



THE HUMANITARIAN MONITOR

MAY 2009

May Overview

One of the common factors underlying many of the humanitarian issues addressed this month is the restriction on Palestinians' use of space in the oPt.

In the West Bank, approximately 28 percent of the West Bank was declared over the years as either closed military zones or nature reserves, where Palestinian access and use is either banned or restricted. This month, entire communities located in such areas in the Jordan Valley are facing new threats of wide-scale displacement as the Israeli military distributed evacuation and demolition orders affecting over 300 people, including almost 170 children. As elaborated in a new OCHA report, only 13 percent of the Bethlehem district is available for development as a result of Israeli administrative restrictions, the Barrier and Israeli settlement development. Moreover, while



Samra Bedouin village in the Jordan Valley. A villager standing in front of his tent, one among several tents facing demolition after having received eviction orders because the village is located in a closed military zone. Photo by Patric Zoll

Israeli measures implemented in the past few months have eased the flow of Palestinian traffic into a number of West Bank cities, overall, the system of access and movement restrictions is becoming more entrenched.

ISSUES COVERED THIS MONTH

West Bank, including East Jerusalem: Palestinian civilians affected by intra-Palestinian and Israeli settler violence • Threat of wide-scale displacement in Jordan Valley • A response plan targets vulnerable communities affected by water scarcity • Special Focus on Bethlehem Governorate • New OCHA Access and Movement report • The UN Committee against Torture expressed concern about certain practices

Gaza Strip: Increase in military activities and resulting casualties • The blockade continues: Imports remain largely restricted to basic foodstuffs • Ban on entry of construction materials continues to prevent reconstruction • Movement in and out of Gaza remained largely banned • Gaza's "buffer zone" further expanded • Wastewater continues to pose a serious environmental and health threat • Concerns over health trends in the Gaza Strip • Number of drugs and disposals at zero level on the rise • Referral Abroad Department continues work • A Human Rights Council mission began investigating "Cast Lead"

Other oPt issues: Funding

In the Gaza Strip, beyond the 23 months of continued closure, the Israeli military has also imposed additional restrictions on space, further aggravating Palestinian livelihoods. This month, the IDF expanded its self-declared “buffer zone” from 150 to 300 meters along most of the Israeli-Gaza Border, making a primarily agricultural area inaccessible. The Israeli navy also continues to prevent Palestinian fishermen from fishing beyond three nautical miles from the coastline.

The impact of “space” restrictions on Palestinian livelihoods throughout the oPt has been significant. In the West Bank, without the ability of Palestinians to develop and expand in Israeli-controlled areas, and to move through them more freely, the impact of current efforts to stimulate the economy will likely remain limited. The situation in Gaza is of even greater concern. Access restrictions recently imposed on farmers and fishermen, together with the protracted blockade, are expected to increase Gaza’s dependency on international aid, which already targets over two-thirds of Gaza’s population.

Freezing evictions, house demolitions and Barrier construction, and lifting some of the access

restrictions to agricultural land and fisheries, are a few of the immediate steps that could be taken to prevent further erosion of livelihoods. In Gaza these steps must be supplemented by a drastic increase in the type and amount of goods allowed in through the crossings with Israel.

In addition, in the West Bank, the last few days of May saw a sharp increase in violent events affecting the civilian population. Following armed clashes between PA security forces and Hamas operatives in which six people were killed, Palestinian Authority (PA) forces imposed a prolonged curfew on Qalqiliya City and stepped up arrests of Palestinians. At the same time, there was an escalation in Israeli settler violence targeting mainly Palestinian property. These attacks followed media reports about the intention of the Israeli authorities to remove a number of “unauthorized” settlement outposts, and come in the context of an explicit strategy among some settlers’ groups to exact a “price” for every attempt to dismantle a settlement outpost. The failure of the Israeli authorities to adequately enforce the law on violent settlers remains a protection concern.

West Bank, including East Jerusalem

Palestinian civilians affected by intra-Palestinian and Israeli settler violence

The last few days of May saw a sharp increase in violent events occurring in two different contexts, intra-Palestinian conflict and Israeli settler violence, which overshadowed the more “routine” violence affecting the civilian population during the rest of the month.

On 30 May, an armed clash between Palestinian Authority (PA) forces and Hamas operatives erupted in Qalqiliya City in the course of an arrest operation. This clash resulted in the death of six people: three members of PA security forces, two armed Hamas militants, and the owner of the building from which the latter were operating. This is the highest recorded single-day death toll from intra-Palestinian fighting in the West Bank since OCHA began collecting oPt

casualty data in January 2005. The building owner’s wife was injured, resulting in the amputation of her hand. Four members of the PA security forces were also reported injured. Following the clash, PA forces imposed two separate curfews on Qalqiliya City totalling approximately thirteen hours. Moreover, PA forces stepped up arrests of Palestinians in the context of the conflict with Hamas in the northern West Bank, with over 50 percent of all arrests in the West Bank attributable to the PA in the last two weeks of the month.

