



December Overview

The extensive violence and high casualties from the Israeli military operation that began on 27 December in Gaza, overshadowed much of the difficult situation that had prevailed during the rest of the month. On early November, six weeks before the expiration of the Egypt-negotiated “calm”, the Israeli army killed six Palestinian militants during its first ground incursion into the Gaza Strip since the “calm”. Palestinian militants reacted with heavy barrages of rockets fired towards Israel that continued through the end of December. The escalation in tension in November resulted in an intensification of the 18-month blockade, which peaked in the middle of December with a total closure of Gaza crossings for eight consecutive days, including for humanitarian supplies and fuel. This was the second longest period of total closure since the Hamas take-over in June 2007.

Overall for the month, until 26 December, the Israeli authorities, citing security risks, allowed a daily average of 30 truckloads to enter Gaza (compared to 475 truckloads before the Hamas takeover). Beginning the day before the Israeli military operation and lasting through the end of the month the daily average of truckloads more than doubled.

The compounded effects of the low truckload imports and the December closure culminated on 18 December when UNRWA suspended its food assistance program to 750,000 residents of Gaza due to the depletion of its wheat grain stocks. The situation in December generated other peaks:

- the shortage of over 100 essential pharmaceuticals in the Gaza Strip;
- the suspension of cash distribution by the Ministry of Social Affairs and UNRWA to more than 100,000 of the poorest families in Gaza due to the lack of cash notes;
- the shutting down of the Gaza power plant five times throughout the month affecting over half a million residents and all aspects of daily life, including sanitation, water and power supply to households, schools, and civilian institutions;
- the doubling of the amount of raw sewage dumped into the sea (to 40 million litres), due to the absence of power and fuel for the wastewater treatment plant;
- the closing of almost all cooking gas distribution centers in Gaza, due to the lack of gas supplies;
- 60% of the population receiving running water only once every 5-7 days.



Heavy smoke from air strikes. Gaza City, 27 December. Photo by Ahmed Abu Sall.

Days before the Israeli operation, OCHA reported, that “The ongoing closures have significantly reduced the capacity of UN humanitarian agencies to provide assistance in the event of an escalation in violence. UN humanitarian assistance programs have run out of stock for several essential supplies and are facing severe difficulties in implementing their regular programmes. UNRWA has no flour or cash-notes to distribute, affecting thousands of dependant beneficiaries. WFP has been unable to preposition stocks; in case of an emergency, it has no food available within the Gaza Strip.”

Also significant in December was the wave of Israeli settler violence following the Israeli security forces evacuation of settlers from the Al Rajabi house settlement in Hebron. OCHA recorded 68 incidents of Israeli settler vandalism, rioting, stone throwing, and arson, resulting in 20 Palestinian injuries following the evacuation. In December, OCHA issued a new report analyzing trends and characteristics of the phenomenon of settler violence. According to the report, in the first 10 months of 2008, OCHA recorded 290 settler-related incidents targeting Palestinians and their property, resulting in 131 casualties.

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Protection of Civilians

Operation “Cast Lead”

On 27 December, the IDF launched a large scale military operation on the Gaza Strip, labelled “Operation Cast Lead”. According to the Israeli government, the attack was “to bring about an improvement in the security reality for the residents of the south of the country.”¹ Israeli fighter planes, helicopters and drones bombed over 400 targets in the first three days of the operation. By 31 December, approximately 350 Palestinians had been killed in the air strikes, and 1,500 others were treated at hospitals. While exact estimates of civilian casualties are impossible to determine at this juncture, there were at least 38 children and 23 women killed during the December portion of the operation – 19 percent of all fatalities. In this period, four Israelis were killed and about 20 Israelis were injured by Palestinian rocket-fire towards Israel.

The Israeli offensive targeted all parts of the densely-populated Gaza Strip. Air strike targets included police stations, military training bases, mosques, residential buildings, workshops, green houses, water wells and pumps and government buildings and installations. In one incident on 27 December, at least 40 people were killed when an IAF plane fired an air-to-ground missile at the police headquarters in Gaza City during preparations for a graduation ceremony for regular civilian and traffic police. Many of the civilian casualties occurred among those living in residences within the vicinity of targeted buildings. In one such incident, on 28 December, Israeli missiles hit and destroyed a mosque in Jabalia refugee camp, instantly killing five children from the same family living in an adjacent home. Twenty-three other civilians, including nine children, were also injured in the bombing.

