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occupied Palestinian territory

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November Overview

Following an IDF incursion into Gaza in search of tunnels, and the firing of rockets and mortars by Palestinian militants, Israel fully closed the Gaza crossings on 5 November. This intensified to an unprecedented level the blockade on the Gaza Strip that was imposed in June 2007. These developments directly contribute to reducing people's lives to a daily struggle of obtaining clean running water, fuel for cooking, and fresh foods to maintain their families. The prolonged duration of the blockade is causing a deep crisis of human dignity, along with the de-development and collapse of basic services and infrastructure, in one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

The severe closure imposed since 5 November halted the delivery of basic supplies, fuel and humanitarian assistance, to the Gaza Strip. Gaza crossings were opened only on six days following the 5 November closure, constraining imports to limited amounts of food, medical supplies, industrial fuel, animal feed and a few other basic items. While any easing of the closure is a welcome measure, the constant disruption of the openings is significantly affecting not only the provision of basic social services, such as electricity and water, but also humanitarian operations. Staff and assistance from international NGOs were prevented from entering Gaza throughout the month. Additionally, the intensified closure forced UNRWA to suspend food distribution for five days during the month, along with its cash assistance programme, as a result of restrictions on cash shipments to Gaza.

Due to the lack of fuel, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) was forced to shut down for half of the month, resulting in prolonged power outages throughout the Gaza Strip, reaching up to 16 hours per day in Gaza City. Intermittent electricity supply, combined with the lack of fuel for backup generators and poor maintenance due to lack of spare parts, left 80% of Gaza's water wells functioning only partially, while the remaining were non-functional. Gaza City was the most affected with 50% of the population having access to water only several hours once a week. Following the interruption of normal supply, the reserves of chlorine, used to disinfect water, dropped substantially.

The intermittent supply of electricity has forced Gaza's hospitals to rely on back-up generators, rendering them increasingly vulnerable, given that generators are designed for short periods and are more likely to fail with prolonged use. Moreover, power cuts have resulted in damaged or malfunctioning of medical equipment aggravated by difficulties in maintenance that stem from the lack of spare parts.



Queues at bread bakeries in Gaza. Photo taken by Ahmed Abu Sall.

By the end of the month, five out of six mills in Gaza had stopped grinding, as flour stocks were depleted. In addition, over 30 out of 47 bread bakeries throughout Gaza were forced to close down, due to a lack of cooking gas, while functioning bakeries started implementing a rationing system. As a result of the severe shortage of cooking gas (used for heating) and animal feed, hatcheries owners were forced to kill over 400,000 baby chicks. This affected not only the availability and affordability of poultry, but contributed to the erosion of livelihoods.

In commenting on the Gaza blockade, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, noted that "essential spare parts for operating and maintaining the power plant, water and sanitation utilities must be allowed into Gaza, together with humanitarian assistance, as a matter of urgency. The immediate and long term health and welfare of the population depend on it."

In the West Bank, the Israeli authorities continued to demolish Palestinian-owned structures, including houses, in November. Demolitions in Area C and East Jerusalem resulted in the

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displacement of 68 Palestinians, including 41 children. Also, medical workers and patients continued to face access problems entering East Jerusalem following tightened restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities in July 2008.

Farmers in the Gaza Strip and the Jordan Valley struggled in November to cope with the effect of floods that took place in late October. Damage caused by the floods further jeopardized the livelihoods of poor farmers, who were already attempting to deal with multiple economic and environmental shocks that occurred since the second half of 2007.

In the southern West Bank, tensions escalated in Hebron City after the Israeli High Court of Justice ruled in mid-November that Israeli settlers must leave the Al Rajabi House settlement in the Israeli-controlled area of the city (H2). In the week following the ruling, thousands of settler supporters entered the city to protest the ruling. Settlers threw stones at a Palestinian building, desecrated tombstones at an Islamic cemetery and scribbled offensive words on the walls and door of a local mosque.¹

Protection of Civilians

Casualties: Increase in Gaza and decline in the West Bank

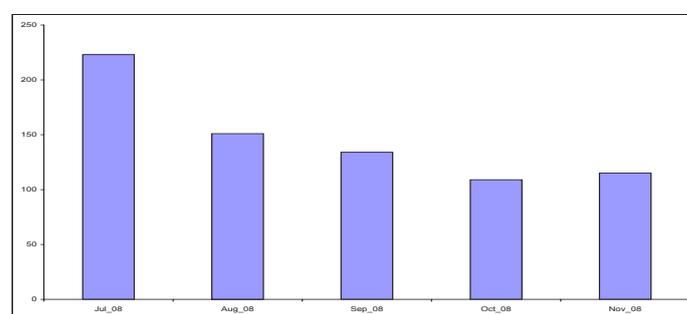
The hostilities between Israel and the Gaza Strip that began on 4 November resulted in the death of 15 Palestinian militants. This figure represents a sharp increase compared with the number of Palestinian fatalities during the four months (July – October 2008) immediately following the truce (one death). However, it is still far below the monthly average of Palestinian deaths during the first five months of 2008 (72).

The overall number of Palestinians injured by IDF or Israeli settlers increased only slightly between October and November (109 vs. 115), with the Gaza Strip accounting for most of the increase – 24 in November (21 militants and three unarmed civilians) compared to two in October. Thirteen Israelis were injured due to the Gaza-Israeli fighting, including 12 IDF soldiers, injured in mortar and rocket attacks in the proximity of Nahal Oz Crossing and one 82-year-old woman, injured when a rocket hit Ashkelon City. Conversely, the West Bank has witnessed a steady monthly decline in the number of injuries of civilians from a high of 218 injuries in July to 91 in November. Slightly less than one third of all injuries in November occurred during 14 anti-Barrier demonstrations (27) in Ni'lin and Bil'in in Ramallah governorate and in Al Masara in Hebron governorate. Seventy seven percent (77%) of all injured Palestinians were by the IDF and 23% by Israeli settlers.

