



# The Humanitarian Monitor

## occupied Palestinian territory

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### October Overview

While the truce between Israel and the Hamas authorities in Gaza was still observed in October, daily life of the population continued to be a struggle. There has been no improvement in the access of people through Gaza's borders, which remained limited to patients, pilgrims and senior businessmen. Moreover, partially due to the closure of the crossings during the Jewish holidays, this month, there was a 30% decline in the number of truckloads entering Gaza compared to September, while exports remained entirely barred. Since the beginning of the truce, there has been an expansion in the types of goods allowed entry, while the limited quantities, combined with the lack of other essential items, precluded any significant impact on the economy and on services. As a result of the harsh restrictions on commercial movement through the official crossings, tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border continued to proliferate and allow the entry of otherwise unavailable goods, including fuels. While this phenomenon brings some respite to the population, it has resulted in numerous Palestinian casualties from tunnel collapses or related accidents; in October, eight Palestinians died in such circumstances. Furthermore, the commercial movement through the tunnels is unlikely to result in any significant reactivation of the economy.

The provision of services to the population in Gaza in October continued to be affected by the Ramallah-Gaza rift. The political divide compounded by the blockade and the suspension of developmental projects has had a destructive impact on the health systems in Gaza. Addressing the negative impact of these factors will require sustained early recovery/development work with the Ministry of Health (MoH). Preliminary information indicates that since the beginning of the strike in the health sector, there was a significant drop, inter alia, in the overall number of patients admitted to hospitals, to outpatient's clinics, and those who underwent elective surgery. Due to the strike conducted by the Referral Abroad Department staff of the MoH, the number of applications to enter Israel and the West Bank for urgent medical treatment declined by almost 50%, compared to August, before the beginning of the strike. Moreover, while the Ministry of Health in Ramallah decided to resume coordination for the entry of drugs into Gaza, no shipment of pharmaceutical has been yet delivered, resulting in a significant increase in the number of essential drug items at zero level. Finally, Gaza's water utility continued to be denied regular fuel supply. This phenomenon, which has severely undermined the functioning of wastewater facilities, raised concerns about possible flooding during the forthcoming rainy season.

Events in October underscored the vulnerability of Palestinians living or tending land in East Jerusalem and in Area C of the West Bank, where Israel retains full control over the building



A child sitting on the debris of his home. Demolitions at the Bedouin community of Um Al Kheir in Hebron. 29 October. OCHA.

and planning sphere. Following a six-month lull, the Israeli authorities resumed the demolition of inhabited houses lacking building permits in Area C. As a result, approximately 140 Palestinians, including 80 children, were displaced or otherwise affected. This development renews concerns over the fate of more than 3,000 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C that have pending demolition orders that can be executed at any time.

The lack of adequate physical protection to civilians continued to be an issue of concern during the month: following the beginning of the annual olive harvest on 10 October, Palestinians harvesting olives in groves near some Israeli settlements and outposts in Area C suffered from repeated acts of intimidation and physical violence from Israeli settlers, despite the deployment of the IDF at friction points. Meanwhile, Palestinians living in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2) experienced an intensified wave of settler violence when Israeli settlers launched multiple attacks following attempts by the Israeli authorities to dismantle a settlement outpost. In addition, several attacks by Israelis on Palestinians and their property in East Jerusalem were reported in October, most of them over the course of the Jewish holidays. The number of Palestinians injured by Israeli security forces in the context of military operations, including search and arrest campaigns

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decreased by 20% compared to the monthly average since the beginning of the year. In total, during October, four Palestinians were killed, including one child, and 109 were injured, including 16 children, in Israeli-Palestinian conflict-related violence.

There is also an increasing concern regarding the situation of Palestinian detainees arrested in areas where additional PA security forces have deployed recently in large numbers. In the Hebron governorate, where such deployment indeed occurred, allegations of due process violations and ill treatment of detainees suspected of links with Hamas emerged following the arrest of 95 people in October.

Access to East Jerusalem and Israel for West Bank Palestinians with special permits was restricted during the month due to a general closure imposed during successive Jewish holidays. In addition, throughout the month the Israeli authorities have been barring medical staff and patients holding valid permits from accessing East Jerusalem hospitals through the vehicular checkpoints located at two main routes into the city, forcing them to use pedestrian checkpoints, which are frequently crowded and much more time consuming. This restriction has had a negative impact on the provision of health care. Seriously ill patients have now to stand at long queues, cross by foot and seek transportation at the other side of the checkpoint. Delivery of medical services at hospitals is disrupted due to the delays of doctors and nurses.

Additional restrictions were imposed during the same period in Hebron city, including the closure of the main route connecting the city with the Tarqumiya commercial terminal. This route was opened last August, as part of a series of measures aimed at easing Palestinian movement, without removing the physical infrastructure.

