

Humanitarian Update

21 November – 8 December 2002

occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)

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Overview

Ten Palestinians were killed and another 13 injured during an IDF attack on Bureij refugee camp in Gaza on 6 December. The IDF entered the camp with tanks and armored vehicles at around 02.15, reportedly to destroy the house of a militant. According to UNRWA, a two-hour gun battle ensued, during which the IDF fired tank shells and at least one helicopter missile. Two UNRWA national staff members were among those killed – Ahlam Riziq Kandil, a school teacher, who was injured in her home and later died in hospital, and Osama Hassan Tahrawi, a school attendant who was killed by a helicopter missile while standing in his yard, according to initial reports. The attack came during the Eid el-Fitr Muslim celebration, which marks the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan. UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen condemned “what appears to be the indiscriminate use of heavy firepower in a densely populated civilian area”. On 9 December another shooting incident involving UNRWA took place when IDF fired at a UN-marked bus at a checkpoint near Khan Younis, injuring a boy. The bus was carrying students from the UNRWA training college in Gaza City back to their homes in the south of Gaza.

These deaths and incidents followed the killing of a UN international worker, Iain Hook, who was shot in the back by an Israeli sniper in Jenin refugee camp on 22 November, while negotiating the evacuation of Palestinian women, children and UN staff from an UNRWA compound. The Israeli military refused to allow a PRCS ambulance to evacuate Iain to take him to hospital. The UN is currently conducting an investigation into the killing.

Sixty-four international UN staff members working in the oPt signed a statement on 3 December calling on Israel to make the IDF accountable for actions against UN staff and to protect all UN and other humanitarian aid workers, in accordance with international humanitarian law. The full statement can be found on www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/

In response, the IDF released a statement on 4 December saying that, *"The State of Israel and the IDF respect the work of the United Nations in the West Bank and Gaza, and are committed to the safety of UN personnel."* A memorial ceremony will be held at the UNRWA West Bank Field Office in Jerusalem on 13 December in memory of the two UNRWA staff members who have been killed while on duty in the West Bank. To date, six UNRWA staff members have been killed during the last two years.

On 22 November, another grave violation of the immunities and privileges of UN staff occurred in Bethlehem when heavily armed IDF troops surrounded the house of UNRWA's West Bank Field Legal Officer. The staff member's Palestinian husband was arrested and she was held at gunpoint for two hours while her house was searched and her mobile phone was confiscated.

The IDF destroyed an apartment block in Gaza on 30 November, including the ground floor which was being used as a World Food Programme storage facility. The warehouse was well marked with a large UN flag and WFP stickers on the doors and contained 537 MT of food aid worth an estimated US \$271,000. WFP issued a statement calling on Israel to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident and compensate WFP for the losses.

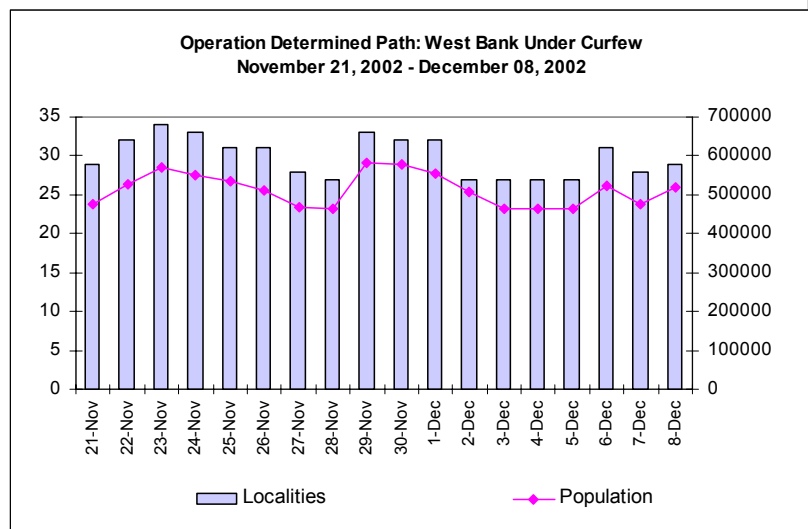
There was one suicide bomb attack on an Israeli bus in Jerusalem which killed 12 people and injured at least 47 on 21 November. Another suicide attack happened in Gaza 22 November when a fishing boat exploded near an Israeli naval patrol ship, two Palestinians died in the explosion and four Israelis were wounded. As a result of the attack Israel has banned fishing. A week later, six people were killed and 43 wounded when Palestinian gunmen opened fire on voters at a Likud polling station in Beit She'an. Both attacks were condemned by the UN Secretary-General.

