

Humanitarian Update

1-31 October 2002

occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)

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*Maps: "Violence/Intimidation
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OVERVIEW

The period under review (October 2002) saw several major Israeli military incursions and attacks on densely populated Palestinian areas resulting in a high number of deaths and injuries as well as damages to civilian houses and infrastructure.

An Israeli missile attack on Khan Younis on 7 October, which left 14 Palestinians dead and over 80 injured, prompted the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to voice "extreme concern" over the deaths, which, he said, was an "unacceptable loss of civilian life". The UN Secretary-General issued a statement deploring an IDF attack on Rafah refugee camp on 16 October in which seven Palestinians were killed, including two children. During that attack over 20 refugee shelters were badly damaged and an UNRWA school was hit.

Concerned about the growing numbers of civilian casualties, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem issued a report on the use of live ammunition to enforce curfews ("Lethal Curfew", October 2002). Shaden Abu Hijla, a 60-year-old human rights campaigner and the mother of a UNDP staff member, was killed by live ammunition as she sat in her garden in Nablus on 11 October. During October, some 65 Palestinians were reported to have been killed by Israeli forces and close to 390 wounded¹.

Several weeks of incursions in the oPt were followed by two suicide bombings - one against a stationary bus near Hadera on 21 October, in which 14 Israelis died and more than 40 were injured, and the second - at Ariel settlement in the West Bank on 27 October, left three Israelis dead. In response to the attack near Hadera, which the UN Secretary-General condemned, Israeli forces carried out their largest offensive against Jenin (25/10) since April 2002.

There was also a marked increase in the attacks on Palestinian farmers coinciding with the start of this year's olive harvest. Israeli settlers killed at least one farmer in Arqaba while scores more were injured throughout the West Bank.

¹ The casualty data provided by PRCs indicates a 14 percent rise in the number of Palestinian casualties in October as compared with the September 2002 casualty statistics.

The Israeli Government announced that it would pull out of parts of Hebron, similar to the withdrawal of forces from Bethlehem, although it would only be partial with troops still remaining in parts of Hebron H2.

A new 19-member Palestinian cabinet was formed, although there was no significant change in the composition of the new cabinet. The first full meeting of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) on 28 October could not take place as members from Gaza were not given Israeli permits to travel to Ramallah.

The Government of Israel transferred a portion – US\$14.7m – of the revenues that it collects on the PA's behalf. This was the final payment in the three phase transfer agreed to in July 2002 as part of the measures aimed at easing Palestinian living conditions. US\$42m has now been paid out of the US\$681m that the IMF estimates Israel owes to the PA. Israel suspended payments in December 2000, and US\$14.7m represents less than a quarter of the PA's committed monthly expenditure, which was US\$ 78m by the 2nd quarter of 2002, according to the IMF.

HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS

A multi-sector UN technical assessment mission visited the oPt from 9-18 October to review current interventions and to assess the needs and assistance required for the Palestinian population. The mission was recommended by the UN Secretary General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy after her mission to the oPt and Israel in August this year. Led by the UN Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator, the mission included participation from UNRWA, UNSCO, WFP, UNICEF, FAO, UNFPA, UNESCO and the World Bank. The mission met and consulted with local UN agencies, donor government representatives, local and international NGOs, Palestinian ministries and several leading Palestinian and Israeli officials, including Mr. Nabil Sha'ath, PA Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Dr. Riyad Zanoun, PA Minister of Health, Dr. Naim Abu Hummos, PA Minister of Education, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Major General Amos Gilad. The mission will shortly produce a Humanitarian Action Plan and response mechanisms to the unfolding humanitarian crisis.

The ICRC president Mr. Jakob Kellenberger visited Israel and the oPt from 5-10 October, the first visit by an ICRC president in more than 7 years. The visit came as a result of the worsening situation and an increase in the scale of the ICRC's operation in the area. Mr. Kellenberger meet with high level Israeli and Palestinian officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Sharon and Palestinian President Arafat, and with the Presidents of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and Israel's Magen David Adom. Mr. Kellenberger conveyed the ICRC's humanitarian concerns and reminded both sides of their obligation to respect the provisions and principles of international humanitarian law.

