



THE HUMANITARIAN MONITOR

DECEMBER 2009

December Overview

As the year of 2009 came to a close, large segments of the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), in particular those living in the Gaza Strip, in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, continued to endure a serious crisis of human dignity.

December marked one year since the start of Israel's "Cast Lead" military offensive on the Gaza Strip, one of the most violent episodes in recent Palestinian history. The operation resulted in the deaths of nearly 1,400 Palestinians and the injury of over 5,400 more as well as the deaths of 13 Israelis and the injury of 512 more. Since the ceasefires implemented on 18 January 2009, 76 additional Palestinians, including four this month, have been killed, along with one Israeli. The "Cast Lead" offensive also resulted in widespread



Due to Israeli restrictions on Gaza exports, the price of local produce has dropped significantly. Gaza city, photo by Patrick Zoll

damage to Palestinian infrastructure and public and private property. The Israeli-imposed blockade, in place since June 2007, continued throughout the year, making attempts to carry out reconstruction activities almost impossible. As of the end of the year, some 20,000 Gazans remain displaced.

ISSUES COVERED THIS MONTH

West Bank, including East Jerusalem: Casualties • Access restrictions to land around settlements challenged • Demolitions and displacement in East Jerusalem and Area C • Sharp increase in East Jerusalem ID revocations in 2008 • Movement developments in the northern West Bank • Ban on Palestinian use of a main road in Ramallah Governorate declared unlawful • Olive harvest concluded, extremely low yield; access to groves behind Barrier insufficient

Gaza Strip: • Four Palestinian civilians killed near the Gaza-Israel border and five in tunnels' incidents • Imports: the blockade continues, albeit with minor improvements • Cooking gas • Industrial fuel: rolling blackouts continue • Water and sanitation • Petrol and diesel • Multiple factors preventing significant agricultural recovery • Medical referral abroad update

oPt-wide issues: Child Protection Box • Israeli High Court of Justice upholds deportation from the West Bank to Gaza • Concerns over new Israeli policy on visas • 2010 Consolidated Appeal launched; Humanitarian Response Fund update

While the blockade remains largely unchanged, two positive, albeit minor, developments occurred in December. First, towards the end of the month, three truckloads of glass per day began entering Gaza. The import of glass, which has been banned since the start of the blockade, was identified as a top priority to address the winter needs of thousands of families living in houses with shattered windows, as a result of the “Cast Lead” offensive. Second, a few truckloads of cut flowers were allowed out of Gaza for export to European markets, with a total of more than 39 million stems of cut flowers scheduled to be exported by May 2010, slightly less than the parallel amount in 2006.

In spite of these developments, the overall situation remains grim. Imports through the crossings during December were five percent below the monthly average since the beginning of 2009 and 81 percent below the monthly average in the first five months of 2007, before the imposition of the blockade. This, along with the near total ban on exports, have prevented any economic reactivation and maintained extreme levels of unemployment, poverty, food insecurity and aid dependency. Moreover, by the beginning of 2010, the number of crossing points for imports to the Gaza Strip had been reduced to one – Kerem Shalom, with the conveyor belt for wheat continuing to operate at Karni crossing. Of concern is the decrease in the amount of cooking gas entering into Gaza as a result of the closure of Nahal Oz crossing and the limited capacity at Kerem Shalom.

In response to the continued blockade, tunnels under the Gaza – Egypt border have flourished and become a lifeline for the population. In spite of the serious risks they pose to those building and working along them – five Palestinians were killed in December alone – their existence provides the population with goods not allowed in through the

official crossings with Israel. Reports about Egyptian measures aimed at shutting down tunnel’s activities have therefore raised significant humanitarian concerns.

In the West Bank, Palestinians continues to face threats to personal security from Israeli soldiers and settlers and widespread restrictions on their ability to move and to access land. While during 2009 the overall number of Palestinian injuries (937) decreased and reached the lowest level since 2005, December 2009 recorded two serious incidents: the killing of an Israeli settler by a Palestinian armed faction, and the subsequent killing of three Palestinians, suspected of responsibility for that attack, by Israeli undercover forces. Also this month, while the number of injuries during anti-Barrier demonstrations remained low, human rights groups drew attention to the rise in arrests of anti-Barrier activists, 34 of whom are currently imprisoned.

Movement between West Bank urban centers improved significantly in 2009, largely as a result of changes at a number of key staffed checkpoints. In contrast to this trend, in December, one key checkpoint in the northern West Bank has been closed for all traffic, reportedly due to road rehabilitation works, disrupting the movement of hundreds of thousands. Also this month, the Israeli High Court of Justice ruled unlawful the Israeli army’s ban on Palestinian use of the West Bank section of a main road in the Ramallah governorate, however, the timing and modality for its implementation remain uncertain.

In spite of some positive developments, in 2009, Area C, which constitutes some 60 percent of the West Bank, remained off-limits for Palestinian use and development. Likewise, Palestinian families continued to face the threat of displacement as a result of eviction or demolition of their homes. While

only four structures were demolished in December, a total of 189 structures were demolished in 2009, displacing 319 Palestinians. A report released in December by OCHA revealed that Palestinian construction is almost completely prohibited in 70 percent of Area C, while a variety of restrictions in the remaining 30 percent make it virtually impossible for a Palestinian to obtain a building permit. Access of Palestinian farmers to agricultural land located in the vicinity of Israeli settlements or left behind the Barrier remained particularly problematic, further reducing the already poor yield of the olive harvest that ended this month.

In East Jerusalem, Palestinians continue to face the risk of displacement, not only due to the demolition of homes constructed without permits, but also due to ongoing attempts by Israeli settler organizations to expand their presence within Palestinian

neighborhoods. In the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, which is currently the target of such attempts, OCHA estimates that some 475 Palestinians are at risk of eviction. Additionally, information released this month indicates that during 2008 the Israeli Ministry of Interior revoked the residency status of 4,577 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, denying them their right to reside or even enter East Jerusalem.

The lifting of the blockade over Gaza, along with the freezing of demolitions and evictions, dismantlement or re-routing of the Barrier to the Green Line, the revocation of the Barrier permit regime, and the opening up of parts of Area C to Palestinian use in the West Bank, are essential steps to be taken in 2010 to improve the humanitarian situation and restore dignity to many Palestinians.