On 22 November, the IDF reoccupied Bethlehem, surrounding villages and three refugee camps and Bethlehem was declared a closed military zone on 26 November. The city had been under Palestinian control since the IDF withdrew from the area on 19 August in accordance with the "Gaza, Bethlehem First" security plan.

In Gaza, there have been brief random closures of the al-Matahen and Abu Houli checkpoints and a curfew was imposed on the enclosed al-Mawasi area on 23 November.

Curfews and Closures

The re-occupation of all major towns and adjoining refugee camps, in "Area A" in the West Bank, with the exception of Jericho, has now lasted almost six months. Jericho, although not re-occupied, continues to be sealed off by roadblocks, trenches



and checkpoints. Intermittent curfews are in place in most major population centres throughout the West Bank. Some 51 localities were under curfew during the reporting period. The highest number of people under curfew was registered on 29 November when 581,973 civilians were confined to their homes for 24 hours. Compared with the previous reporting period (1-20 November) the number of people and localities under curfew increased substantially from an average of 20 localities and 357,210 civilians to an average of 30 localities and 506,000 civilians. The Bethlehem, Tulkarm and Nablus governorates were the hardest hit.

The IDF injured 23 civilians while enforcing curfews between 21 November and 8 December: in Balata camp 12 people were injured (25 November); 6 people were injured in Tulkarm (26 November); and 5 people were injured in Hebron (4 December).

- Nablus and its surrounding villages and refugee camps have now been under curfew for 170 days. The curfew, which in previous months had been enforced very strictly and only lifted for short periods to allow the civilian population to re-stock basic commodities, has become more intermittent. Between 21 November and 8 December the curfew was lifted on 10 occasions for a total of 108 hours.
- A curfew was re-imposed on Ramallah on 29 November after 22 curfew free days (the longest curfew free period recorded in Ramallah since 24 June) and was lifted on 1 December; the closure around the city, however, remains in place severely restricting the movement of people and goods.
- Bethlehem was re-occupied by the IDF on 22 November and the curfew has been strictly enforced during the reporting period. The curfew has been lifted only three times for a total of 13 hours in the last 18 days.
- Tulkarm, the surrounding villages and two refugee camps were placed under curfew for 405 out of a possible 432 hours. The curfew has only been lifted on three occasions.
- Hebron Old City was under curfew for 413 out of a possible 432 hours and was lifted on four occasions between 21 November and 8 December.
- Curfews were placed on Jenin on the 22 November and 6 December, in Qabatia on 23 November, Jalbun on 29 November and in Ya'bad on 1 December. There were no curfews in the rest of the Jenin area but tight closures were enforced.
- Qalqilya was placed under curfew from 23-25 and 29-30 November and again on 2-8 December, a total of 7 days (168 hours) out of the 18 days reporting period (or 432 hours).

In Gaza the number of workers with permits to work in the Erez industrial zone and inside Israel has remained steady over the reporting period with a daily Sunday to Thursday average of 3,500 and 10,500 respectively. The number of work permits has risen approximately 40 % since September when an average of 2,650 permits for Erez industrial zone and 6,650 permits for work inside Israel were issued daily. The Karni and Rafah crossings have also remained open for commercial traffic. Internally, however, there have been sporadic closures of the al-Matahen and Abu Houli checkpoints for several hours at a time on 29 and 30 November, accompanied by random searches of people, cars and trucks. Also on 29 November the al-Tuffah checkpoint, the only entry/exit to the Al-Mawasi area was closed, leaving dozens of people stranded and having to find overnight shelter in Khan Younis. The checkpoint reopened on 2 December. Inhabitants Al-Mawasi must be registered and be in

possession of a magnetic card in order to be allowed to enter or exit the area. As of 9 December male inhabitants must be under 10 or over 50 years to be allowed to enter the area while there was no similar age restriction for women. These restrictions have, however, been subject to frequent changes.

