



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
occupied Palestinian territory

## Humanitarian Update – January 2005

### **I. Overview**

**II. Donor contributions to the oPt:** \$21 million for health of Palestinian mothers and children; \$2 million for women entrepreneurs; USAID launches construction of water supply system for Hebron

**III. New Humanitarian report:** Physicians for Human Rights: Gaza healthcare

**IV. Events in January affecting the humanitarian situation:** Update on Gaza Strip crossing points: Rafah, Karni and Sufa; Two Palestinian children killed; Al Walaja demolitions; Barrier construction near Ariel settlement resumes

**V. Humanitarian monitoring issues-** Casualties, Access, Curfews, Demolitions, Land Levelling

### **I. Overview**

In January, Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, was sworn in as the new Palestinian Authority (PA) president. Palestinians, Israelis and international observers reported that the election went relatively smoothly. However, despite the prevailing optimism following the elections, violence continued. During January, 70 Palestinians were killed including 12 children and 164 were injured. Ten Israelis were killed, and 61 injured.<sup>1</sup>

Palestinian voters in 10 localities voted 27 January in the first-ever municipal elections in the Gaza Strip. The voting followed a round of municipal elections in West Bank communities in December.

### **II. Donor contributions to the oPt**

#### **\$21 million for health of Palestinian mothers and children**

In January, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a three-year \$21 million project aimed at enhancing the quality of health and nutrition services available to Palestinian mothers and children.

The new primary healthcare venture is, among other things, intended to include upgrading essential diagnostic, treatment, and counseling skills of healthcare providers; enhance the management skills of clinic managers; and introduce effective health education messages. The project's initial targets will be to improve the availability of essential services and counseling for women of reproductive age; to upgrade well-baby care and infant and child nutrition; and to improve the management of common childhood illnesses.

The project will have two main offices, one in Ramallah and one in Gaza City with three satellite offices, located in Hebron, Nablus and Khan Younis. *For more information, please see* [<http://www.usaid.gov/>]

#### **\$2 million for women entrepreneurs**

The US government said it is releasing \$2 million to the "Palestine for Credit & Development" organisation, FATEN, to support micro-finance activities for Palestinian women. The \$2 million will be used to provide small loans to an estimated 3,000 women entrepreneurs seeking to establish or improve their businesses. FATEN, an independent Palestinian not-for-profit corporation, has five offices in the Gaza Strip and five in the West Bank. *For more information, please see* [<http://www.usaid.gov/>]

<sup>1</sup> January figures reflect casualties between 29 December 2004 and 1 February 2005.

## **USAID launches construction of a water supply system for Hebron**

Also in January, USAID began construction of a \$30 million water supply system that will provide fresh clean water to 200,000 Palestinians living in the Hebron area. The water supply system is part of a package of projects funded by USAID.

The new system will be constructed in the Bani Naim area and will directly service Bani Naim, Yatta and 17 villages of West Hebron for a total of 200,000 beneficiaries. The construction is expected to be completed by June 2006 when operation of the new system will become the responsibility of the Palestinian Water Authority.

The project is being implemented by American Intercontinental Constructors LLC and the Palestinian construction firm Saqqa and Khoudary Co. Ltd. The construction project is expected to generate 7,200 person days of employment for skilled workers and 15,000 person days of work for unskilled labourers. *For more information, please see: [http://www.usaid.gov/]*

## **III. New Humanitarian Report Gaza Strip healthcare**

Physicians for Human Rights, an Israeli NGO, stated in a new report entitled “The Morning After” that many Palestinian patients could die if they are not provided with access to life-saving medical treatment in Israel and abroad, after Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The organisation concluded that Israel must allow Gaza Strip residents in need of medical attention to travel abroad freely for treatment. Gazans are dependant on hospitals in Israel, Egypt and Jordan for advanced medical care including catherization and cardiac surgery, burn treatments, pediatric cardiology, neurosurgery, radiotherapy and many types of transplants and medical tests.

According to the report, between 1998 and 2004 the rate of physicians in the Gaza Strip fell by 13% (from 0.86 physicians per 1,000 inhabitants to 0.75) and the number of nurses fell by 36% (from 1.4 to 0.9), while the Palestinian population rate continued to grow. *For more information, please see: [http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/pfhr-israelgaza-27jan.pdf]*

## **IV. Events Affecting the Humanitarian Situation**

### **1. Update on Gaza Strip Crossings:**

Following a series of deadly attacks by Palestinian militants on Israelis at the Rafah and Karni crossing points, the Israeli authorities closed the two terminals for most of the month of January. Rafah crossing is the principal entry and exit point for most of the 1.4 million Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip and Karni is the main commercial crossing point for Gaza. There are two other crossings into Gaza: Sufa, which is limited to building goods and a few Palestinian labourers working in the Negev, and Erez crossing, which has been closed to Palestinian workers since 31 August 2004. The humanitarian and economic impact of the closures of Rafah and Karni crossing points was significant.

#### **a. Rafah Terminal**

On 12 December 2004, the IDF closed the crossing for arrivals into Gaza for 40 days until 21 January. It also closed the terminal for departures (except for some medical patients) from Gaza until 1 February. This closure constituted the longest period of uninterrupted closure of the terminal in the last five years. Since 17 April 2004, Palestinian males aged between 16 and 35 have generally been forbidden to leave Gaza through the Rafah crossing.

