



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS WEEKLY REPORT

14-20 DECEMBER 2011

Key issues

- Four places of worship, and other Palestinian properties, were targeted in multiple “price tag” settler attacks. Although “extraordinary” law enforcement measures were announced by the Israeli authorities, the key challenge remains their implementation on the ground.
- This week, at least seven shooting incidents at Palestinian fishermen by the Israeli navy, inside the three nautical miles fishing restriction imposed by Israel, were recorded. Access restrictions to the sea have had a devastating impact on Gaza’s fishing sector.

WEST BANK

Dozens injured in clashes with Israeli forces; ‘price tag’ settler attacks target places of worship

On 18 December, 550 Palestinian prisoners were released as part of a prisoner exchange agreement between Israel and Hamas. The sentences of almost two-thirds of the prisoners were due by the end of 2012, including around 100 prisoners due for release in the coming month, as reported by human rights groups.

During the release of the prisoners, clashes broke out between Israeli forces and family members of prisoners outside of the Ofer prison, south of Ramallah. At least 40 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were injured as a result.

Most other Palestinian injuries occurred in weekly demonstrations protesting access restrictions, Barrier construction and settlement expansion. These included 14 injured in Kafr Qaddum village (Qalqiliya), four in An Nabi Saleh village (Ramallah) and one (a 16-year-old child) in Qalandiya village (Jerusalem). Another 16-year-old child was physically assaulted by Israeli forces in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Palestinian casualties by Israeli forces:

Killed this week: 0

Killed in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 10 vs. 13

Injured this week: at least 60; 19 in a demonstration

Of whom were children: 3

Injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 1438 vs. 1,098

Search-and-arrest operations: 70

Weekly average since the beginning of the year: 82

Ten settler attacks leading to Palestinian injuries or damage to Palestinian-owned property were documented compared to a weekly average of eight incidents for the rest of 2011. At least seven of these attacks took place in the context of the so-called “price tag” strategy, by which Israeli settlers attempt to deter the Israeli authorities from removing unauthorized settlement outposts.

Three of the attacks targeted mosques and resulted in significant damage. Two mosques were set on fire in West Jerusalem and Burqa village (Ramallah), and a third was vandalized in Bani Na’im village (Hebron). Since the beginning of the 2011, a total of ten mosques have been targeted by settlers, up from six in 2010 and one in 2009. Also this week, Israeli settlers briefly took over and vandalized a Greek

Please note that there will be no Protection of Civilians report next week due to the upcoming Christmas holiday. The next report will cover a two-week period.

Orthodox Church northeast of Jericho; later Israeli forces arrived and removed the settlers.

Settlers raided four Palestinian villages ((Bittin (Ramallah), Duma (Nablus), Kifl Haris and Yasuf (Salfit)), setting fire to eight vehicles, and one building (in Bittin). In addition, in an area near Yitzhar settlement, settlers cut down 13 olive trees belonging to the Palestinian village of Burin (Nablus).

Finally, clashes erupted between Israeli settlers and Palestinians during a funeral organized by settlers in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2), resulting in the injury of two Palestinians and five settlers.

The lack of adequate law enforcement and the resultant state of impunity are the main factors behind the pervasiveness of settler violence. Following last week's settler attacks against Israeli soldiers and military basis, the Israeli authorities approved a range of "extraordinary measures" to be used against settler suspects and perpetrators. These include, among others, granting soldiers the authority to arrest violent settlers and prosecuting Israeli settlers in military courts. While such measures are widely used when it comes to Palestinian suspects, they have been rarely used against Israeli settlers, though the formal authority to implement such measures has always been in place.

Herding communities in the Jordan Valley at risk of displacement

The Israeli authorities demolished 29 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and East Jerusalem, due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits.

Fifteen structures, including ten tents and five animal shelters, were demolished in the herding community of Fasayil Al-Wusta in the Jordan Valley

Settler-related incidents:

Incidents resulting in Palestinian injuries or property damage:

in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 403 vs. 303

Palestinians injured this week: 2

Palestinians injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 179 vs. 108

Settlers injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 36 vs. 50

area, displacing 32 people, including 25 children, and affecting 30 others. This is the second round of demolitions that the community experiences this year. In June, 100 people in the community were displaced as a result of home demolitions. Another two animal shacks were demolished in the nearby herding community of Fasayil al Fauqa, affecting nine other people.

The majority of the Palestinian population in the Area C sections of the Jordan Valley (16,000), including some 9,300 Bedouin and herders, are at risk of forced eviction and displacement, due to the allocation of their area of residence to Israeli settlement or the Israeli army for training purposes.