In addition to the 14 anti-Barrier demonstrations, there were a number of other demonstrations organized

during the month in the West Bank. While the majority of these protests resulted in no Palestinian casualties, they are noteworthy given the variety of issues around which Palestinians demonstrated during the month, including protests marking the anniversary of the 1917 Balfour Declaration and demonstrations marking the fourth anniversary of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's passing and the 20th anniversary of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence in Algiers.² Of note, on 6 November, about 1,500 Palestinians marched from Salah El Din Street in East Jerusalem to Mammilla area in West Jerusalem in a peaceful demonstration to protest an Israeli High Court decision to allow the demolition of part or the historical Ma'man Allah Muslim cemetery in order to construct the "Museum of Tolerance" in its place.

Chart 1: Palestinian direct conflict injuries, July-November 2008



Child protection

During November, while no Palestinian child was killed in the context of the conflict with Israel, 23 children were injured in the West Bank. The majority of these injuries (17) took place during IDF military activities in the West Bank. In addition, a total of six children were injured by Israeli settlers in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2). There were no child injuries in the Gaza Strip.

In the Gaza Strip, the impact of the Israeli blockade continued to exacerbate access to child healthcare services during November. Of concern during November was children's access to clean water (see Health and Water and Sanitation sections below). There is also increased psychosocial stress affecting children and a rise in domestic violence, indicated by the intensified use of the UNICEF-supported toll-free helpline and a reported need for psychosocial counseling and family emergency visits.

In the West Bank, the demolition of 18 structures in Area C and East Jerusalem has resulted in the displacement of 41 children aged between two months and 15 years (see Demolitions section below).

As of the end of November, 327 Palestinian children were reportedly being held in custody in Israeli prisons, including five girls. This represents a 10% increase compared to October, when 297 children were held. Over 90% of the children held in November were aged 16 and 17 years



old. Five children, including two girls, are being held in administrative detention (incarceration without charge or trial).

Demolitions, forced eviction of a house and stop-work orders in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem: 68 displaced including 41 children

Throughout November, the Israeli authorities continued to demolish Palestinian-owned structures located in the West Bank due to lack of permit. Demolitions took place in Area C and in East Jerusalem, with a total of 18 structures demolished, twelve of which were residential. This resulted in the displacement of 68 people, including 41 children, aged between two months and 15 years.

In East Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Municipality demolished 13 structures (located in Al 'Eisawiya, 'Anata, As Sawahreh Al Gharbieh, Beit Hanina, Jabal Al Mukabber, Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and Shu'fat localities). As a result, 59 people, including 34 children, were displaced. Of note, Israeli security forces evicted an elderly couple (the Al Kurd family) from their home in Sheikh Jarrah. The family was displaced three times during the month: first, on 9 November, several months after a Jerusalem court ruled that the house belonged to a group of Israeli settlers, who possessed an Ottoman-era bill, which they claimed their ownership of the land on which the house was built. Following their eviction, the family moved to a nearby protest tent, which the Israeli authorities demolished twice (but was rebuilt by Palestinians). On 22 November, the family patriarch died of a heart attack.

In the central West Bank, five other structures were demolished in Area C in Al Eizariya locality of Jerusalem governorate and Shuqba village in Ramallah governorate. One of the demolished houses in Shuqba village resulted in the displacement of a family of nine members, including seven children.

During the four-month period between April and July 2008, no structures were demolished in Area C of the West Bank for lacking construction permits. However, since August 2008, a total of 112 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished in Area C, 76 of which were inhabited and uninhabited dwellings. The total number of structures demolished during this period is close to the number demolished between January and April 2008 (112 vs. 124). The proportion of residential structures demolished between August and November 2008 is slightly higher (60 vs. 50 percent), however the majority of these residential structures were uninhabited at the time of the demolition, as indicated by the significantly lower number of people displaced as a result of the demolition (151 vs. 435).

In the southern West Bank, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) issued 54 stop-work orders against Palestinian-

owned structures located in Area C, which lacked building permits. Some of the orders were issued against houses that have been inhabited over the past 15 years. Al Rama neighbourhood to the north of Hebron City received 19 stop-work orders, targeting inhabited houses and shops. Nine stop-work orders were issued in Jaba' village of the Bethlehem governorate, against three inhabited houses, four houses under construction, an animal pen and two classrooms that were built by the UNDP. In the Bedouin community of Khashm Al Karm in Hebron, 26 stop-work orders were issued against structures, including bathrooms, animal pens, brick houses and cisterns. According to the community's lawyer, almost every structure in the community received a stop-work order. Unless the owner of the targeted structure is able to obtain a building permit from the ICA, a final demolition order is issued a few weeks after the issuance of the stop-work order.

Over 90% of applications for permits submitted by Palestinians in the last seven years were rejected. Currently, more than 3,000 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C of the West Bank have pending demolition orders that can be executed at any moment.