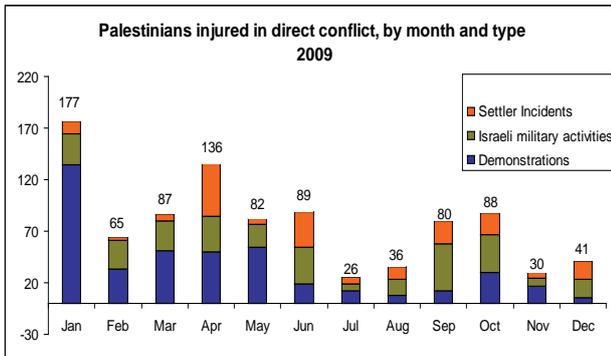
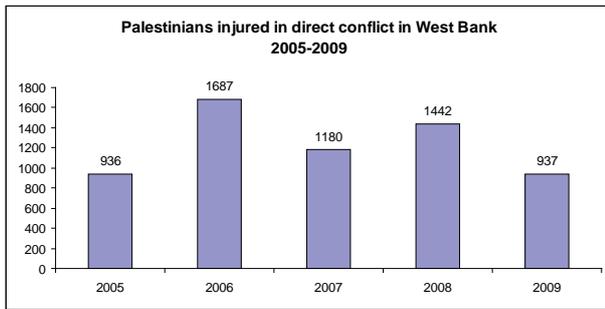
West Bank

West Bank Casualties

On 26 December, three Palestinians were shot and killed in Nablus city during an Israeli military undercover operation in Nablus city. A pregnant Palestinian woman, the wife of one of the men, was also injured during the operation, and children suffered from trauma. According to an IDF spokesperson, the soldiers shot the men after they refused to surrender. However several sources, including an Israeli media report and Israeli human rights NGO (B'tselm) have indicated that two of the Palestinian suspects were not armed and did not try to escape.¹ The three men had previously been granted pardon by the Israeli authorities, after committing to not to engage in violence. The military operation was conducted after the killing of a 45-year-old Israeli settler from Shave Shomron settlement on road 57 by gunmen near Beit Lid junction (Tulkarm). The Israeli authorities claim that the three men were responsible for the

attack and killing of the settler. This is the third incident recorded in 2009 in which Israeli forces kill Palestinians in the course of incidents described by the Israeli military forces as "arrest operations"- a significant decrease compared to previous years.

During December, there were a total of 19 Palestinians injured in the West Bank by Israeli forces, including nine children, and 22 injured in incidents involving Israeli settlers. Several of the settler incidents occurred in the context of the "price tag" strategy, by which Israeli settlers exact a price against Palestinians in response to the partial settlement freeze announced by the Israeli authorities in November. This type of incident included setting fire to a mosque in the village of Yassuf (Salfit governorate). Other injuries by Israeli settlers occurred in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem in the context of ongoing attempts



Ongoing Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian schoolchildren

Since 2006, Palestinian children from At-Tuwani area in Hebron have been escorted by Israeli soldiers to and from school, to protect them from attacks by Israelis from Ma'on and Havat Ma'on settlements. On 16 December, an 8-year-old boy, his 12-year-old brother, and a cousin were attacked by two settlers as they walked home from school in the al Bweireh neighborhood on the outskirts of Hebron. Two weeks later, on 30 December, the Israeli military escort arrived 90 minutes late, and 14 Palestinian children between the ages of 6 to 15 were attacked with stones by an Israeli settler from the settlement outpost of Havat Ma'on. The incident left the students traumatized, and caused them to miss the first two classes of the day.

by a settler organization to expand its presence in the area and by Israeli settlers to continuously harass Palestinian residents therein through physical assaults and stone throwing. Also this month, 14 Israelis, including twelve settlers and two soldiers, were injured by Palestinians in a number of stone and Molotov throwing incidents against Israeli plated cars traveling along West Bank roads.

The year of 2009 witnessed a general decline in the number of Palestinians injuries by Israeli security forces compared with 2008 (a monthly average 78

vs. 120 injuries or a 35 percent decrease). This was mainly driven by the decrease during 2009 in injuries stemming from anti-Barrier demonstrations, which since 2005, have been the most significant events leading to casualties in the West Bank. This trend is also mirrored by a slight decrease in the number of Palestinians injured due to Israeli settler violence in 2009, in comparison with 2008 (12 vs. 15 reported injuries per month, respectively).

ANTI-BARRIER LEADERS ARRESTED

Along with the decrease in casualties during anti-Barrier demonstrations, the Israeli authorities have intensified their efforts against prominent figures associated with non-violent campaigns against the Barrier. A high school teacher, one of the main organizers of the weekly anti-Barrier protests in the village of Bil'in, and the coordinator of the "Stop the Wall" campaign, who is also a prominent speaker at international fora, was arrested this month. In addition, a youth coordinator with the Stop the Wall Campaign, who was arrested in September 2009 on his return from a speaking tour in Norway, remains under interrogation. A campaign has been launched by local and international groups to draw attention to the crackdown and to demand their release. Currently, there are 34 Palestinians imprisoned in the context of anti-barrier demonstrations in Jayyous (Qalqiliya), Ni'lin and Bil'in (Ramallah).²

Access restrictions to land around settlements challenged

The Israeli human rights group Yesh Din, in conjunction with Palestinian farmers from the villages of Jaba' and Silwad (Ramallah), petitioned the Israeli High Court of Justice in November and December, alleging that the Israeli authorities have failed to enforce the law on Israeli settlers who illegally prevent the access of Palestinian farmers to agricultural land located in the vicinity of the Geva Binyamin and Ofra settlements.³ In both cases, the Palestinian owners have been mostly unable to access the areas since 2000 owing to violence, harassment and intimidation at the hands of the settlers, who have fenced off and deployed attack-dogs on part of the land.

According to the petitioners, the affected area in the case of Silwad/Ofra covers over 3,000 dunums of land planted with olive and fig trees.⁴ Additional

areas, also privately owned by the villagers and registered in the land registry, have been gradually taken over by Israeli settlers since the mid-1970s, and used for the unlawful construction and expansion of Ofra settlement, without obtaining requisition orders or building permits from the ICA.⁵ In the case of Jaba'/Geva Binyamin, the inaccessible area is estimated at nearly 400 dunums⁶ used in the past to grow seasonal crops, such as vegetables, wheat and barley. In both cases, the access prevention has severely undermined the livelihoods of dozens of families. Regular monitoring by OCHA indicates that access restrictions to Palestinian farm land in the vicinity of Israeli settlements located on the eastern ("Palestinian") side of the Barrier is widespread. While in some cases, such as the two discussed above, the restricted/closed areas were unilaterally established and enforced by the settlers, in other cases, the Israeli military erected fences around settlements, typically a few hundred



Silwad's agricultural land along Road 60, isolated by fencing illegally erected by Israeli settlers from Ofra, Ramallah Governorate. Photo by Patrick Zoll

CASE STUDY: FAMILY FROM SILWAD VILLAGE LOSES MOST OF THEIR AGRICULTURAL LAND DUE TO ISRAELI MILITARY AND SETTLEMENT EXPANSION.