CURFEWS DURING OCTOBER

Although eased, the curfew regime enforced by the IDF in the West Bank in October was pervasive and intense.

Compared with curfews in September, one of the harshest months in terms of the extent and duration of total closures, October saw a comparative reduction in the number of civilians affected by curfew. On average some 430,000 civilians were affected by curfews – a drop from 560,000 in September. Likewise, the geography of curfews shrank noticeably. On average 14 Palestinian localities – predominantly large urban areas and refugee camps – were placed under curfew for varied durations in the second half of October. This is in comparison with an average of 25 localities a month earlier. The towns of Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilya and Tulkarem were the hardest hit with monthly curfew hours ranging from 480 in Tulkarm to 560 in Jenin (out of a possible 720, i.e. 24 hours x 30 days). The two other major

urban areas of Hebron and Ramallah also came under curfew although with longer curfew-free hours.

THE OLIVE HARVEST

On 22 October the IDF prohibited Palestinians in West Bank villages from picking their olives saying that they could not protect them from Israeli settler violence. Later the same day the order was retracted and the IDF stated that, "Olive harvesting throughout the West Bank has been renewed, and is currently underway as planned. IDF forces in the area have been directed to allow for the harvest in the groves and to protect the workers."

The Palestinian olive harvest, which runs from early October to end-November, is critical to the local economy providing between 15-20% of all agricultural outputs, according to the PA Ministry of Agriculture. The olive harvest takes place every two years and this year's harvest was expected to give high yields. B'Tselem urgently requested on 6 October, in an open letter to Major General Moshe Kaplinski, OC Central Command, IDF and Major General Shahar Ayalon, SHAI District Commander, Israel Police Force, that all possible steps be taken to ensure that the olive harvest is "carried out without disruption", pointing out that one of their main concerns "are attacks, harassment and threats on the part of residents of certain settlements towards Palestinians harvesting their crops".

Throughout the reporting period, there were almost daily reports of settler violence and intimidation as well as frequent reports that the IDF was preventing farmers accessing their land. The most serious incidents took place in the Nablus and Hebron areas. On 6 October, settlers opened fire on olive pickers in Aqraba (near Nablus) killing one farmer and injuring two others. Yanun residents abandoned their village on 18 October because of repeated attacks from settlers (*see box*). In Jayyus (Nablus area) the IDF fired live rounds and teargas on 20 October to prevent Palestinians from picking olives. Eleven Palestinians and one international volunteer were injured. In Tuqu (Hebron area) on 22 October, settlers fired at Palestinians and international volunteers picking olives injuring three Palestinians. In Anabta, the IDF fired live rounds and teargas to prevent Palestinians from picking olives on 26 October.

There have also been several reports of Israeli settlers uprooting and/or burning olive groves. The most serious incident occurred on Saturday 12 October when settlers set fire to olive groves in Silwad and al-Mizra'a al-Sharqiyya villages east of Ramallah. The fire destroyed approximately 2,000 olive trees. According to reports from UNRWA, the IDF bulldozed areas of agricultural land in the West Bank on more than 20 occasions in October.

YANUN VILLAGE

On Friday, 18 October 2002, the last remaining residents (17 families) of Yanun village (10km south-east of Nablus) fled to the nearby village of Aqraba for fear of further settler violence. Originally home to 25 families, Yanun has, for the last four years, suffered from constant harassment and attacks from the settlers of Itamar settlement. The settlers had set up a series of "illegal outposts" surrounding the village. During October there was an increase in settler attacks due to the advent of the olive harvest.

Villagers reported that the settlers have been attacking the village on a weekly basis, which has led to one death and several people injured. The settlers, they report, have been entering the village at night on horseback with their faces covered, have been firing at the village, smashing windows, breaking doors, and they have cut off the village's water and electricity supplies.