Olive Harvest

The 2002 olive harvest was expected to yield approximately 14,000 tons of olive oil, and farmers had high expectations of this year's harvest because of the deteriorating economic situation. At the beginning of the season many reports came in of violent attacks by settlers against olive pickers and in some cases by the IDF, these became an almost daily occurrence, and incidents were reported in 189 localities during the few weeks of the olive harvest. B'Tselem released a new report, "The Performance of Law Enforcement Authorities in Responding to Settler Attacks on Olive Harvesters", which states that Israel failed to perform its obligations as an Occupying Power to protect the life and property of residents under its control. The full report can be found on <http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>

The bulldozing of agricultural land continues both in the West Bank and in Gaza. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 117.5 dunums of agricultural land were bulldozed in Gaza between 21 November – 3 December. Some 85% of the land destruction took place near Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis.

In the same period, UNRWA reports that some 100 dunums of agricultural land were bulldozed or confiscated by the IDF in Hebron and Nablus governorates in the West Bank. In addition, a large area of land in Deir Nizam, Jerusalem, was bulldozed by settlers on 2 December.

House Destruction

At the end of November the ICRC provided some 130 families in the southern Gaza Strip, whose homes had been completely or partially destroyed during IDF attacks, with tents, blankets, household goods and other emergency supplies. In the West Bank five families in Qalqilya, four in Tulkarm, four in Nablus, six in Bethlehem and eight families in Hebron were provided with similar emergency kits.

The IDF has continued destroying the homes of the families of suicide bombers or militants who are "wanted". During raids into Gazan communities between 21 November and 3 December, some 15 houses were destroyed and many more were damaged. In the same period, UNRWA reports that 8 houses were demolished in the West Bank.

Humanitarian Access

The IDF introduced new procedures for UN and other international humanitarian workers leaving the Gaza Strip via the Erez crossing. Vehicles, other than diplomatic, must have a minimum of two international staff members. No non-diplomat will be permitted to leave alone, which will severely affect the work of the international humanitarian community. UNRWA has lodged a formal protest with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PRCS ambulances continue to be needlessly delayed at checkpoints and in some cases denied access to patients. On 22 November, the IDF stopped an ambulance on its way to the UNRWA compound to rescue Iain Hook, the UN staff member who was shot by an IDF sniper in Jenin. According to a report from the PRCS, *“The Israeli army prevented PRCS medics from accomplishing their humanitarian mission and fired to prevent access.”* In Gaza, PRCS reports that during the invasion of Deir El-Balah, the IDF denied PRCS ambulances access to provide medical treatment to the wounded.

PRCS reports of several incidents where ambulances were stopped and turned back. In Ramallah and Tulkarm, ambulances transporting patients to hospital were stopped and prohibited from continuing to the hospital: one stopped in Tulkarm was transporting a child with severe food poisoning; and the ambulance which was stopped in Ramallah carried a female patient. In addition several incidents of severe delay of ambulances were reported; In Tulkarm an ambulance transporting a child with a fractured leg and a woman with severe back pain was delayed for two hours and in Nablus an ambulance carrying a bleeding woman was delayed for two hours.

UNRWA reports severe operational problems in the West Bank because of curfews and closures resulting in restrictions on staff members’ movement. The UNRWA health centres in Bethlehem and Hebron have been closed for most of the reporting period, as have schools in Hebron, Bethlehem, Nablus, Tulkarm and Qalqilya. On 2 December, a planned emergency food distribution to Qalqilya was cancelled due to the closure.

