



Special Focus: The Closure of Hebron's Old City

Following attacks on Israeli military personnel in June and July, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) placed seven iron gates across roads leading to the Old Suq (market) in Hebron. These gates complete the encirclement of the Old Suq area and its 2,500 residents. The Old Suq is located within the larger area of what is called H2 – the 20% of Hebron under the direct control of the IDF.

The IDF security measures to protect Hebron's settlements from Palestinian attacks together with violent settler activity have led to a critical humanitarian and economic situation for the H2 Palestinian population. Once the centre of Hebron's commercial and cultural life, the Old Suq it is now virtually deserted. (See maps for locations referred to in the text below).

Hebron is the only West Bank city with Jewish settlements inside its urban area: around 600 settlers live in the four settlements of Avraham Avinu, Beit Romano, Beit Hadassah and Tel Rumeida¹. Approximately 1,500 IDF soldiers are also present to secure these settlements. Two larger Jewish settlements (Kiryat Arba and Givat Harsina with a combined population of 6,400) sit on the hills overlooking the Hebron's eastern neighbourhoods.



OCHA – Steve Sabella | Israeli settler exiting the Machpela Synagogue | Hebron city | June 2005

The focus of H2 is the Ibrahimi Mosque / Cave Machpela, a religious site for both Muslims and Jews housing the tombs of Abraham, Rebecca, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah and Leah.

Hebron is the second largest West Bank city with a Palestinian population of 170,000², of which around 35,000 live in H2.

Restrictions and Closures in H2

The industrial area of H2 is cut off from roads used to bring in raw materials and transport goods to markets. Rural farmers cannot access the city's markets to sell their produce and outsiders no longer come to the Old Suq to sell goods.

Physical obstacles

As of August 2005, 101 closures exist in H2. Many of these block the exits from the Old Suq toward Al Shohada Street or onto Prayer's Road – the road that is restricted for Israeli settlers to travel to Ibrahimi Mosque / Cave Machpela. Seventeen checkpoints prevent Palestinians driving or walking inside H2. Palestinians who live beyond the checkpoints are required to be registered with the IDF to reach their homes. In the Wadi Al Gruz area, for example, a Palestinian neighbourhood between the settlements of Kiryat Arba and Givat Harsina, the combination of earthmounds, road blocks and gates has isolated approximately 65 families from the rest of the city.

History of H2

In January 1997 the Israel Defense Forces withdrew from some 80% of the Hebron municipal territory.

Under the Hebron Protocol, a distinction is made between Hebron's "H1" and "H2" areas. The Palestinian Police Forces (PPF) exercises full control over "H1".

In the remaining part of the city, "H2", Israel maintains military presence, as well as control over various aspects of Palestinian daily life. Palestinian civil institutions operate under certain restrictions imposed by the Israeli military administration. "H2" covers approximately 20% of the municipal territory. It comprises the entire Old Suq and areas adjacent to the Jewish settlements.

In January 1997, Israel and the PLO signed "The Agreement on the Temporary International Presence in the City of Hebron"- (TIPH). Norway, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey provided personnel for a civilian observer mission to monitor and report on misconduct by either side in the conflict.

For more information, please see: [http:// www.tiph.org]

Restrictions on roads

Access and movement restrictions exist for Palestinians on all roads that run between, toward or adjacent to settlements. Students from Cordoba school, which is located on Al Shohada Street, for example, cannot use the main road and have to take a detour around the southern side of the school across fields to avoid crossing the path of settlers along Al Shohada Street.

Security roads and buffer zones

The encroachment of security roads around Kiryat Arba and Givat Harsina settlements onto Palestinian agricultural land has meant that farmers are required to pass through gates and obtain prior coordination with the IDF to reach their land. In July 2005, the IDF issued a military order confiscating land for a 6-km road around the two settlements. This will be the third security road built around Kiryat Arba to enlarge its security buffer zone.