## Protection of Civilians

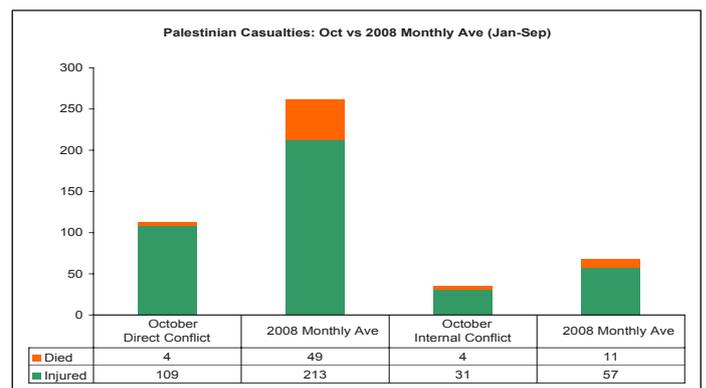
### Three Palestinians killed by IDF in Ramallah Governorate, Internal deaths decrease in the Gaza Strip

Palestinian deaths resulting from the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians remained at the same level in October as in September (four deaths in the West Bank and none in the Gaza Strip), significantly lower than the monthly average for 2008. Of concern are three separate incidents in the Ramallah governorate in October, during which the IDF shot and killed three Palestinians with live ammunition. Two of the incidents occurred on 14 and 15 October in the vicinity of Bet El settlement and resulted in the death of a 17-year-old boy and a 22-year-old man, both from Al Jalazun refugee camp. The third incident took place the same week during an IDF military operation in Kafr Malik village, resulting in the death of a 21-year-old Palestinian man. According to the IDF, the three Palestinians

posed a threat to the lives of soldiers and of Israeli settlers, as they were carrying and preparing to throw Molotov cocktails. However, the findings of an investigation by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem into the circumstances surrounding the killing of the 22-year-old challenges the IDF's version of events. According to B'Tselem, even if the victim was indeed preparing to throw a Molotov cocktail, it would not have endangered the lives of soldiers given his distance away from them. B'Tselem has requested that the IDF prosecutor launch an official investigation into the killing.

While West Bank injuries due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict decreased in October (98 compared to 130 in September), injuries due to anti-Barrier demonstrations in Bil'in and Ni'li villages increased. During the month, 30 Palestinians were injured by Israeli security forces during anti-Barrier demonstrations in these two villages of the Ramallah governorate, 36% more than in September 2008. In addition, three IDF soldiers were injured by stones thrown by protestors and numerous cases of tear-gas inhalation (not included in the injuries) occurred among protestors. The lower number of injuries sustained during anti-Barrier demonstrations in September and October compared to previous months (e.g. 96 in August, 113 in July), and reflected in the overall decrease in West Bank injuries, may be attributed to the decrease in the frequency of demonstrations from almost daily events to weekly events, which could in turn be partly explained by the resumption of the school year in September. However, it should be noted that since July 2008, alongside injuries during demonstrations, dozens of Palestinians in these villages were injured during the course of military operations carried out either before or in the aftermath of demonstrations. In October, seven people were injured in Ni'lin village in such operations, bringing the total number of injuries resulting from incidents directly or indirectly related to anti-Barrier demonstration to 19. There were no Palestinian injuries associated with IDF military operations in Ni'lin village prior to the outbreak of anti-Barrier demonstrations in May 2008.

Chart 1: Number of Palestinians killed and injured in October, compared to the 2008 monthly average:





Of note, the low level of internal conflict in the Gaza Strip in October resulted in a significant reduction in internal deaths (17 in September compared to 3 in October), while the number of deaths due to internal conflict in the West Bank remained the same (one death in both September and October).

## **Hebron: increased concern over violation of detainees' rights following a wave of PA arrests**

During October, Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces arrested a total of 95 Palestinians suspected of links with Hamas in the Hebron governorate. Some of these arrests were conducted during the last week of the month, following the deployment throughout the governorate of 550 additional members of the security forces. The deployment took place in coordination with the Israeli authorities. The arrest campaign gained momentum in the aftermath of the discovery of a chemical laboratory and a tunnel in Hebron City.

This wave of arrests has raised the level of concern over possible violations of detainees' rights, following numerous complaints submitted to the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR)<sup>1</sup>. According to the complaints, most detainees were not informed of the reason for the arrest, were denied access to defense lawyers and not allowed to have family visits for an initial period of 13 days. Moreover, some of the complaints indicated that interrogations of detainees involved some form of ill-treatment. ICHR has initiated investigations into these allegations.

## **Child protection**

In October, a 17-year-old child was shot and killed in Jalazun Refugee Camp by the IDF in the West Bank and 16 other children were injured in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in incidents related to the conflict with Israel. Eighty (80) Palestinian children were killed throughout 2008, including 11 in the West Bank and 69 in the Gaza Strip. Injuries to children included

- a 14-year-old child attacked by Israeli settlers when he tried to stop them from taking olives from trees inside his father's land (Hebron);
- four children injured in separate incidents by rubber-coated metal bullets fired by the Israeli military in Bil'in and Ni'lin villages (Ramallah);
- three children suffering asphyxia from tear gas inhalation during anti-Barrier demonstrations in Ni'lin and Bili'n villages (Ramallah);
- two children injured by Israeli settlers in Nablus and in H2 area of Hebron City;
- three children beaten by the IDF in Bethlehem;
- one child injured by live ammunition fired by the IDF in

a military operation in Tubas (Jenin)

- one child injured as a result of falling from a tree when hit with a gas canister fired by the IDF in Nilin village;
- a 16-year-old girl from Khuza'a town in Gaza injured inside her classroom, when the IDF fired live ammunition towards Palestinian farmers.

In addition, a 17-year-old child was killed in Khan Younis governorate by live ammunition fired in the air by a group of Hamas supporters to disperse children, who threw stones at them.