Settler Violence: Palestinians paying the "price" for outpost dismantlement and attacks during the olive harvest

On 16 November, the Israeli High Court of Justice ruled that Israeli settlers must leave the Al Rajabi House settlement in Hebron. The ruling came in the context of increased settler violence against Palestinian civilians in 2008. Israeli media reports attribute the recent rise to more radicalized settler youth, impacted by Israel's 2005 "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank and strenuously opposed to further evacuations of settlements.³ Some of the most radical settlers report that they intend to exact a heavy "price" for every attempt to dismantle a settlement "outpost" -- small satellite settlements established without official Israeli authorization.⁴

Implementation of this strategy was evident in the weeks after the Al Rajabi ruling, when some 20,000 settler-supporters entered Hebron. Tensions ran high as settlers threw stones at a Palestinian building, desecrated tombstones at an Islamic cemetery and scribbled offensive words on the walls and door of a local mosque. Palestinians also suffered settler violence in October following attempts to dismantle the "Federman Farm" outpost near Hebron city and evacuate the Shavut 'Ami outpost near Qedumim settlement in the Qalqiliya governorate. In effect, after paying the price of Israel's settlement policy for decades, Palestinian from all walks of life are now paying the price for the limited efforts undertaken to remove settlement outposts.⁵ [On 4 December, Israeli security forces evacuated Israeli settlers from the Al Rajabi house. Clashes between security forces



and settlers resulted in casualties on both sides. Subsequent to the evacuation, Israeli settlers in Hebron and throughout the West Bank carried out reprisal attacks against Palestinian civilians and their property. See upcoming (December) Humanitarian Monitor for full details.]

In addition, settler violence against Palestinians harvesting their olive crops continued in November. Incidents of settler harassment (without casualties) were reported in Kafr Qaddum and Azzun (Qalqiliya governorate), Kafr Ed Dik and Yasuf (Salfit governorate) and Burin and Awarta (Nablus governorate). Of note, on 5 November, a group of settlers from Qedumim settlement in the Qalqiliya governorate physically assaulted a Palestinian man from Kafr Qaddum village, who was picking olives, leading to his hospitalization. Also, on 26 November, a group of Israeli settlers set fire to olive groves near Huwwara checkpoint in the Nablus governorate, burning 200 olive trees on land belonging to farmers from Burin village.

Palestinian Female Prisoners in Israeli Jails and Detention Centers

On 2 November 2008, an Israeli military court rejected an appeal concerning two Palestinian girls from Bethlehem, who have been held under administrative detention (i.e. detention without charge or trial) since June 2008.⁶ Their current administrative detention order ends on 3 January 2009, but these orders can be renewed indefinitely. The girls, who were 16 at the time of their arrest, are the only female minors among the some 650 Palestinians currently being held in administrative detention.⁷ They are also among 64 female prisoners, 15 of whom are mothers, currently detained by Israel.

At least 700 Palestinian women have been incarcerated in Israeli jails since September 2000.⁸ Human rights organizations report that female prisoners suffer a range of physical and psychological ill-treatment during the arrest through incarceration process.⁹ Indeed, there are no female doctors provided by the Israeli Prison Service to meet the specific physical and mental health needs of women: gynecological care is offered only to women in need of hospitalization and the transfer of pregnant women to the hospital is usually carried out under strict supervision, with hands and feet shackled with metal chains.¹⁰ Palestinian women also face greater difficulty than their male counterparts in reintegrating into society upon release. Some are alienated by their families for having violated perceived gender roles, while others are overly protected. Some mothers face difficulties rebuilding relationships with their children, due, in part, to inadequate and insufficient contact allowed with their children while imprisoned.¹¹

Human rights groups challenge Israel's use of torture

In November, three Israeli human rights groups filed a

“contempt of court” motion to the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) against the Government of Israel and the Israel Security Agency (ISA, previously the General Security Service). The motion concerns a policy the petitioners argue grants permission for ISA interrogators to torture Palestinian suspects of terrorism.¹² According to the motion, this policy is in fundamental violation not only of international law, but of an HCJ judgment from 1999.

The 1999 judgment established that the ISA had no legal power to use “physical means of interrogation”, which exceed the rules of a “reasonable and fair” investigation and cause suffering to the persons interrogated. Despite this, the judgment ruled that interrogators who exceed their authority and use “physical pressure” may not be held criminally responsible, if it is revealed, in retrospect, that such use was carried out in exceptional circumstances, such as the “ticking bomb” case.

In the current motion, the human rights organizations submitted evidence indicating that the ISA has adopted a procedure for the pre-authorization of illegal physical means of interrogation. The evidence includes testimonies of ISA interrogators from court proceedings, public responses by the ISA, as well as testimonies from Palestinian victims.

Access and Movement

The blockade on the Gaza Strip severely intensified

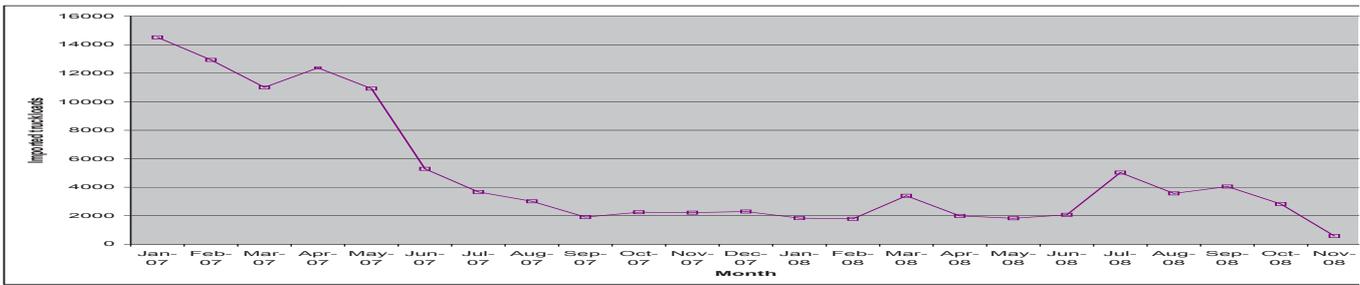
Following the resumption of violence on 4 November, Israel has intensified the closure regime imposed since June 2007 to an unprecedented level. As a result, the functioning crossings (Kerem Shalom, Nahal Oz and a conveyor belt next to Karni) have remained closed since then, except for six days during which limited quantities of food, industrial fuel, animal feed and a few other essential items were allowed in.

