

# OCHA

## occupied Palestinian territory

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# humanitarian UPDATE

4 -21 APRIL 2003



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### Overview

With the cessation of large scale American operations in Iraq in the last week, international focus has once again returned to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and specifically the “road map” as first announced by President George Bush on June 24 2002, and endorsed by the other members of the Quartet.

In spite of 15 reservations by the government of Israel over the “road map” that were presented to the US administration last week, Prime Minister Sharon indicated in an interview with Haaretz on 13 April that he could not rule out “painful concessions” in terms of territorial compromise in the search for a durable peace. In the meantime, EU special envoy Miguel Moratinos stated the roadmap would be published and implemented as it was in December 20, 2002 without any changes or modifications, as soon as the new Palestinian government is sworn in.

The period under review was marked by intense military activity and a high number of Palestinian civilian casualties both in the West Bank and Gaza. In response to the air raids in Gaza on 9 April, the UN Secretary-General issued a statement “...deploring the use of excessive force in a densely populated area and reiterates his opposition to extrajudicial killings. While he recognizes Israel's right of self-defence, the Secretary-General again calls on Israel to conduct itself in a manner fully consistent with its obligations under international humanitarian law.”

In Tulkarem camp, approximately 2,000 Palestinian men and boys were rounded up and held in an UNRWA girls' school and subsequently ordered into trucks and expelled or "transferred" to Haret Salaam. Meanwhile, the construction of the "separation fence" accelerated notably around Tulkarem.

### Delivery of Humanitarian Assistance

Under international humanitarian law the provision of humanitarian assistance is the responsibility of Israel as the occupying power. In the occupied territories however, this task is undertaken by relief organizations funded largely by donor countries. But to carry out their work, these organizations rely on the safe passage of their vehicles and personnel through the large number of checkpoints in the occupied territories. As the figures compiled by OCHA for the month of March show, access for humanitarian assistance is still fraught with problems.

### Worsening Access for Health Workers

In the health sector, the situation was particularly serious. Palestinian ambulance operators<sup>1</sup> and UNRWA, for example, reported **63** incidents throughout the West Bank and Gaza – up from 52 in February. Access for people in need of medical assistance was completely denied in 18 cases – up from 12 in February. There were also a large number of serious incidents: in **15 cases** firearms and force were used against ambulance personnel and patients. PRCS and MoH ambulances were fired upon by the IDF in Khan Younis (2 and 16 March); Rafah (9 and 11 March); Beit Lahya (10 and 17 March), Jabalya (17 March) and Beit Hanoun (27 March).

The IDF checkpoints around Nablus continue to account for approximately 50 percent of incidents in the West Bank. This dense network of checkpoints (Beit Iba, Huwwara, Deir Sharaf, Za'tara, Sara, etc.) continues to hinder medical evacuations from the catchment area of Nablus city – one of the major health service providers.

### Humanitarian Movement Hampered

Humanitarian personnel, vehicles and aid items of international organisations and agencies continued to be subject to restrictions and obstruction both in the West Bank and Gaza. **International organisations reported a total of 151 incidents in March.** Of these, 124 major access incidents were in the West Bank, 13 of which involved complete denial of access while the remainder consisted of delays (average delay of 90 minutes).

In Gaza, most incidents involved delays at Abu Houli-Gush Qatif checkpoint. More than 200 UNRWA staff members living in the south of the Gaza Strip cross this checkpoint twice each work day on UNRWA buses.