With regard to Israeli settler violence, while May saw a sharp decline in the number of Palestinian injuries compared to April (7 vs. 67), there was an escalation in the gravity of settler attacks affecting Palestinian property during the last week of the month. In one incident in the northern West Bank,

PALESTINIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FORCED TO RUN BY IDF ESCORT

In the course of the past few years, Palestinian children from two small villages in south Hebron, who walk every day to the elementary school in At Tuwani village, have faced regular harassment by Israeli settlers, including being verbally abused, physically assaulted, chased and having stones thrown at them. Though the Israeli authorities have failed to bring an end to the harassment, the IDF has committed to escorting these children to school. Yet, despite the commitment, the soldiers often abandon the children partway along the route, leaving them vulnerable to settler attack. This month, Christian Peacemaker Teams, an international NGO working in the area, reported that in three occasions (4, 17 and 20 May), the soldiers rode in jeeps, forcing the children to run in order to keep up with the escort. Children expressed unhappiness with the escort to the NGO staff, reporting that, in cases, soldiers either revved the jeep's engine, frightening the children, or approached the children in their jeeps at high speeds.

Israeli settlers set fire to olive groves and wheat crops belonging to the villages of Burin (Nablus) and Jinsafut (Qalqiliya), damaging at least 600 olive trees; in another incident, Israeli settlers set fire to ten dunums of land cultivated with barley belonging to the Palestinian village of 'Urif (Nablus). In the southern West Bank, Israeli-settlers continued to prevent Palestinian herders from grazing their sheep in areas close to various settlements.

These attacks followed media reports according to which the Israeli government will dismantle 26 settlement outposts and they come in the context of an explicit strategy among some Israeli settlers to exact a "price" for every attempt to dismantle a settlement outpost. The "price tag" technique was seen several times in 2008 with settlers mobilizing large groups of other settlers to attack Palestinians following attempts to dismantle settlement outposts. There are approximately 100 settlement outposts considered by Israeli authorities to be "unauthorized".¹

Overall, during May two Palestinians were killed in direct conflict (Israeli-Palestinian) incidents and 83 others, including 10 children, were injured. Three Israelis were also injured this month by Palestinians. One of the two Palestinian fatalities was a senior member of Hamas, described by the Israeli authorities as the head of the Hamas' Al Qassam Brigades in Hebron, killed by the IDF in an arrest operation. The number of Palestinian injuries represents a 43 percent decrease compared to April's

figure and a 20 percent decrease compared to the monthly average for 2009. Roughly two-thirds of Palestinian injuries in May occurred during weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations in Bil'in and Ni'lin villages in the Ramallah governorate, which have occurred regularly since 2005 and 2008, respectively, in protest of the isolation of part of the villages' land by the Barrier.

Israeli military search operations in the West Bank totalled 501 during May, a 12 percent increase compared to the 2008 monthly average, while the number of arrests remained relatively the same, with 322 in May compared to 323 in April. Approximately two-thirds of IDF search operations occurred in the northern West Bank.

Threat of wide-scale displacement in Jordan Valley

In May, Israeli soldiers delivered 37 stop work, demolition and evacuation orders that threaten to displace a combined total of 314 Palestinians, including at least 168 children, from three communities in the Jordan Valley: Al Hadidiya, Khirbet Samra, and Khirbet ar Ras al Ahmar. All of the communities are located in areas that the Israeli military has declared "closed". The affected families reside in tents or similar structures.

In the Bedouin community of Al Hadidiya in the Tubas governorate, a total of 19 households, 151 people, were served evacuation or stop-work orders. Forty-nine (49) people were affected by evacuation

orders, while the remaining households received stop work orders and were ordered to appear in court at Beit El military base on 25 June.² According to the community spokesperson, families have lived in Al Hadidiya since before the beginning of Israel's occupation in 1967.

Given that all but one family in Al Hadidiya received either a stop work order or an evacuation order, the entire community is at risk of displacement. Because they have experienced multiple waves of evacuation and displacement, Al Hadidiya people have constantly moved, sometimes erecting their tents a few meters away from the original location and at other times temporarily re-locating to other areas. The residents of Al Hadidiya have been displaced multiple times in the past, the last of which took place in February and March 2008 when about 30 people were displaced in each incident.

In December 2006, the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected a petition³ against a demolition order for Al Hadidiya issued by the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA). The High Court accepted the ICA's arguments that the orders were reasonable, given that: 1) the affected buildings were inconsistent with master plans from the British Mandatory period of the 1940s, and 2) the community's location in close proximity to the Ro'i settlement represented a security threat.

In the nearby community of Khirbet Samra, Israeli forces distributed seven stop work orders, affecting the entire community of 35 Palestinians. On 28 May, one of the households self-demolished one of the threatened structures (an animal barracks).

In Khirbet ar Ras al Ahmar, also in the Tubas governorate, one-third (1/3) of the families received a total of 18 evacuation orders. Some residents disassembled their structures upon receipt of the orders. [On 4 June, Israeli authorities demolished

15 residential structures, 30 animal pens and 18 traditional "taboun" ovens. A water tank, tractor, and trolley were confiscated. A total of 128 people, including 66 children, have been displaced by the recent events.]