Due to the intensified closure, the average daily number of truckloads reached a new low in November, following the one recorded in October 2008: 23 truckloads compared to 123; an 81% decline. The November average compares to 475 in May 2007, before the Hamas take-over of the Gaza Strip and 631 in December 2005, before the Palestinian legislative elections won by Hamas. Imports in November represented only 4% of the December 2005 level (13,430 truckloads), 5% of the May 2007 level (10,921 truckloads) and 12% of the July 2008 level (5,028 truckloads), the month after the 19 June truce. Exports have been barred since February 2008.

Of the 579 truckloads that entered during November, the majority carried food supplies (80%). The remaining truckloads carried fuel supplies, including petrol, diesel and



Chart 2: Total monthly imports entering into the Gaza Strip.



cooking gas (7%) and other commodities such as hygiene/cleaning supplies, medical supplies, agricultural materials, construction materials, etc. Ninety-seven of the 579 truckloads carried humanitarian aid.

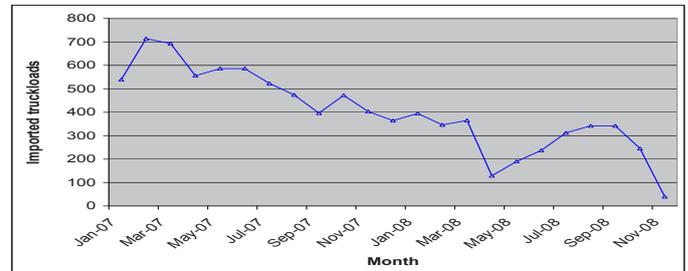
During the month, access to basic needs, including food and water, was increasingly difficult and daily lives were disrupted due to the lack of electricity, water and basic goods. Meat, dairy products and vegetables and most fruit were hard to find. The closure of the crossings has hindered the regular delivery of humanitarian food assistance. UNRWA, the largest aid agency in Gaza, suspended food distribution for five days, to 750,000 Gazans, due to lack of food supplies. Furthermore, UNRWA was denied entry for computers for use in its health centres, emergency and gender programmes. Lubricant oil for water pumps, generators and vehicles - including ambulances and sanitation vehicles - were also denied entry, jeopardizing the stability of some UNRWA operations.

Fuel shortages in the Gaza Strip

Fuel imports were reduced during November as a result of the tightened closure on Nahal Oz fuel pipeline, the only line to import fuel from Israel into the Gaza Strip. The crossing was only partially opened on seven out of 25 scheduled days during the month, allowing the entry of 124,410 litres of petrol, 262,400 litres of diesel, 756 tonnes of cooking gas and 2,223,250 litres of industrial gas for the Gaza Power Plant (GPP). These amounts represented only 4% of petrol, 3% of diesel, 10% of cooking gas and 16% of industrial gas daily needs.

By the end of November, no Israeli diesel or petrol was available at gas stations in Gaza. However, the transfer of Egyptian fuel to Gaza through the Rafah tunnels meant that some diesel and petrol was available. The Gas Stations Owners Association reported that a daily average of 100,000 litres of diesel and 10,000 litres of petrol was transferred through the tunnels during November 2008.

Chart 3: Total monthly fuel imports (excluding industrial gas) entering through Nahal Oz Crossing



Daily power cuts continued as a result of lack of fuel and spare parts

As a result of the tightened closure on Nahal Oz Crossing beginning on 5 November, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) ceased functioning on 9 and 10 November due to the lack of industrial fuel. On 11 November, the GPP was able to resume operations following a limited supply of fuel but the electricity production was again suspended on 13 November. Limited amounts of fuel entered again on 24 November, however the GPP could not operate as the turbine batteries were damaged and were no longer functioning due to prolonged lack of use. By 26 November, plant engineers managed to adapt car batteries as temporary replacements but with the risk of causing definitive damage to the turbines. The electricity production remains precarious and the plant urgently needs more than 100 items of spare parts and tools. More than US\$ 800,000 worth of tools and new supplies have already been procured and are waiting in Israel to enter Gaza. Although the power plant resumed operations on 26 November, output was down to just one turbine. The GPP was again closed on 30 November and the GEDCO (Electricity Company) re-instituted a load-sharing programme.

The electricity demand in the Gaza Strip is estimated at an average of 237 MW (megawatt). Israel supplies some 51% (122 MW) of this demand, paid by the PA, and Egypt another 7% (17 MW). The GPP can currently produce at full capacity 80MW, approximately 34% of the demand of the total demand of the Gaza Strip. This capacity is 43% below the capacity of the plant before Israel destroyed the plant's transformers in an airstrike on June 2006 (140 MW). Since November 2007, when Israel began reducing the amounts of fuel allowed into Gaza, the plant operates at 75-80% of its capacity (65 MW), resulting in a significant energy deficit (approx. 15%).

The shutting down of the GPP during half of the month



triggered rolling blackouts of up to eight hours per time in some areas. Worst affected were some areas of Gaza City and the middle areas, which experienced up to 16 hours of power cuts a day. At any one time, approximately 65,000 people were without electricity due to the load sharing.