Yanun's residents depend on agriculture and the olive harvest for their livelihood. They reported that settlers had issued a direct threat ordering them not to harvest their olives or they would be shot at whenever they attempted to enter their fields. Moreover, farms have been attacked, sheep poisoned, crops burned and shepherds prevented from reaching the pastures to tend to their flocks.

Yanun is believed to be the first case in recent years in which the entire population of a village has fled to escape settler violence and intimidation. As a result, volunteers from the Israeli-Palestinian organization Ta'ayush, Israeli volunteers, and foreign volunteers from the International Solidarity Movement went to the area intending to stay a couple of weeks to give the villagers some "protection" and to encourage their return to Yanun. *

Encouraged, some families did decide to return. However, the presence of volunteers did not deter some settlers. On Sunday 27 October, the olive pickers were again attacked by settlers and four Palestinians, including two children, and four volunteers were reported injured.

*Information from a team of NGO and UN staff who visited Yanun on 22 October.

According to UNRWA and the Land Defence Committee incidents of violence and intimidations against olive pickers occurred in 113 villages in October (see map). The most exposed area was Nablus, where incidents preventing the olive harvest was recorded in 27 villages during October.

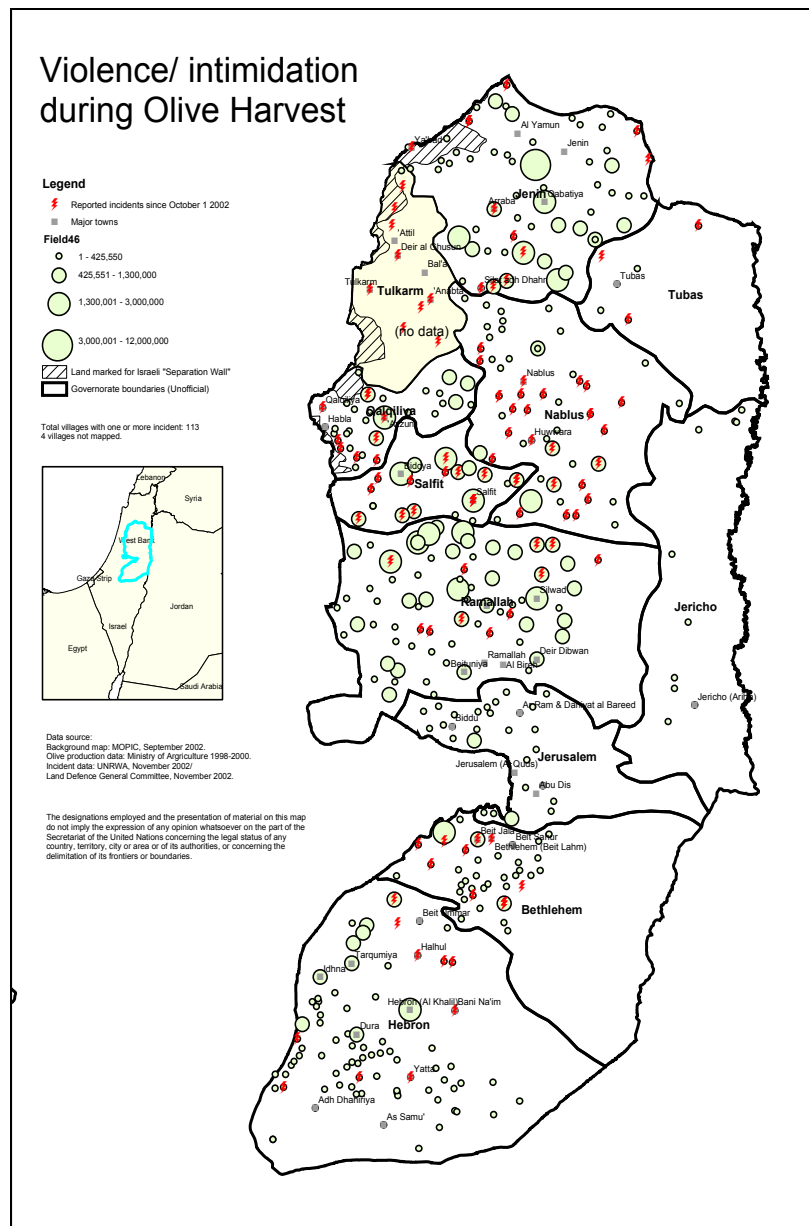
HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Strict movement restrictions remained in place for Palestinians traveling inside the West Bank and from the West Bank to Jerusalem. All UNRWA vehicles traveling to Nablus continue to experience delays at IDF checkpoints. In addition, teaching staff in the north and south West Bank are still unable to reach their schools because of curfews. The highest number of UNRWA teaching staff (120)