Also in May, Israeli forces issued six stop-work or demolition orders for structures (including two residential structures) in the Bedouin communities of 'Arab Ramadin Janubi and 'Arab Abu Farda in the Qalqiliya governorate. These orders threaten to displace 14 people, including 10 children. The two communities are located between the Barrier and the Green Line, within the area declared closed by the Israeli military in October 2003 (also called the "Seam Zone"). These communities will not be affected by the re-routing of the Barrier that is currently underway in the area (Alfe Menashe settlement enclave) and are planned to remain on the western ("Israeli") side of the Barrier.⁴

While there was a sharp increase in demolition orders in May, actual demolitions and displacement declined. In the course of the month, six structures were demolished, including two "self-demolitions",⁵ and eight persons were displaced, compared to 30 structures demolished and 118 displaced in April. Of note, receipt of at least 25 demolition orders for Palestinians living in Beit Hanina and Wadi al Joz neighborhoods of East Jerusalem were reported to OCHA in May. Also in May, Palestinian families involved in a protracted legal battle over the ownership of land in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood continued to face the risk of displacement as a result of eviction from their homes. During the month, the Israeli District Court levied fines against two families in Sheikh Jarrah in the amount of NIS 259,000 (approx. \$64,750) per family and ordered residents to evacuate the buildings by 19 July 2009.⁶

CHALLENGES FACING RESIDENTS OF CLOSED MILITARY ZONES

Since 1967, approximately 1,150 square km, or more than 20 percent of the West Bank, were declared by the Israeli authorities as closed military zones, where Palestinian access is prohibited (excluding the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line). The large majority of these areas are located in the Jordan Valley and along the eastern slopes of the Bethlehem and Hebron governorates.

The closed military zones are populated primarily by small herding and farming communities, many of whom have resided in the area since before 1967. These communities represent some of the most vulnerable in the West Bank and are considered priority groups for humanitarian assistance. They have limited or no access to services (such as education and health) or infrastructure (including water, sanitation and electricity infrastructure). In addition, they face a number of daily challenges, including:

- restricted access to land (including for grazing and agriculture);
- water scarcity, including drought conditions and inequitable allocation of water;
- poor water quality;
- restrictions on planning and construction that force many to build without a permit and face the risk of house demolitions; and
- violence from Israeli settlers living nearby, who generally enjoy a much higher standard of living, due, in part, to Israeli government incentives;⁷ and
- regular harassment from Israeli soldiers, among others.

OCHA field observations in recent months suggest that there has been an increase in the enforcement of restrictions applicable to these areas, including the signing of closed military areas in various Jordan Valley locales. Tightened restrictions on access exacerbate the hardship of these communities, and are likely to contribute to the erosion of livelihoods, increasing poverty and growing dependency on aid. As a result of the difficulties confronting these communities, many of them face the ongoing threat of forced displacement.⁸

A response plan targets vulnerable communities affected by water scarcity

The shortfall in precipitation since the beginning of 2009 is compounding the endemic water crisis affecting the West Bank. The rainfall for the whole of the West Bank up until the end of May was less than 80 percent of the average annual rainfall, while in the southern West Bank, it was just over 60 percent. This situation contributes to the perilous position of many rural communities. Agriculture and shepherding has been a major economic cushion in the West Bank, providing employment and income to vulnerable communities. However, the lack of rainfall, along with overgrazing, has

led to a significant deterioration in pastures and grazing areas. The current water scarcity crisis is also impacting approximately 10 percent of the West Bank population living in communities un-served by a water network, which rely on traditional water sources.

A comprehensive response plan, addressing the immediate needs of the most vulnerable communities has been jointly developed by the relevant PA ministries, international humanitarian organizations and a number of international donors. As part of the plan, a Water Scarcity Task Force was formed to set guidelines and coordinate the implementation of the plan. Among other activities, the Task Force has developed eligibility criteria,

according to which vulnerable communities will be allocated tankered water, fodder and food. The total cost of the response plan is \$8 million, of which \$6 million have already been granted, mainly by ECHO, leaving a gap of \$2 million. Implementation of the plan by the various agencies is expected to start during July. This plan intends to complement and support PA medium and long-term initiatives aimed at providing sustainable solutions to the recurrent water scarcity crisis.

Special Focus on Bethlehem Governorate

This month, OCHA released a Special Focus report entitled “Shrinking Space: Urban Contraction and Rural Fragmentation of Bethlehem Governorate”. The report points out that after four decades of Israeli occupation only approximately 13 percent of the Bethlehem governorate’s land is available for Palestinian use, much of it fragmented. Israeli measures implemented during this period have led to an overall reduction in Palestinian access and space. These measures include the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and settlement outposts, construction of the Barrier, and the zoning of the majority of the Bethlehem governorate as Area C, where Israel retains security control and jurisdiction over planning and construction. The physical and administrative restrictions allocate most of Bethlehem’s remaining land reserves for Israeli military and settler use, effectively reducing the space available to the Palestinian inhabitants of Bethlehem.

As a result, Bethlehem’s potential for residential and industrial expansion and development has been reduced as well as its access to natural resources. The traditional mainstays of the Bethlehem governorate economy, such as work in Israel, tourism, agriculture, herding and the private sector, have been undermined. Continuation of these Israeli measures compromises the future economic and social development of the Bethlehem governorate.

Actions including halting construction of the rest of the Barrier in the West Bank, opening up closed military areas and nature reserves for

sustainable Palestinian development, along with the international call for a freeze on settlement activity and related actions like ‘state land’ declarations, would restore parts of the lost space to the governorate and improve the humanitarian and economic situation in Bethlehem.

