



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

3 - 9 February 2010

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 9 February

10 February:

- Clashes erupted between Palestinian armed groups and Israeli forces in the area of Johr El-Dik in central Gaza, resulting in the killing of an armed Palestinian, and the injury of three female students on their way to school (ages six, eight and 18 years old). Several houses were reportedly damaged.
- An Israeli soldier was stabbed and killed by a Palestinian police officer near Tappuah checkpoint, south of Nablus City. Following the incident, the Israeli army raided Al Khuljan village (Jenin), where the perpetrator lives, arrested six of his relatives and notified his family that its home will be demolished.

West Bank

Military activities affecting Palestinians: clashes in Shu'fat refugee camp

Israeli forces, including the Border police, municipal workers and an undercover police unit, carried out a search and arrest operation in Shu'fat refugee camp (East Jerusalem) during the early morning hours of 8 February. During the operation, intense clashes erupted between the Israeli police and Palestinian youth, which lasted for two days. According to the Israeli media, the operation aimed at arresting tax evaders. During the confrontations, Israeli forces fired live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets and sound bombs and Palestinians hurled stones at Israeli forces. As a result, at least 11 Palestinians were injured, including six Palestinian journalists covering the event, four of whom were physically assaulted by the Israeli police and two who were hit by stones. Five Israeli policemen were also injured by stones in the course of the clashes and several shops and vehicles sustained damages.

The number of people arrested and detained by the police remains unconfirmed, ranging between 35 and 100, according to different sources. While the camp lies within the Israeli-declared boundaries of the Jerusalem municipality and a large part of its residents hold Jerusalem IDs, the camp has been severed from the rest of the city by the Barrier, forcing the residents to cross a checkpoint in order to access services and workplaces.

In addition to the arrest operation in Shu'fat camp, Israeli forces conducted 101 search operations inside Palestinian towns and villages, roughly the same as the 2009 weekly average (103); the majority of these took place in the northern West Bank (69).

Also this week, Israeli forces injured eleven other Palestinians in various incidents throughout the West Bank. Among the injuries were two Palestinians injured by rubber-coated metal bullets during the weekly demonstration held by Palestinian residents of Deir Nidham and An Nabi Saleh villages (against the expansion of Hallamish settlement in the Ramallah area) and seven Palestinians, including two boys, wounded in separate incidents involving physical assault by Israeli forces.

Israeli settler-related incidents

Ten settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians were recorded throughout the week, compared to a weekly average of seven incidents during 2009. Two of these incidents resulted in two injuries; a 76 year-old Palestinian man from Wadi Kana (Qalqiliya) was hit by stones thrown by Israeli settlers while working his land; and a 17 year-old boy was shot with live ammunition during clashes between settlers and residents of Iraq Burin village (Nablus). The remaining incidents involved property damage, physical assault (without injury) and trespass of private property.

Also during the week, Israeli settlers from the outposts around the settlement of Shilo installed four mobile homes on a hill next to Jalud village (Nablus), which overlooks an area of 500 dunums of privately-owned Palestinian land. Entry of Palestinian farmers to this area, as well as to thousands of additional dunums of private land surrounding the settlements of Shilo and Eli, is possible only after "prior coordination" with the Israeli military. The establishment of the new outpost has raised concerns about further deterioration in access to this area.

This week, there was one incident that involved Palestinians hurling Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles driving near Al-Lubban al-Gharbi (Ramallah). No injuries or damage to vehicles were reported.

Access and movement update

This week, long queues and delays were experienced at the Qalandiya checkpoint, the only checkpoint that Palestinians with West Bank IDs and valid entry permits are allowed to use to access East Jerusalem through the Barrier from the north. The delays occurred as a result of construction works aimed at expanding the checkpoint. While this expansion may contribute, once complete, to expediting the movement of people through the checkpoint, it is indicative of the entrenched separation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

Also this week, Israeli forces deployed throughout the West Bank a total of 88 "flying" ad-hoc checkpoints, a significant decrease compared to a weekly average of 114 flying checkpoints since the beginning of 2010, but well above the 2009 weekly average of 65.

Gaza Strip

No direct-conflict casualties; access restrictions to fishing areas continue

This week, there were no Palestinian casualties reported in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Since the beginning of 2010, Israeli forces have killed eight Palestinians and injured seven others inside the Gaza Strip¹; no Israeli casualties were reported.

Israeli forces continue to enforce access restrictions on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore, a restriction enforced since January 2009. In one incident off the Beit Lahia (north Gaza) shore on 7 February, Israeli naval vessels opened warning fire towards Palestinian fishing boats, detained four fishermen and confiscated two boats. The fishermen, who reported that they were inside the specified fishing zone at the time of the incident, were released later that day without their boats.

1. The Palestinian fatality reported last week, as well as three of the injuries, occurred as a result of a tunnel collapse and not following an airstrike, as mistakenly reported.

On 8 February, a local committee organized a demonstration in Beit Hanoun into the so called “buffer zone” along the Gaza-Israel border, protesting the access restrictions enforced in this area by the Israeli military. The “buffer” zone, which was originally declared by the Israeli authorities following Israel’s “disengagement” in 2005, was officially expanded from 150m to 300m in May 2009. Israeli forces fired warning shots to disperse the demonstrators, but no injuries were reported.