UNRWA staff traveling in the West Bank continue to be needlessly delayed at IDF checkpoints. On 24 November, UNRWA vehicles were denied access at Surda checkpoint, north of Ramallah. On 25 November, UNRWA staff traveling to Askar and Balata camp was stopped by the IDF in Nablus and delayed for 1 hour and an UNRWA distribution team was delayed at Beit Iba checkpoint for more than 3 hours.

On 3 December, the IDF stopped and searched an UN marked car used by UNRWA’s West Bank legal assistant and legal consultant. Both showed ID identifying them as UN staff but were ordered out of the car where after the car was searched for about ten minutes.

The ICRC reports that the curfew imposed on most of the main cities in the West Bank continues to hamper planning and implementation of ICRC’s urban food non-food voucher programme.

On 23 November, a WFP convoy with food for distribution in Mawasi, Khan Younis and El-Toufah was refused access by the IDF due to curfew in the area. In the West Bank governorate of Tubas the curfew has prevented PARC from distributing WFP food aid to Food for Work participants.

The Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) has formed a security committee that will meet weekly. The committee will, among other security related issues, discuss incidents related to access. The committee will establish focal points for security issues in all governorates.

The PRCS has established a medical post (22 November) for more than 2,000 stranded travelers at the Jericho bus terminal. The travelers are trapped in Jericho due to the movement restrictions on Palestinians entering Jordan by the King Hussein (Allenby) bridge and the closure regime in the West Bank.

Food

The ICRC's Rural Relief Programme distributed basic commodities such as wheat flour, rice, oil, pulses and sugar to some 6,205 families (37,230 beneficiaries) in 72 villages in Jenin, Bethlehem, Hebron, Tulkarm and Salfit governorates between 18 November and 1 December. In addition to monthly vouchers for food and non-food items distributed to 8,717 families (52,302 beneficiaries) through ICRC's Urban Voucher Programme in the cities of Tulkarm, Salfit, Ramallah, Qalqilya and Jenin.

In the reporting period the UNRWA Field Office in the West Bank distributed 4,856 emergency food parcels for 9,712 beneficiaries containing wheat flour, rice, sugar, oil and powder milk in 14 localities throughout the West Bank.

WFP reports that in the period 16-30 November a total of 10,498 families representing 52,490 individual beneficiaries received a total of 724.2 MT of WFP food commodities. The food was distributed in the West Bank and Gaza by WFP's implementing partners, PARC, MSA, CRS and CHF.

Ongoing monitoring of market trends by WFP in Gaza shows that the prices of basic commodities remained relatively stable in general with a drop in the price of sugar. Prices of fresh food and meat also remained also stable. (see table below)

Commodity	Qty/ units	21- 27/10	28- 31/10	1- 7/11	8- 15/11	16- 22/11	23- 30/11
Wheat flour	60 Kg	95 NIS	82 NIS	90 NIS	90 NIS	90 NIS	90 NIS
Rice	25 Kg	62 NIS	62 NIS	62 NIS	62 NIS	62 NIS	62 NIS
Sugar	50 Kg	82 NIS	80 NIS	85 NIS	83 NIS	82 NIS	77 NIS
Vegetable oil	5 Lt	18.5 NIS	18 NIS	20 NIS	23 NIS	23 NIS	22 NIS
Milk powder	2.5 Kg	85 NIS	85 NIS	85 NIS	85 NIS	85 NIS	85 NIS
Lentils	1 Kg	3 NIS	3 NIS	3 NIS	3 NIS	3 NIS	3 NIS

WFP interviewed 252 beneficiaries in Gaza between 16-30 November. 81% of interviewees stated that they were unable to buy milk for their children. Most respondents reported that they had been unable to find casual work and had reverted to selling family assets to cover the cost of basic needs. Only 23% of the interviewed were receiving any assistance from other family members or neighbours. 86% of the respondents reported spending between 40 – 60 NIS (9 -13 US\$) weekly on food, in addition to the food aid they receive from WFP. 78 % have more than 8 dependents.