In addition, six structures, including three agricultural rooms and three water wells, were demolished in Kafr ad Dik village (Salfit); the livelihoods of 15 families were affected. Also in Area C, the Israeli authorities bulldozed two roads that were built without permits connecting the villages of Huwwara, Beita and Za'tara in the Nablus governorate, affecting the access between those villages for at least 6,000 residents.

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

Demolished this week: 29

Of which residences: 10

Structures demolished in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 571 vs. 412.

People displaced in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 1080 vs. 546.

In East Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities demolished three animal structures in the Palestinian neighborhoods of At-Thuri and Beit Safafa; 29 people, including 20 children were affected. Also in As Suwana neighborhood, the Israeli authorities levelled a playground belonging to Al-Ibrahimieh school and College.

GAZA STRIP

Casualties decline; shootings at fishermen increase

While sporadic shooting incidents by Israeli forces and Palestinian factions continued, the overall level of violence in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel declined in comparison with the previous two weeks.

On 14 December, Israeli forces opened fire at farmers working their land near the fence, injuring one, and forcing the rest to leave the area. Israeli tanks and bulldozers levelled land approximately 200 meters inside the Gaza Strip on two separate occasions. In addition, Israeli forces detained three Palestinians reportedly trying to enter Israel; they are still being held.

During the week the Israeli navy opened fire towards Palestinian fishing boats on seven separate occasions, injuring one fisherman on 16 December. On 18 December, the Israeli marine vessels intercepted two Palestinian fishing boats, arresting four fishermen and confiscating their boats. Three of the Palestinians, including a 16-year-old child, were later released, however their boats remain in Israeli custody.

In the previous week, Israeli forces demarcated the sea areas allowed to Palestinian fishermen – three miles offshore - by placing a number of sea buoys. While the new demarcation can potentially reduce the risk of fishermen being shot at, it also contributes to the entrenchment of the naval blockade, which has severely undermined the livelihoods of thousands of fishermen.

Demolition orders against at least 26 structures, including residences and agricultural structures, were issued in the governorates of Tubas and Qalqiliya, affecting close to 200 people.

Palestinian casualties by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip:

Killed this week: 0

Of whom children:

Killed in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 105 vs. 68

Injured this week: 2

Of whom children: 0

Injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 454 vs. 272

New arrangements at Rafah crossing

Because the number of people registered to exit Gaza into Egypt through the Rafah Crossing has declined, on December 18, the Ministry of Interior in Gaza announced the suspension of the registration requirement until further notice. Since January 2011, travelers have waited a minimum of three weeks to leave Gaza. Despite this new development, access through the crossing remains impeded by reduced working days (six compared to seven days prior to the blockade), and, on occasions, Gazans are denied access by the Egyptian authorities. Since the beginning of 2011, a daily average of 425 travelers have crossed Rafah each way, compared to a daily average of 650 travelers in the first six months of 2006, prior to the partial closure of the crossing.

Critical patients receive supplies enough for a few weeks only

Towards the end of the reporting period, the Ministry of Health (MoH) in the Gaza strip received two urgently needed shipments of filters (approximately 3000 units) for the treatment of patients on kidney dialysis from its counterpart in Ramallah. The supply, however, is only enough

for a few weeks. The shortfall of drugs and medical supplies in Gaza continue to put the lives of thousands of medical cases at risk, including approximately 450 patients on kidney dialysis. According to the MoH in Gaza, the shortages are mainly due to the lack of coordination between the two ministries of health in Gaza and Ramallah, with 25 per cent of items in the essential drugs list, and 20 per cent of items in the essential disposables list, are out of stock in Gaza. No reports of similar shortages in the West Bank.

Exports remain well below pre-blockade levels

For the third consecutive week, limited quantities of agricultural produce were allowed out of Gaza to the outside world. A total of 22 truckloads of agricultural produce, including 19 truckloads of strawberries (around 65 tonnes), one of cut flowers (42,000 stems), one and a half of sweet pepper (8.75 tonnes) and half a truckload of cherry tomato (1.26 tonnes), were allowed to exit via Kerem Shalom Crossing (see comparison with pre-blockade exports in box below).

Movement of goods (Kerem Shalom Crossing):

Imports:

Weekly average of truckloads (TL) entered this week: 1,102

TL carrying food: 40%

Weekly average of TL since the beginning of 2011: 942

Weekly average of TL before the blockade: 2,807

Exports:

Truckloads that left this week: 22

Weekly average since the beginning of 2011: 5

Weekly average before the blockade: 240

Prior to the blockade, imposed in 2007, most exports were designated for the West Bank and Israel markets. However, Gazan exports are currently banned to these two key markets, and as a result, the volume of production and employment in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors has been greatly reduced.

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