Israeli Air Force attacks repeatedly targeted residential homes of Hamas leaders and militants. Many residents received IDF telephone calls warning them to evacuate their homes; in some cases the strike occurred only 5 minutes after the call. Additional people received similar warnings that did not materialize, leaving families in a state of panic and uncertainty. Thousands of homes were destroyed in Israeli bombardment.

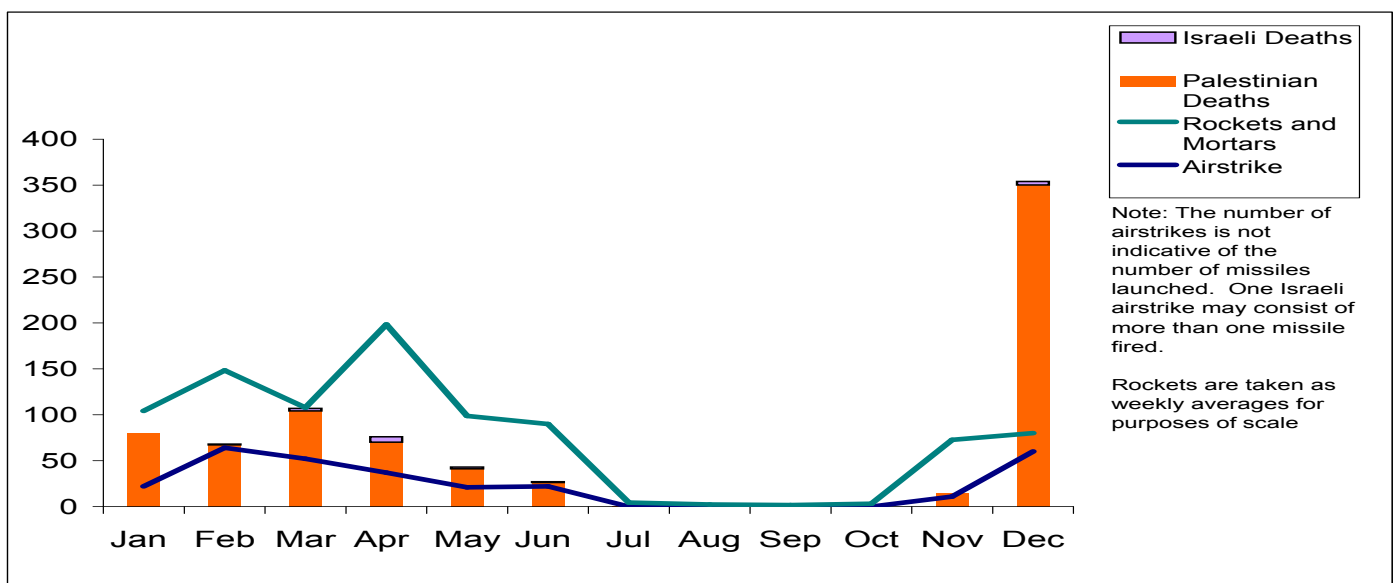
By 31 December, Israeli airstrikes had severely disrupted humanitarian and relief operations. Many beneficiaries were killed or injured, and UN installations and equipment sustained damage during the air strikes. Some critical humanitarian activities, including food distribution to the poorest households by WFP, were suspended due to heightened security risks. The operation, ongoing at the time of publication, is characterized by one of the highest death tolls of any Israeli operation recorded in the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967.

Direct conflict casualties: 2008 Summary

Civilians in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel were affected by fighting related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict throughout 2008. Six distinct phases of violence can be identified:

1. The first phase (1 January 2008 until 26 February) was in the months leading up to the Israeli operation, “Hot Winter.” From the beginning of the year to the beginning of the operation, 115 Palestinians were killed, including five children, and 245 Palestinians, including 31 children, were injured. During the same period, three Israelis were killed and 19 others were injured.
2. In the second phase (27 February until 4 March), the Israeli military carried out operation “Hot Winter”,

Chart 1: Palestinian and Israeli deaths – direct conflict (Gaza-Israel), rocket fire and air strikes.