Security roads have also been built to link the large settlement of Kiryat Arba to the settlements in H2. In August 2004 one of these roads on the eastern side of the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of Machpela destroyed houses dating back to the Ottoman and Mamluck period.³

There are additional plans by the IDF to create another security road from the settlement of Tel Rumeida to the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of Machpela cutting through Hebron's Islamic cemetery.

Closure on commercial activities

Military orders closing shops, prolonged curfews in 2001 and 2002, and settler harassment have emptied the Old Suq of trade. Shopkeepers resort to a back-to-back system of transportation (moving goods from one vehicle to another) at the gates to bring in goods. The wholesale and vegetable markets have relocated from H2 to H1. Al Shohada Street has been deserted by Palestinians with the road restricted for the use of Israelis.

Settler violence

Violent settler activity appears aimed at pushing Palestinian families out of the Old Suq area, particularly those living close to settlements. Families living around Tel Rumeida settlement, for example, are subject to daily attacks. Metal netting has been erected above the sections of Old Shalala Street and in the Old Suq running under the settlements of Beit Hadassah and Avraham Avinu from where settlers throw garbage and stones to discourage movement below.

In other areas, IDF escorts are needed by those who wish to leave their homes. As a result, many families have chosen to relocate. Palestinian schoolgirls attending Cordoba school on Al Shohada Street for example, are routinely harassed while walking to and from the school by settler children.

Humanitarian impact of closure and violence

Education: In areas close to settlements, school attendance and pupils' performance are dropping. Attendance in the three schools closest to the settlements – Al Ibrahimiyye, Cordoba and Al Fayhaa schools – has dropped by almost 50% since September 2000 because the children cannot study in unsafe conditions.



OCHA – Steve Sabella | Protective metal net below Avraham Avinu Settlement | Hebron city | June 2005

Figure 1: Attendance in schools close to settlements

School/year	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05
Cordoba	194	196	148	139	85	88
Al Fayhaa	327	335	269	253	207	222
Al Ibrahimiyye	532	539	428	401	309	352

Source: Department of Education of Hebron

The Department of Education records of the pass rate for the 2005 final year Tawjihi exams show students in H2 fare well below the average for the city, with the schools in the Old City – Tariq ibn Ziad and Abd Al Khaleq – ranking 40 and 41 out of a total of 43 schools in Hebron.

Restricted access for emergency services

Movement restrictions imposed in H2 and along Prayer's Road mean that medical evacuations are either delayed or denied. Ambulances cannot reach H2 or the eastern side of Hebron (Wadi Al Gruz). The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) estimates that, as a direct result of the closures in the Old City, the time to reach patients has increased from 7 to 17 minutes; when coordination with the IDF is necessary (usually to pass through a checkpoint), the average time is 47 minutes.

The unreliability of emergency medical care from the H2 area has meant that pregnant women take the precaution of moving to friends' and relatives' houses in H1. The PRCS reports a drop in the request for ambulance from H2 patients from three to one per day in the last five years.

Hebron's Fire Department is located in H1 and is often delayed from responding to calls. Between September 2000 and January 2004, the department responded to 120 calls from H2 with an average waiting time of 15 minutes to obtain the authorization to access the area. In 38 cases, the department waited for more than one hour.

Restrictions on PA and other services

The Ministry of Supply, the Ministry of Information, the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, the Al Waqf, the Union of Agricultural Workers Committee and the Women's Association have relocated from the Old Suq to areas less affected by the closures.

Restrictions on commerce

The Old Suq of Hebron was an important West Bank market. Most shops are currently closed either by military order or due to the general economic decline resulting from closure. According to the Ministry of National Economy there were 1,610 shops licensed in H2 before September 2000. Currently, more than 1,000 shops are closed, one-third by military order. Of the 650 shops and storage places still located in the Old Suq, just 10% are functioning according to the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee.

Livelihoods

Without work opportunities for H2 residents, poverty in H2 has increased. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of National Economy the average income per household in H2 is about NIS 700 per month, well below the poverty line. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) initiated a monthly distribution of food parcels in 2002 to almost 2,500 households in H2 that includes all of the Old Suq residents. It is the only food assistance programme that the ICRC still continues in the West Bank.