The demolition of 28 inhabited structures out of 42 Palestinian-owned structures resulted in the displacement of 81 children in Hebron and Ramallah governorates, including a one-week-old baby girl.

## **Settlers' violence against Palestinians and attacks on IDF soldiers as outpost dismantled**

The IDF's dismantlement of a settlement outpost in Hebron spurred a wave of violent attacks targeting Palestinians in October. On 26 October, the IDF and Border Police removed the "Federman Farm" outpost, south of the settlement of Harsina, next to Hebron City. Following the removal, Israeli settlers living in the Al Rajabi settlement in the H2 area of the city slashed the tires of 22 Palestinian cars parked in the vicinity of the settlement, and removed twenty gravestones from the nearby Al Ras Cemetery. In addition, Israeli settlers from Harsina, tore down an approximately one kilometre stretch of the security fence surrounding the settlement, while trying to reach a nearby Palestinian house; failing to reach the house, they attacked it with rocks for two hours.

Within days, settlers from Harsina and their supporters twice re-established the outpost. Clashes between the settlers and Israeli security forces during the removal of the newly constructed structures resulted in the injury of eight policemen and the arrest of seven settlers (five female and two male). Again, Palestinians became the target of settler fury, as masked settlers attacked two Palestinian homes in the area, leading to the injury of three journalists, a 95-year-old woman and three Palestinians living in one of the homes, along with damage to the homes. The fence surrounding the settlement that was torn down by the settlers during the initial demolition made settler access to the Palestinian homes easier.

Underscoring the absence of effective law enforcement against settlers, Israeli media reports indicate that IDF soldiers have been newly ordered to take firm action against settlers carrying out attacks<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, in response to attacks on soldiers, the Israeli Defense Minister reportedly intends to cut some services to outposts, though not water, electricity or security services<sup>3</sup>.



These events come in the context of a reported increase in settler attacks of IDF soldiers and a rise in settler violence against Palestinians. Settler-related incidents doubled in October, 50 compared to 24 in September. Settler-related incidents recorded by OCHA and related casualties during the first ten months of 2008 surpass the total recorded in each of the preceding two years: 392 incidents in 2008, compared to 291 in 2007 and 235 in 2006.

## Wave of attacks affected East Jerusalem Palestinians

Several attacks by Israelis on Palestinians and their property in East Jerusalem were reported in October, most of them over the course of the Jewish holidays. Incidents included various attempts by Israelis to break into Al Aqsa mosque compound, one of which involved the forcible entry of approximately 100 Israelis under the protection of Israeli security forces into the mosque area, where they prayed and walked around compound premises. During these incidents, three Islamic Waqf guards were physically assaulted and two others were arrested by Israeli security forces. In another two incidents on 9 October, seven Palestinians were injured after being attacked by Ultra-Orthodox Jews; six were physically assaulted and the seventh, a Palestinian working for the Jerusalem Municipality, was hospitalized after his truck was stoned in West Jerusalem.

Other incidents reported in October involved attempts to take over land in East Jerusalem: In the early morning hours on 7 October, tens of Israeli settlers arrived at Ras Shehada area in the northern part of the city and attempted to take over ten dunums of land, reportedly belonging to Palestinian families living there. The Israeli settlers ploughed the land and planted olive trees in an attempt to claim ownership and establish a new outpost. Later on, Palestinian residents arrived at the land and uprooted the settlers' plants. On 12 October, Israeli settlers opened a new synagogue in AlWad Street in the Old City, close to Al Aqsa mosque, on land seized from the Islamic Waqf. Clashes erupted between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, who set up checkpoints around the Old City to prevent Palestinians from reaching the site. No injuries or arrests were reported.

## IDF resumes demolitions of inhabited Palestinian-owned structures in Area C: 142 people, including 81 children, directly affected

Towards the end of October, the Israeli authorities resumed demolitions of Palestinian inhabited structures located in Area C of the West Bank, due to lack of building permits. These were the first demolitions of inhabited Area C structures since the beginning of April 2008: demolitions in August and September 2008 affected 36 uninhabited structures<sup>4</sup> and 29 commercial stands. Demolitions of

structures in East Jerusalem have continued throughout the period. The October demolitions targeted 42 Palestinian-owned structures belonging to Bedouin communities and directly affected 142 people, including 81 children.

On 29 October, the Israeli authorities demolished six structures, five of which were residential dwellings, in the Bedouin community of Um Al Kheir, located in the vicinity of Karmel settlement in south Hebron, due to the lack of permits. This incident, occurring eight months after the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) had issued demolition orders against these structures, resulted in the displacement of 45 people, including 30 children (including a one-week-old infant), from their permanent place of residence.

The following day, 30 October, another 36 structures, including 23 residential dwellings, were demolished by the Israeli authorities in the Bedouin community of Mughayir Al Dir in Ramallah governorate<sup>5</sup>. These structures were the seasonal dwellings of 97 people, including 51 children, who lived there between April and October, while during the winter season they usually relocate to Al Mu'arrajat area. The demolished dwellings were located in an area declared by the IDF as a "closed military zone", next to an Israeli settlement outpost (known as "Mitzpe Dany"), which is located in the vicinity of Ma'ale Mikhmas settlement and is considered illegal by the Israeli authorities (See map below). As a result, the ICA issued 'evacuation' orders on 22 September 2008 against the residents of the structures. The residents subsequently petitioned the Israeli High Court of Justice against the orders; however, the demolitions took place before the first hearing scheduled by the Court on 2 November took place.