who was unable to get to work because of curfews was recorded on 1 October. UNRWA schools in Qalqilya, Tulkarm and Jenin were closed several times in October due to curfews. Furthermore, some UNRWA health centres have not been operating fully because of curfews. In Jenin camp the UNRWA health centre was forced to close because of curfew between 28-31 October.

Surda checkpoint, between Ramallah and Birzeit, was removed on 15 October but later re-established. The checkpoint is now open to pedestrians only although vehicles from humanitarian organizations are permitted to pass.

In Jenin, the IDF prevented Palestinian medical personnel from travelling outside the town, cutting many people off from emergency and basic health care. Medecin Sans Frontiers reports that by early October they were escorting Palestinian doctors and nurses to health points in 11 surrounding villages such as Beit Qad and Faquq'a.



Ambulances

During the large-scale IDF attack on Khan Younis on 7 October, the Palestine Red Crescent Society's (PRCS) Al Amal (Hope) City buildings, including the hospital, sustained extensive infrastructural damage. PRCS reported that the IDF also opened fire on their ambulances, which were attempting to provide emergency medical care to many of the wounded.

PRCS reported two attacks on its ambulances in the West Bank during October. In Nablus on 12 October, the IDF used an ambulance carrying patients as a shield while firing on Palestinians throwing stones near the entrance to Balata refugee camp, and on 26 October an ambulance carrying a mother and her sick baby was attacked by settlers near Huwarra checkpoint south of Nablus.

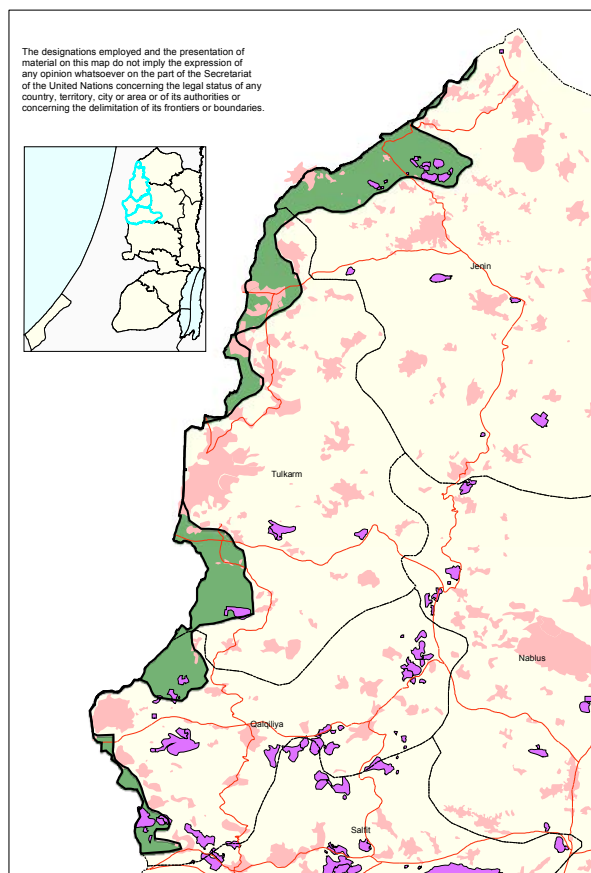
PRCS also reported that they are still facing needless delays at checkpoints. The most severe delay occurred on 19 October when an ambulance had to wait at a checkpoint for 2½ hours and then was prohibited from passing.