II. New humanitarian reports:

B'Tselem: "Means of Expulsion"

According to a B'Tselem report "Means of Expulsion", Israel has made an ongoing effort to try to expel some one thousand Palestinians who live in caves in the southern Hebron hills. In addition to the threat of expulsion, the cave residents are victims of violence and property damage from the residents of nearby settlements, the Israeli information centre report says.

Israel contends that expulsion of the cave residents is justified because they are not permanent residents of the area, and that the expulsion is an "imperative military need" – a contention that B'Tselem says is "baseless". *For more information, please see: [http://www.btselem.org/]*

Palestinian children killed in 2004

According to the Defence for Children International/Palestine Section (DCI/PS) Annual Report 2004, 162 Palestinian children (including 130 in the Gaza Strip) were killed by Israeli troops and settlers, and many thousands were harmed. The region that suffered the second greatest number of child fatalities after the Gaza Strip was Nablus with 19 deaths. *For more information, please see: [http://www.dci-pal.org/1]*

UNICEF donor update

According to UNICEF's oPt donor update, US \$8.2 million is urgently needed for health services, educational and psychosocial support for Palestinian children. Chronic malnutrition in children under five has now increased to almost 10% from eight percent in the year 2000 - meaning that approximately 100,000 children have not grown to the normal height for their age, and will never be able to make up the deficit, according to UNICEF. Furthermore, basic equipment for maternal and newborn health is lacking and maintaining the polio-free status as well as sustaining high immunisation coverage rates has been a challenge. *For more information, please see: [http://www.unicef.org/]*

III. Humanitarian assistance to the oPt

WFP providing for Palestinian food needs

Basic food needs of both the Palestinian chronic and "new poor" are being provided through World Food Programme (WFP) distributions of monthly family rations. In the West Bank, from 14 to 21 July, 154,960 beneficiaries received a total of 2,465 tons of WFP food commodities. In the Gaza Strip, during the same period, a total of 15,595 families (58,775 beneficiaries), received a total of 1,445 tons of WFP food.

As part of contingency planning and anticipating potential restrictions in access to the Gaza Strip during and post disengagement, WFP has provided all beneficiaries (58,775 individuals) with an advance

ration for July and August and has in addition pre-positioned food equivalent to more than 5,800 tons throughout the Gaza Strip to cover all current beneficiaries until the end August. Some 9,350 people (1,336 families) living in areas close to Israeli settlements, where movement of the population may be restricted due to military operations, have received a three-month general distribution. *For more information, please see: [http://www.wfp.org]*

Yatta's new reservoir

A new reservoir in Yatta, the West Bank, became functional in July and is planned to solve the chronic water problems of Yatta's 48,000 residents by providing consistent and inexpensive water. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) contributed \$250,000 for the construction of the reservoir and an asphalt road to facilitate access by maintenance personnel. The Yatta municipality donated and levelled the land and provided the equipment. Before the new reservoir was built, inconsistent water pressure left some areas of the city with just 20 litres of water per person per day – only 20% of what the World Health Organization considers the minimum for domestic consumption.

UNRWA New shelters for Rafah homeless

On 4 July, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) handed over 109 new homes to 116 families from Rafah refugee camp whose shelters have been destroyed by the Israeli military during the last four years.

In total in the Gaza Strip, 775 shelters for 831 families have so far been rebuilt and another 148 shelters for 165 families are under construction. Plans for an additional 1,210 funded shelters for 1,285 families are currently underway in Rafah. However, UNRWA still needs approximately US \$28 million to cover the backlog requirement for a further 1,263 new shelters to house 1,352 homeless refugee families throughout the Gaza Strip. *For more information, please see: [http://www.un.org/unrwa/]*