## Focus on International Humanitarian Law

### 4th Geneva Convention

#### Article 56

*"To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the public Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining, with the cooperation of national and local authorities, the medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene in the occupied territory(...) Medical personnel of all categories shall be allowed to carry out their duties."*

#### Article 59

*"if the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population, and shall facilitate them by all the means at its disposal."*

#### Paragraph 3

*"all Contracting Parties shall permit the free passage of these consignments and shall guarantee their protection"*

#### Article 61

*"The distribution of the relief consignments (...) shall be carried out with the cooperation and under the supervision of the Protecting Power. This duty may also be delegated (...) to a neutral power."*

#### Paragraph 2

*"...The Occupying Power shall facilitate the rapid distribution of these consignments on their way to the occupied territories"*

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health, PRCS, UPMRC

To help ameliorate access problems, IDF/COGAT Liaison officers have been deployed. Field-based NGOs and other organisations in the West Bank report that this development is generally positive. They reported an improvement in the recognition of their identity cards and “yellow plated” vehicles at checkpoints. In addition, there was some improvement in coordination arrangements with the IDF following the deployment of an IDF Liaison Officer in Gush Katif (Gaza). The overall coordination with IDF in Gaza (through Erez), however, remains poor.

But, while improvements have been noted for international organisations, Palestinian humanitarian workers and vehicles have noted little difference in their access situation.

The collection and mapping of access problems and incidents is a key part of measuring progress (or lack of it) on humanitarian issues. It is being undertaken by OCHA staff and is compiled for use by TFPI (Task Force on Project Implementation) in its dealings with the IDF; for donor governments for their bilateral discussions and is available for other organisations to use as part of their own advocacy. A monthly update will be posted on the OCHA website.

### Closure and curfews

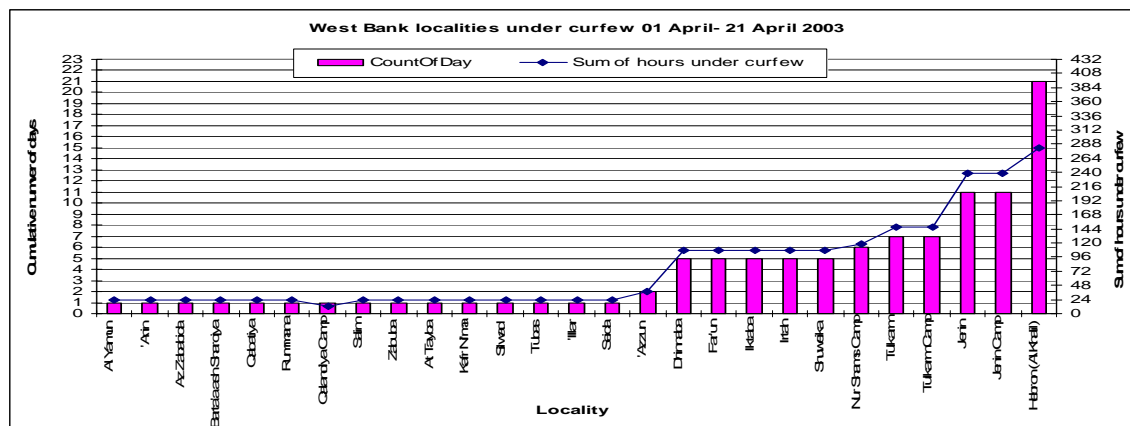
During the reporting period 01-21 April 2003, 27 Palestinian towns, villages, camps and /or cities were under curfew. The average number of people under curfew for this reporting period was 197,980.

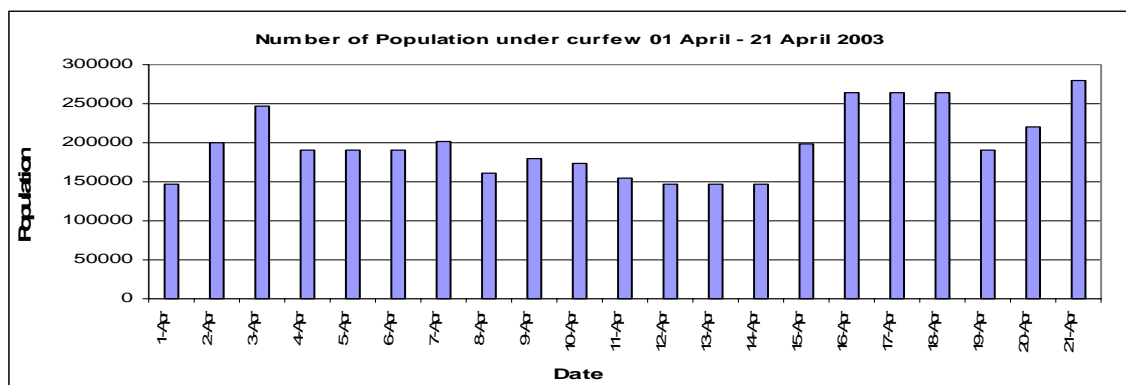
Several Palestinian areas (both A and B in the West Bank and their equivalents in Gaza) remained under tight closure. Particularly hard hit were:

**Qalqiliya:** Under curfew for 5 consecutive days without any lifting (120 curfew hours).

**Jenin Town & Camp:** Under curfew for 8 consecutive days. The curfew was lifted on 27 March 2003 at 16:00 (184 curfew hours out of 192 hours).

**Hebron:** Under curfew for 22 consecutive days. Curfew is imposed at night and lifted for 10 hours daily. 147,291 people are affected in Hebron.

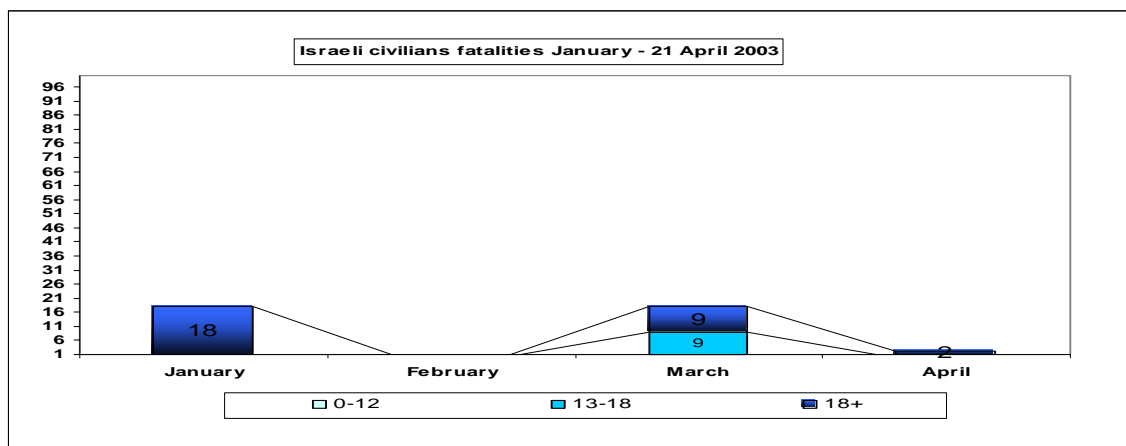
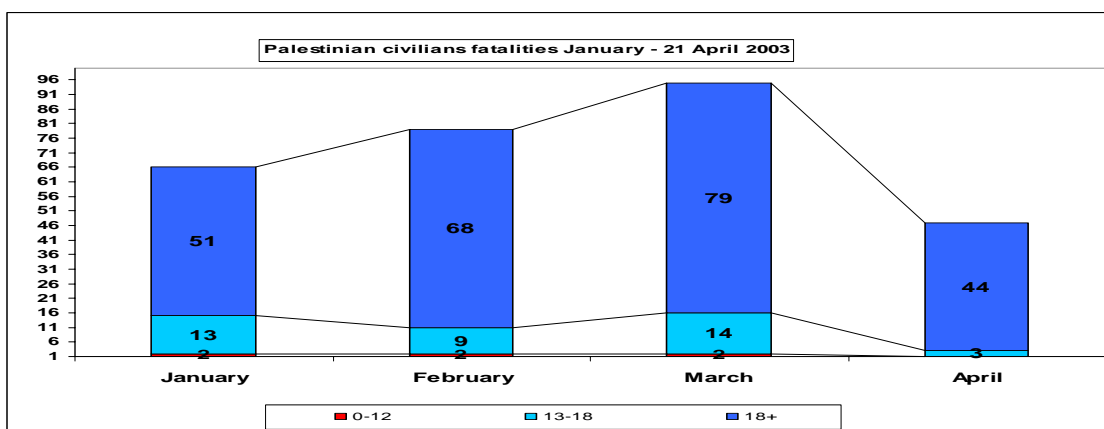