Update on Casualties

Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) figures as of 1600 hours, 14 January are 1,013 Palestinians dead, of whom 322 are children and 76 are women. The number of injured stands at 4,560, of whom 1,600 are children and 678 are women. The MoH reported on 12 January that the number of child fatalities has tripled since the beginning of the ground operation on 3 January (compared to the number of child fatalities from 27 December to 3 January). The danger to medical staff and the difficulty of extracting the injured from collapsed buildings makes proper evacuation and estimation of casualties difficult, including the determination of the number of Palestinian male civilian casualties. According to the 'Magen David Adom in Israel' between 27 December and 14 January, four Israelis were killed and 78 were injured in Israel.² Nine Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza.

which resulted in the deaths of 120 Palestinians, approximately 28% of whom were children. An additional 269 Palestinians were injured during "Hot Winter."

- The third phase (5 March until 18 June) was marked by a moderate but steady decline in violence. During this phase, there were a total of 159 Palestinians, including 29 children, and 9 Israelis killed.
- The fourth phase (19 June – 4 November) began with the Egypt-brokered informal "calm" between Israel and the Gaza authorities that began on 19 June. Excepting one Palestinian fatality in July, no other deaths occurred from Israeli-Gaza violence until 5 November.
- The fifth phase (5 November – 26 December): Although the Egypt-brokered "calm" was not set to expire until 19 December, violence resumed on 5 November, following an Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip, allegedly aimed at destroying tunnels. The incursion resulted in the death of six Palestinian militants and the injury of four Israeli soldiers. Palestinian militants reacted with rocket fire and Israel closed all of the Gaza crossings. Ensuing Israeli-Palestinian violence resulted in one Israeli injury.

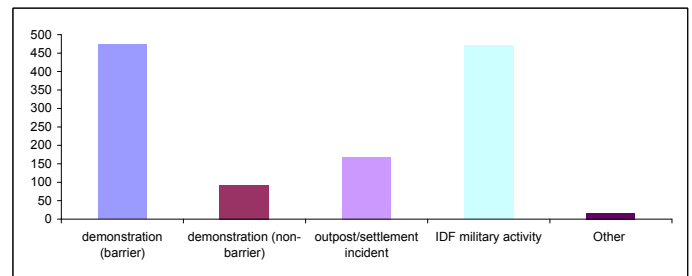
- Israeli-Palestinian violence finally entered into the sixth phase on 27 December with the onset of "Operation Cast Lead". The first five days of the operation saw the highest Palestinian death toll of all the phases, though it was the shortest in length.

West Bank

There were 51 Palestinians killed and approximately 1,350 Palestinian injuries in the West Bank in 2008. Most Palestinian casualties occurred in the contexts of, first, anti-Barrier demonstrations or, second, as a result of IDF military activities, including search-arrest operations, military patrols, and undercover IDF operations. There is some overlap between these two categories since most casualties that occurred in anti-Barrier demonstrations were by IDF patrols or IDF military operations. In Bil'in village in the western Ramallah governorate, regular anti-Barrier demonstrations, which had begun in 2006, continued in protest of the Barrier's isolation of the village's agricultural land, and the IDF's refusal to adhere

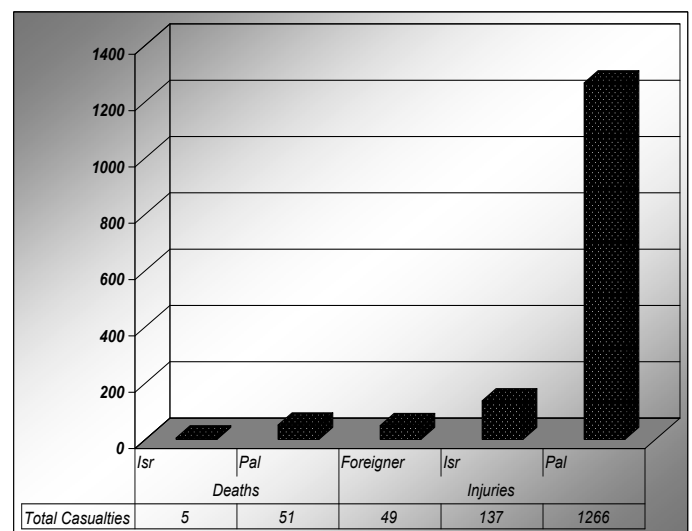
to an Israeli court order to move the Barrier. In May 2008, daily anti-Barrier demonstrations began, settling into a weekly schedule by the end of the summer. Soon thereafter, demonstrations began with increased frequency in Ma'sara village (Bethlehem) and Jaiyyus village (Qalqiliya).