New OCHA Access and Movement report

OCHA released a new report with analysis of the main developments and trends in internal movement and access restrictions in the West Bank during the period between September 2008 and the end of March 2009.⁹

The Israeli authorities have implemented a number of measures easing the flow of Palestinian traffic on some access routes to four main cities: Nablus, Hebron, Tulkarm and Ramallah. These measures included the removal of permit requirements for vehicles entering Nablus City; the opening of two junctions allowing more direct access to Hebron City; the removal of one checkpoint on the southern route into Tulkarm City; and the opening of a “fabric of life” alternative road easing access to Ramallah City from the west.

At the same time, there has been further entrenchment of various mechanisms used to control Palestinian movement and access and to facilitate the movement of Israeli settlers. While some of these measures do ease the flow of Palestinian traffic, they exact a price from Palestinian residents of the West Bank. For example, the Israeli built “fabric of life” roads, reconnect Palestinian communities that were disconnected due to restricted access to a main road, or due to the obstruction of a road by the Barrier, at the expense of reinforcing the exclusion of Palestinians from the primary road network and undermining the territorial contiguity between different areas.

Israeli settlements remain the most important factor shaping the system of movement and access restrictions. This is reflected in the significant degree of overlap between the location of access restrictions (including the Barrier) and the location of settlements and settlers’ routes.

In the comprehensive closure survey completed at the end of March 2009, OCHA field teams documented and mapped 634 obstacles blocking internal Palestinian movement and access, which represents an insignificant increase of four obstacles, compared to the parallel figure at the end of the previous reporting period.

The UN Committee against Torture expressed concern about certain practices

In May, the Committee against Torture, a UN treaty-body composed of ten independent experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the 1984 Convention against Torture (CAT), reviewed the periodic report submitted by Israel and issued its concluding observations.¹⁰ In its observations, the Committee expressed concern about certain confirmed and alleged practices affecting the protection afforded to Palestinians in the oPt. According to the Committee, these practices are inconsistent with Israel's obligations under the CAT, in particular with Article 16 that prohibits acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and include, among others, the following:

- the fact that none of the over 600 complaints of ill-treatment by Israeli Security Agency (formerly the GSS) interrogators submitted by Palestinians between 2001 and 2008 resulted in a criminal investigation;

- the differing definitions of a child in Israel and in the oPt (under 18 and 16 respectively), the interrogation of Palestinian minors in the absence of a lawyer, the allegations on the use of unlawful methods in the interrogation of children, and the fact that 95 percent of the child convictions in military courts rely on confessions;
- the holding of hundreds (according to Israel, 530 by the time of reporting) of Palestinians under administrative detention for “inordinately lengthy periods”;
- the holding of most Palestinian juveniles in detention facilities located in Israel, which hinders prisoners from receiving family visits;¹¹
- the increase in Israeli settler violence in the West Bank, despite measures adopted by Israel to control it;
- the resumption of “purely punitive house demolitions”;
- the allegations on the degrading treatment given to Palestinians at West Bank checkpoints, undue delays and denial of entry, including for persons with urgent health needs;

The Committee also expressed concern about allegations concerning acts committed by Hamas security forces in Gaza and Fatah authorities in the West Bank, including arbitrary arrests, abductions and unlawful detentions of political opponents, denial of access to legal council and the torture and ill-treatment of detainees.

OPT CHILD PROTECTION FIGURES AT A GLANCE: MAY VS. APRIL 2009

Conflict-related casualties:

- Palestinian children killed: 1 by UXO vs. 2
- Israeli children killed: 0 vs. 1
- Palestinian children injured: 19 (including 3 by UXO) vs. 31
- Israeli children injured: 0 vs. 1

Displaced as a result of house demolitions: 0 vs. 59

Palestinian children in Israeli detention: 346, including one administrative detainee, compared to 391 in April.

Increase in military activities and resulting casualties

The decline in military activities witnessed in the month of April came to an end in early May, when the Israeli Air Force (IAF) began a series of airstrikes against Palestinian targets, and Palestinian militants increased the frequency of rocket and mortar fire targeting towns and military bases in southern Israel.

On 2 May, Israeli airstrikes targeting tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border resulted in the killing of two Palestinians and the injury of four others present in one of the targeted tunnels. Israeli airstrikes targeting tunnels and metal workshops continued throughout the month. Other tunnel incidents during May, including collapse due to precarious building conditions and electrocution, resulted in the death of eight Palestinians and the injury of another four. In 2008, there were at least 46 Palestinians killed, and 69 others injured, in tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. Since the implementation of unilateral ceasefires on 18 January 2009, 24 Palestinians were killed and 29 others injured.

On one occasion, Israeli tanks and bulldozers entered Gaza, east of Jabalia, and conducted land leveling and excavation operations. In addition, in every week during May, there were several incidents involving Israeli forces opening “warning fire” in the direction of farmers and fishermen, in order to enforce access restrictions [see also Buffer Zone Section herein]. Overall, three Palestinians were killed and 14 injured due to Israeli military activities in the Gaza Strip, compared to two armed Palestinians killed and no one was injured in the month of April 2009.

In the context of increased rocket and mortar fire by Palestinian armed factions, on 19 May, one rocket hit and damaged a house in the Israeli town of Sderot, injuring one Israeli. Despite the increase, however, there were no additional casualties or damage from Palestinian rocket-fire during the month.

Civilian’s lives in the Gaza Strip continued to be jeopardized also by internal Palestinian violence.