This development renews concerns over the fate of more than 3,000 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C that have pending demolition orders that can be executed at any time.

In a statement reacting to the demolitions, the UN Special Coordinator, Robert Serry, said he "is alarmed at the recent resumption of house demolitions by Israel in the West Bank", and called on Israel "to adhere to its commitments by reinstating a moratorium on house demolitions and protecting vulnerable civilians from displacement and loss of livelihoods".



Map: Mughayir Al Dir demolition site. Google Earth.



## New reports addressing impact of Israeli restrictions on Area C

During October, two comprehensive reports were published addressing different aspects of Israeli restrictions on land use in Area C of the West Bank; one by the Israeli NGO 'Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights' and the other by the World Bank.

Bimkom's report focuses on the planning policies of the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) regarding Palestinian villages located entirely or partially in Area C<sup>6</sup>. According to the report, the ICA restricts Palestinian building in most Area C communities based on the regulations of outdated and inappropriate plans issued in the 1940s during the British Mandate. While the ICA has issued in the last few years new "Outline Plans" to several communities, which ostensibly should facilitate the approval of construction permits, the effect of these plans is to restrict the spatial expansion of Palestinian construction as much as possible, according to Bimkom. The report notes that, since obtaining a building permit for construction in Area C is virtually impossible, Palestinians are forced to build without permits, in spite of the threat of demolition.

According to the World Bank, the land-use restrictions described above have a significant economic impact on Palestinians, not only on the small communities located in Area C, but also on Areas A and B, where most of the Palestinian population of the West Bank resides<sup>7</sup>. Among other phenomena, the World Bank points to the fact that these restrictions have created an artificial land shortage, resulting in a distortion of land markets; as Area C became largely inaccessible or not desirable for investment, land prices in Areas A and B have increased and, in certain towns, are cost-prohibitive, thus severely inhibiting urban and industrial development.

## Access and Movement

### Gaza: sharp decline in imports from Israel

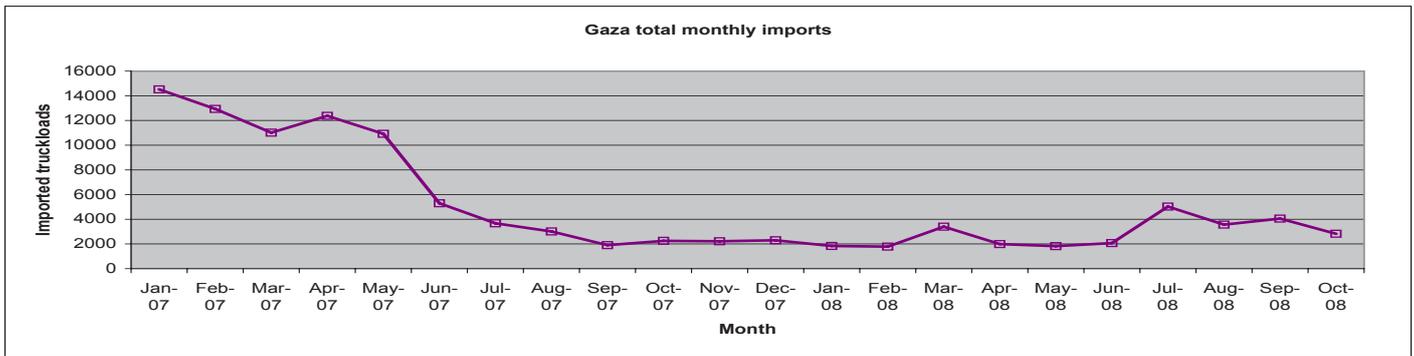
There was a 30% decline in the number of truckloads entering Gaza in October through the commercial crossings with Israel, compared to September (2,823 vs. 4,069), partially due to the closure of the crossings during the Jewish holidays. The types of commodities allowed to enter through these crossings continued to be determined by Israel, rather than by market demand. Over half of all imported truckloads contained food supplies (54%) and another 20% gravel, the latter being of little benefit without adequate quantities of complementary building materials. October's imports represented only 21% of the December 2005 level (13,430 truckloads), that is prior to the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, and 26% of the May 2007 level, immediately before the Hamas take-over of the Gaza Strip.

Since the beginning of the truce on 19 June, there has been an expansion in the types of goods allowed entry, including, inter alia, cement, clothes, plastic pipes and shoes. However, the limited quantities, combined with the lack of other essential items, precluded any significant impact on the economy and on services. The Palestine Trade Center (Paltrade) estimated that Gaza needs a minimum of 850 truckloads of market-triggered imports per day to start any sort of economical revival, far above actual amounts (155 in August, 176 in September and 123 in October). Exports from Gaza continued to be totally barred since February 2008. The Palestinian Federation of Industries (PFI) estimated that as a result of import restrictions and the inability to export, only 23 of the 3,900 industries in Gaza are operating, six of which produce wheat flour, one clothing, and the remainder work in food processing.

The economic situation has been compounded by the limited amount of currency, particularly Israeli shekels needed for day-to-day transactions, allowed into Gaza. According to a World Bank estimate, banking activity has dropped from 40% of total Palestinian banking, to about 7% since the commencement of the closure in June 2007. The lack of currency has been an ongoing issue since some Israeli banks cut ties with Gaza as part of the economic sanctions imposed by Israel after the Hamas takeover.