Since the 1950's, Ahmad Ayyad's family has owned more than 120 dunums of land in Silwad area. The family cultivated most of this land, used some of the produce for household consumption, and sold the majority to generate income.

In the early 1970's, the family's 40 dunums of land in Silwad and Kafr Malik, planted with grapes and wheat, were confiscated for the expansion of a military base in the area. Later, in the 1990s, five dunums of the family's land in Silwad, planted with olive trees, were requisitioned for the construction of Road 60. Another 22 dunums in the same area, near Yabrud village, are inaccessible as they are located in the buffer zone west of the road. While this particular land is not fertile, the family's attempts to rehabilitate it through projects run by the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) have failed, mainly because of the confiscation of equipment and the imposition of fines on people working in the area.

Following the beginning of the second Intifada, the Ayyad family lost access to an additional 20 dunums of agricultural land and 24 dunums of mountainous land, because of their proximity to the Israeli settlement of Ofra and Israeli settlers' fencing of the land (in the case of the 20 dunums). To access the farmland (the 20 dunums), coordination with the DCL was required, but the family succeeded in accessing their land only on two occasions, and even then they were unable to harvest their produce as Israelis settlers had burnt the crops (in total, settlers burnt the crops on three occasions, this was the last burning incident). Since 2003, the family has been unable to access the 22 dunums, and they have been unable to access the other 24 dunums since the beginning of the Intifada.

As of 2009, the Ayyad family has only 14 dunums of land left, of which two dunums are located in Area C along the road between Silwad and Al Mazra'a, and on which Ahmad is hoping to build a chicken farm. The remaining twelve dunums are located inside the built-up area of the village, half of which is already built up. All that remains of the family's agricultural land are six dunums planted with olive trees for personal use.

meters from the edge of the built-up area of the settlement, and officially declared the area behind the fence a "Special Security Area", where access of Palestinian farmers requires "prior coordination" with the ICA. According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, as of September 2008, there were 12 settlements with such security areas.⁷

Demolitions and displacement in East Jerusalem and Area C

In December, OCHA confirmed the demolition of five Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem due to the lack of building permits. Previously reported plans by the Jerusalem Municipality to carry out dozens of pending demolition orders against Palestinian-owned structures before the end of 2009 have not materialized.

Three of the structures targeted this month were

tents erected by Palestinian families forcibly evicted from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in August 2009, in the context of organized attempts by settler organizations to take control of land and property in the neighborhood. In the same context, at the beginning of December, Israeli settlers accompanied by Israeli police took over part of a house belonging to a Palestinian family of 12 in the neighborhood, following the issuance of a court order authorizing the settlers to take possession of the uninhabited section of the house. Later on, two additional families received letters from a settler organization demanding that they evacuate their residences or face a legal suit. In 2009, eight families in Sheikh Jarrah received evacuation notices and orders to report to court, including the family who owned the house that was taken over by settlers. OCHA estimates that some 475 Palestinians in the

Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood are at risk of eviction due to Israeli settler plans in the area. Tension in the area continued throughout the month and included several clashes and stone throwing incidents between Palestinians and Israeli settlers, as well as weekly protests by Israeli, Palestinian, and international activists, some of which were met with a violent response by Israeli security forces.

Also this month, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) demolished two Palestinian structures (both commercial) in an area of Qusra village (Nablus) designated as Area C, and two animal shelters in Al Buweirah in Hebron governorate, all due to the lack of building permits. In the course of 2009, OCHA recorded the demolition of a total of 189 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C by the ICA, displacing a total of 319 Palestinians, including 167 children, and further affecting another 494 Palestinians. According to information released this month by the Israeli State Attorney's Office, over the course of the past 12 years, the ICA demolished 2,450 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C due to lack of building permit, roughly twice as many demolitions as in Israeli settlements.

In addition, two small Area C herder communities in the central and southern West Bank were newly identified as being at risk of displacement. One of them, located in the vicinity of Deir Abu Masha'al village (Ramallah) and consisting of nine households (57 adults and 32 children), received eviction orders from the Israeli army ordering them to evacuate the area within 45 days on the grounds that they are living on an area designated as "state land". Residents of the other community, Bir Al Idd, which is located in the southeast of Hebron governorate and consists of 147 people, received stop work orders against almost all of their structures (tents



Children from Bir Al 'Idd. The community recently returned to southeast Hebron after being evicted by the Israeli military, photo by Patrick Zoll

and animal pens), less than two months after they were allowed to return, following many years of displacement. In 2001, Israeli forces forcibly evicted the entire community, ostensibly for living in a "fire zone", but without serving them with eviction orders.⁸ Between 2001 and 2006, members of the community tried to return to the area, but failed due to harassment by Israeli settlers. In 2009, in the framework of an Israeli High Court petition submitted by the Israeli group Rabbis for Human Rights, on behalf of the community, the ICA agreed to allow the residents to return to Bir Al Idd and to open the road leading to the community. However, since their return in November 2009, the residents have received 18 orders that targeting various tents and animal pens.⁹

Sharp increase in East Jerusalem ID revocations in 2008

According to data provided this month by the Israeli Ministry of Interior (MoI) to the Israeli human rights group Hamoked, in 2008 the MoI revoked the Israeli residency status of 4,577 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, including 99 children.¹⁰ This figure constitutes more than half of revocations recorded between 1967 and 2007 and represents a sharp increase compared to the number of residency revocations executed by the MoI in previous years: 289 in 2007, 1,363 in 2006, and 222 in 2005. Similar figures regarding 2009 are currently unavailable. Once the residency is revoked, people lose their right to enter East Jerusalem or reside there, as well as the right to register their children as residents or to receive any social benefits.

Following the annexation of East Jerusalem to Israel in 1967, Palestinians living in the city were given Israeli identity cards. However, the vast majority of them were registered as permanent residents of Israel, as defined by the Entry into Israel Law, rather than as citizens. According to this law, the status of a permanent resident expires if a person stays for a period of seven years or more outside East Jerusalem or Israel, including in any other part of the oPt, or if he or she obtains citizenship or residency in another country, regardless of the length of the absence from East Jerusalem.