## Casualties and injuries

Between 1-17 April, 37 Palestinians were killed, and 159 were injured by live ammunition, bomb fragments and shrapnel, according to PRCS. The highest number of deaths were in Gaza (25), followed by Hebron and Nablus. The highest number of injuries were also in Gaza (97), followed by Jenin and Hebron.

In the West Bank, one Israeli officer was killed and another wounded in Nablus by a gunman whom they tried to arrest in Nablus, who was also killed. In addition, two Israelis were killed and three wounded by Hamas gunman who infiltrated Karni border terminal in Gaza.



## **Child injuries**

29 children, ages 7-15 years, were injured in an explosion at a girls' school in Al-Jarba village south of Jenin on 9 April, according to PRCS. An Israeli Jewish terrorist group calling itself the "Revenge of the Infants" or "Childrens' Wrath" claimed responsibility.

Six children (ages 10 -16) were injured in the West Bank (two were hit by rubber-coated metal bullets, one in the forehead and one in the chest).

## **Extrajudicial killings**

Tuesday 8 April, Israeli Apache Helicopters accompanied by an F-16 fighter jet launched two missiles at a car in Gaza City's densely populated Zeitoun neighborhood. The IDF target was a senior Hamas official Said Arbeed who was killed together with another passenger while traveling in his car. A number of Palestinian civilians had gathered around the targeted car when a third missile was launched towards the crowd, killing 5 Palestinian civilians, including two children, and injuring another 53, among them at least 6 children.

At around 02:45 PM on Thursday 10 April, a second targeted assassination was conducted in Gaza when IDF Apache helicopters fired a missile at a car in the Gaza City killing Islamic Jihad military-wing activist Mahmoud Zatma. Some 12 children nearby were lightly injured in the attack.

A 23 year-old Bader 'Abdul Ra'ouf Yassin was shot 24 times in Salfit at point blank range by six gunmen from an Israeli undercover unit. According to PCHR, Yassin was a member of the Palestinian Military Intelligence and a Fatah activist.

The following sections chronicle major events affecting the livelihoods of civilians.

## **Gaza Strip (4-18 April)**

On 2 April, the IDF killed 4 Palestinians, and injured 3, during an attack at al-Salam and al-Brazil neighborhoods in Rafah, some 35 IDF heavy military vehicles and a number of military bulldozers operated in the two neighbourhoods. IDF demolished two houses in the al-Brazil neighbourhood, and partially destroyed two others in the al-Salam neighbourhood; in addition roads and electricity supplies were severely damaged.

On 4 April 2003, the IDF carried out a massive house to house search campaign. The IDF opened fire at the houses and made holes in the walls of the houses in order to move from one house to another. During the operation 4 people were injured.

On 5 April 2003, incursions were conducted in Al-Nuseirat and al-Maghazi Refugee camps in the Gaza Strip. 8 Palestinians were injured. In al-Maghazi Refugee Camp residential neighbourhoods were raided in house-to-house searches. During the operation the IDF fired at residents' houses, causing severe damage to 3 houses. In Rafah the IDF moved into al-Salam neighbourhood, demolishing one house totally and three others partially.