During this month, four Palestinians, including two children, were killed and another six were injured in the course of various incidents, including inter-factional fighting, family feuds and reckless use of weapons.

In addition, during May, one child was killed, and four other Palestinians, including three children, were injured by UXO. Since the 18 January ceasefires, there have been six child deaths from detonation of unexploded ordnance.

The blockade continues

Imports remain largely restricted to basic foodstuffs

During May, there was a slight increase in the number of truckloads carrying goods (2,960) allowed entry into Gaza compared to April 2009 (2,656). However, this amount constitutes less than one quarter the monthly average of truckloads that entered Gaza in the first five months of 2007 (around 12,350), before the tightening of the blockade in June 2007. Truckloads imported by humanitarian agencies constituted around one-quarter of imports, including 64 truckloads that entered through Rafah Crossing, while the rest were imported by the commercial sector.

The criteria used by the Israeli authorities to clear the import of all types of goods have remained unclear and unpredictable. The decision adopted by the Government of Israel on 22 March 2009 to enable the unrestricted entry of all foodstuffs, provided that the source is approved by the Israeli authorities, remains unimplemented. Therefore, while truckloads carrying mainly basic food made up 70 percent of all imports during May (2,072), individual commercial items, including, but not limited to, baby formula, tea, several types of canned food and jam, were denied entry. The bulk of the remaining 30 percent were comprised of hygiene materials, fuel (cooking gas and industrial fuel only) and non-edible consumables. In addition, a total of 54 truckloads carrying plumbing and water-related materials were allowed in during May (see Water

and Sanitation section). Construction material remained almost totally banned (see Reconstruction section).

During the month, no exports have been allowed out of Gaza. Following Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive, after an entire year without exports, 15 truckloads of cut-flowers were allowed out of Gaza, the last shipment was allowed out on 27 April, representing 1.7 percent of the cut-flowers export produce during the flower season (November 2008-May 2009).¹² Before the tightening of the blockade in June 2007, the average volume of exports was 1,380 truckloads per month or 60 truckloads per day, carrying a range of products, including furniture, garment, cash crops, vegetables, processed food, metal products and handicrafts.¹³ The November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, stipulates that Israel should allow the export of 400 truckloads per day from Gaza.

The amounts of cooking gas and industrial fuel (used to operate the Gaza Power Plant) that entered Gaza during May increased by more than 50 percent compared to April, however, they constituted only around 80 percent and 70 percent of the respective monthly needs, as estimated by the Palestinian Gas Stations Owners Association (GSOA) and the Power Plant Authority. According to the GSOA, although cooking gas is available in the open market,

shortages and long queues at filling stations are still evident. As a result of the shortages of industrial fuel, combined with the lack of spare parts needed for the Power Plant, scheduled power cuts, reaching five hours a day throughout the Gaza Strip, have remained in place.

The import of benzene/petrol and diesel has remained blocked by the Israeli authorities since 2 November 2008, with the exception of small quantities delivered to UNRWA and some hospitals. According to the GSOA, benzene/petrol and diesel have continued to enter through the tunnels located under the Egypt-Gaza border on a daily basis since mid-March. Tunnels remain an important economic lifeline for Gaza's population, supplying the market with goods barred from entering Gaza through the Israeli-controlled crossings.

Towards the end of the month, the GSOA reported that the Israeli authorities had informed them verbally that the Nahal Oz pipeline, Gaza's main fuel delivery route, will be relocated to the Kerem Shalom Crossing within the coming few weeks. According to the Israeli Civil Liaison Administration, fuel pipelines currently exist at Kerem Shalom Crossing and will replace those at the Nahal Oz Crossing, which will eventually close, however the existing infrastructure will remain in place. The capacity and procedures for fuel delivery at Kerem Shalom are not yet clear.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROVISION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Following the end of hostilities in Gaza, the Humanitarian Country Team, under the auspices of the Humanitarian Coordinator, has developed a Framework for the Provision of Humanitarian Assistance in Gaza. Recognizing the myriad challenges presented by the operational context, the Framework elaborates the external conditions and parameters which must be met in order to facilitate an adequate and principled humanitarian response including the swift implementation of the projects included in the Consolidated Appeal. The framework also provides a tool to strengthen humanitarian programming internally. Specifically, it supports internal monitoring and evaluation to address concerns related to the possible diversion and misuse of assistance.

Based on this Framework, monthly and more detailed quarterly monitoring and reporting will resume from June 2009. The objectives of the public report are twofold: 1) to build confidence amongst all parties through transparency in monitoring; and 2) to highlight obstacles that must be addressed to facilitate the provision of assistance. Whilst the Framework currently focuses on Gaza it may in the future be extended to cover the West Bank, if deemed appropriate.

Ban on entry of construction materials continues to prevent reconstruction

Israel's sweeping ban on the import of construction materials into the Gaza Strip continue to hinder reconstruction of houses, infrastructure and factories that have been destroyed or incurred damage during "Cast Lead" offensive. During the first five months of 2009, only six truckloads carrying construction materials were allowed entry to Gaza, the bulk of which carried cement for water-related projects; the parallel figure during the same period of 2007, before the Hamas takeover of Gaza, was over 39,000 truckloads.