Between December 1995 and March 2000 the MoI implemented a policy by which East Jerusalem Palestinians approaching the MoI to obtain any document were requested to prove that their “center of life” was in East Jerusalem and not in any other part of the West Bank, regardless of the frequency or length of their presence/entry into the city. Those who, according to the MoI, failed to produce sufficient evidence for that, had their residency status revoked.¹¹ As part of this policy the residency

status of over 3,000 Palestinians was revoked. In March 2000, in the framework of a petition to the Israeli High Court of Justice, the MoI announced a return to the pre-1995 policy, under which all residents living outside East Jerusalem for more than seven years, would maintain their permanent residency status provided that they visited the city during the period in which their travel document is valid.¹²

According to the MoI, of the 4,577 revocations in 2008, only 38 affected people who had moved to other parts of the oPt (presumably to the West Bank), while all the rest of the affected Palestinians reside in other countries. The impact is likely to be particularly severe for individuals and families who were residing abroad on temporary visas that have in the meantime expired and have become “stateless” or without residency rights since the revocation of their status in East Jerusalem.

Movement developments in the northern West Bank

During the second week of December, the Beit Iba checkpoint, which controls Palestinian traffic along the main access route into Nablus city from the west, ceased to be staffed by Israeli forces, while most of its infrastructure remained in place. These changes followed similar measures, implemented in June 2009, affecting four key staffed checkpoints that controlled access into Ramallah, Jericho, Qalqiliya, and Salfit; while infrastructure remained in place, these checkpoints ceased to be permanently staffed by the Israeli military and they were transformed into “partial checkpoints”, staffed on an ad-hoc basis. These measures resulted in a reduction in travel time between these cities, as well as in the level of friction between Palestinians and Israeli forces at these checkpoints.

On 24 December, however, following a shooting incident that resulted in the killing of an Israeli settler a few kilometers west of the Beit Iba checkpoint (see casualties section above), a permanent military presence at the checkpoint resumed. According to the Israeli District Coordination Liaison office, the relaxation of Palestinian movement across this checkpoint, as originally planned, will be reassessed in light of security concerns triggered by that incident.

Also in the northern West Bank, since 10 December, the Shave Shomeron checkpoint, located on the main road connecting Jenin and Nablus governorates (Road 60), has been closed by Israeli military forces for all movement. As a result, all residents of the Jenin governorate (274,000) traveling southwards, as well as West Bank residents traveling to Jenin, are forced to make detours in order to reach their destinations. This step was reportedly adopted due to the rehabilitation of a segment of Road 60, north of the checkpoint, scheduled to take place over the next nine months. In August 2005, Palestinian movement through this checkpoint was totally banned. Though that closure was originally announced as a “temporary measure”, in the context of the evacuation of Israeli settlements in this area as part of the disengagement plan, it continued until August 2008.

As of the end of December 2009, there were 69 permanently staffed checkpoints within the West Bank territory, 21 partial checkpoints and 483 unstaffed obstacles (roadblocks, earthmounds, earth walls, road barriers, road gates and trenches). Of the 69 permanently staffed checkpoints, 37 are located along the Barrier and used to control access to Israel and East Jerusalem, and/or to control access to communities isolated by the Barrier.¹³

Ban on Palestinian use of a main road in Ramallah Governorate declared unlawful

On 29 December, the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) partially accepted a petition, submitted by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and a number of Palestinian villages in the western Ramallah area, against the ongoing prohibition on Palestinian use of the West Bank section of Road 443 (25 km long). As a result of the ban, the road, which is the main east-west traffic artery in the area, was restricted for more than seven years to the exclusive use of Israelis, mainly those commuting between Jerusalem and the coastal areas.

In a two-against-one decision, the HCJ ruled the current situation illegal on the grounds that under international humanitarian law, the military commander in an occupied territory has no authority to totally preclude the protected population from using a public resource for an indeterminate period of time to the exclusive benefit of the occupying power’s population. In addition, the HCJ found that the harm of the current prohibition to Palestinians is disproportionate, relative to its security value, particularly taking into account that in 1980 the same High Court had rejected an appeal by local residents against the expropriation of some of their land for the road’s expansion and upgrading on the grounds that it would serve the general public. Those whose lands were expropriated were later denied use of the road.

The ruling’s impact on Palestinian movement remains uncertain. The Court ordered the authorities to implement, within five months, an alternative arrangement for the use of this road, without determining the actual parameters of such an arrangement. By contrast, the Court rejected the request of the petitioners to open the route leading from Road 443 to the Beituniya checkpoint,

ACCESS TO THE ALFE MENASHE BARRIER ENCLAVE FURTHER RESTRICTED

A number of Palestinian communities are located in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line and require permanent resident permits to continue to live in their own homes. They face restricted access to health and to education services and are cut off from family and social networks which are generally located on the 'Palestinian' side of the Barrier.

In December, the Israel authorities introduced a new procedure for five of the communities located in the Alfe Menashe enclave between the Barrier and the Green Line in the Qalqiliya governorate. Residents must now give at least two days notice in order to bring in commercial quantities of goods through the Ras Atiya Barrier checkpoint. What constitutes 'commercial' quantities, as opposed to quantities for personal consumption, is determined by the soldiers staffing the checkpoint. Residents report that this new procedure, which is reportedly intended to prevent the smuggling of goods from the West Bank into Israel, is disrupting the functioning of local shops, as well as preventing households from bringing in food for domestic consumption.

The segment of the Barrier around this enclave is being currently re-routed, in compliance with an Israeli High Court of Justice ruling. Upon completion of the works, three of the five communities in the enclave will be located on the eastern ("Palestinian") side of the Barrier; some of their agricultural land will remain isolated behind the Barrier.

and from there into Ramallah city. Therefore, the potential opening of Road 443, when and if implemented, may facilitate the movement of Palestinians between villages in this area, as well as to agricultural land long the road, but not directly to Ramallah city. Access between villages in this area and Ramallah, however, has gradually improved since the beginning of 2008 due to the construction of a number of "fabric of life" roads providing transportation contiguity.¹⁴

Olive harvest concluded with extremely low yield; access to groves behind the Barrier insufficient

The 2009 olive harvest ended in December with an extremely low yield. Adverse weather conditions earlier in the year, along with the fact that this was the off year of the two year cycle, resulted in the poor yield, estimated to be only 10 percent of the peak season. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the 2009 olive harvest yielded

approximately 5,600 tons of olive oil, well below the 12,000 tons of oil consumed annually. The shortfall has resulted in the price of oil increasing to 40 NIS per litre, as opposed to 18 NIS per litre for the 2008 harvest.