*The Presidency of the European Union, in a statement on 7 April, was “particularly concerned” that the IDF’s “unacceptable actions” took “the form of collective punishment and fuel hatred and violence”.*

*UNRWA, in a statement on 3 April, strongly protested the IDF’s occupation and the military use of its girls’ school citing that this was in violation of the UN Privileges and Immunities. UNRWA staff were denied access the school and other UNRWA facilities in the camp during the IDF’s operations.*

On 6 April 2003 after imposing a curfew on the village, IDF raided Gaza village of Al-Massadar, and carried out a house to house search. During the military operation 2 people were killed, including a 14 year old boy, and another 12 citizens were injured. During the invasion, the IDF damaged the electricity and telephone network in the area. The same day two Palestinian civilians were injured in their homes when the IDF opened fire at private houses in Tal Zo'rob area in the southwest of Rafah. A third civilian was injured when the IDF opened fire at Palestinian houses in Block J in Rafah refugee camp. In addition, two houses were demolished south of Rafah. A group of International Solidarity Movement members tried to stop the demolition, but Israeli soldiers fired live bullets and sound bombs to drive them away from the area.

On 9 April IDF entered Beit Hanoun in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, killing 5 Palestinians, among them a 16 year old boy, and injured 9 others. Two road side bombs exploded and one Israeli soldier was reported injured. Palestinian militants launched rockets and mortar shells towards Israel and settlements in Gaza. No civilian Israeli casualties were reported.

### **West Bank**

On April 2, IDF soldiers, supported by helicopters, tanks and armoured vehicles carried out the largest operation in Tulkarem since April 2002 imposing a strict curfew on Tulkarem town and Nur Shams and Tulkarem camps. A representative from one of the camp committees stated how the IDF surrounded the camp from 02.00 am, announcing that all males between 15 and 45 years must leave their homes from where they were taken to the UNRWA girls school. At the school the detainees were separated into groups by age 15-20, 20-30 and 30-45 years. In an extremely worrying development the IDF from the early afternoon then ordered most of the detainees into trucks and expelled or “transferred” them to an industrial estate in Haret Salaam neighbourhood adjacent to Nur Shams camp. The men were then instructed to disperse but not to return to Tulkarem camp until advised to do so by the IDF through the local media. The detainees eventually returned to their homes on April 5 by which time the IDF had demolished the home of a suicide bomber who had carried out an attack in Netanya in 2001 in which five Israelis were killed.

Residents of Tulkarem reported that the IDF also surrounded Tulkarem Hospital on Wednesday, although they did not enter the hospital. According to Health Inforum, the IDF had been checking the IDs of patients arriving at the hospital. Health Inforum also reported that PRCS ambulances were able to enter Tulkarem refugee camp with prior coordination with the IDF; however, the ambulances were experiencing delays.

This latest operation was ostensibly in response to the recent suicide bombing in Netanya that was carried out by an Islamic Jihad militant from a village in the Tulkarem area.

The IDF entered the Makhfiya district of Nablus 15 April 2003 with three tanks, APCs and armoured jeeps, positioning outside a house in the area exchanging fire with three armed Palestinians. Two Palestinians that fled to a nearby house were arrested. The remaining Palestinian, Mazen Marwan Freitekh, was reported killed after continuing exchange of fire. Departing IDF fired live rounds of machine guns and sound bombs outside al-Najah University and in Nablus Centre.

#### **International Solidarity Movement**

*On 11 April 2003 Thomas Hurndall, a 21 year old British member of International Solidarity Movement (ISM) was shot in the head and seriously injured by the IDF in Rafah. Thomas Hurndall was pronounced brain dead upon arrival at hospital. Thomas Hurndall was wearing an orange fluorescent vest with reflective stripes and was clearly visible from the IDF watch tower when he was hit by a single gun shot to the back of his head, while attempting to bring two little girls caught in the line of fire to safety.*

*An international solidarity movement activist, 24-year-old Brian Avery from the US, was seriously injured near Jenin's main square on 5 April when he was wounded in the face by a bullet fired from an IDF APC machine gun. PRCS Emergency Medical Service staff were quickly on the scene and administered first aid before transferring him to Jenin hospital. PRCS reported that Mr. Avery had also on occasion worked as a volunteer with the PRCS branch in Jenin.*