Preliminary results of a joint UNRWA-UNDP housing survey indicate that 3,700 housing units were totally destroyed, 2,700 sustained major damages and 46,000 houses need minor repair. Assuming an average household size of 6.5,¹⁴ these 52,400 housing units sheltered a total of 340,600 individuals. Moreover, according to a recent report by the Palestinian Federation of Industries, 324 industrial businesses and factories were either destroyed or sustained partial damages during the Israeli offensive. These establishments provided job opportunities for 4,000 workers.¹⁵

Despite the ongoing ban, limited amounts of construction materials are available in the market, after reportedly being imported into Gaza through the tunnels operating along the border with Egypt. However, due to the immense gap between the available amounts and current needs, prices of key construction supplies have increased significantly. For example, the current market price of one tonne

of cement (3,400 NIS) is over ten times higher than the price before the tightening of the blockade in June 2007 (350 NIS). Other construction supplies, when available, cost, on average, three times as much as they do in the West Bank. As a result, some Gazans have started to use primitive building materials, such as mud, to rebuild their houses, and pilot schemes for rebuilding houses with the same method are underway.

The unavailability of construction materials is compounded by the lack of liquidity in Gaza, delaying the delivery of cash assistance by some aid organisations to the affected families, with the aim of assisting them to cope until reconstruction or rehabilitation occurs. All families whose shelters were destroyed or have suffered major damage are entitled to cash assistance in the value of \$5,000 and \$3,000 respectively. Also, although UNDP has been able to distribute cash assistance provided by the PA to 8,100 non-refugee beneficiaries, 5,200 have been left unassisted due to the unavailability of cash in local banks. Moreover, UNDP and UNRWA have also started providing cash assistance in lower amounts to allow affected families whose shelters have suffered minor damage, to start repairs. To date, approximately \$35 million has been distributed in support of these activities.

The Bank of Palestine reported that in May, Israel allowed the entry of only 50 out of a total of 200 million shekels requested for the month by local banking institutions. The shortage of cash inside Gaza is also affecting the ability of over 60,000 PA employees to withdraw their monthly salaries, hindering their ability to meet daily needs for their

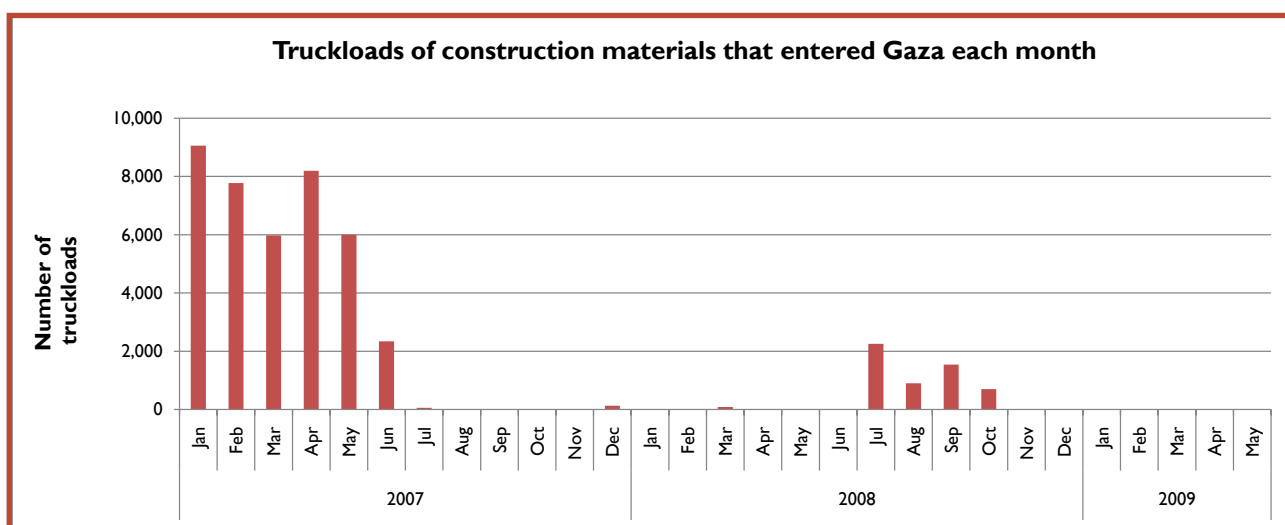
THE IMPACT ON SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN

According to a rapid assessment of the Education Sector conducted by Save the Children and UNICEF, a total of 245 governmental and private schools and kindergartens were severely or partially damaged during the Israeli offensive in Gaza. Those severely damaged include eight government and two private schools, and eight kindergartens. Another 156 government and 12 private schools and 60 kindergartens were partially damaged. In addition, schools continue to be affected by shortages of needed supplies denied import clearance by the Israeli authorities, including textbooks, stationery, uniforms, school bags, and furniture items. The education system of Gaza serves approximately 450,000 children and adolescents through 373 government schools, 221 UNRWA schools and 36 private schools.

families. All other currencies, including dollars and dinars, have remained blocked from entering Gaza.

Moreover, removal of rubble of damaged buildings and houses is planned to commence in July 2009. Israel's bombardment of Gaza residences and infrastructure during "Cast Lead" resulted in an estimated 600,000 tonnes of concrete rubble. A Joint Operational Plan has been developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for

the removal of rubble at an estimated cost of \$15 million. Implementing agencies include UNDP, UNMAS, UNICEF and participating NGOs. The implementing partners are in the midst of conducting risk assessment of sites (from May through June 2009), and training workshops on the handling of hazardous materials are being currently provided by UNDP to local government staff, as well as other key actors. Contractors have also submitted their bids to remove the rubble piles from 400 private houses and 21 public buildings.