During the last year, Rafah has become the main exit point for Palestinian residents of Gaza seeking medical treatment and travel abroad. Prior to this, Erez crossing in northern Gaza also served as an

exit point. However, following four suicide bomb attacks on Erez in early 2004, the Israeli authorities tightened security restrictions to the point, where today only the most senior Palestinian Authority officials are able to cross Erez. *For more information, please see: Situation Report Rafah Terminal at [http://www.ochaopt.org]*

### **b. Karni Crossing**

Following two weeks of closure, Israel opened the Karni crossing (for commercial goods) in the northern Gaza Strip for several hours in the morning on January 28, allowing items to be exported from the Gaza Strip. The terminal had been closed following an attack at the crossing, which killed six Israelis. In February, Karni was reopened for daily operations, although with reduced capacity.

During the closure of Karni, the IDF reported that it had allowed 74 trucks loaded with sugar, rice, meat and dairy produce from the World Food Programme to cross through Sufa between 23 January and 3 February.

## **2. Two Palestinian children killed in Gaza**

A 3-year-old Palestinian girl was struck dead by gunfire while she was sitting in her house in the central Gaza Strip. The girl's family reported that the IDF opened fire in the direction of the family's living area.

In another incident, Palestinian officials said that a 10-year-old Palestinian girl was shot and killed by Israeli tank fire while she was inside an UNRWA school area in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip. A second girl was also wounded. The IDF was investigating the report.

## **3. Demolitions in Al Walaja - Bethlehem**

On 17 January, Israeli forces demolished four homes, two metal structures and five animal shelters in Ain Jawaizeh, the northern section of the Palestinian village of Al Walaja, located in the Bethlehem governorate. One house was occupied by a family who has since been forced to relocate to Bethlehem.

The Israeli authorities claimed that they demolished these buildings since they were constructed without permits.

Originally part of the West Bank, Israel incorporated this area of Al-Walaja village into its Jerusalem municipal boundaries following 1967. Palestinians living in the area were not provided with Jerusalem residency and remained West Bank residents. However, the land eventually fell under Jerusalem municipal building laws which made it difficult for West Bank residents to apply for building permits.

Today, the Ain Jawaizeh residents remain in the precarious situation whereby they are 'illegally' residing on their own land and have difficulty in obtaining permits to build homes on their properties. In the last two years, 17 Palestinian houses have been demolished in Ain Jawaizeh on the grounds of lacking permits. According to the Palestinian Monitoring Group, 53 other houses in Ain Jawaizeh have been issued demolition orders.

The splitting of the village between Jerusalem municipal lines and the West Bank has caused other problems for the village. This month, two private buses and four vehicles used by local residents in both parts of the village were confiscated by the Israeli Border Police for trespassing illegally into Israel. Following a successful petition in court, the buses were released, since they provide a critical connection for the residents to and from Bethlehem.

Land confiscation orders issued by the IDF in August 2003 show that the route of the Barrier will completely surround the residents of the village, allowing them only one entry/exit point. Currently, the two main access routes for the village to Bethlehem are both closed by a series of trenches and an IDF checkpoint. The only access road leading to Jerusalem, is exclusively used by Israeli settlers from the adjacent settlement of Har Gilo or by Palestinians with special permits.

#### **4. Barrier construction near Israeli settlement Ariel**

In January, Israel resumed construction of a 4-kilometre Barrier-like segment near the West Bank Israeli settlement Ariel. Attorney General Menachem Mazuz approved the work. Israel said it was building separate individual fences around Ariel and other settlements in the area and will decide at a later date whether to connect them to the already constructed Barrier. On 11 February, the Israeli High Court suspended construction.

### **V. Monthly snapshot of humanitarian monitoring issues**

**Casualties** – Between 29 December 2004 and 1 February, 70 Palestinians were killed, and at least 164 were injured. Ten Israeli were killed and 61 were injured in the same period.<sup>2</sup>

**Incidents involving ambulances/medical teams** – There were four incidents of an ambulance or medical team being denied access, and 14 reported incidents of delays. In one of the incidents, on 22 January a woman delivered her baby inside a Palestine Red Crescent Society ambulance that was delayed for 35 minutes at Al Tuffah checkpoint in the Gaza Strip. In a further seven incidents, shooting or damage to an ambulance was reported.

**Curfews** – There were at least 15 incidents of curfew reported, one in excess of three days in Seida, Tulkarm Governorate.

**Demolitions/people displaced** – At least 33 structures were demolished in the oPt between 29 December 2004 and 1 February 2005 most of which were residential homes. A further 24 structures were partially destroyed and another 48 were damaged to a lesser extent. Between 31 December 2004 and 2 January in Khan Younis (included in the above), 13 houses were demolished and another seven houses partially destroyed. Another 39 houses sustained damages of varying degrees. Thirty-eight families (255 people) were made homeless. Severe damage to the infrastructure in Khan Younis was also reported.

**Land levelling and requisitions** – At least 137 dunums (13.7 hectares) of land were levelled. There were additional reports of land levelling, mostly for Barrier construction, where it was not possible to estimate the amount of land involved. Furthermore, requisition orders for at least 500 dunums (50 hectares) of land were issued or received. *For more details, please see Humanitarian Briefing Notes at: [http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/]*

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

*For more information on humanitarian monitoring issues, go to OCHA Updates at: [http://www.ochaopt.org/]*

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*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.*

*An Arabic and Hebrew version will be made available on the OCHA website: [http://www.ochaopt.org/]*

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<sup>2</sup> Chart reflects monthly reporting periods. For example, January figures reflect casualties between 29 December 2004 and 1 February 2005.