Restrictions on import of fuels continued during October, with a decline of 40% and 12% in the amounts of diesel and cooking gas, respectively, and no change regarding petrol and industrial fuel, compared to September. On average, only 17% of petrol of the amount supplied before the blockade, 41% of diesel, 43% of cooking gas and 72% of industrial gas for the power plant were received.

Due to the limited supplies of industrial fuel, the amount of electricity generated by the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) continued to be below the demand. Israel currently allows 2.5 million litres on average of industrial fuel for the plant per week, while estimated weekly requirements are 3.15 million litres. As a result, the GPP could only generate 65MW, considerably below its actual capacity of 80MW, which added to the amount received from the Israeli Electricity Company (120MW) and Egypt (17MW) gives only 202MW of the estimated 240MW need. Furthermore, due to the shortage of basic electrical items including transformers, cables and fuses, Gaza Power Generating Company (GPGC), which is responsible for the distribution of electricity, reported that the company is having difficulty maintaining output. With the upcoming rainy season, demand on power is expected to increase and lead to longer power-cuts. This will also affect the provision of water, wastewater management and sanitation services, along with hospitals, schools and other basic services.



## Most Gazans still denied external access; urgent medical cases further delayed due to the Gaza-Ramallah rift

No improvement can be reported for October regarding movement of people through Gaza's borders with Israel and Egypt. Erez Crossing, the only one connecting Gaza with the West Bank via Israel, was open on 23 days in October; however, it remained inaccessible for the large majority of the population. Some 2,000 Palestinians were allowed passage through Erez during the month, 650 of whom were patients and their accompaniers referred to medical treatment outside Gaza and 260 were senior businessmen with special permits.

The offices of the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) and the Directorate of Coordination and Liaison (DCL) have remained officially closed since the beginning of the health sector strike on 30 August. However, referral documents and application for permits for urgent/ life saving cases have been processed by the directors of RAD and DCL from home -- mainly oncology, cardiology, pediatrics and ophthalmology cases. Even this precarious system was suspended entirely on 9 October, following the physical closure of RAD offices by the Hamas authorities leaving its director unable to retrieve the required documents from the office. On 15 October, following the intervention of the Ramallah Minister of Health, the directors of the RAD and the DCL were allowed to resume work. Applications to enter Israel for medical treatment were submitted for 460 patients during October, half the amount submitted in August (874) and slightly higher than September applications (348). Of these, the Israeli authorities approved only 355 (77%) applications. 105 (23%) were denied or delayed. The number of patients that actually crossed Erez in October (343) was 39% lower than during August (560) and 3% higher than during September (334).

Rafah Crossing was open in both directions on two days during the month and partially open on eight other days to allow medical cases and pilgrims to return to Gaza. A total of 22 Palestinians crossed to Egypt in October, compared to 2,676 who crossed in September, and 1,040 pilgrims and medical cases returned to Gaza, compared to 781 in September.

In addition, thousands of Gazans are affected by the

shortage of new blank passports since the Hamas takeover in June 2007. Since the beginning of 2008, Gaza has received only 15,600 new blank passports from Ramallah. However, in total, 20,000 new passports are required to deal with the backlog of requests, 2,500 of which are for urgent humanitarian cases. In mid-August President Abbas ordered new passports to be sent urgently to Gaza, however, as of the end of October no passport has yet arrived.

## Gaza-Egypt border: tunnels continue providing relief at the expense of more casualties

As a result of the ongoing restrictions on the import of goods through the official Gaza crossings (Karni, Sufa, Kerem Shalom and Rafah), tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border continue to proliferate. Over the last year, hundreds of recently-opened tunnels have become a lifeline for the population. Items imported through the tunnels include, inter alia, sheep and calves, mechanical spare parts, foodstuff and other basics, according to media sources. In addition, since the beginning of September 2008, the tunnels have been increasingly used to import fuels via pipelines. Various sources suggested that up to 100,000 litres of diesel and 50,000 litres of petrol were transferred each day during October into Gaza. Some Gaza's fuel stations sell both Israeli and Egyptian fuel, with the latter sold at lower prices (Egyptian diesel costs 4.8 NIS/lit, while Israeli diesel costs 5.75 NIS/lit). Against this background, the diesel rationing system implemented by the Hamas authorities in April 08 was suspended on 25 September, as more fuel came from Egypt. By contrast, the petrol rationing system remains in place and severe shortage of cooking gas.

While the proliferation of tunnels brings some respite to the population and benefit to the new emerging "economical" elite, it should not overshadow the need to re-open the regular crossings. In particular, they are dangerous and at times, result in deaths. During October, eight Palestinians were killed in tunnel-related incidents: two when a fire broke out in a tunnel reportedly transporting fuel; two when a gas cylinder being transported through a tunnel exploded; one after being electrocuted while digging a tunnel; and three as a result of tunnel collapses. These incidents bring the total number of fatalities since the beginning of the year to around fifty. At the end of September, the Hamas authorities announced a list of conditions to protect tunnel labourers,



including fixed compensation prices for the families of those killed in tunnels, and a new licensing scheme. All tunnels need to be licensed to operate and there is a set fee for digging and operating a tunnel. In the meantime, Egyptian security forces continued to close and destroy tunnels, with six of them reportedly destroyed during October.