Cooking gas shortages continued; most Gaza's bread bakeries forced to close

During November, only 756 tonnes of cooking gas were allowed into Gaza, of which only 130 entered after the intensification of the blockade on 4 November (on one day only). Gaza's needs of cooking gas are estimated at 300 tonnes a day. Due to the cooking gas shortage, long queues were evident at gas stations/outlets. More than 30 out of 47 bread bakeries in Gaza City ceased production, while all the bread bakeries in Rafah ceased functioning, although some continued to sell bread baked elsewhere.¹³ Queues were also evident at operating bakeries, which began implementing rationing systems, selling just one bag of 50 pieces per customer/family per purchase. The lack of cooking gas has forced some households to use wood to cook, while others have started using communal ovens. A limited amount of cooking gas is coming in through the Rafah tunnels from Egypt, however it is too expensive for most Gazans (400 NIS a canister as opposed to 120 NIS) and does not meet demand.

Tunnels-related incidents

As a result of the strict closure on Gaza crossings, Gaza's population is ever more reliant on goods imported through the tunnels located under the Gaza-Egypt border. During November, tunnels-related incidents continued, however no deaths were reported. Three tunnels collapsed: four Palestinians were rescued in one of the tunnels; three were trapped inside another tunnel for one day and were later rescued; and two others were rescued following a collapse of another. On 18 November, the Egyptian security forces reportedly demolished 20 tunnels opposite the Brazil Quarter of Rafah city, and, on 23 November, destroyed an additional one, reportedly trapping the three Palestinians who were later rescued. It was reported that fewer goods arrived through the tunnels in November, partly due to restrictions reportedly imposed by the Egyptian side.

While the tunnels provide access to otherwise unavailable commodities and allow some economic activities, they constitute a very precarious and unsustainable mechanism, which by no measure can substitute the normal functioning of crossings. Most items that enter through the tunnels are only affordable by a small portion of the population.

Rafah Crossing opened on several occasions

Rafah Crossing was partially opened on ten days during November to allow medical and other humanitarian cases, students and foreign residency permit holders to cross to Egypt or return to Gaza. In total, 3,703 Palestinians

reportedly crossed to Egypt in November, compared to 22 in October 2008, and 816, most of them medical cases, returned to Gaza, compared to 1,040 in October 2008. An additional 704 people were denied access to Egypt by the Egyptian authorities. Rafah Crossing has been closed since 9 June 2007, but opens sporadically, with the consent of the Egyptian authorities, to allow medical and humanitarian cases to cross to Egypt or return to Gaza.

Gaza pilgrims affected by Gaza/Ramallah rift

Gaza Haj pilgrims were caught in the ongoing Gaza/Ramallah political rift during November. Two separate lists of Gaza pilgrims were prepared by the PA in Ramallah (3,200 pilgrims) and the Hamas authorities in Gaza (2,200 pilgrims). Those registered with Ramallah reportedly have Saudi visas ready (with their passports awaiting at the Egyptian side of the crossing) while pilgrims registered with the Hamas authorities do not. On 27 November, the Palestinian Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs in the West Bank announced that Gaza pilgrims could leave through Rafah crossing on the next day. The Hamas authorities reportedly denied knowledge of the opening of the crossing for this purpose and urged Saudi Arabia to grant Gaza pilgrims registered on the Hamas authorities list visas in order to be able to travel on time. By the end of the month, no pilgrim had left. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, some of the pilgrims who made their way towards Rafah were physically assaulted by Hamas security forces at checkpoints. Others decided not to attempt the journey amidst the political rift.

Additional restrictions at Erez Crossing

Additional restrictions were imposed on Erez Crossing in November. The crossing was partially open for the movement of urgent medical cases, humanitarian workers and diplomats with special coordination arrangements on 23 days during the month. Only 45 Palestinian businessmen holding special permits exited Gaza before 5 November. None were allowed to cross in the period following 5 November compared to 261 during October 2008.

Humanitarian access became increasingly more difficult for NGOs during the month. Almost all the NGOs reported a denial of access for their staff, jeopardizing their ability stability to keep implementing humanitarian programmes. International media and diplomats also reported being denied entry in the period following 5 November. Overall, there was a 25% in the number of people able to leave Gaza through Erez, including patients, Palestinian businessmen and humanitarian workers, compared to the previous month (1,540 vs. 2,061).

At the beginning of November, a new list of prohibited items was introduced by the Israeli authorities for people crossing Erez. The list included all types of chemical materials,



fertilizers, spices, plants and vegetation, kitchenware and glass, electrical equipment, computers including laptops and accessories, car spare parts and animals. Food items are not allowed from Gaza to Israel, however small quantities are allowed from Israel to Gaza. In addition, any item coming from Israel into Gaza exceeding four pieces will be considered a commercial quantity, rather than for personal use, and will not be allowed in.

Slight improvement in access for medical referrals to specialized treatment outside Gaza

A total of 969 patients referred to specialized medical treatment outside Gaza and their companions were able to cross in November, an increase of 33% compared to October 2008. Access for patients restored to its previous levels in November, mainly due to the fact that the staff of the Palestinian Directorate Coordination and Liaison (DCL), which processes applications for permits, returned to work after being on strike for the last two months (September and October 2008).

