Key issues

West Bank

- Israeli forces kill a Palestinian and injure 24 others.
- Israeli authorities demolish a structure in East Jerusalem and confiscate construction material for a donor-funded project.

Gaza Strip

- Israeli forces injure a Palestinian man in the Access Restricted Areas (ARA).
- Large areas flooded in the middle area.
- Three children injured by explosive remnants of war.
- Rafah Crossing between Gaza and Egypt remains closed; no opening since 22 January 2015.

WEST BANK

One Palestinian killed and 24 others injured by Israeli forces

Clashes triggered by search and arrest operations during the week accounted for one Palestinian fatality and 13 out of 24 Palestinian injuries by Israeli forces. On 24 February, Israeli forces shot and killed a 19-year-old Palestinian refugee during clashes that took place during a search and arrest operation in Ad Duheisha Refugee Camp (Bethlehem). The 19-year-old was standing on the roof of his house during the clashes and may have been engaged in stone throwing. An Israeli soldier was also injured.

The incident resulting in the largest number of injuries during the week took place on 22 February in ‘Ayda Refugee Camp (Bethlehem), where 11 Palestinians were injured, including a child and four adults by live ammunition and five Palestinians, including a pregnant woman, due to physical assault. Additional injuries occurred during search and arrest operations in ‘Anabta (Tulkarem) on 19 February, and in Zububa (Jenin) on 22 February, during which three Palestinian children, 10, 12, and 13-years–old, in addition to four adults, were injured as a result of severe gas inhalation.

Overall, Israeli forces conducted 90 search and arrest operations during the week, roughly the same as the weekly average thus far in 2015. Similar to the previous two reporting periods, the majority were carried out in the Jerusalem governorate. During the week, a total of 102 Palestinians were arrested bringing to 899 the number of Palestinians arrested since the beginning of the year. According to the Israel Prison Service (IPS), by the end of 2014, there were 5,528 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons on security charges, and another 1,115 for being present in Israel illegally.

Six of this week’s injuries, including a child, were recorded during the weekly protest against the longstanding closure of the entrance to Kafr Qaddum village (Qalqiliya). On 22
February, another child was injured in the leg by live ammunition during clashes involving stone throwing by Palestinians at Israeli soldiers at the entrance of Al Jalazun Refugee Camp.

Five Israeli settler attacks recorded this week

This week, five settler attacks on Palestinians resulting in injury or property damage were recorded, bringing the weekly average of such attacks thus far in 2015 to four, compared to a weekly average of six during 2014.

Four of the incidents took place in the Hebron governorate, including one involving a 10-year-old boy who was beaten with an iron bar by a group of settlers in Hebron city. On the following day, Israeli forces detained the boy for a few hours, allegedly for throwing stones at an Israeli soldier. Also in Hebron, a group of settlers from the settlement of Susya beat a 55-year-old shepherd from Qwawis while he was grazing his sheep near the settlement. In the same community, settlers cut down over 40 olive trees belonging to farmers from Yatta village. Additionally, 550 olive saplings provided through a donor-funded project, were uprooted by settlers in Sa’ir village. In total, 25 families were affected.

On 19 February, “price tag” graffiti was sprayed on a donor-funded water tank in Assirah al Qibliya (Nablus) and an electricity pole was partially damaged. Of note, the electricity pole was previously cut down in January of this year. In Jalud village (Nablus) on 17 February, a group of settlers physically assaulted a Palestinian man with a metal pipe near the outpost of Esh Kodesh. The latter is one of six settlement outposts to the east of Shilo settlement, established during the 1990’s in contravention to both international and Israeli law. Settlers from these outposts have been the source of systematic violence and harassment of Palestinians in nine surrounding villages, undermining their livelihoods and physical security.

During the week, there were three Palestinian attacks against Israelis, according to Israeli media. The most serious incident took place on 22 February near the Old City in Jerusalem, when a Palestinian stabbed and lightly wounded an Israeli man. The other two attacks reportedly resulted in damage to property and involved Molotov cocktail throwing at an Israeli settler compound in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem on 18 February, and stone throwing at an Israeli vehicle near Al ‘Arrub Camp on 20 February. In three separate incidents (not included in the count), Palestinians threw paint bottles and stones at the light train station in the Shu’fat area of East Jerusalem, causing damage to a windshield. Israeli forces carried out search and arrest operations, but no arrests were reported.
One structure demolished in East Jerusalem; materials for a water project in Area C confiscated

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities demolished a retaining wall in At Tur area of East Jerusalem, built in 2012 on privately-owned land, due to lack of Israeli-issued building permit, affecting five Palestinians. This brings the number of structures demolished throughout the West Bank, since the beginning of 2015 to 90 compared to 131 in the equivalent period of 2014.