In spite of the immediate relief it provides, the commercial activity through the tunnels is not likely to reactivate the Gazan economy. It is not a substitute for the re-opening of the border crossings with Israel.

## **West Bank: Access to agricultural land - Impediments during the olive harvest in the West Bank**

This year's olive harvest began officially on 10 October and is expected to be a peak, high-yield harvest. As in previous years, the work at olive groves located in the vicinity of some Israeli settlements and outposts has been affected by acts of provocation and physical violence from Israeli settlers that occurred despite the deployment of the IDF and international and Israeli solidarity groups at such friction points for designated periods. Also of concern is the limited access at olive groves isolated between the Barrier and the Green Line. An OCHA/UNRWA survey found in the north that 80% of people who has to go to farm land have not received permits from the Israeli authorities.

In the Hebron district, where the Barrier gates only open during the olive season, the start of the season was postponed twice until 22 October. Farmers experienced long delays and harsh restrictions applying to vehicles, inter alia, due to the limited allocation of IDF personnel to operate the gates. In the Jerusalem and Ramallah districts, Barrier gates opened Sunday to Thursday and remain closed during the weekends, forcing Palestinians with regular jobs to take time off. Moreover, the gates in the Jerusalem district opened only in the morning and late afternoon preventing school children from assisting with the olive harvest during the afternoon.

This year, the IDF has taken significant steps to improve coordination of the olive harvest. In the northern West Bank, where the permit and gate regime has been operational since 2003, Palestinian access to agricultural land isolated by the Barrier severely restricted. This year, however, the IDF has announced the allocation of 3,000 extra permits for the olive harvest, including to those normally precluded because of security records, although proof of land ownership is still required (implementation is being monitored)<sup>8</sup>. Reports indicate that the gates are generally opening according to schedule, including those which only open during the olive season. In the Bethlehem district, Barrier gates providing access to areas that were annexed to Israel in 1967 (within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem) were opened for the first time this olive harvest.

Various incidents involving settler violence against harvesters were reported throughout the West Bank. In the north, friction was particularly high around Qedumim, Elon Moreh, Yitzhar and Shilo settlements and Shevut Ami and Havat Gilad outposts, while in the south this occurred in the vicinity of Tel Rumeida (in the Israeli controlled area of Hebron City), Kiryat Arba' and Otni'el settlements, as well as in the Palestinian villages of Nahhalin and Tuqu.

## **Access to East Jerusalem:**

### **Further restrictions on access of patients and medical staff to East Jerusalem hospitals**

Throughout the month, the Israeli authorities have been barring medical staff and patients holding West Bank IDs with valid permits from accessing East Jerusalem hospitals through the vehicular checkpoints located at two main routes into the city (Hizma and Az-Zayyem checkpoints). This prohibition, which has been implemented since July 2008, forces these people to use instead one of the two "pedestrian" checkpoints/terminals (Qalandiya and Olive checkpoints), like the rest of Palestinians holding West Bank IDs and permits.

The fact that the two pedestrian checkpoints, which medical staff and patients are now forced to use, are frequently crowded and much more time consuming (an estimated delay of 90-120 minutes), has had a negative impact in the provision of health care to the Palestinian population: seriously ill patients, including diabetic, cancer and cardiac patients, have now to stand at long queues, cross by foot and seek transportation at the other side of the checkpoint; doctors and nurses have been reportedly arriving late at work thus disrupting the timely delivery of medical treatment.

However, some patients and medical staff have been allowed through one of the two restricted vehicular checkpoints on an exceptional basis, following the intervention of the Health Coordinator of the Israeli Civil Administration. The Palestinian Minister of Health has contacted his Israeli counterpart to intervene urgently in this matter in order to restore the previous arrangement.

### **Palestinian access further affected during Jewish holidays**

Due to the Jewish holidays in October - New Year, Yom Kippur and Sukkot - the Israeli authorities imposed 12 days of full closure on the West Bank. Palestinians with West Bank IDs holding valid Israeli-issued entry permits were denied access to East Jerusalem and Israel. Among those most affected were Palestinian workers employed inside Israel and paid on a daily basis, who were unable to access their jobs on some working days.

The IDF imposed additional movement restrictions in and around Hebron City during this period. The IDF closed



the gate on the route that connects Hebron City to Road 35 (Ras Al Jora junction), which serves commercial traffic between the city and Tarqumiya commercial terminal on the 12 days. This gate was opened in August as part of a series of measures aimed at easing Palestinian movement in the West Bank. In addition, the IDF prevented the access of Palestinian worshippers to the Ibrahimi Mosque in the Israeli controlled area of Hebron City (H2) on three days to allow access to a large number of Jewish worshippers. Finally, during the Sukkot holiday, the IDF declared the area adjacent to Qurtuba Girls' School a "closed military zone", denying access of the students and their companions from the World Council of Churches.

In the northern West Bank, on 8 and 9 October, during the Yom Kippur holiday, the IDF closed Tayasir and Al Hamra checkpoints for 27 hours, preventing Palestinians from entering and exiting the northern Jordan Valley area.

## **Access out of the West Bank: New procedure affecting West Bank Palestinians prohibited from travelling abroad**

In a decision issued on 28 October, the Israeli High Court of Justice gave the IDF 90 days "to test" an amendment to the procedure applying to West Bank Palestinians prohibited from travelling abroad after being branded a "security threat" by the Israel Security Agency ("Shabak"). The State Attorney informed the Court that about one percent of the Palestinian population (around 20,000) in the West Bank currently falls within this definition.

