



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

Humanitarian Update – July 2004

*Gaza Strip worries in Rafah and Beit Hanoun – Preliminary analysis of proposed Barrier route changes –
Refugee house rebuilding plan – Major measles immunisation campaign –
EC pledges €124.25m for Palestinians – Summer camps aim to ease children's stress –
Pilot project to address food security - Humanitarian monitoring briefs*

Overview

Among the main developments affecting the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory in July were the deterioration of the situation in the Gaza Strip, especially around Beit Hanoun and the Rafah terminal crossing, and growing concerns for humanitarian access and the safety of humanitarian staff in Gaza. Serious security incidents have occurred near UN workers in Beit Hanoun, and staff members from other agencies have experienced similar incidents. Heightened security concerns are restricting humanitarian assistance. Meanwhile, four French aid workers were kidnapped for several hours in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on 16 July, and later released without physical harm. Three other internationals were released early on 31 July, hours after they had been abducted in the West Bank city of Nablus.

Responding to prevailing insecurity in Gaza, Peter Hansen, Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), relocated some staff to Jerusalem on 29 July, while pledging that the move would not hamper the provision of aid or services to refugees in need. In a statement issued in Gaza, he explained that “recent worrying developments - including the extensive Israeli military operations in Beit Hanoun and increased unpredictability and insecurity faced by UN staff in crossing into and out of the Gaza Strip at Erez”, were behind the decision. *For more details, go to:*
[<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=11499&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>]

On 9 July, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its advisory opinion that the Barrier represented a breach of international humanitarian law and should be dismantled. [<http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/iwhats.htm>]
The potential humanitarian implications of that decision are still uncertain as the international community and appropriate United Nations bodies deliberate on the ruling and consider its implications.

Health concerns at Rafah terminal, Gaza Strip

The Rafah passenger terminal, linking the Gaza Strip with Egypt, was closed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to all Palestinian passengers from 11 July to the end of the month, except for the weekend of 15-17. At least 2,500 passengers were left waiting at the Egyptian side of the terminal and in nearby guest houses at the end of July, with some estimates putting the number of stranded people considerably higher.

Humanitarian agencies were particularly concerned about Palestinians who had travelled from the Gaza Strip to Egypt for medical treatment not available inside Gaza, and who were waiting at the terminal to return, and about ordinary passengers suffering from a range of medical complaints. Public health concerns were also raised in light of the very basic hygiene facilities available at the Egyptian side of the terminal and temperatures hovering between 30° and 40° Celsius.

The Israeli authorities said that closing Rafah terminal had been done on security grounds. At one point, it reportedly offered to open Al Ouja (or Netzana) commercial terminal, some 50km to the east, to allow up to 200 Palestinians a day into the Gaza Strip. That would have required passengers to travel from the Egyptian side of Rafah terminal to Al Ouja, and from there 60km to enter at Sofa Crossing.

The Palestinian Authority is understood to have refused that offer on the grounds that it would take too long for all those Palestinians waiting in Egypt to get back into Gaza. There was also concern that Palestinians would have some 110km added to their journeys, and at the broader issue of having Palestinians to pass through Israeli territory to enter Gaza from Egypt.

Access problems worsen in Beit Hanoun, Gaza Strip

Amid military operations by the IDF from 29 June, following the deaths of two Israelis in a Qassam rocket attack on the nearby Israeli town of Sderot, Palestinian Ministry of Health sources reported that at least 17 Palestinians have been killed and 154 injured to 29 July. At least three IDF soldiers have been reported injured.

Beit Hanoun has more than 30,000 residents, most of whom are registered refugees. An additional 7,000 Palestinians live in surrounding areas. Restricted humanitarian access is a primary concern, given notable shortages of water, food and medical supplies in some areas. Water and electricity networks, main roads, telephone lines and sewage pipes have also been damaged during IDF operations.

OCHA and UNRWA are particularly concerned about access problems. In more serious instances, the IDF has opened fire near aid workers when they have arrived in an area, despite prior coordination efforts.

See Beit Hanoun situation reports at: [<http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>]

Humanitarian effects of Barrier route changes

On 30 June 2004, the government of Israel revised the route of the West Bank Barrier and published a map on its seam zone website [www.seamzone.mod.gov.il]. In July, OCHA was able to analyse that map and assess the humanitarian implications of the revised route of the Barrier, which threatens to cut people off from their land, places of work and basic social services, to fragment communities and isolate residents from social support networks.