USAID road construction

USAID financed a US \$400,000 construction of 3 kilometres of new road in Yaa'bad, in the northern West Bank. Yaa'bad, once an important commercial and social centre for more than 13,000 farmers from surrounding villages, had become nearly inaccessible over the past three years, according to USAID. USAID plans to reconstruct another six roads in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at a total cost of US \$12 million during the next few months, with construction work on roads in Tulkarm and Western Hebron expected soon. *For more information, please see: [http://www.usaid.gov/]*

LIFE inaugurates two medical facilities in oPt

Life for Relief & Development with the cooperation of American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), and PRCS, has inaugurated two medical centres in the oPt. The medical centres, built in Jaba village in southwestern Jenin in the West Bank and in Jabaliya, in the northern area of Gaza Strip, will provide general and emergency related care in addition to social services. LIFE funded the construction of the centres valued at more than \$290,000.

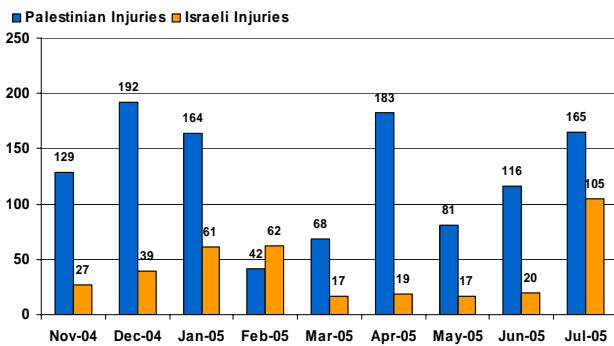
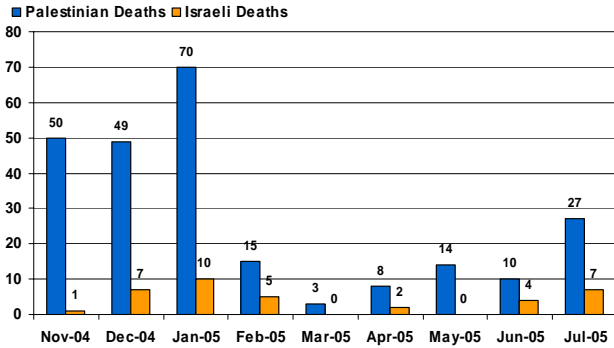
Save the Children Palestinian children's summer camps

Starting 10 July, Palestinian children from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip began participating in Save the Children USA-sponsored summer camps. Through funding from USAID, Save the Children USA will directly fund 354 summer camps. An additional 313 summer camps will be provided with materials to support the implementation of psychosocial support group of activities in 667

summer camps. It is anticipated that approximately 80,000 children will directly benefit from the summer camps. *For more information, please see: [http://www.usaid.gov/]*

II. Monitoring Issues

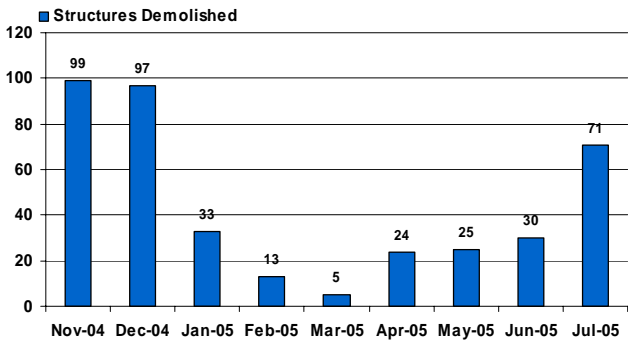
Casualties: Palestinian and Israeli Deaths



Causalities | Increase in violence

Violence increased notably in July: 27 Palestinians were killed and 165 were injured; and seven Israelis were killed and 105 were injured. Most Israeli casualties were a result of the 12 July suicide bombing in Netanya. Israel imposed closure on the oPt following the attack affecting access for thousands of Palestinians to their places of employment and essential services. Seven internationals were also reported injured. More casualties were reported in July than any other month in 2005, aside from January 2005.