The decision was issued in the framework of a petition submitted two years ago by three Israeli human right groups<sup>9</sup> against the IDF practice, by which, Palestinians declared security threats would learn that they are prohibited from travelling only once they had reached Allenby Bridge on the day of travel and were denied any possibility to appeal the prohibition. In January 2008, following the petition, the IDF introduced new regulations allowing Palestinians to ask the Israeli DCL in advance in order to find out if they are prohibited from traveling and receive a reply to their inquiry within six weeks. If such a prohibition indeed exists, the Palestinian is entitled to request that the IDF review the situation and reply within another six weeks. Beyond this, there is no mechanism within this procedure for appealing the decision or having a hearing to challenge the evidence against him/her. The amendment about to be tested affects primarily those for whom no prohibition applies, who, from now on, will be entitled to receive an answer immediately after submitting their application. Following the initial enquiry, the files of those defined as security threats will be reviewed by the relevant authorities and an answer given within six weeks.

According to the petitioners, both the regulations introduced in January and the recent amendment are blatantly illegal:

instead of the IDF notifying on its own initiative every person regarding whom a travel prohibition is being considered, as required by basic rules of fair administration, and giving that person the opportunity to challenge the prohibition, the IDF places the bureaucratic burden of checking his/her status on the individual and continues to deny him/her the right to a fair hearing.

## **Health**

### **Health strike in Gaza continued**

The health strike that started on 30 August 2008 was extended until the end of the calendar year. During October, 25% of health personnel working at the Ministry of Health (MoH) hospitals were still on strike, as compared to 28% in September. This drop resulted from the decline in the proportion of striking doctors by 28% during the first week of October. The proportion of striking nurses (24%) and other professionals remained the same as in September. All the MoH hospitals operated at full capacity and provided all services, including elective surgery; however, the quality and timeliness of services remains of concern.

At the primary health care (PHC) clinics, no change was detected either in the proportion of professionals abiding by the strike or the delivery of services. Between 36 and 40 percent of their personnel adhered to the strike. Two PHC facilities in North Gaza and Gaza districts have remained close, whilst the rest of PHC centers and community mental health centers functioned at full capacity.

The political divide compounded by the blockade and the suspension of developmental projects has had a destructive impact on the health systems in Gaza. Addressing the negative impact of these factors will require sustained early recovery/ development work with the MoH. Preliminary information indicates that since the beginning of the strike in the health sector, there was a significant drop, inter alia, in the overall number of patients admitted to hospitals, to outpatient's clinics, and those who underwent elective surgery.

### **Shortage of drugs and medical supplies in Central Drug Stores in Gaza**

In October, the MoH in Ramallah made a decision to resume coordination for the entry of drugs into Gaza. However, no shipment of pharmaceutical has been delivered yet from the Central Drug Stores in Ramallah to Gaza, reportedly due to logistical impediments. Since the beginning of September, however, the CDS in Gaza has received two shipments delivered by WHO.

As a result of the lack of new drug deliveries, there was a significant increase in the number essential drug items at zero level at the CDS in the Gaza Strip; from 63 out of 473 items in mid-September (15%) to 94 (23%) in mid-



October. Around 48 (12%) drug items were with less than three months stock, a similar level to mid September. In addition, there were 128 out of 596 medical supplies at zero level (22%).

In the West Bank, the MoH reported that during October 65 drug items were out of stock. The MoH is bringing forward deliveries of additional drug items purchased in a recent procurement exercise. Care International supplied the Ministry with US\$814,000 worth of disposables, through the Emergency Medical Assistance Program (EMAP) project funded by USAID, however, during October the MoH reported that 100 disposables were out of stock.

## Water and Sanitation

### Gaza: supply of water and sanitation undermined due to the ongoing Gaza-Ramallah conflict

The ongoing lack of coordination between the PWA (Palestinian Water Authority) in Ramallah and the MoA (Ministry of Agriculture) in the Gaza Strip during October continued to impact the supply of water and sanitation in the Gaza Strip. The CMWU (Coastal Municipalities Water Utility) has not received diesel since August 2008 (usually 100-150,000 litres a month), which is needed to operate its water wells, wastewater pumping stations and wastewater suction trucks. Although the electricity supply was better throughout October, in some areas, particularly Rafah, which experiences under-voltage, fuel remains essential for the adequate functioning of the system. The CMWU reported that 50% of water wells were out of fuel and could operate only if there was an electricity supply.

In addition to water supply, the lack of fuel is affecting sewage pumping stations, which rely on electricity and backup generators to operate to prevent flooding. Following heavy rains on 27-28 October, the CMWU appealed for emergency fuel supplies as sewage pools were at risk of overflowing and some areas reported flash floods and house-flooding. In response, UNRWA donated 32,500 litres of fuel for emergency use, which brings the amount of diesel donated by UNRWA to the CMWU since the dispute began to 77,500 litres. Talks continued to resolve the situation, however as of the end of October, the issue was still unresolved and with the onset of the rains and subsequent flooding, the issue remains of utmost importance.