Movement in and out of Gaza remained largely banned

The movement of Palestinians in and out of the Gaza Strip through the Erez and Rafah Crossings has remained largely banned. The number of exceptional medical and other humanitarian cases allowed through Erez in May (1,132), however, was more than two-fold the parallel figure during April (515). One of the main reasons behind this increase was the resumption of the referral of patients to medical treatment in West Bank, Israeli and Jordanian hospitals since the end of April (see section on the Referral Abroad Department). Due to this reason a total of 586 patients and their accompaniers crossed Erez in May, compared to 173 in April. The majority of the remaining Palestinians who crossed Erez were holding permits to visit families outside of Gaza.

The number of exceptional cases allowed entry into Egypt through the Rafah Crossing in May (1,564) decreased by 36 percent compared to April (2,427),

while the number of those back to Gaza increased by 21 percent (1,327 compared to 1,095). The daily average of people who crossed into Egypt (50) and those who entered Gaza (43) through the Rafah Crossing during May 2009 represents only 17 and 15 percent respectively of the parallel figures for May 2007, one month before the Hamas take-over.

Gaza's "buffer zone" further expanded

This month, the Israeli Air Force dropped thousands of leaflets across the North Gaza and Gaza governorates warning that people who enter an area within 300 metres from the Gaza-Israel border will be risking their lives. This is the first time that residents of Gaza are officially informed that the "buffer zone", instituted following the Israeli "disengagement" from Gaza in August 2005 on a 150 metre-wide strip of land along the border, has been expanded by 150 metres. An exception to this definition is an area

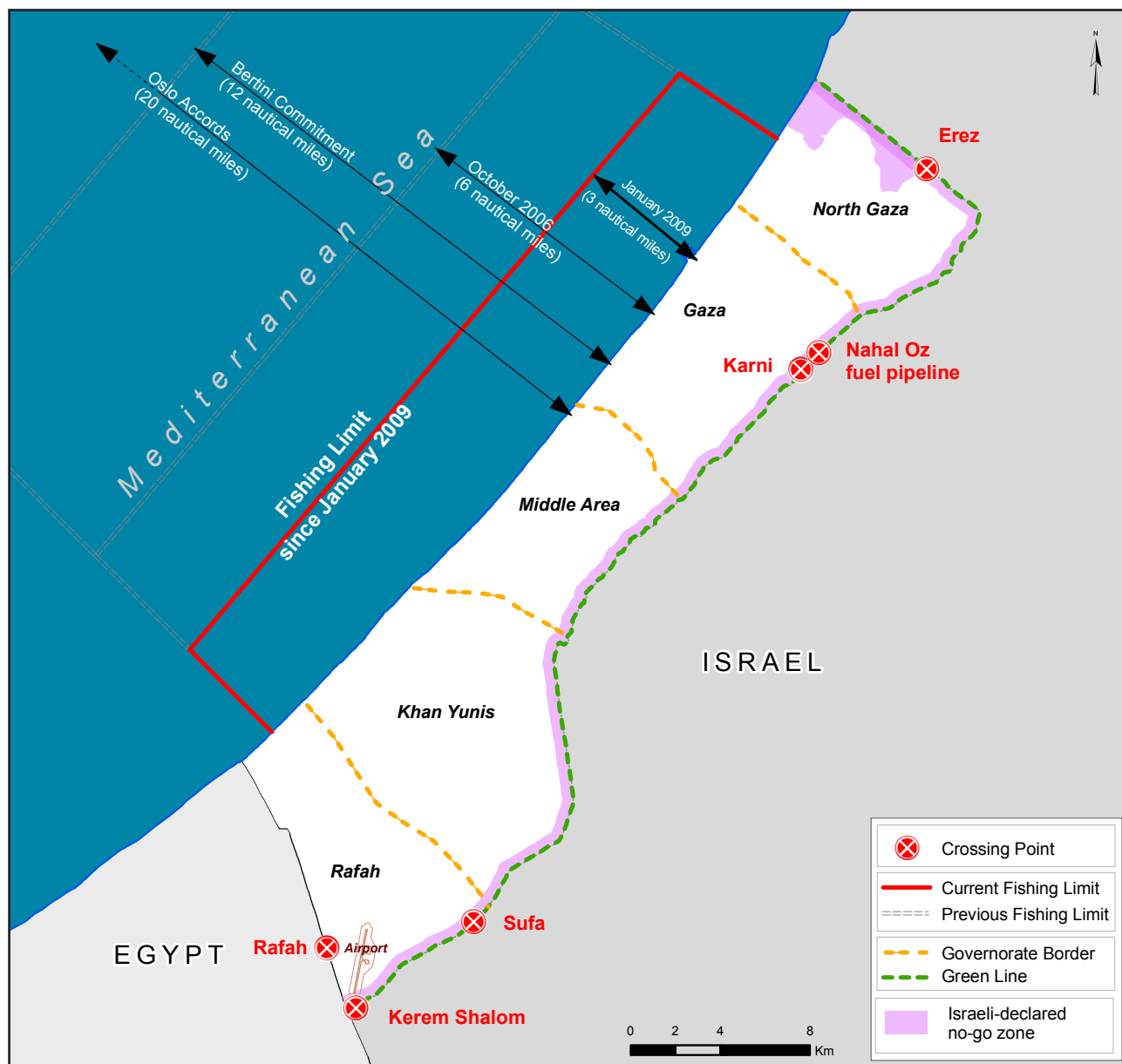
along the northern border of Gaza – the past location of three Israeli settlements - where the no-go area is significantly larger (see Map).