Chart 2: Contexts in which Palestinian casualties occurred in 2008



Settler-related incidents were the third highest contributor to Palestinian casualties; 168 Palestinian casualties resulted from such incidents in 2008. In addition, three Israeli settlers were killed and 45 others injured, including five by Israeli security forces. There was a sharp increase in the number of Palestinians injured in settler-related incidents in December, due to the combination of Israeli settler rioting following the Al Rajabi House settlement evacuation by Israeli forces in Hebron, and Palestinian demonstrations protesting the Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip.

Chart 3: Casualties stemming from Israeli-Palestinian violence in the West Bank in 2008





Gaza Strip

The blockade on the Gaza Strip continued

The intensified closure regime imposed on Gaza Strip crossings following the resumption of violence on 5 November 2008, continued throughout December. In the period prior to Israeli military operation “Cast Lead” (1-26 December), imports into Gaza remained constrained to very basic food items and limited amounts of fuel, animal feed and medical and hygiene supplies. During this period, the functioning crossings (Kerem Shalom, Karni grain conveyor belt and Nahal Oz fuel pipeline) were partially opened on eight days only, during which 716 truckloads were allowed entry. This constitutes a daily average of 30 truckloads - a slight increase compared to November 2008 (23), but only 25% of the parallel figure for October 2008 (123) and 6% of the amount in May 2007 (475), one month before the Hamas take-over of Gaza. The Israeli authorities have justified the closure of the crossings, inter alia, by referring to increased security risks stemming from potential attacks by Palestinian militants. The majority of the truckloads allowed entry transported basic food items (60%). Of note, 26 December – one day before Israel launched its air strikes on the Gaza Strip – recorded the highest number of truckloads entering Gaza during the month.

The availability of goods in Gaza is highly determined by the number of truckloads that the Israeli authorities allow in per day. The steady degradation of basic infrastructure, public utilities and services as a result of the lack of equipment, spare parts and construction materials, continued through the month. Many basic food items are

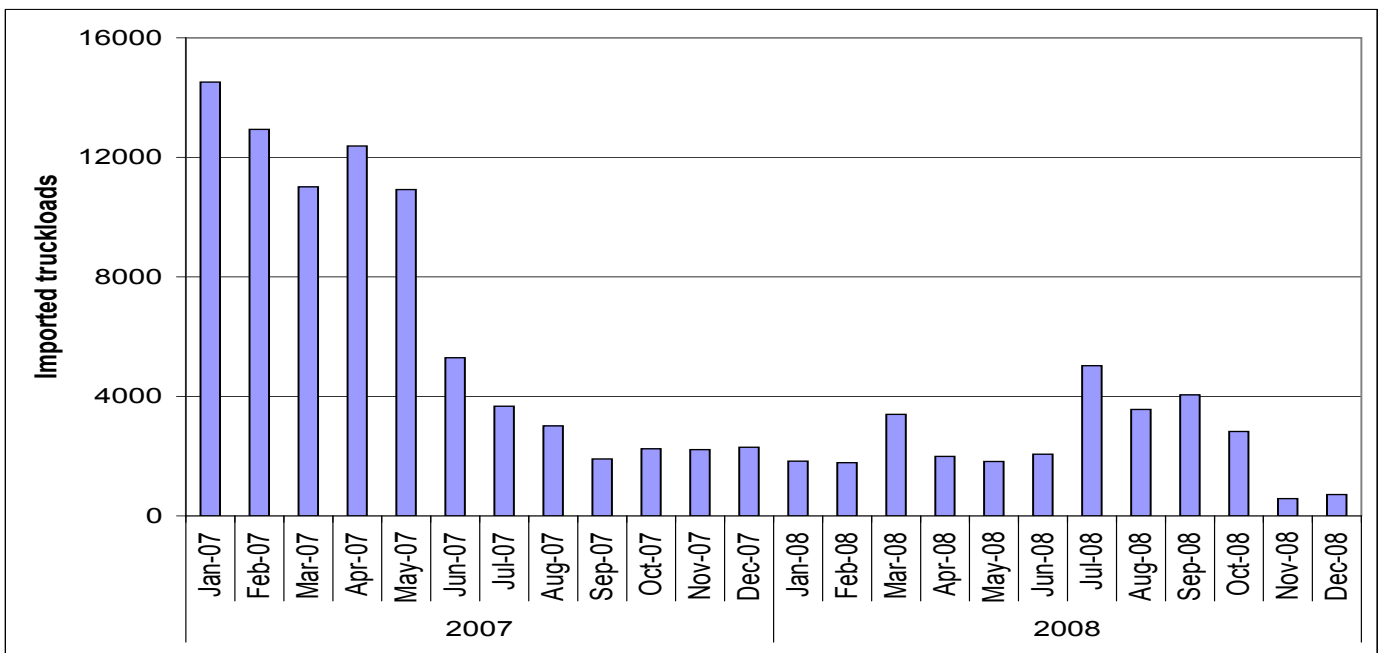
no longer available in the local market. Several food items, in particular meat, dairy products, vegetables and fruit, were scarce.