According to the revised route, about 15% of the proposed 622km Barrier will follow the Green Line, up from 10% of a proposed 638km Barrier in January. While part of the proposed Barrier lies on the Green Line, most of the revised route still passes through the West Bank. Approximately 63,120 hectares, or about 11.5%, of West Bank land, excluding East Jerusalem, will lie between the Barrier and the Green Line, according to the revised route.

This land, some of the most fertile in the West Bank, is home to more than 93,200 Palestinians in 63 villages and towns (excluding East Jerusalem). Of these people, 16,300 will live in closed areas: areas between the Barrier and the Green Line – down from 20,000 in January. Another 76,900 will live in enclaves, totally surrounded by the Barrier – down from 169,000 in January. In the semi-enclaves, an additional 15,400 Palestinians will live in areas encircled by the Barrier, which they can enter and leave by just one route.

The proposed route of the Barrier would also open up two areas west of Ramallah (one from Rantis to Deir Qaddis, the other from Saffa to Beit Surik), with a combined population of over 76,000 Palestinians, that would have been cut off going by previous plans, although access issues will persist. *See full report at:*

[http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/docs/UN/OCHA/update3barrierprojections9July04_maps.pdf]

Beit Surik - OCHA published a separate report in July on the particular case of the presence and route of the Barrier in Beit Surik, southwest of Ramallah. The Israeli Supreme Court ruled on 30 June that the route should be changed there because it impinged too much on residents. That decision is likely to give Palestinians greater access to their lands than envisaged in the original Barrier plan, but humanitarian concerns remain. Even if Barrier is rerouted, it will curtail people's access to markets, schools and health services in Ramallah and Jerusalem.

See full report at: [<http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/docs/UN/OCHA/BeitSurik23July04.pdf>]

Land agreement paves way for home rebuilding in Rafah

On 11 July, two United Nations agencies and the Palestinian Authority (PA) signed a land agreement that will allow the rebuilding of homes in Rafah, replacing those that have been demolished by the Israeli military since the start of the current intifada in September 2000.

Under the land agreement signed with UNRWA and the UNDP, the PA will donate 430 dunums (43 hectares) of land in Rafah, at the south of the Gaza Strip, to a project to rebuild homes for some 15,000 people who lost their homes there. UNDP said it has funding approval that will allow it to build at least 700 homes, schools, roads and other community amenities. Additional funding had been contingent on the UN receiving this donation of land from the PA. More than 22,000 people have lost their homes, approximately 2,270 buildings, to Israeli demolitions in the Gaza Strip since the start of the current intifada, according to UNRWA.

Homelessness is one of the most pressing humanitarian issues for the people of Rafah, according to a UN inter-agency humanitarian needs assessment in June 2004.

In 2002, an average of 15 homes were destroyed or damaged beyond repair each month in Rafah. In 2003, the average was 47 homes and in the first five months of 2004, the number of homes was 100 a month. If further demolitions occur, the homeless may be forced to live in tent villages, with severe sanitation and health risks and even greater community dislocation, according to the needs assessment.

The government of Israel has said that house demolitions are among the measures the IDF takes to maintain Israel's security. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has condemned mass demolitions in Rafah and reminded Israel that collective punishment of civilians for the actions of armed militants is a breach of international humanitarian law.

For more information on the Rafah rebuilding plans, go to: [<http://www.un.org/unrwa/>]

Measles immunisation campaign goes well

In July, UNICEF wrapped up a three-week measles immunisation campaign in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The goal was to provide more than 540,000 children aged 9 months to five years with a safe injection of measles vaccine and doses of Vitamin A.

More than one-third of young Palestinian children had shown no immunity to measles, according to a recent survey conducted by the Palestinian Ministry of Health and UNICEF. In some areas, the percentage was up to 50%. Among the potential causes was that routine immunisation services in the last two years were compromised, according to UNICEF. For example, refrigerated vaccine boxes were opened at checkpoints, possibly reducing the effectiveness of vaccines. Moreover, more than 22% of children less than five years of age suffer from a deficiency of vitamin A and an additional 54% are at risk of developing it. Vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of preventable blindness in children globally, and raises the risk of disease and death from severe infections.