Access to East Jerusalem hospitals continued to be restricted

Towards the end of November, the Israeli authorities announced a slight relaxation in the restrictions on the access of medical staff to East Jerusalem hospitals. Since July 2008, medical staff and patients holding West Bank IDs with valid permits have been barred from accessing East Jerusalem through two of the vehicular checkpoints located at main routes into the city (Hizma and Az-Zayyem checkpoints).¹⁴ According to the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network (EJHN), approximately 70% of the staff of East Jerusalem's six hospitals (1,400 out of 2,000) lives outside Jerusalem and, therefore, has been affected.

According to the revised regulations relayed to the head of the EJHN by the Israeli authorities by the end of November, the arrangement in place before July 2008 will be implemented again, but only for doctors, who constitute about 14% of the affected staff. As a result, doctors holding newly issued permits will be allowed to access East Jerusalem through any of the checkpoints leading into the city. Other staff will continue to be barred from using Hizma and Az Zayyem. According to the revised regulations, however, they will be allowed to cross Qalandiya and Olives on buses, instead of forced to cross on foot, during specific hours in the morning.

Of concern, the revised regulations do not apply to patients holding permits, who will continue to be forced to cross on foot through the pedestrian checkpoints. In addition, the restrictions applying to medical staff will continue to impair the functioning of hospitals. For example, East Jerusalem hospitals regularly dispatch nurses and professionals to

villages in other parts of the West Bank during the day, beyond the time allocated under the new arrangement for the crossing of buses. The EJHN estimates that the new arrangement will force each hospital's administration to manage a complicated, more costly system as it adjusts the functioning of services to these restrictions.

Health

Impact of the ongoing health strike in Gaza

In November, WHO released a report on the impact of the strike on the provision of health services covering the period of August through October 2008. The main points were the following:

- Twenty percent (20%) of hospital personnel and 27% of PHC (Primary Health Care) personnel abided by the strike. The majority were administrative workers
- The kidney dialyses departments in the MoH hospitals were not affected, as all personnel in these departments reported to work regularly.
- The Referrals Abroad Department was on strike and issued requests for urgent cases only. The requests for patients in need of specialized hospital care fell by almost 50% compared to the monthly average for 2008. Only the most urgent cases were processed
- As of mid-November, 94 (20%) drug items out of the list of 473 essential drugs were at zero level, compared to 63 (13%) items in mid-September, and 48 (11.5%) items in mid-August, due to both the strike and the coordination difficulties faced by the MoH in Ramallah, compounded by the closure regime imposed by the Israeli authorities.

Impact of Gaza blockade on provision of services at the MoH health facilities

WHO monitored the impact of the lack of fuel on the provision of services at the MoH (Ministry of Health) since 5 November. The following results were found:

- Most MoH hospitals, except Beit Hanoun, Gaza European and Shifa hospitals, functioned at full capacity. Some MoH hospitals reported shortages in cooking gas needed for kitchen and laundry services. Shortage in cleaning materials has been reported by many MoH hospitals.
- Beit Hanoun hospital reduced the number of surgical operations; restricted lab services to urgent cases only; and reduced the number of working hours for the oxygen extractors (devices that generate Oxygen) by 50% as a precautionary measure to save fuel needed



to run generators, during the period of 23 and 26 November, to cope with recurrent electricity outages.

- Gaza European Hospital suspended the provision of cardiac catheterization procedures on 23 November, as the necessary machine was out of order due to lack of spare parts.
- Many vital departments will be affected if the generators break down because of overuse and the lack of spare parts to repair them.
- The provision of diagnostic, antenatal and dental services was interrupted at the PHC facilities that do not have generators.

Supply of pharmaceuticals to the Gaza Strip

On 17 and 20 November, WHO facilitated the entry into Gaza of one shipment of drugs and another of vaccines (4,500 doses needed for pilgrims) through Kerem Shalom Crossing. The latter was performed upon a request from the MoH in Gaza. Since the MoH in Ramallah assumed responsibility for the supply of pharmaceuticals to Gaza in September 2008, no shipment of drugs was actually delivered to Gaza Central Stores, reportedly due to difficulties in the coordination process with the Israeli authorities. (Since the beginning of December, only three shipments entered).

Water and Sanitation

Gaza: No daily water, chlorine supply running out; water and sanitation network deteriorated

As a result of intermittent electricity supply, lack of backup fuel and lack of spare parts, UNICEF reports that 80% of Gaza water wells (115 out of 145) only partially functioned most of the month, while the remaining 20% were non-functional. Gaza City was the most affected with 50% of the population having access to water only several hours once a week, 30% every four days and 20% every three days. Other areas of Gaza received water on average every other day.

On 23 November 2008, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) announced that supplies of chlorine for drinking water would be depleted within two weeks. Some wells ran out of stock, forcing the CMWU to instruct people in several areas to boil water before drinking. On 27 November, 18 tonnes of chlorine (out of a requested 220 tonnes) was allowed in through Kerem Shalom crossing. This amount was expected to last for approximately one week.

The shortage of chlorine supplies in the Gaza Strip,

coupled with intermittent water supplies in many areas (as a result of fuel shortage), deteriorated water networks and contamination with untreated wastewater is posing a risk of water pollution. Eighty percent (80%) of the water supply in Gaza does not meet the WHO standards for drinking water. Periodic shortages of chlorine increase the risk of an outbreak of waterborne diseases.

Almost no new infrastructure for the water and sanitation system has been constructed or expanded since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007, while much needed maintenance is impeded by the lack of pipes, spare parts and construction materials. The resulting degradation of the system is posing a major public health hazard, likely to result in an increase in morbidity rates and impede overall socio-economic development in the long term.

