

OCHA

occupied Palestinian territory

humanitarian

UPDATE

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Overview

The Israeli Cabinet voted on 25 May to accept the “Road Map.” However, clear divisions were evident within the cabinet. The international optimism generated by this vote was tempered somewhat by a later vote within the cabinet rejecting UN Resolution 194, which recognizes the right of return of Palestinian refugees from 1948 and their descendants. In addition, the Government of Israel made 14 reservations to the “Road Map”. In an interview on 26 May, Prime Minister Sharon broke new ground by specifically referring to the “occupation” and stating it was not in Israel’s interest to continue to rule over 3.5 million people.

The measured optimism generated by the “Road Map” and its acceptance by the parties improved the outlook. However, there has been an escalation of violence during the reporting period with 33 Palestinians and 12 Israelis being killed, and the number of Palestinian fatalities exceeded the previous two weeks.

A prolonged incursion into Beit Hanoun in Northern Gaza from 15 – 20 May resulted in 12 Palestinian fatalities, including two children aged 12 and 14. There was also significant destruction to Palestinian agricultural lands in this area (1,000 dunums or 250 acres of citrus trees and olive groves).

From 17 – 19 May, a wave of Palestinian attacks launched against Israeli settlers and civilians killed 12 and injured 90. The highest number of fatalities occurred on 18 May

when seven people (six Israelis and one Palestinian) were killed in a suicide attack on a bus in the French Hill district of East Jerusalem.

On 1 June, Israel reported that it had eased the closure of the Palestinian territories three days ahead of the USA-Israeli-Palestinian peace summit this week. According to Israel, the IDF relaxed its blockade of the West Bank and Gaza Strip overnight, as part of a package of measures to ease the hardships on the Palestinians. However, there was no noticeable change on the ground and the checkpoints and closures around Palestinian towns remained strict. Palestinian security sources said that 4,500 men age 28 and above were allowed to cross into Israel from the Gaza Strip on 1 June, compared with an average of 30,000 before September 2000.

Erez Convoy

The 17 May introduction of an exclusive list of international organization personnel that would be allowed entry into the Gaza Strip via the Erez Crossing restricted the ability of international organisations to move in and out of Gaza. The limited nature of this list induced staff from 30 international and Palestinian relief and development NGOs to organize a 26 May convoy to Erez to demand free and unrestricted access for all humanitarian and development agencies. The convoy presented a statement signed by 32 members of the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) urging Israel to respect its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention to facilitate access by humanitarian aid workers. Captain Joseph Levy, the head of foreign relations for the District Coordination and Liaison Office at Erez, received the statement and said that the convoy was free to pass.

At the same time, UN agencies organized a donor tour to visit Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip. After several hours of delay, most donors and UN agencies were granted access into Gaza. A few were denied access, reportedly as a security measure. After more than five hours of waiting at Erez, the IDF informed everyone that access would be granted to all humanitarian workers in the future, regardless of the list. However, those names that appeared on the list would be processed faster than those who were not.

The donors and UN agencies proceeded into Beit Hanoun to visit the UN programmes. The Swiss Representative's car was heading the small convoy when it came face to face with a tank. Unable to communicate with the soldiers in the tank, the clearly marked

Road Map

The UN Secretary-General commented on the acceptance of the road map: "Great wrongs have been done by each to the other. Terrorist attacks launched by Palestinian groups must stop, and the Palestinian Authority has an obligation in this regard," he declared. "Israel must end such measures as extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, house demolitions, blockades and settlement activities. Moreover, the parties should not allow extremists to hijack the process and dictate agendas." Though responsibility to bring this process to a successful conclusion rests primarily with the parties themselves, Mr. Annan added, "the international community remains there to help, at least to alleviate the hardship of the Palestinian people until the occupation of the Palestinian territory is ended on the basis of United Nations resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002)."

diplomatic car stopped and waited. Two bullets were fired into the front windshield of the car towards the passenger, who would have been hit had the window not been bullet proof. The IDF has said it is investigating the matter. Later, soldiers opened fire at a crowd of Palestinians that surrounded the convoy. The only conclusion that can be drawn from these events is that diplomatic status can no longer guarantee any form of protection from the IDF. Furthermore, the arbitrary way that entry and exit is permitted greatly hinders the effectiveness of all humanitarian operations. Several NGOs reported that their work has been severely hampered by the new situation at Erez.

On 29 May, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs briefed the donor community, UN and NGOs on the situation at Erez. This was the first public statement from the Israeli Government.

Human Rights

Amnesty International criticized Israel for perpetrating “war crimes” in the Palestinian territories while it labeled Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians as “crimes against humanity” in its annual report issued on 28 May. Amnesty cited Israel’s “unlawful killings, obstruction of medical assistance and targeting of medical personnel, extensive and wanton destruction of property, torture and cruel and inhuman treatment, unlawful confinement and the use of human shields.” AI said, “at least 1,000 Palestinian were killed by the Israeli army in 2002 and most of them unlawfully. They included 150 children and at least 35 individuals killed in targeted assassinations.” Amnesty International condemned “the deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians by Palestinian groups,” which, it said “constituted crimes against humanity.” Armed groups “killed more than 420 Israelis, at least 265 of them civilians and including 47 children and some 20 foreign nationals in targeted or indiscriminate attacks.” Amnesty also criticized the Palestinian Authority for arresting scores of people for political reasons, and the execution and unlawful killing of alleged collaborators with Israel.

STATISTICS 15 May to 1 June	
Casualties	
Palestinians 33 killed 124 injured - 4 under 18 years 1 under 12 years	Israelis 12 killed 90 injured
Incidents Involving PRCs Ambulances	
Delay of 45 minutes – 4 hours	20 cases including women in labour and cardiac cases
Denial of access	7 incidents reported
Abuse or damage to ambulance	4 incidents reported
Shooting at ambulance	1 incidents
House Demolitions	
Total houses destroyed	71
in the Gaza Strip	57
Palestinians made homeless, approx.	700
Fisheries	
Gaza Strip	6 nautical miles
Al Mawasi / Khan Younis	fishing is totally prohibited
Destruction of Agricultural Land	
Gaza Strip	1908 dunums (477 acres)

West Bank

In Tulkarem, a strict curfew was imposed for six consecutive days without easing. This has prevented people from getting access to water, medical services and education. The curfew was lifted again on 30 May. However, as a result of these closures, the IDF targeted educational institutions and entered schools in Tulkarem as the students were forced to break the curfew in order to finish their studies before the end of the academic year. A 15 year-old student, Mohammad Nassim Awad was killed on 27 May. On 28 May, Ibrahim Abu Hable, 14, was shot and left brain dead. Another student was critically injured and taken to Jerusalem for treatment by the PRCS.

A new checkpoint has been erected on the western Ramallah-Ein Arik road, which is the only access road for workers and students who daily travel to Ramallah from over 20 Palestinian villages. A temporary checkpoint was reinstated on this road on 18 May. A curfew was imposed on Ramallah since 2 June 2003.

On 2 June, the IDF entered Nablus city with three armored jeeps and one army truck, proceeding into Ain Beit Al Ma' refugee camp and arresting a UN janitor. Due to the use of sound bombs during the arrest, two minors required psychological treatment afterwards. Nablus is currently under closure since 2 June and many flying checkpoints are reported on the access roads.