces result in injuries and damages

This week, Israeli forces and settlers injured 17 Palestinians throughout the West Bank. Eight of them sustained injuries in clashes with Israeli forces during raids on 'Azzun (Qalqiliya) and Madama (Nablus) villages; and another four in clashes during a weekly demonstration against the closure of the main entrance to Kafr Qaddum village, next to Qedumim settlement (Qalqiliya). In addition, a Palestinian was physically assaulted and injured by a group of Israelis in West Jerusalem.

Also this week, Israeli settlers physically assaulted and injured two Palestinians in Hebron City and stoned and injured another man near Shilo settlement (Ramallah). A settler was also injured when Palestinians stoned Israeli-plated vehicles travelling on Road 60 (Ramallah).

Settlers also vandalized 40 olive trees belonging to Palestinians near Kfar Tappuah settlement; stoned or set on fire eight Palestinian vehicles in the Salfit, Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron governorates; and wrote graffiti on the walls of a mosque (in Deir Istiya, Salfit). These incidents took place in the context of the "price tag" strategy, after the Israeli authorities demolished ten structures in an outpost near Kiryat Arba' Israeli settlement on 11 January. Many such outposts are located on private Palestinian land forcibly taken over by Israeli settlers. While the recent dismantlement of structures in settlement outposts is welcome, there are concerns over new initiatives aimed at "legalizing" these settlement outposts under Israeli law that are being currently promoted, and partially implemented, both by the Israeli government and at the Knesset. These attempts to "legalize" outposts reinforce an atmosphere of impunity and are likely to encourage further violence and encroachment on Palestinian land.

Palestinian casualties by Israeli forces:

Killed this week: 0
- Killed in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 0 vs. 4

Injured this week: 13; 4 in demonstrations
- Of whom were children: 1
- Injured in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 31 vs. 34

Search-and-arrest operations this week: around 90

Demolitions continue to undermine Palestinian livelihoods

This week, Israeli authorities demolished 12 Palestinian-owned structures, nine of which were

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related to a source of livelihood for Palestinian families, due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits.

The demolished structures included: two animal shacks and a balcony in the communities of Sur Bahir and Shu'fat in East Jerusalem; four animal structures, a storage room, an agricultural structure and a restroom in the communities of Humsa Al-Farsheh and Frush Beit Dajan in the Jordan Valley; and two shacks, including a stone-cutting shop and a car workshop in the village of Hizma (Jerusalem). The livelihoods of 36 people were affected.

Also this week, the Israeli authorities distributed demolition and evacuations orders against two houses in East Jerusalem and Jericho and two animal shelters and three agricultural structures in the Nablus governorate.

Settler-related incidents:

Incidents resulting in Palestinian injuries or property damage:
in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 16 vs. 13
Palestinians injured this week: 3
Palestinians injured in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 8 vs. 8
Settlers injured in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 1 vs. 3

Palestinian-owned structures demolished in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem

Demolished this week: 12
Of which residences: 1
Demolished in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 22 vs. 25
People displaced in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 0 vs. 70

GAZA STRIP

Relative calm in Gaza

While the situation in Gaza was relatively calm this week, with no reports of Israeli air strikes and incursions, Israeli forces shot and injured two armed Palestinians while they were reportedly attempting to plant a bomb near the fence separating Israel and the Gaza Strip. These are the first casualties documented since the beginning of this year.

Israeli restrictions continued on Palestinian access to areas up to 1,500 meters from the fence and to fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore. On one occasion, Israeli forces positioned near the fence opened fire towards Palestinian farmers, forcing them to leave their land. Also, Palestinian armed factions fired a number of rockets towards southern Israel, two of which fell inside Israel and the other two landed inside Gaza, causing no injuries or damage to property.

Concerns over death sentences and suppression of civil liberties

On 11 and 16 January, a court in Gaza sentenced two men to death, one of whom was convicted of collaborating with hostile parties and the other of murder. According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), these are the first death sentences issued in 2012. Palestinian authority courts have issued 123 death sentences since 1994, 25 of which were issued in the West Bank and 98 in the Gaza Strip. Among those issued in the Gaza Strip, 36 sentences have been issued since 2007, following the Hamas takeover of Gaza. Eight people have been executed since 2007, and 11 others were executed in the Gaza Strip between 1994 (establishment of the Palestinian Authority) and 2007.

Also this week, human rights organizations raised concerns over the excessive use of force by

Hamas security forces in Gaza, stressing the right to freedom of religion. This follows an incident on 14 January, when security forces in the Gaza Strip stormed a house in the Beit Lahiya area while about 20 Palestinians were allegedly performing religious rituals, physically assaulting and injuring some of them. The people were taken to a police station for questioning, after which they were released. Human rights groups also called upon the government in Gaza to open investigations into this incident and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

On two occasions on 3 and 13 January, a human rights defender, who is also the Director of the Communications and International Relations Unit at Al Mezan Center for Human Rights in the Gaza Strip, was attacked and injured by unknown persons. Human rights groups believe that the attacks took place because of an op-ed published by the victim.

Limited agricultural produce leaves Gaza

This week, 15 truckloads of agricultural produce were exported from Gaza. The majority (12) carried strawberries (109 tonnes), one carried cut flowers (263,500 stems), one sweet peppers (4 tonnes) and one cherry tomatoes (7.5 tonnes). These exports are exceptions to the general prohibition on the export of goods from the Gaza Strip, imposed by Israel since 2007. Since the beginning of the season for the export of these products in late November 2011, over 120 truckloads of such products have left Gaza, compared to over 5,700 truckloads of exports, ranging from agricultural produce to furniture and textiles, which exited to the West Bank, Israel and international markets between January and June 2007, before the blockade.

Palestinian casualties by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip:

Killed this week: 0
- Of whom children: 0

Killed in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 0 vs. 2
Injured this week: 2
- Of whom children: 0

Injured in 2012 vs. same period in 2011: 2 vs. 7

Movement of goods (Kerem Shalom Crossing):

Imports:
Weekly average of truckloads (TL) entered this week: 948
- TL carrying food: 41%
- Weekly average of TL in 2011: 948
- Weekly average of TL before the blockade: 2,807

Exports:
Truckloads that left this week: 15
- Weekly average since late November 2011: 21
- Weekly average before the blockade: 240

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