Agriculture

Impact of Gaza blockade on agriculture sector: over 400,000 chicks killed

FAO reported that the agriculture sector in the Gaza Strip has been crippled by the closure imposed by Israel since June 2007. The situation worsened dramatically after 5 November, especially for the animal production sub-sector. Poultry hatchery owners had to kill over 400,000 baby chicks due to the near total lack of animal feed and cooking gas, which is used for warming the chicks. Pecking and cannibalism, common reactions to poor nutrition, has also been reported in poultry farms. Since 5 November, only 22% of the animal production sub-sector's monthly requirement of animal feed has reached Gaza's private sector (1,080 out of 5,000 metric tonnes).

Due to the shortage of feed, the production cost for poultry meat reached 9.5 NIS/kg and the market price rose to from 7/8 to 12 NIS (as of 26 November), making it unaffordable for many Gazans. Due to the high price of red meat, as much as 70% Gaza's population relies on white meat, mainly chicken, for their animal protein intake. Moreover, the fishing sector cannot satisfy the current demand for fish, due to the lack of fuel, cooking gas and spare parts, as well as its limited access to the sea.

November is the beginning of the cut flower, strawberry and cherry tomato season. The bulk of profit from these crops comes from exports. For example, strawberries fetch 25 NIS/Kg on the external market, compared to the 5-6 NIS/Kg producers get in the local market. However, the ongoing ban on agricultural exports for the second consecutive year puts strain on the sector to absorb the loss. In addition, the plant production sub-sector suffers because necessary inputs, particularly fertilizer, pesticides, fuel for irrigation pumps and plastic sheeting, are either unaffordable or unavailable. Without the entry of such essential items,



the quantity and quality of local production will decrease, negatively impacting farmers' cash income and livelihoods.

Impact of October floods causing severe damage to agricultural facilities in the Jordan Valley and Gaza Strip

A series of floods took place in the Jordan Valley and Gaza Strip during October 2008, mainly on the 19th and 29th. The floods caused severe damage to large areas planted with various crops, including greenhouses, irrigation networks, livestock sheds, in addition to significant damage to agricultural roads, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The total direct losses caused by the floods have been initially estimated by FAO and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) field staff at around US\$ 1.4 million -- about US\$ 720,000 in the Gaza Strip and US\$ 680,000 in the Jordan Valley. Damage caused by the floods further jeopardizes the livelihoods of poor farmers, who were already attempting to deal with multiple economic and environmental shocks that occurred since the second half of 2007 (e.g. massive increase in fodder, fertilizer and veterinary prices, drought, and late frost in Hebron governorate in early April 2008). Around 630 farming families (3,800 people) in the Jordan Valley (1570) and Gaza Strip (2230), whose farms have been badly hit by floods, have been identified by FAO and the MoA as requiring urgent assistance, such as the rehabilitation of irrigation networks and greenhouses and replanting some of the vegetable crops.

Socioeconomic

Gaza: Lack of currency

Economic restrictions on cash shipments to Gaza imposed by Israel have created a lack of shekel currency in the local market. As a result, on 19 November, UNRWA was forced to suspend its cash assistance programme to support refugee 'special hardship cases'. UNRWA needs 270,000 NIS daily to financially support an average of 2,000 people per day. Beneficiaries use cash assistance to supplement the UNRWA food basket with fruit, vegetables and other basic products. The lack of shekels in Gaza is adversely affecting many other areas of business and life.

Cash for Work Project Supporting Palestinians with disabilities

In light of the high unemployment rates in the oPt,¹⁵ UNRWA Cash for Work Project (CaWP) provides job opportunities to the vulnerable refugees who have few or no employable skills, and targets those with special needs and disabilities. Beneficiaries are selected based on need and family status, and then matched with appropriate work placements. Subsidies are offered to the beneficiaries and allow them to buy basic household goods. The programme offers 2,100 short-term posts in municipalities and village councils and 2,050 posts in UNRWA camps and installations (including health centres and UNRWA schools' offices) in the West Bank each month. The labour provided through the

programme is used to improve public works and services and, ultimately, benefits the entire community.

Case Study: Ahmad and Ra'fat are two deaf and dumb brothers in their early twenties from Faqqua village in the northern West Bank. Working at the local municipality office through the UNRWA CaWP programme was their first time to have a job. The subsidies enabled them to purchase basic household goods and a personal computer. Younis from the same village was able to pay for his medication as he suffers from neurological problems. Before the CaWP job, Younis had not worked for about 15 years. He reported that he felt productive again while working, even if it was for a short time. He also plans to use the rest of the subsidy for the construction of his son's house.

Food security

Flour mills in Gaza shut down while red meat becomes increasingly inaccessible

By the end of November, five out of the six flour mills in Gaza had stopped grinding as flour stocks were depleted. This has followed the announcement of Gaza's largest flour mill that it would have to cease grinding due to lack of wheat flour, as of 19 November. Other mills followed, and some resorted to grinding low quality wheat (usually used for animal feed or mixed with higher quality wheat).

As no calves have entered Gaza since the beginning of November, the scarcity of red meat increased and its price rose from 40 NIS in October to 60 NIS per kg in November. This made meat unaffordable to many, resulting in further detrimental effects on nutritional standards. In addition, by the end of the month dairy products and some fruit and vegetables were also in short supply.

Education

Education in Gaza affected by lack of water, electricity and fuel

Many schools sanitation facilities in the Gaza Strip in November were affected by the lack of water. At the same time, the lack of electricity has adversely affected science and computer classes, many of which were cancelled. The lack of electricity at home left some children unable to complete their homework, while others missed afternoon sport activities in order to complete homework before dark. The psychological impact of the closure on children is high; UNICEF reported three times the usual number of calls to a toll-free helpline in November.