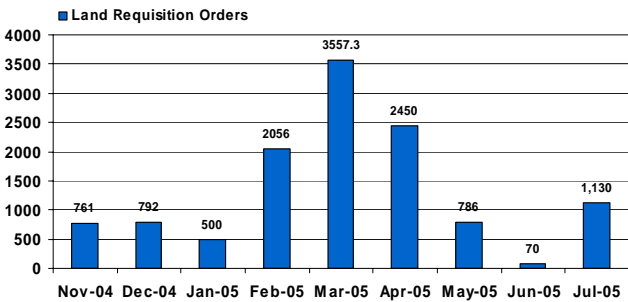
Structurs demolished



Structures demolished / people affected

Approximately 71 structures were demolished in July, which resulted in the displacement of many Palestinians. In one incident on 5 July, 170 Palestinians were displaced when the IDF demolished 22 structures, including the village school in Khirbet Tana east of Beit Furik (Nablus). The entire village was demolished except for two structures and the mosque. The residents had received notice one day prior to the demolitions - a piece of paper left outside one dwelling that stated that the houses had been built without Israeli permission.

Land Requisition Orders



Land levelling/requisition/trees destroyed⁴

At least 9.5 dunums (0.95 hectares) of land were levelled and at least 1,130 dunums (113 hectares) of land were requisitioned or confiscated. In addition, 50 trees were reported uprooted and on 25 July, Israeli settlers from Khamish settlement uprooted trees and plants on 5 dunums (5 hectares) of land belonging to Beitillu village. There are many additional reports of land levelling, mostly for Barrier construction and for new roads and Israeli security infrastructure. However, it was not possible to estimate the amount land levelled.

¹ Not all are permanent residents – approximately 200 are yeshiva students

² PCBS 2005 mid-year projections.

³ See OCHA Humanitarian Update December 2003.