Despite Israel’s military operation, between 28 December (the second day of the military operation) and the end of the month, Kerem Shalom crossing was opened, allowing entry to 249 truckloads carrying mainly food and medical supplies. This quantity constitutes an average of 62 truckloads a day, a more than two-fold increase in comparison with the daily average allowed entry since the beginning of December and an almost three-fold increase in comparison with the daily average during November.

However, the closure of the Karni grain conveyor, the only available mechanism for the import of wheat grain, resulted in the depletion of stocks, forcing all six mills in the Gaza Strip to shut down. As a result, about one-third of the truckloads entering Gaza through Kerem Shalom during the last four days of the month, needed to be used to carry wheat flour, with the rest carrying other basic foods items, medical supplies and a small amount of animal feed.

In addition, items not allowed in through the Kerem Shalom crossing, but which might have previously entered through the Rafah tunnels, were soon in severely limited supply as a result of Israel’s bombing of the tunnels, which began the second day of the operation. Most tunnels were rendered non-operational, due either to their destruction or the security risk, as a result. The first wave of air strikes on the tunnels resulted in the death of two Palestinians and the injury of 22.

Chart4: Total monthly imports entering through Gaza commercial crossings





Energy crisis in the Gaza Strip deepened

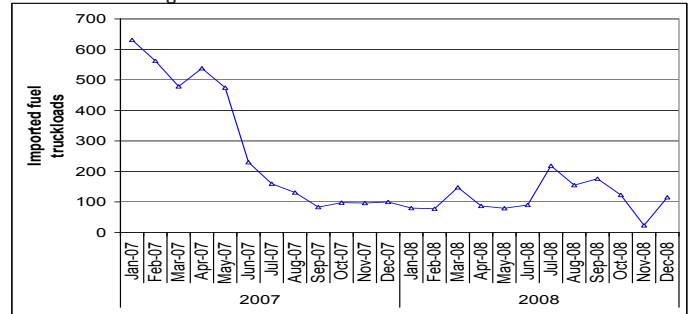
Negligible amounts of fuel were allowed into Gaza during December, exacerbating the already grave energy crisis. Nahal Oz crossing was open on just seven days in the entire month (none since the beginning of military operations), during which, 2% of petrol, 5% of diesel, 12% of cooking gas and 20% of industrial gas daily needs entered.

Due to the limited and erratic entry of industrial fuel needed to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) during December (2,752,150 litres), the plant was forced to shut down on five separate occasions. Overall, the GPP was able to operate during only 15 days in December, most of them at less than half of its capacity (1-2 out of 4 turbines). The turbines are operated depending on fuel availability. On the days the GPP was shut down, the GEDCO (Gaza Electricity Distribution Company) implemented load-sharing programmes, triggering rolling blackouts of up to 16 hours a day in Gaza City and the northern area. During load-sharing times, a total of 650,000 people were reportedly left without electricity at any given time. The situation was compounded following the beginning of Israel's military operation due to the damage inflicted during the air strikes to at least 20 electrical transformers. Spare parts to repair the transformers have remained unavailable in Gaza.

Water supply throughout the Gaza Strip continued to be severely affected by the intermittent electricity supply, the lack of spare parts and the shortages of fuel needed to operate backup generators. Further to this, the air strikes hit and severely damaged two water wells in Gaza City and East Jabalia on 27 December, rendering more than 30,000 people without water.

As a result of the severe shortages of cooking gas, all 21 stations distributing cooking gas throughout the Gaza Strip shut down on 23 December. Due to the shortages, a cooking gas rationing scheme was implemented that prioritized bakeries. Nevertheless, long queues were evident at bakeries throughout Gaza. Petrol and diesel entered only once and twice respectively on 9 and 10 December.