Farmers attempting to harvest olive crops on land located in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line (the "Seam Zone") faced new access restrictions this year. In the northern West Bank, since October 2003 Palestinians have been obliged to obtain 'visitor' permits to access groves in the closed area. The majority of the Barrier gates providing access to the closed area only open for during the olive harvest and usually only for a limited amount of time during the day. This is insufficient to allow farmers to carry out essential year-round agricultural activities, such as ploughing, pruning, fertilising, and pest and weed management, which improve the quantity and quality of the olive oil yield. UN monitoring in the northern West Bank has revealed that the combination of the restricted allocation of 'visitor' permits and the limited

number and opening times of the Barrier gates have severely curtailed agricultural practice and undermined rural livelihoods.

In January 2009, the closed area designation was extended to the Ramallah, Hebron and parts of the Salfit, Bethlehem and Jerusalem governorates, with the permit system now operational at many Barrier gates and checkpoints in these areas, making access to olive groves in the closed area increasingly difficult.

In the Hebron district, for example, 470 farmers applied for permits to access their land through the Khirbet Al Dier gate during the 2009 olive harvest, of which 370 were eventually granted. By contrast during the 2008 olive harvest, before the extension of the closed area designation, an estimated 1,500 farmers accessed their olive groves through the same gate, by showing their ID cards and being checked against a list of names maintained at the gate (also known as the “prior coordination” system). The sharp decrease in access is partly attributable to the poor harvest this year, but also due to the onerous demands of the permit system, which require applicants to satisfy the security considerations

necessary for all Israeli-issued permits and to submit land documents to prove a ‘connection to the land.’¹⁵

The difficulties imposed on farmers by the permit system have prompted some communities to protest the system and refuse to apply for permits. In the Ramallah governorate, 10 of the 13 Barrier gates and checkpoints now require permits: no one crossed through six of these crossing points at all during 2009, as the communities affected are protesting the new requirement. Some 200 permits were issued for the other four gates during the olive harvest, according to the Israeli District Coordination Liaison (DCL) Office. In the Jerusalem governorate, seven Barrier crossing points now require permits and local farmers, for the most part, are refusing to adopt the new regime. Approximately 600 farmers who previously had access to the Har Adar/ Beit Surik gate using the previous ‘list’ system have been denied access during 2009 because they sent coordination lists instead of permit applications. Only seven people in the Jerusalem area were reported applying for and were granted permits for two other gates during the olive harvest.

Gaza Strip

Four Palestinian civilians killed near the Gaza-Israel border and five in tunnels’ incidents

Escalating Israeli-Palestinian violence resulted in increased Palestinian fatalities during the month. In December, Israeli forces killed four Palestinian civilians near the Gaza-Israel border, compared to one minor killed and 16 Palestinians injured in November 2009. Since the implementation of the “Cast Lead” ceasefires on 18 January 2009 until 31 December 2009, a total of 76 Palestinians and one Israeli were killed, and 154 Palestinians and five

Israelis were injured in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza and southern Israel.

On 12 December, Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian near his house, located 700 metres from the Gaza-Israel border, east of Al Bureij. According to the Palestinian human rights group Al Mezan, the killing occurred during an armed clash, in which a Palestinian armed group fired anti-tank missiles at Israeli military vehicles patrolling the border fence; Israeli forces responded by firing tank shells. A number of Palestinian homes were also damaged. In

another incident, on 26 December, an Israeli aircraft opened fire on and killed three Palestinian civilians near the border area while they were reportedly attempting to enter into Israel from an area west of the Erez Crossing.

Also in December, on 11 occasions, Israeli forces entered with tanks and bulldozers a few hundred metres into border areas and conducted land-leveling operations. Such incidents disrupt farming activities in agricultural land located near the border fence. In addition, Israeli naval forces opened warning fire towards Palestinian fishing boats on 15 separate occasions, forcing them ashore. In one incident, the targeted boat entered Egyptian territorial waters while attempting to escape, following which Egyptian naval forces confiscated the boat and arrested three fishermen, who were released the same day. Since January 2009, Israeli naval forces have restricted the access of Palestinian fishing boats to three nautical miles from the seashore; in practice, access is sometimes restricted to as little as one nautical mile.

Additionally in December, in four separate incidents, one Palestinian died and four others were injured, including a 14-year-old boy, while handling explosive devices. During the month, Palestinian factions continued to fire mortar shells and rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel, including military base areas, however no injuries or damage to property resulted; some of the rockets reportedly landed within the Gaza Strip.

Tunnel activity under the Gaza-Egypt border continued to claim Palestinian lives in December. Five Palestinians working inside the tunnels were killed, and another one wounded, in three separate incidents of tunnel collapse; in one of the incidents, three members of the same family were killed. Since the end of the “Cast Lead” offensive, 65 Palestinians

have been killed and 120 others injured in various tunnel-related incidents. From the onset of the Israeli blockade on Gaza in June 2007, tunnel activity has increased gradually, in spite of the risks posed, in order to compensate for the loss of access to goods which previously entering through the official crossings with Israel; almost all types of goods are reportedly transferred through the tunnels, though some are too expensive for the majority of the population to afford.

Towards the end of the month, numerous reports in the Palestinian, Israeli, and international media indicated that Egypt is constructing an underground “steel wall” along its border with Gaza, which will shut down all tunnels’ activities. However, while the Egyptian authorities have been indeed carrying out construction works along the border, the Egyptian government has not confirmed the precise nature of these works.