⁴ 4 dunums = 1 acre; 10 dunums = 1 hectare

Hebron Old City - status of closure

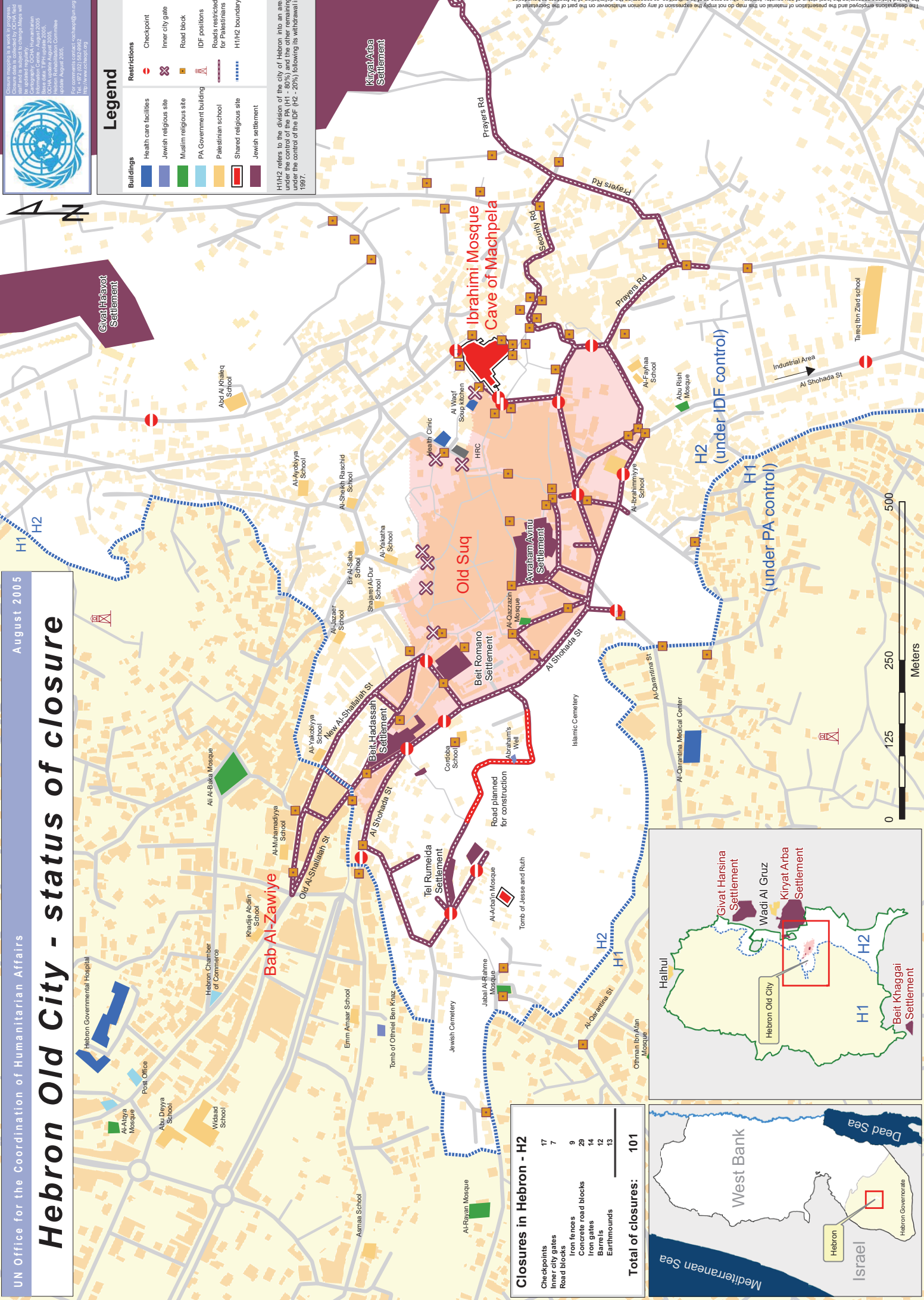


Closure information is a work in progress. Closure data is collected by OCHA field offices through regular visits to the affected population. Category: OCHA Humanitarian. Date: 15 August 2005. Data date: 15 August 2005. OCHA update August 2005. For comments contact: ocha@un.org Tel: +972 (0) 1522-9892 Fax: +972 (0) 1522-9893

Legend

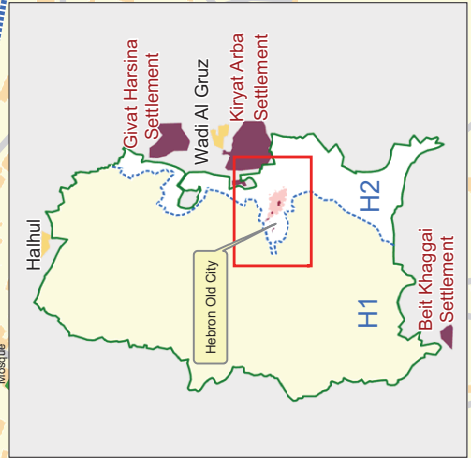
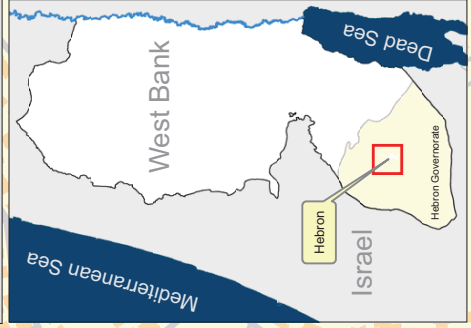
Buildings	Restrictions
Health care facilities	Checkpoint
Jewish religious site	Inner city gate
Muslim religious site	Road block
PA Government building	IDF positions
Palestinian school	Roads restricted for Palestinians
Shared religious site	H1/H2 boundary
Jewish settlement	

H1/H2 refers to the division of the city of Hebron into an area under the control of the PA (H1 - 80%) and the other remaining under the control of the IDF (H2 - 20%) following its withdrawal in 1997.



Closures in Hebron - H2

Checkpoints	17
Inner city gates	7
Road blocks	9
Iron fences	29
Concrete road blocks	14
Iron gates	12
Barbed wire	13
Earthmounds	13
Total of closures:	101



The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNCTAD or the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its boundaries or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.