On 12 October a PRCS ambulance transporting a woman in labour from Kufur Sour, was unable to cross the Al-Kafryat checkpoint because it was blocked by cement blocks. The ambulance was forced to take an alternative and longer route via Al-Taybeh checkpoint. One hour later, the woman gave birth to a 7 months premature baby in the ambulance.

THE “SEPARATION WALL”²

The construction of a “separation wall” in a strip of land between the West Bank and Israel (the so-called “seam area”) continued increasing Palestinian fears of forced deportations or transfer of the mainly rural population living in or alongside this “seam area”. According to *Ha'aretz* daily newspaper (29 October), the Israel Airports Authority will continue plans, which were started in 2000, to construct five crossing points at a cost of NIS600m, including at Jalameh (north of Jenin), in the Taibeh area between Tulkarem and Qalqilia, at the Atarot junction between Ramallah and Jerusalem, and near Tarqumiya (southern West Bank).

According to B'Tselem's report “The Separation Barrier: Position Paper” (September 2002), at least 8 villages, home to more than 10,000 Palestinians, will be left stranded between the northern segment of the wall and the Green Line (1967 border between the oPt and Israel) and cut off from the rest of the West Bank while thousands of dunums of agricultural land will be



² Map by HIC/OCHA; Data Source: MOPIC. Shaded areas indicate affected regions where construction is underway or being planned.

confiscated. When finished, the wall erected around Qalqilya is expected to surround the town leaving only one entrance on the eastern side. This will not only severely affect the population in Qalqilya, but also the surrounding rural population, which depends on Qalqilya for a number of services, including health care.

The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights & the Environment (LAW) petitioned the Israeli High Court on 14 October on behalf of 49 Palestinian landowners to stop the Israeli confiscation of their land around Qalqilya for the building of the “separation wall”.

UNRWA reports that the IDF confiscated 2,600 dunums of land and uprooted hundreds of trees in Izbet Salman and Izbet Jilad on 20 October for the construction of the “separation wall” The IDF has also levelled wide areas of agricultural land in Jayyus, near Qalqilya, and in the Tulkarm and Hebron areas, also for the construction of the “separation wall”.

Ongoing Relief Efforts

HEALTH

On 25 October, Health Inforum called upon the international community, UN agencies and donors to urgently assist in distributing medical supplies from the Ministry of Health Central Stores in Ramallah to hospitals and primary health care centres in other districts of the West Bank. This request came in response to the inability of MOH staff to carry out the distribution because of the ongoing closures. There was an urgent need to move kidney dialysis solutions, medicines for chronic diseases and other medical supplies to the districts.

CARE/USAID released the final report of their Rapid Nutrition Assessment in the West Bank and Gaza. According to the report, the situation in the West Bank is marked by a prevalence of acute malnutrition among children under five, while numbers from the Gaza Strip indicate that Gaza faces a humanitarian emergency in regards to global acute malnutrition, which can lead to serious development delays.

Around 60 Palestinian surgeons and senior medical staff attended an ICRC seminar on war surgery in Ramallah on 15-16 October. Led by an ICRC surgeon, this seminar was part of a series on war surgery training organized by the ICRC in co-ordination with the Palestinian Ministry of Health. The programme was designed to facilitate the exchange of ideas and a sharing of experiences on the care of the injured. The last seminar in this series was held in Nablus during 21-27 October, and Palestinian surgeons and senior medical staff from Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqilya and Salfit attended.

On 17 October, an ICRC team visited the Mawasi closed area in the south of the Gaza Strip and delivered medicines and medical supplies to two health clinics.