Chart5: Total monthly fuel imports (excluding industrial gas) entering through Nahal Oz Crossing



Humanitarian operations disrupted due to the blockade and hostilities

The intensification of the closure on Gaza in early November 2008 resulted in a severe disruption of the ability of humanitarian agencies to carry out relief operations. This development added a new dimension to the human dignity crisis affecting the Gaza Strip since the imposition of the blockade on June 2007, characterized by a widespread erosion of livelihoods and a significant deterioration in infrastructure and essential services.³

On 18 December, UNRWA was compelled to halt its food distribution programme for the rest of the month, after its wheat flour stocks were completely depleted. On average, UNRWA distributes food to approximately 20,000 refugees per day; overall, 750,000 Palestinian refugees in Gaza depend on UNRWA food assistance. WFP's food distribution cycle to 265,000 beneficiaries, scheduled to start in November, had been postponed until the third week of December, due to a shortage of several food items.

UNRWA programmes were also hampered due to the ban on the entry of cash-notes into Gaza. As a result, the agency was compelled to suspend its cash distribution programme to some 94,000 of the poorest households in Gaza, as well as its "cash for work" program. In addition, UNRWA has been unable to pay to local suppliers of goods and services or the salaries to its own local staff (over 9,500 employees).

Latest Updates

Since the beginning of the military operation and as of 13 January, two UN staff and four contractors were killed while on duty, and another six UN staff and six contractors injured. Four incidents of aid convoys being shot at have been reported. At least 49 UN buildings have sustained damage, 28 of them during the first three days of the operation. One NGO partner clinic is reported to have been destroyed and several NGO compounds have been damaged.



The ability of humanitarian agencies to operate was further affected as a result of the Israeli military operation that began on 27 December. Due to the daily opening of Kerem Shalom crossing from the second day of the operation, WFP and UNRWA were able to begin rebuilding their stocks. However, food distribution could not restart by the end of December, due to widespread Israeli air strikes and the resulting insecurity.

Although UN installations and personnel were not directly targeted in December, many of its beneficiaries have been killed or injured, and buildings and equipment damaged. In one of the gravest incidents, on 27 December, an IAF missile targeted and killed forty Palestinian policemen standing in front of the UNRWA Training Centre in Gaza City. Eight UNRWA students waiting for UN buses were killed and 19 others were injured. Other damaged UN installations include thirteen UNRWA schools, and the offices of UNSCO, OCHA, and FAO.

Increased risks faced by humanitarian aid workers in Gaza conflict zones have been exacerbated by significant destruction of police capacity, exposing humanitarian staff to the threat of violence. A few relatively minor incidents of this kind involving UNRWA and WFP were reported during the first days of hostilities.

Health sector in the Gaza Strip remained in critical situation

Throughout December, hospitals in the Gaza Strip have continued to suffer from recurrent electricity blackouts, low stocks of fuel to operate backup generators, lack of spare parts for maintaining medical devices, and shortages of consumables and medical supplies. Power cuts and water impurities have caused damage or mal-functioning of medical equipment. As in other sectors, the lack of building materials and inputs has prevented the implementation of projects aimed at expanding or repairing the physical infrastructure of health facilities. The almost total ban on travelling abroad continued to prevent medical staff from updating and upgrading their knowledge.

According to WHO, upon the beginning of the military operation, 105 out of 473 essential drug items (20%) were out of stock. Towards the end of the month, following an influx of medical supplies, the situation vis-à-vis medical supplies started to stabilize. However, the medical supplies entering Gaza presented logistical challenges related to the management and distribution of supplies.

The steady deterioration of the health system during the 18-month long blockade that followed the Hamas takeover of Gaza, has left hospitals ill-prepared to deal with the massive influx of injured, and the complexity of many cases, resulting from the Israeli air strikes. Intensive care units were particularly overwhelmed. Ambulances

and paramedics experienced immense difficulties in reaching the injured due to uninterrupted bombing.

West Bank

Widespread reactions in the West Bank to Gaza air strikes

From the onset of the Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip, Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, reacted with a general commercial strike and carried out multiple demonstrations on a daily basis throughout the main cities and some villages. The weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations, usually organized in the villages of Ni'lin and Bil'in (Ramallah) and in Al Ma'sara village (Bethlehem), were devoted to protest the events in Gaza.

Most of the demonstrations in the West Bank evolved into violent clashes. The Israeli soldiers fired live ammunition, rubber-coated bullets and teargas and physically assaulted the protesters, who threw stones towards the soldiers. As a result of these clashes, three Palestinians, including a 17-year-old boy from the Silwad village of the Ramallah governorate, were killed, and over 100 were injured, the majority of whom by live ammunition. Four Israeli soldiers were reportedly injured from stone throwing in one of the demonstrations in East Jerusalem.