Palestinian armed factions continued to fire a number of rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military bases, resulting in no injuries or damage to property during the week; one rocket reportedly exploded prematurely and landed in the Gaza Strip, but did not result in casualties or damage. Additionally, one armed group member was killed and another one was injured while allegedly preparing an explosive device, which detonated prematurely. Three civilians received shrapnel wounds.

In two separate incidents, the Egyptian border police located and destroyed three tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. No casualties were reported during the week in tunnel-related incidents.

Deteriorating internal security situation

The week saw a relative deterioration in internal security with several incidents of note; on 4 February, an improvised explosive device detonated near a convoy of four vehicles belonging to the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), while traveling in the northern Gaza Strip. The explosion resulted in damage to a vehicle, but no injuries were reported. The motive behind the incident remains unclear.

In two separate incidents, two Palestinians were injured during the week when unknown gunmen shot a doctor in Gaza City, and abducted, allegedly tortured and shot another Palestinian in Jabaliya refugee camp. In recent weeks, local human rights groups have raised concerns about the noticeable deterioration in the state of security in the Gaza Strip.

Electricity crisis in Gaza continues

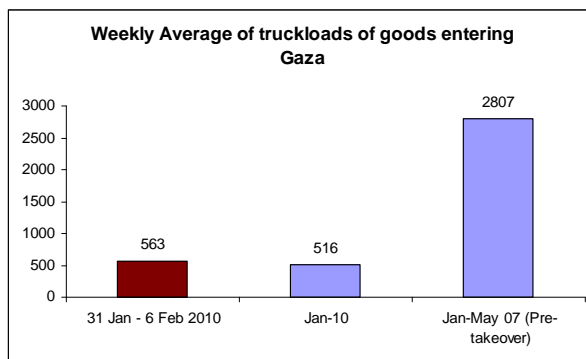
The electricity crisis continues, as power supply has been reduced and remains precarious due to a shortage of funds allocated for the purchase of fuel from Israel and, recently, recurrent technical failures. On two separate occasions during the week, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) reduced its production of electricity from 65 MW (megawatts) to 30 MW; on one such occasion, the GPP completely shut down for a few hours. Such occurrences trigger long rolling blackouts of up to 12 hours throughout the Gaza Strip.

Since the beginning of the year, the quantities of fuel delivered to the power plant have declined from a weekly average of 2.2 to 1.8 million litres. The GPP authority indicated that at least 2.2 million liters of industrial fuel are needed per week to maintain previous production levels of 60-65MW of electricity, which still leaves the majority of the population with power cuts of 6-8 hours, 4-5 days per week. According to GEDCO, the overall supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip stands now at approximately 202 MW (120 MW purchased from Israel, 65 MW produced by the GPP and 17 MW delivered by Egypt), some 70 percent of the estimated electricity demand (280 MW).

Limited shipments of exports and entry of glass continue

Despite the continued prohibition on exports, nine truckloads of cut flowers and strawberries exited Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing this week. Since 10 December 2009, 56 truckloads have exited

Gaza; 25 truckloads of cut flowers (3.3 million stems) and 31 truckloads of strawberries (50 tonnes). Prior to this, there had been no exports from Gaza since 27 April 2009. The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) indicated that 300 tonnes of strawberries and 30 million cut flowers are expected to be exported during this season (ending on 15 February for strawberries and 20 May 2010 for cut flowers).



The entry of truckloads carrying glass also continued during the week. Since 29 December 2009, a total of 81 truckloads carrying 68,576 sheets have been allowed entry. Also, 12 truckloads of wooden poles and three others carrying fuel tankers for the private sector were allowed entry. One truckload of fuel pipes for upgrading the fuel pipelines at Kerem Shalom was also allowed into Gaza. Entry of other major essential goods remains either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry entirely.

Cooking gas rationing continues (31 Jan - 6 Feb)

This week, cooking gas imports increased by around 36 percent compared to last week (647 tonnes vs. 477 tonnes), reaching a new high of nearly 180 tonnes on one a day -- the largest amount transferred in one day via Kerem Shalom since the installation of fuel pipelines at this crossing in September 2009. The increased import of cooking gas this week, however, represents only 46 percent of the weekly needs (1,400 tonnes) of gas, as estimated by the Gas Station Owners Association (GSOA). GSOA also indicates that at least 2,000 tonnes of cooking gas needs to be transferred into Gaza, in addition, to an uninterrupted transfer of at least 250 tonnes each day, to overcome the ongoing shortfall. Since November 2009, the quantities of gas available at the Palestinian General Petroleum Corporation (PPC) are being distributed to bakeries and hospitals first, as a priority, due to ongoing shortfalls. The current crisis has been triggered by the gradual shutdown of the Nahal Oz fuel crossing (finally closed at the beginning of this year) and the alternative channeling of all fuel imports to the Kerem Shalom Crossing, which has a significantly smaller capacity.