As a result of the inability of UNRWA to import staples, glue, and ink used to print and bind textbooks, the printing of second semester textbooks has been suspended. This will affect 200,000 children in UNRWA schools. Additionally, UNRWA has not been able to import supplies for use at



its school for the visually impaired. The lack of cooking gas affected UNRWA's school feeding programme, as canteens were unable to make the basic falafel sandwich or buy bread from bakeries.

Education strike continued in the Gaza Strip

The teachers' strike at PA schools, which started on 23 August, continued throughout November. Since 14 October 2008, the cut-off date given by the MoEHE (Ministry of Education and Higher Education) in Gaza for teachers to return to work, no teachers have been allowed by the ministry to return. As a result, the percentage of those on strike remained constant at 54% throughout the month. Pupil attendance remained largely unaffected, due to the appointment of around 6,000 replacement teachers by the Hamas authorities in response to the strike. On 18 November, the MoEHE in the Gaza Strip started phase two of the training programme offered for the replacement teachers, consisting of 15 hours of training in Arabic, English, science, maths and religion.

Funding

2009 CAP

In late November, the Humanitarian Coordinator launched the 2009 CAP (Consolidated Appeals Process), which stood at US\$462 million, to fund humanitarian assistance programmes. A total of 159 humanitarian projects should respond to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the oPt, mostly in parts of the West Bank, where the Barrier, the Israeli settlements and closures imposed by the Israeli authorities, and in the Gaza Strip, where the blockade has triggered unprecedented levels of unemployment and poverty.

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator reported that the 18-month long closure of the Gaza Strip has led to widespread erosion of livelihoods and of significant deterioration in infrastructure and essential services.

The following UN Agencies, local and international NGOs and organisations participate in sector working groups and regularly provide information to the Humanitarian Monitor: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), Al Haq, Badil, Save the Children (UK), Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI-PS), Oxfam GB, Palestine Hydrology Group (PHG), ACF-E, AAA, ACP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

High levels of poverty and unemployment continued to exhaust coping mechanisms and increase dependency on humanitarian assistance. This is compounded by the rise in global food prices, the severe weather/drought conditions, the Palestinian rift and the "de-development" process in the Gaza Strip.

Humanitarian projects worth around US\$313 million in the oPt were funded through the 2008 CAP, as of 10 December, constituting 69% of the total CAP funding requests.

End Notes

1. On 4 December, Israeli security forces evacuated settlers from Al Rajabi House by force. The evacuation was followed by settler violence against Palestinians and their property.
2. In addition: in the northern West Bank, Palestinians and international peace activists marched towards the evacuated settlement of Homesh in November to protest ongoing attempts by Israeli settlers to re-settle there. In the central West Bank, Palestinian and international activists demonstrated at the road block between Deir Ibzi' and Ras Karkar in the Ramallah governorate, which prevents residents of 14 villages (estimated population of 30,000) from directly accessing Ramallah.
3. See for example, Roi Sharon, Amir Rappaport and Amit Cohen, "The Wild West Bank, No Man's Land," Ma'ariv, p. B8, 8 August 2008. Also see Amos Harel, "IDF West Bank commander: Rightist violence encouraged by settler leader," Ha'aretz, 2 October 2008.
4. Amit Cohen, "The Wild West Bank."
5. Approximately 40% of the occupied West Bank is taken up by Israeli settlements, outposts, military bases and closed military areas, Israeli-declared nature reserves or other related infrastructure that are off-limits or tightly controlled to Palestinians. See OCHA, The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank, July 2007, p. 8.
6. Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association, Press Release 10/2008.
7. Source: Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association
8. Source: Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Association. http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/Barrier_Report_July_2008.pdf
9. Source: Aseerat project, Protection of Palestinian Female Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons, a UNIFEM-supported project implemented by Palestinian non-governmental organizations. See <http://www.aseerat.ps>. Forms of reported abuse during interrogation include sleep deprivation, prolonged shackling in painful positions, and even beatings. Imprisoned, women suffer from isolation in solitary confinement, humiliating treatment, strip searches and a variety of threats, including prohibition of family visits. Poor conditions of detention reported include overcrowding, a lack of fresh air and natural sunlight and the provision of a poor quality of food, among others.
10. From 2003-2008, four cases of women giving birth in jail under very difficult conditions have occurred. United Nations Country Team-oPt, Inputs to the Secretary General Report on the Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women, August 2008; www.aseerat.ps.
11. This is due to restrictions imposed on granting permits to family members, which make visits difficult, along with restrictions on physical contact during visits. Interview with Magda Mughrabi, Addameer, 7 November 2008.
12. The organizations are The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and HaMoked, the Center for the Defence of the Individual. For further information see: <http://www.stoptorture.org.il/en>
13. There are 71 bakeries in Gaza but only 47 sell basic bread – the others focus on cakes and biscuits.
14. This prohibition, which affects primarily Palestinians from the central and northern West Bank, forced staff and patients to use one of two "pedestrian" checkpoints (Qalandiya and Olives), like other Palestinians holding West Bank IDs and permits. These checkpoints are unpredictable, frequently crowded and much more time consuming. The restriction also compromises the health of severely ill patients, as patients must cross these checkpoints on foot.
15. Unemployment rates according to ILO (International Labour Organisation) definition increased from 25.8% in Q2 2008 to 27.3% in Q3 2008 in the oPt; from 16.3% in Q2 2008 to 20.7% in Q3 2008 in the West Bank, while it decreased from 45.5% in Q2 2008 to 41.3% in Q3 2008 in the Gaza Strip.

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