FOOD SECURITY

According to the Rapid Nutritional Assessment for the West Bank and Gaza Strip (CARE/John Hopkins University and Al-Quds University) more than 50% of the sampled households in the West Bank and Gaza reported to have reduced their food consumption on more than one occasion during the last two weeks of the survey. The main reasons given were curfews and lack of money.

Recent statistics provided by the ICRC, UNRWA and WFP indicate that over 50 percent of the Palestinian population is currently receiving some form of food aid.

FOOD AID DISTRIBUTIONS

Agency/Organization	Location	Beneficiaries
UNRWA (food parcels)	58 locations in West Bank Gaza	97,912 119,911
ICRC (Rural Relief Programme – food distribution)	207 villages in West Bank areas of Ramallah, Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, Jericho and Qalqilya	92,208
ICRC (Voucher Program – also includes non food items)	Hebron, Jericho, Nablus, Qalqilya Tulkarem, Bethlehem, Ramallah	96,894
ICRC (family parcels)	Nablus, Hebron (H2), Jenin	38,352
World Vision & coalition of 6 Christian organizations	Nablus	16,200
WFP	Throughout West Bank and Gaza	96,970
Total		558,447

WFP

In total 1, 834 tons of wheat flour, rice and vegetable oil was distributed by WFP's implementing partners – CRS, PARC and CHF.

WFP met with the Israeli Port Authorities in mid-October to resolve the problem of the delays in the transportation of basic commodities through the Shejayieh/Karni crossing, the goods terminal between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli authorities agreed that WFP would be permitted to transport a maximum of 20 containers per day of priority goods, and up to a total of 80 containers per week. WFP aims to build an emergency buffer stock in the Gaza Strip and a new WFP warehouse is expected to be operational shortly.

ICRC

ICRC vouchers were distributed for the second consecutive month in Hebron and Jericho between 7-10 October, and for the first time vouchers were distributed in Nablus and Bethlehem between 14-20 October. This was the first distribution of vouchers in Nablus due to the prolonged curfew in the town. In addition to vouchers, food parcels were distributed in Nablus as an emergency response following the delay ICRC has experienced in providing assistance to the non-refugee population. The distribution of emergency parcels was done in close coordination with WFP and the municipality. ICRC did also manage to deliver food parcels to Jenin during 21-27 October. As soon as the situation eases these parcels will be distributed to families in particular need of assistance. From 21-27 October families in Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarm and Qalqilya received a monthly voucher for essential food and non food items.

Further voucher distributions in the other main towns in the West Bank are under preparation, except for Jenin where the security situation is preventing distribution.

In Hebron's Old City the prolonged curfew prevented the regular distribution of aid in the first half of the month. In the period 14-27 October, distribution of food parcels was made to 2,000 families.

WATER

The ICRC is currently facilitating access to water for several villages in the West Bank that are not connected to a water network. Some 1,300 vulnerable households received 10,000 liters of potable water for the months of August and September. As of 9 October, 1,254 households in the Yatta and Dura areas (Hebron Governorate, south West Bank) were receiving water for domestic use. The programme, which covers basic domestic water needs, will be extended to 2,500 households and will run to the end of the dry season (November).

Due to the current IDF incursions into Jenin Camp and technical problems with the central water pump the camp experienced a severe water shortage the last week of October. The water shortage was alleviated by CARE who brought in six water tankers which currently supply 150 households daily with clean water for domestic use. CARE plans to increase their supplies to cover approximately 500 households daily.

The Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) released the third report from their Water and Sanitation, Hygiene Monitoring Project. A total of 101 communities were surveyed. Of these 16 communities report relatively low water consumption (less than 30 liters daily). In 47 communities, more than 55 % of the population reported that they are not able to pay their water bills, and 17 communities, which rely on tankered water, reported that the cost of tankered water is higher than 20 NIS per m³. The highest price registered (40 NIS per m³) was in Beit Mirsim, Hebron.

For more information about PHG WaSH Monitoring Project see:

<http://www.phg.org/monitoring/monitoring.html>

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