In a demonstration conducted in the PA-controlled area of the city of Hebron (H1), PA security forces fired live ammunition and physically assaulted demonstrators. This resulted in the injury of five protesters and six members of the security forces.

Other reactions to the events in Gaza involved attacks against Israeli settlers. These included the stabbing of five Israeli settlers, four in Modi'in Illit settlement (Ramallah) and one in the vicinity of Qedumim settlement (Qalqiliya), and several incidents of stone throwing at Israeli-plated vehicles, resulting in the injury of 14 Israelis, including two children. In a separate incident, Israeli settlers from Tappuah settlement burnt cars' tires and blocked the main road leading to Yasuf village (Salfit).

Wave of settler violence following evacuation of a settlement outpost in Hebron

A new wave of Israeli settler violence affecting Palestinians erupted on 4 December 2008, following the forcible evacuation of the Al Rajabi House settlement in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron (H2) by Israeli security forces. In the aftermath of the evacuation, groups of settlers threw stones at Palestinian houses and set fire to vehicles, agricultural fields, houses and the contents of one mosque in Hebron City. In spite of IDF efforts, settler attacks were difficult to contain.



The violence quickly spread to other areas of the West Bank. During the five days starting with the evacuation, OCHA recorded 68 incidents of Israeli settler vandalism, rioting, stone throwing, and arson, resulting in 20 Palestinian injuries. According to Israeli media sources, clashes between Israeli forces and Israeli settlers, mostly during the day of the evacuation, resulted in the injury of six Israeli soldiers and policemen and 14 settlers.

The evacuation of the settlement followed a protracted legal battle, still ongoing, in the course of which the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) ruled that Israeli settlers must leave the Al Rajabi House and declared that the State of Israel will be named temporary custodian of the property until a separate ruling on the ownership is issued.

In December, OCHA issued a new report analyzing trends and characteristics of the phenomenon of settler violence.⁴ According to the report, in the first 10 months of 2008, OCHA recorded 290 settler-related incidents targeting Palestinians and their property, resulting in 131 casualties. These figures surpass the total number of incidents and injuries recorded in each of the previous two years. Approximately half of all Palestinian injuries from settler violence each year since 2006 have been made up of children, women, and the elderly over 70 years of age. While incidents were recorded by OCHA in all governorates, according to the report, they were more frequent in the Hebron and Nablus governorates.

The report concludes that in spite of clearly defined legal responsibilities and some recent efforts undertaken by the IDF and Israeli police, the relevant Israeli authorities have failed to adequately enforce the rule of law on Israeli settlers who carry out acts of violence against Palestinians and their property.

Access restrictions in the West Bank eased

During December, the Israeli authorities implemented several steps easing the internal movement of Palestinians in some areas of the West Bank.

In the Hebron governorate, one roadblock blocking vehicular movement between the town of As Samu' and Road 60, the main north-south traffic artery in the area, was removed and replaced with a road gate, which has since then remained open. Two additional obstacles blocking alternative routes between this town and Road 60 were also removed. These measures have improved the access of about 20,000 Palestinians to Hebron City, the main economic and service hub in the area, cutting travel time by half (20 compared to 40 minutes).

These openings continue an improving trend in access, observed in the southern West Bank since last May. The main components of this trend were the opening of two

key junctions ('Al Fahs' and 'Ras al Joura') to the north and south of Hebron City, which improved Palestinian traffic to and from the city, commercial traffic, in particular. As in the case of the main access to As Samu', the roadblocks located at these junctions were replaced with road gates, each of which have been closed since then at least one time for several days.

In the northern West Bank, all six checkpoints controlling access to and from Nablus City remain intact, although the movement of pedestrians and vehicles across five of them has been eased. First, the opening hours of these checkpoints have been extended since the first week of December. Second, the requirement of a special permit for Palestinian-plated vehicles leaving Nablus City was revoked vis-à-vis non-Nablus City residents. As a result, no queues were reported at these checkpoints during most of the days in December. Finally, trucks are now allowed to move in and out of Nablus (through the 'Awarta checkpoint) with no need for a special permit or a "back-to-back procedure", thus significantly improving the flow of commercial traffic. Expansion and upgrading works at two of these checkpoints (Huwwara and 'Awarta) continue. These measures follow the August 2008 opening of 'Shave Shomron' checkpoint for Palestinian traffic, which facilitated the movement of around 300,000 Palestinians traveling from the northern West Bank into the central and southern parts and vice versa. By contrast, long queues continued to be reported at key checkpoints in Qalqiliya and Tulkarm governorates (particularly Enav and Qalqiliya DCO checkpoints).