Also this week, Israeli authorities confiscated construction material for a donor-funded water well rehabilitation project to provide drinking water to the community of Tell al Khashaba (Nablus, also known as Al Twayel community). The community, which is located in a closed military zone or “firing zone” in Area C, is not connected to a water network and residents have relied on rain collection or purchasing tankered water. During 2014, Israeli authorities demolished 41 structures in the community, including 16 which were donor-funded displacing over 100 people. The demolished donor-funded structures also include an electricity network installed in the community which was dismantled and around 2 kilometres of the road servicing the community which were damaged.

In addition, two public vehicles, a tractor and compactor, belonging to the municipality of Yatta (Hebron) were confiscated, on unclear grounds, while dumping waste in a site in Area C, east of Yatta. The two vehicles were impounded in a military base in the settlement of Gush Etzion.

On 17 February, in Tayasir village (Tubas), Israeli forces uprooted 300 olive saplings and damaged the surrounding fence, affecting a family of five, on the grounds of illegal activity in an area designated by Israel as a closed military zone, or “firing zone”.

GAZA STRIP

Israeli forces injure a Palestinian man in the Access Restricted Areas (ARA) on land

Incidents involving Israeli forces opening fire into the Access Restricted Areas (ARA) on land and at sea continued on a daily basis, with at least 15 such incidents reported during the week, one of which led to injury. On 23 February, Israeli forces positioned along Gaza’s perimeter fence north of Beit Lahiya shot and injured, and subsequently arrested, a Palestinian man as he was approaching the fence.

Access restrictions imposed by Israel at land and sea continue to undermine the security of Palestinians as well as the fishery and agricultural sectors in Gaza, which are the primary source of income for thousands of farmers and fishermen and their families.

During the week, Israeli forces arrested three Palestinian men northeast of Al Bureij Camp, reportedly while they were attempting to infiltrate into Israel.

In one incident on 23 February, Israeli forces fired two shells to the east of Al Maghazi Camp with no injuries reported.

Large areas flooded due to overflow of a stream in the Middle area

The Wadi Gaza stream, which runs through the Middle area of the Gaza Strip, overflowed on the early morning of 22 February, flooding large areas on both sides. Up to 35 residential structures in Al Moughraqa area (mostly Bedouin-owned structures) sustained some type of damage, primarily to furniture and other belongings, including ten homes rendered temporarily uninhabitable. Approximately 100 people were evacuated from their homes and accommodated in the nearby UNRWA Collective Center for IDPs in Al Bureij and in Al Wafa rehabilitation center. Agricultural areas adjacent to the stream were also flooded, resulting in damage to crops and trees, as well as loss of livestock. Main roads were temporarily blocked. Overflowing of the Wadi Gaza stream occurs almost every year with varying degrees of impact.

Palestinian officials have claimed that the flooding occurred due to the opening of a dam on the Israeli
side of the stream. According to various media reports, the Israeli authorities denied this claim and attributed the incident to a sudden “flash flood”.

Three children injured by detonation of explosive remnants of war

On 17 February, three Palestinian children, aged between two and 13, two of whom are siblings, were injured by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) which detonated inside their house in Al Twam area, west of Jabalia. Since the ceasefire of August 2014, ten Palestinians, including one child, have been killed in similar incidents, and 39 others, including 14 children injured.

According to the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), some 7,000 ERW continue to contaminate areas in Gaza, with children, humanitarian workers, rubble-removal workers, scrap collectors, construction workers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to their damaged homes, and farmers working and/ or living in the Access Restricted Areas at highest risk of injury.

Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt remains closed

The Rafah Crossing between Gaza and Egypt remained closed during the entire reporting period. An estimated 30,000 Palestinians are waiting to cross into Egypt, including patients and students. Of this number, 17,000 are registered at the Palestinian Ministry of Interior in Gaza as having priority to travel.

The Rafah Crossing was last opened in both directions between 20 and 22 January, including for a humanitarian convoy of medical and food supplies. During the whole of 2014, the Rafah Crossing was opened on 158 days, allowing 97,690 people to pass in both directions, compared to 262 days and 302,240 people crossing in both directions in 2013.