Latest developments

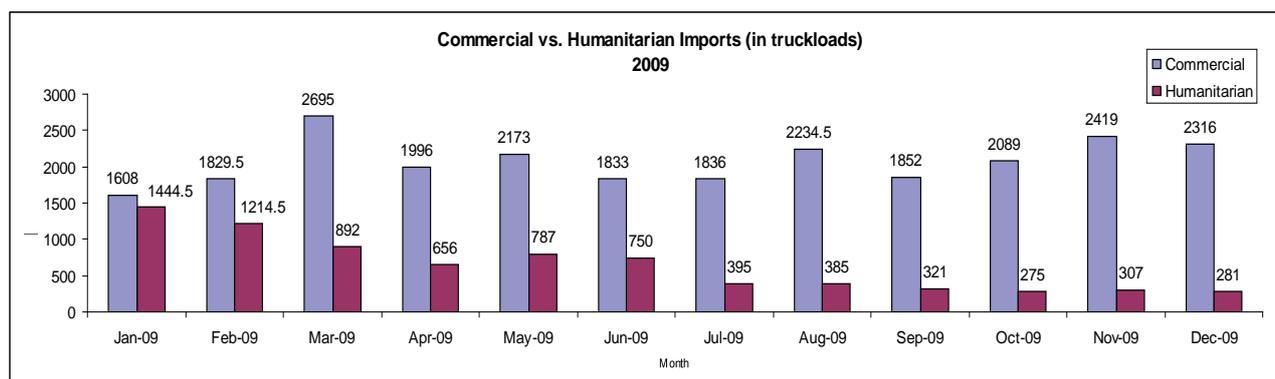
On 6 January, clashes took place at Rafah Crossing between Egyptian forces and Palestinians demonstrators protesting Egypt’s refusal to allow the entry of an aid convoy into Gaza, as well as the alleged construction of an underground “steel wall”. As a result, an Egyptian soldier was shot dead and thirteen of Palestinians sustained injuries.

Imports: the blockade continues, albeit with minor improvements

In December, a total of 2,597 truckloads of goods, including 281 truckloads (11 per cent) designated for humanitarian aid agencies, were allowed entry into Gaza, a five percent increase compared to the previous month. This month's imports were 79 per cent below the level of goods which entered in Dec 2005 (13,430 truckloads) prior to the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, and 81 per cent below the monthly average of truckloads that entered Gaza in the first five months of 2007 (12,350 truckloads), before the imposition of the blockade. Food supplies and cleaning materials made up the highest proportion of total truckloads (81 percent), with the rest consisting of non-edible consumables (8 percent), agricultural raw materials (4 percent), fuel supplies including cooking gas (2 percent) and industrial/electrical appliances (2 percent).

Of note, on 29 December, for the first time since the imposition of the blockade, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of three truckloads of glass into Gaza. The Palestine Trade Centre (Pal trade) indicated that for the following 30 days (except Fridays and Saturdays), Israel will allow the entry of three truckloads of glass per day. Glass has been identified as a key priority to address the winter needs of thousands of families living in houses with shattered windows, as a result of the "Cast Lead" offensive. In addition, 12 truckloads of gravel were allowed to enter through the conveyer belt at the Karni crossing - the second such entry since 26 June 2009.

Also this month, there was a significant increase in the import of non-edible consumables (206 truckloads) including candles, brooms, eyeglasses, and blankets among other miscellaneous items—significantly higher than the average of 68 per month since January 09.



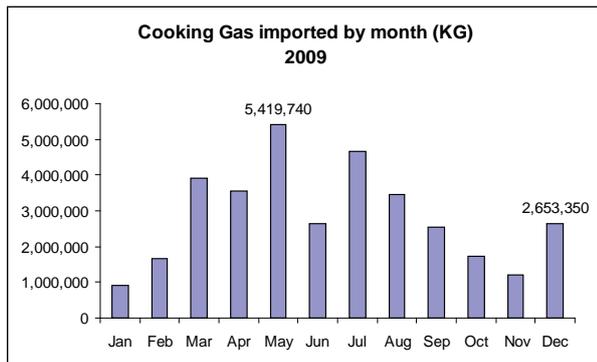
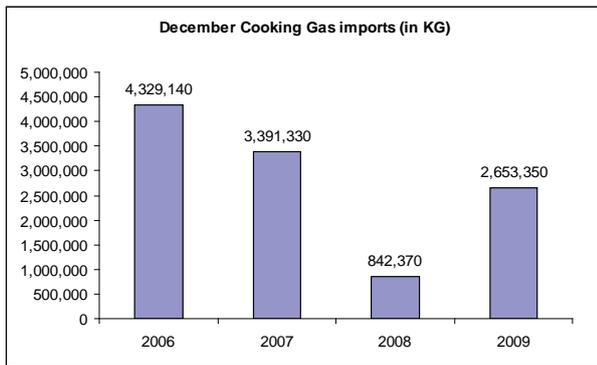
Cooking gas

A total of 2,653 tons of cooking gas entered Gaza in December, the bulk of which entered via the newly installed fuel pipelines at the Kerem Shalom crossing and the remainder through the Nahal Oz crossing, which operated only one day a week.

While cooking gas imports in December were more than two times higher than the previous month (2,653 vs. 1,196 tons), they remained 13 percent below the monthly average for the first 10 months of 2009 (3,047 tons). December imports represent

less than 44 percent of the estimated monthly needs of 6,000 tons, according to the Gas Station Owners Association (GSOA).

The decrease in the import of cooking gas observed since July 2009 is partly linked to the gradual transfer of fuel import operations from the Nahal Oz to the Kerem Shalom crossing, due to stated security concerns by the Israeli authorities. While the capacity for the transfer of cooking gas at the latter is being currently expanded, capacity remains significantly lower than at the Nahal Oz crossing.



The supply of cooking gas to the Gaza Strip is almost exclusively dependent on the crossings with Israel, as there are no cooking gas pipelines that extend through the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border and the amounts imported through this channel are negligible.

Industrial fuel: rolling blackouts continue

In December, there was a 10 percent decrease in industrial fuel imports from the previous month (8.7 compared to 9.7 million liters). According to the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) authority, the amount entered represents 63 per cent of the estimated monthly needs, resulting in the GPP operating at about 75 percent of its full capacity, creating an almost 25 percent electricity deficit throughout the Gaza Strip. According to the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO), 95 percent of the Gaza population still experience intermittent power supply, with scheduled outages ranging between six and eight hours per day, 3-4 days a week.

The remaining 5 percent of the population, located in East Jabaliya, West Beit Lahiya and south-east Gaza City has been without electricity since the end of December 2008, when the Cast Lead military

operation began, due to damage sustained by the electricity network. This damage could not yet be repaired due to the continuing shortage of spare parts. Although three truckloads carrying electrical cables and transformers were allowed to enter in December, GEDCO reports that 240 items are still in short of supply, of which 73 are completely out of stock.

Water and sanitation

In December imports included 13 trucks carrying water and sanitation materials destined for ICRC and the private sector, including nine truckloads of chlorine. However, since mid-November the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), which is the main provider of water and sanitation services, has not received a single truckload of materials, targeted for their projects.