In the recent campaign, dozens of mobile teams conducted immunisations in 15 districts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Trained logistic teams ensured the delivery of vaccine, vitamin doses and equipment to outlying villages. Measles, a leading cause of child mortality globally, is caused by a highly infectious virus. The threat is compounded when children are malnourished, even more so in densely populated areas like those in the Palestinian community, according to UNICEF. *For more information, go to: [<http://www.unicef.org>]*

EC pledges €124.25m to Palestinians

On 29 July, noting the continuing economic problems and human suffering in the occupied Palestinian territory, the European Commission (EC) announced the approval of €124.25m (676m shekels) in funding for the West Bank and Gaza. That includes emergency support to social services, to mitigate the deterioration resulting from the ongoing conflict, of €22.75m (124m shekels).

The EC package comes on top of around €89m it has already earmarked through UNRWA, of which €8m comes from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO); €29m for humanitarian aid through ECHO; around €10m for food aid and food security through WFP and NGOs, and for the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.

The UN and its partners in oPt sought a total of \$305m (or around €253m) in the Consolidated Appeal Process for 2004 to assist the people most affected by the humanitarian consequences of the continuing Palestinian crisis.

In its 29 July press release, the EC said income levels had dropped severely and that “the level of suffering is unprecedented” in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The EC said its assistance in 2004 was focused addressing urgent needs and contributing to the creation of a viable and democratic Palestinian state. *For more information, go to: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm]*

Meanwhile, the US government authorised the use of up to \$20m (90m shekels) from the US Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund to allow UNRWA assist Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. The US State Department said on 29 July that the contribution was in response to UNRWA’s \$193m emergency appeal for 2004 to fund the food, shelter, health and other urgent humanitarian needs of over 1.5 million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. *For more information, go to: [<http://www.state.gov/>]*

Recreation aimed at giving children a lift

A summer camp project supported by UNICEF started throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip in July, bringing educational, recreational and play activities to some 17,000 Palestinian children.

The camps are intended in part to help Palestinian children make up for reduced class times in school, according to UNICEF. Education has been hindered by further construction of the Barrier, closure and curfews, and by house demolitions. From November 2003 to May 2004, some 126 school days were lost, according to the Consolidated Appeal mid-year review of the United Nations family in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The camps, 100 in all, were also conceived as safe havens where children can escape the ongoing conflict and learn about non-violent conflict resolution and peace-building activities. Due to operate until mid-August, the camps typically last about two weeks, operate for a half day and are held in schools, community centres and parks. The agency said it hoped the camps would help ease stress among Palestinian children and adolescents.

There are two types of summer camp this summer: 50 summer clubs for an estimated 10,000 children aged 6-12; and 50 other camps for 7,000 adolescents aged 12-18 years. Two of those clubs in Tulkarm, in the northwest of the West Bank, will focus on remedial education to help students whose schooling has been significantly affected by the Barrier, UNICEF said. *For more information, go to: [<http://www.unicef.org>]*

Pilot project aims to boost food security

On 29 July, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced a pilot project to help Palestinian farmers reverse a three-year-long decline in food security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. With rising poverty and unemployment, food security has “deteriorated considerably over the past three years,” the agency said.

Agriculture plays a major economic and social role in the occupied Palestinian territory, and lack of physical access to agricultural lands, markets and employment is the primary cause of food insecurity, according to the mid-year review of the UN’s inter-agency Consolidated Appeal for 2004. The FAO pilot project, funded by Italy with around \$1.5m, is intended to foster urgently needed agricultural rehabilitation against a volatile political and economic background.

The project aims to support around 12,000 poor people from 1,500 farming households in rural areas of Bethlehem, Hebron and Tulkarm in the West Bank, and in the Gaza Strip, over the next two years. It will be carried out jointly by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Project activities will include replanting orchards, replacing greenhouses, installing irrigation systems and providing pest management equipment. It is also intended to support livestock production, rehabilitate rangeland, establish rainwater harvesting systems and provide training in sustainable natural resource use. *For more details, go to: [<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2004/48967/index.html>]*