## Socioeconomic

### Increase in the amount of expired food items seized in the West Bank

In October, the Palestinian Ministry of National Economics (MoNA) reported an increase in the quantities of expired food items seized in the markets of the West Bank in September by around 96% compared to August 2008

(271 vs 138 tonnes)<sup>10</sup>. Around 95% of the items were intended for human consumption. Palestinian localities with close proximity to Israeli terminals and settlements were particularly affected by this phenomenon. In one single raid, the Consumer Protection Department of MoNA located and confiscated 150 tonnes of expired food items in Hebron on their way to the markets of Ramallah; the largest quantity ever seized in the oPt, reportedly originating from Israel and the Israeli settlements.

The declining economic conditions and purchasing power<sup>11</sup> are a major cause behind the illegal trade in expired food and medicine items. A parliamentary working group has been set up by the Palestinian Legislative Council to develop protection measures for consumers against illegal trading of expired food and medicine and follow up on taking actions against traders involved<sup>12</sup>. The potential health implications are yet hard to be identified.

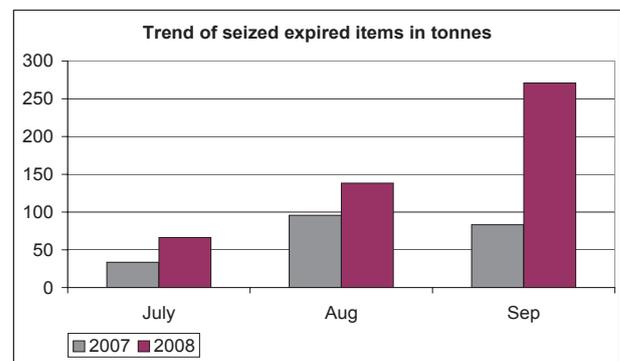


Chart3: Seized expired items in tonnes

## Education

### Education strike in Gaza continues

The teacher strikes, which began on 24 August 2008, were extended until the end of the calendar year. The strike has affected 381 PA schools (total student population 250,000), employing 10,000 teachers in the Gaza Strip. Initially more than 60% of teachers at PA schools adhered to the strike call however throughout October the number on strike was estimated to be approximately 52% (UNICEF). Pupil attendance has remained constant throughout the strike period, as the 6,000 Hamas appointed replacement teachers continued to conduct lessons, though some disruption to schedules. Some schools continued to lack replacement for math and science teachers and thus teachers were shared between classes, resulting in fewer hours of instruction for some pupils.

The quality of education continued to be of concern. In early October, the MoEHE (Ministry of Education and Higher Education) in Gaza conducted an eight-day training programme of forty hours for the newly recruited teachers. The programme mainly focused on teaching methodology. In addition, UNICEF has increased its remedial education



programmes, administered through NGO partners. It is running pre- and after school classes in all subjects, especially math and Arabic. On 13 October, the Education Ministry affiliated to the Hamas authorities gave instructions to education directorates that as of 14 October, no striking school teachers or principals would be allowed to return to schools.

## Funding

### HRF and CAP

During 2008, the HRF (Humanitarian Response Fund) targeted emergency projects that responded to urgent humanitarian needs of thousands of Palestinians. However, two recent worthy and approved projects related to health in Gaza were put on hold due to the depletion of funds. In addition, the HRF could not respond to recent appeals to assist communities in the Jordan Valley, whose livelihoods were severely affected following heavy rains.

Given the ongoing and emerging needs and to ensure timely responses to assist growing numbers of people in dire need, OCHA oPt, as manager of the fund and on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator, is seeking to secure additional contributions to the HRF, with a funding target of \$US5-8million. The HRF has lately registered two funding pledges from Spain and Norway.

Recently, it was possible to respond to an emergency in the Gaza Strip through the HRF, to cover the maintenance of a sewage pumping facility in Jabalia Refugee Camp, which was destroyed following the flooding in late October.

Humanitarian projects worth of around US\$313 million in the oPt were funded through the CAP (Consolidated Appeals Process) as of mid-November 2008, constituting 73% of the total CAP amount.

## End Notes

1. Formerly the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens Rights.
2. See Yossi Yehoshua, *Police in Army Uniform*, Yediot Ahronoth, 30 October 2008, p. 6.
3. See Amos Harel, *Barak cuts services to outposts in response to settler violence*, 30 October 2008.
4. While uninhabited at the time of demolition, 17 of these structures served as winter residences.
5. Mughayir al Dir community existed before 1967 in a location east of its current one. Following 1967, the IDF declared large parts of the area as a closed military area and relocated the community westwards. In 1982, the IDF pushed the community again further to the west. In 1986, the Israeli Civil Administration built a school (a one-room cement block structure) at their current location and connected the community to water network.
6. Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights, *The Prohibited Zone, Israeli Planning Policy in the Palestinian Villages in Area C*, October 2008.

7. The World Bank, *The Economic Effects of Restricted Access to Land in the West Bank*, October 2008.
8. See UNOCHA-UNRWA: *The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier: Four Years after the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Barrier*, July 2008. [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/Barrier\\_Report\\_July\\_2008.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/Barrier_Report_July_2008.pdf)
9. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, *Hamoked - Center for the Defense of the Individual, and Physicians for Human Rights*.
10. Facts and figures are from interview with MoNE representative.
11. Food consumer price index (CPI) increased by 2.8% in September compared to August 2008. The World Bank reported an increase in CPI by 21.4% in the period between June 2007 and June 2008
12. "PLC urges action against expired food and meds", *Maan News Agency*, 29.10.08, <http://www.maannews.net/en/index.php?opr=ShowDetails&ID=32868>.

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, ACPP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

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