Of particular concern is the lack of electrical generators at a number of water wells, whose operation is interrupted during the prolonged power outages (see above). In these wells, power interruptions result in a halt in water supply, due to the lack of the water reservoirs (destroyed during the "Cast Lead" offensive), which would enable continuous supply into the network regardless of power cuts. When pressure drops in water pipelines there is a risk of contaminants entering the pipe, which would be sent straight to people's houses the moment water supply resumes.

In December, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for the oPt has requested the Israeli authorities urgent approval for the import of six generators needed to address this problem at six wells serving a population of 80,000 in various areas of Jabaliya, Deir Al Balah and Khan Younis. The HC requested also urgent approval for the import of six high-capacity drainage pumps, needed for project planned by a Polish NGO to alleviate localized flooding that may occur in case of heavy rains. To date, a response to his requests has not been received.

Petrol and diesel

The Gaza market still largely relies on the fuel being transferred from Egypt through the tunnels at Rafah-Egypt border with nearly 100,000 litres of diesel and 100,000 litres of petrol being transferred into Gaza a day. A total of 36,500 litres of petrol from Israel designated for private sector was allowed entry in December. Although Israel has indicated its willingness to allow nearly 75,000 liters of petrol and 800,000 liters of diesel per week, since September 09, local companies have largely reduced requests for Israeli petrol, as the price of Israeli petrol is still more than twice the price of Egyptian petrol (5.30NIS/lit vs. 2.70NIS/lit).

Latest developments

As of the 1 January 2010, Nahal Oz crossing ceased operations entirely. As a result, except for a conveyor belt at the Karni crossing used for the import of grain and animal feed, Kerem Shalom is now the only operational crossing for the import of goods into Gaza.

Multiple factors preventing significant agricultural recovery

Despite some positive developments during November and December, a number of key factors, including the ongoing Israeli blockade, access restrictions to land and sea and adverse weather conditions, continue to prevent any significant revival of the agriculture sector in the Gaza Strip.

The “Cast Lead” military offensive, a year on, has left a devastating impact on the agriculture sector in the Gaza Strip. According to an inter-agency needs assessment, the sector has lost USD 180.7 million in direct damage and over USD 88 million in indirect damage.¹⁶ These figures include USD 77.8 million in damage to infrastructure such as wells, roads, poultry farms, and greenhouses, which are unable to be repaired due to restrictions placed on the entry of construction materials.

While there has been a significant increase in the amount of agricultural inputs allowed into Gaza during the past two months, this falls far short of pre-blockade imports. In November and December 2009, a monthly average of 125 truckloads of agricultural inputs entered Gaza, compared to a monthly average of 45 truckloads between January and October 2009. The Palestine Trade Center, Pal Trade, however, estimates that during the year that preceded the imposition of Israel’s blockade in June 2007, imports of agricultural materials varied between 200 and 250 truckloads a month. As a result, despite the recent increase, key inputs such as fertilizers, plastic sheeting for insulation or water collection, and pipes for irrigation are still in short supply and their prices are unaffordable for most farmers and herders.

In addition, alongside the shortage of imports, only half of the average amount of eggs entered Gaza during December (1.5 out of 3 million), forcing hatcheries to operate at half their normal capacity. Poultry farmers are also confronting an outbreak of an unknown strain of Infection Bronchitis on farms. Prices of locally produced food may also increase in the near future, as a result of the lack of rainfall, which may affect the volume of agricultural produce. In December, precipitation rates constituted only one quarter of the historical average for this month.

The situation of the fishing sector also continues to be of concern. The reported fishing catch between January and December 2009 was 1,455 tons, a steep decline compared to the 2,845 ton catch of 2008. This decline is mainly attributable to the prohibition imposed by the Israeli authorities since the “Cast Lead” offensive, on accessing sea areas beyond three nautical miles (nm) from the shore, down from the 6 nm previously allowed and the 20 nautical miles agreed in the Oslo Accords.

On a more positive note, the limited opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing for the export of cut flowers

has created hope for some farmers. In December 2009, as part of an agreement negotiated with the Dutch government, the Israeli authorities allowed six truckloads of cut flowers the export to European markets. According to this agreement, more than 39 million stems of cut flowers are scheduled for export until May 2010, slightly less than the parallel amount for 2006 (45 million), prior to the blockade. If these plans materialize, they would be the largest export of agricultural products since the blockade began in 2007, generating significant needed income for this segment of the agriculture sector.

Medical referral abroad update

In December, the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCO) processed 1,103 applications for permits by patients referred to medical treatment outside Gaza. Of these applications, 79 percent were approved, 19 percent were delayed, and two percent were rejected. Having the application delayed means that no reply was received by the patient from the Israeli authorities by the day of the planned travel, resulting in a loss of the pre arranged appointment at the relevant hospital. When this occurs, the patient must seek a new appointment and subsequently submit an entirely new application. The rate of approvals and delays during December, however, reflects a relative improvement compared to the monthly averages during January-November 2009 (66 and 27 percent respectively). As Rafah border crossing remained closed to patients in December, no patients accessed Egyptian healthcare facilities during the month. During December, a 43-year-old man died while waiting for medical treatment, after twice being rejected entry into Egypt through the Rafah crossing earlier this year. In 2009, there were a total of 27 patients who died while waiting to exit Gaza for medical treatment.

Israeli High Court of Justice upholds deportation from the West Bank to Gaza

On 9 December, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected a petition submitted by a 22-year-old Palestinian student, challenging her deportation by the Israeli authorities from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, on the sole grounds that her registered address is in the Gaza Strip, while she was “illegally staying” in the West Bank.¹⁷ The actual deportation occurred in October 2009, two months before she was able to complete her Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration at Bethlehem University.