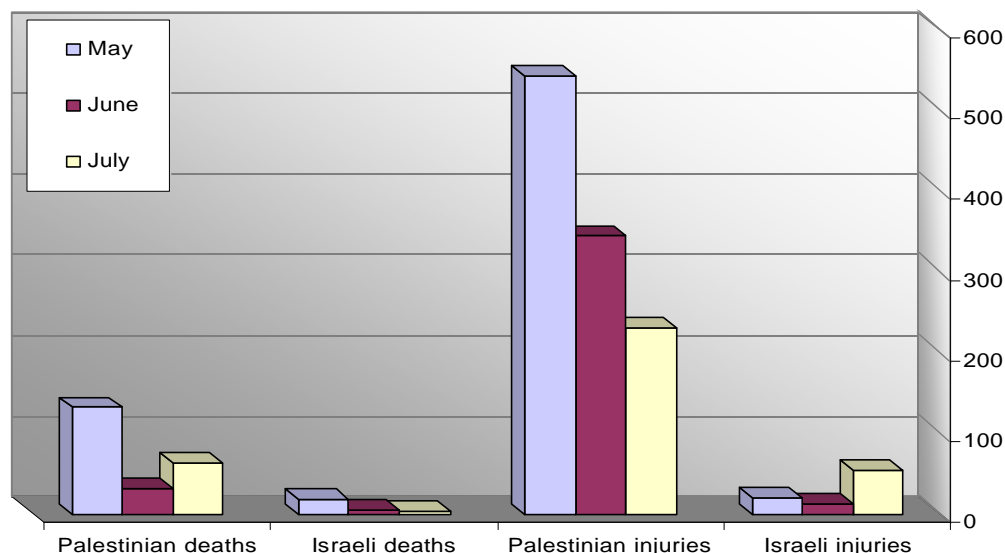
Monthly Snapshot of Humanitarian Monitoring Issues

Casualties - Between 30 June and 27 July 2004, sixty-five Palestinians were killed in the occupied Palestinian territory. Another 231 people were injured. Four Israelis were killed and 56 injured in the same period.

The number of Palestinians killed in July was almost double that in the period 2-29 June, when 33 people were killed. Another 345 Palestinians were injured in that period. Seven Israelis were killed and 14 injured between 2 and 29 June.

The number of both Palestinians and Israelis killed and injured in July was well down on the toll in May. From 28 April to 1 June, 133 Palestinians were killed and 543 injured. In that time, 19 Israelis were killed and 21 injured. Three injuries to internationals were also reported.

Graph: Number of Palestinians and Israelis Killed and Injured in May, June and July 2004



Incidents involving ambulances/medical teams – Between 30 June and 27 July, there were six incidents of ambulances or medical teams being denied access, and 14 instances of delays - ranging in length from less than one hour to five hours. In two cases, humanitarian access delayed or denied was deemed to be a contributing factor in the deaths of emergency patients [see separate report]. In another case, a woman in labour was delayed. There were eight cases where shooting or damage to ambulances were reported.

Curfews - There were 15 incidents of curfew reported between 30 June and 27 July, ranging in duration from four hours to three and a half days (in Beit Sira, Ramallah, between 30 June and 4 July). The average duration of curfews was 20 hours.

Demolitions/people displaced - One hundred and sixty five structures were demolished between 30 June and 27 July, including at least 130 homes, two workshops, one cafeteria, a tile factory, 23 stores and an olive press. Nine structures were damaged to an extent that they were no longer useable. Another 21 structures were damaged to a lesser degree.

Land reports - At least 1,400 dunums (140 hectares) of land were levelled between 30 June and 27 July, much of it agricultural. In addition, at least 870 trees were uprooted or destroyed. These numbers included one instance where it was reported that more than 1,000 dunums (100 hectares) of different crops were destroyed in Beit Hanoun, in the Gaza Strip. There are no exact figures yet available for land levelled in Beit Hanoun since the start of a major IDF operation at the end of June because the area remains inaccessible.

Sources: OCHA, FCU, PRCS, UNRWA, IDF, MoFA, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, PCHR

For more information on humanitarian monitoring issues, go to OCHA Updates at:
[<http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>]

This update will be produced regularly by OCHA oPt to capture the main events and trends of humanitarian developments in the territory. OCHA invites UN agencies, international organisations, NGOs and donors to submit contributions for future issues.

Arabic and Hebrew versions will be made available on the OCHA website.