In Ramallah governorate, the Israeli authorities opened a six-kilometers-long "fabric of life" road, which it built at a cost of NIS 48 million to link the village of Beit Ur al Fauqa with Ramallah City. The road, paved through Palestinian agricultural areas, was made necessary because of the Israeli ban on Palestinian movement on the main east-west route in the Ramallah governorate – Road 443. The latter is reinforced by 20 obstacles and checkpoints along this road. The new "fabric of life" road facilitates the access of about 40,000 Palestinians, living in a cluster of villages located between the Barrier and Road 443, and Ramallah City. Earlier this year, two additional "fabric of life" roads linking this area with Ramallah and with another Barrier enclave (Bir Nabala) via tunnels and underpasses, were opened.

These developments suggest the emergence of a trend characterized by a local improvement in the transportation contiguity between Palestinian areas, while entrenching their physical separation and the Israeli control of overall Palestinian movement. Some of the "fabric of life" roads are effectively a secondary road system of paved agricultural roads connected by tunnels and passages diverting Palestinian traffic from the primary road system



in the occupied territory, which is now used exclusively by Israelis. This exclusion is reinforced by hundreds of physical obstacles, restricting the access of Palestinians to primary roads. The replacement of physical obstacles with road gates, as well as the expansion of checkpoints has improved the flow of Palestinian traffic, without reducing the degree of IDF control over it, making such improvements easily reversible.

West Bank: concern over potential impact of weather conditions

The low temperatures expected during the month of January in the West Bank, including the possibility of a new frost, are of increasing concern for humanitarian agencies due to the potential impact on vulnerable populations. Those most affected would be primarily small Bedouin and herder communities in the eastern slopes of the Hebron and Bethlehem governorates and in the Jordan Valley. According to various estimates, approximately 4,000 families live in these areas in tents or tin shacks, without any type of heating.

OCHA has started to coordinate an intervention to provide these households with heating and warmth. In this framework, six national and international organizations are expected to distribute firewood and other items. The intervention has been funded through the Humanitarian Emergency Response Fund (HERF) administered by OCHA.

These communities were already badly affected by the frost that occurred in January 2008, which was the worst in the last 10 years. Combined with unusually strong winds, the frost of last January damaged 70-100% of all open field crops in the West Bank, as well as 30-90% of greenhouse crops. The situation of farmers throughout the West Bank was further compounded by the low levels of rainfall in the 2007-2008 winter, amounting to a full scale drought. Thousands of them lost their main source of income for the entire year. Herders in the abovementioned areas, who were already in a cycle of deep debt and poverty, faced a year with sparse pastures and very limited fodder crops and water.⁵ This year, the December rainfall level was already below the multi-year average and expected rainfall for the rest of the winter is low.

Funding

Emergency response to the humanitarian crisis resulting from “Cast Lead”

Upon the commencement of the Israeli military operation “Cast Lead” in the Gaza Strip, the CAP 2009 document was updated to reflect the immediate needs and initial response plans per sector. The Humanitarian Country team has provided donor partners with highlighted projects, which are a blend of new and existing projects

considered the most urgent.

Cash donations worth approximately \$64m have been received so far towards Gaza emergency projects, with a further \$26m pledged. For the Initial Response Plan and Immediate Funding Needs, visit:

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_crisis_cap_funding_2009_english.pdf

End Notes

1. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.
2. OCHA's casualty figures do not include the number of Palestinians or Israelis treated for shock.
3. For further details on the components of this crisis see: OCHA, The Impact of the Blockade on the Gaza Strip, 15 December 2008, available at: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_situation_report_2008_12_17_english.pdf
4. OCHA, Unprotected: Israeli settler violence against Palestinian civilians and their property, December 2008, available at: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_settler_vilonce_special_focus_2008_12_18.pdf
5. See, The Humanitarian Monitor, March 2008, p.2.

The following UN Agencies, local and international NGOs and organisations participate in sector working groups and regularly provide information to the Humanitarian Monitor: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), Al Haq, Badil, Save the Children (UK), Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI-PS), Oxfam GB, Palestine Hydrology Group (PHG), ACF-E, AAA, ACPP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

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