Since 2003, the Israeli authorities have implemented a policy by which, Palestinians, who are registered in Israel’s copy of the Palestinian population registry as Gazan residents and are found residing in the West Bank without a permit, are summarily deported to the Gaza Strip.¹⁸ This policy relies on a military order issued in 1967, which declares the entire West Bank as a “closed military area” requiring non-residents to obtain entry permits. While access to the West Bank for Gazan residents, including students, has been difficult since the early 1990s, since the beginning of the second Intifada in September 2000, Israel has enforced a sweeping ban preventing Palestinians from Gaza from studying at West Bank universities. According to the Israeli human rights group Gisha, though a 2007 decision from the Israeli High Court ruled that students from Gaza should be allowed to take up residence in the West Bank “in cases that would have positive humanitarian implications,” Israel has not issued a single entry permit for this purpose. Also since September 2000, the Israeli authorities have generally refused requests submitted by Palestinians to change their address in the population registry from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank. Temporary

permits to reside in the West Bank are issued only in exceptional cases, which include only orphans, chronically ill people or elderly invalids, who have no relatives in Gaza who can care for them and have first-degree relatives in the West Bank.¹⁹

The number of people currently living in the West Bank with registered addresses in Gaza is estimated at approximately 25,000, mostly those who entered the West Bank with permits valid for a few days

and stayed there after their permit expired.²⁰ People in this situation live under the permanent threat of displacement, which may occur, as in the case of the student recently deported to Gaza, as a result of a random check at a checkpoint. Consequently, their ability to move within the West Bank is severely limited, which affects their opportunities to work and access services.

OPT-Wide

	November 2009	December 2009
Palestinian children killed	1	1
Israeli children killed	0	0
Palestinian children injured	11	11
Israeli children injured	0	2
Palestinian children displaced from home demolitions	41	0
Palestinian children in Israeli prisons	306	305

Concerns over new Israeli policy on visas

Implementation of the new visa policy announced by the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) began in December. According to the policy, foreign nationals working in the oPt, including staff of international NGOs (INGOs), would be issued B2 tourist visas instead of B1 work visas as until now. Although most details of the new policy remain unclear, B2 tourist permit holders are not allowed to work in Israel. Therefore, this has created considerable concern for INGOs currently working from East Jerusalem, an area that was annexed to Israel in 1967, and could be affected by the new policy. In addition, INGO staff may experience problems accessing some terminals, such as Erez terminal to Gaza, whilst on a B2 visa. There is concern that the new constraints on the ability of INGO staff to operate may impede the implementation of humanitarian programs.

2010 Consolidated Appeal launched; Humanitarian Response Fund update

In an event taking place on 9 December, the UN humanitarian agencies, along with international and national non-governmental organizations operating in the oPt, presented the 2010 Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). This CAP appeals for USD\$ 664.4 million to fund 236 assistance projects to be carried out in the areas of food security, agriculture, protection, education, health, water and sanitation, and coordination and support services.²¹ Hundreds of partners from UN agencies, the Palestinian Authority, and national and international NGOs have worked together in the last few months to develop the appeal into a needs-focused humanitarian response for the oPt. During the event, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the oPt, Maxwell Gaylard, stated that the “Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory, continue to face a crisis of human dignity... the continued erosion of livelihoods and the denial of basic human rights together are compelling Palestinians to become more and more dependant on international aid”.

In December the Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) supported a project implemented by RCSD in the southern West Bank with the community of Kerbit Bir al-Idd for the sum of US\$44,447. The

project involved emergency shelter and livelihoods support for the community who had been displaced from their land for over 10 years before a High Court ruling on 28 October 2009 allowed them to return to their lands. The communities had been impoverished after years of displacement and required shelter for themselves and their flocks in

order to return to their lands in the winter.

In 2009 the HRF supported 38 projects in Gaza and the West Bank with just under US \$5,650,000 in funding. The balance in the HRF at the end of 2009 is US \$7.4 million counting both funding on hand and committed funds.

Endnotes

1. Avi Issacharoff and Amos Harel, Orders were to capture militants alive - so why were they killed?, *Ha'aretz*, 1 January 2010.
2. There are no arrests recorded as a result of anti-Barrier protests Al Ma'sara.
3. The two cases were addressed in two separate petitions, one submitted in November (Jaba'/Geva Binyamin) and the other in December (Silwad/Ofra). The Israeli State Attorney has yet to submit a response to these petitions.
4. This area includes also land owned by farmers from the adjacent village of 'Ein Yabroud
5. See B'Tselem, *The Ofra Settlement – An Unauthorized Outpost*, December 2008.
6. The total area fenced by Israeli settlers is 900-1000 dunums, divided into two sections: the first section is located to the north of Adam settlement is 400 dunums is the part included in the Yesh Din petition; the second fenced section consists of 500-600 dunums located to the west and south of Adam settlement, east of the road between Jaba' and Hizma. This was not included in the Yesh Din petition.
7. See B'Tselem, *Access Denied: Israeli measures to deny Palestinians access to land around settlements*, September 2008
8. Other communities in the area, including Massafer Yatta, were issued military eviction orders, but these did not include the area of Bir Al Idd. In 2001, two petitions were submitted to the Israeli High Court to allow these communities to return. The petitions were upheld, but they did not include the community of Bir Al Idd, which was not included in the original eviction orders.
9. The community received these demolition orders in January 2010
10. For further details see: <http://www.hamoked.org>
11. B'Tselem and Hamoked, *The Quiet Deportation: Revocation of Residency of East Jerusalem Palestinians*, April 1997.
12. HCJ 2227/98, Hamoked and others vs The Ministry of Interior, affidavit submitted by the respondents on 15 March 2000.
13. For a more detailed breakdown of the different types of checkpoints see, OCHA, *The Humanitarian Monitor*, November 2009.
14. For a discussion on the concerns about the impact of the "fabric of life roads" see, OCHA, *West Bank Movement and Access Update*, May 2009.
15. For additional information on requirements for proving a 'connection to the land', see OCHA oPt, *"Five Years After the International court of Justice Advisory Opinion*, July 2009.
16. *Agriculture Sector Report: Impact of Gaza Crisis*, 2 March 2009.
17. The petition was submitted in conjunction

- with the Israeli human rights group Gisha. For further information see the press release issued by Gisha at: <http://www.gisha.org/index.php?intLanguage=2&intItemId=1651&intSiteSN=113>.
18. For a background on this policy see: Gisha, Restrictions and Removal: Israel's double bind policy for Palestinians holders of Gaza IDs in the West Bank, November 2009. See also, B'Tselem and Hamoked, Separated Entities, Israel Divides Palestinian Population of West Bank and Gaza Strip, Position Paper.
 19. See OCHA, The Humanitarian Monitor, June 2009, p. 13.
 20. Gisha, Restrictions and Removal: Israel's double bind policy for Palestinians holders of Gaza IDs in the West Bank, November 2009.
 21. An overview of the 2010 CAP can be found at <http://www.ochaopt.org/>

CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

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), Campaign for the Right to Enter, ACF-E, AAA, ACP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

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