The access prohibition to the “buffer zone” is enforced by the Israeli military by means of opening warning fire in the direction of the people present in the relevant areas. Consistent reports by Gazan farmers since 2005 indicate that such enforcement has never been uniform across different areas and periods of times, including numerous reports about farmers targeted with warning shots while staying as far as 1,000 metres from the border.

In addition, Israeli forces continued to prevent fishermen from accessing sea areas located beyond three nautical miles from the shore. Several incidents of warning shots fired from IDF vessels towards fishermen’s boats, forcing the latter to return to the coast, were reported every week during May. The restrictions on access to the sea undermine the current sardine catch, the bulk of which is located in deeper waters.

MAP Gaza Strip: Areas Restricted for Palestinian Access

June 2009



Wastewater continues to pose a serious environmental and health threat

In the first week of the month, a total of 54 truckloads carrying water and sanitation supplies, including plastic pipes, hoses, plumbing spare parts, cement and power generators, were allowed entry into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. This was the largest shipment of water and sanitation supplies since the tightening of the blockade in June 2007. The imported materials enabled the implementation of various urgent water and sanitation projects by the Gaza Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), the ICRC, The World Bank, Oxfam GB and UNICEF. Notably, the entry of these supplies allowed the completion of a critical ICRC project providing a sea outfall from the Khan Younis emergency wastewater treatment lagoons.

Yet, despite the significance of May's shipment, the large majority of projects aimed at maintaining, rehabilitating and upgrading the sewage and sanitation infrastructure of the Gaza Strip have been disastrously affected since the tightening of the blockade following the Hamas takeover of Gaza, due to restrictions on the import of supplies, construction materials and fuel. The impossibility of implementing projects has resulted in a gradual dilapidation of water and wastewater systems and created a significant health and environmental hazard.

According to the Gaza CMWU, every day approximately 80 million litres of untreated and partially treated wastewater are being discharged into the environment. In the Middle Area, for example, about 10 million litres of raw, undiluted, sewage flows every day into Wadi Gaza and from there into the sea, while in Khan Younis area, mixed storm water and sewage soaks directly into the aquifer. Moreover, even though the damage incurred to the wastewater infrastructure during the "Cast Lead" offensive was limited, the destruction and damage caused to thousands of structures that were connected to the wastewater network, resulted in additional quantities of untreated wastewater flowing into the environment.

Levels of resulting pollution are extremely high, raising serious health concerns. The 50 million

litres of partially treated sewage discharged every day into the sea from Gaza city, for example, contain twice the amount of biological pollution and suspended solids than if the Gaza Treatment Plant could function normally.¹⁶ Microbiologically contaminated seawater has been found along the Gaza Strip coast and there is evidence of sanitation-related infections (see "Concerns over health trends" below). Seawater samples taken by WHO and the Ministry of Health in Gaza in 2008 indicated particularly high pollution levels at a number of specific locations along the Gaza Strip coastline. The pollution of the sea represents a serious health hazard to people using beaches for recreation, to fisherman and to the Gaza Strip population, through potentially contaminated sea food.

Of no less concern are the potential health impact of the sewage infiltration into the aquifer and the resulting contamination of underground waters. In Khan Younis governorate, for example, one of the worst affected areas, the average levels of nitrates detected in 2008 in water wells was more than twice the recommended WHO level (70 mg/L), with even higher levels in wells within or close to the city. The aquifer is the single source of water available in the Gaza Strip for all domestic, agricultural and industrial uses. In the course of the past decades, the aquifer has undergone a process of gradual salinization as a result of over pumping.

Update on health situation

Concerns over health trends in the Gaza Strip

Newly available data indicate a number of worrying trends in the health situation for Gaza residents, including a significant increase in watery diarrheal disease, a rise in stunting levels and high levels of anemia among children 9 to 12 months, and substantial levels of psychological distress among adult patients. At the same time, data indicate a decrease in bloody diarrheal disease and fewer underweight children between 9 and 12 months.

Data collected from the UNRWA Communicable Disease Surveillance System during the period of January to April 2009 shows that the level of watery diarrheal disease among children is double its level during the same period of 2008. The major increase

occurred in the Khan Younis and North Gaza districts, where the level of disease was higher by 88 and 77 percent, respectively. At the same time, the level of bloody diarrheal disease during the January to April 2009 period was 14 percent lower than its level during the same period in 2008.

Recently published data from February 2009, on the nutritional status among children 9-12 months,¹⁷ show an increase in the level of stunting (disproportionately low height for age), a key indicator of malnutrition;¹⁸ an improvement in underweight (weight for age) levels;¹⁹ the level of anemia among children 9-12 months remains a severe public health problem in the Gaza Strip.²⁰

WHO recently carried out a survey to measure the prevalence of psychological distress among 500 adult patients visiting five Primary Health Care (PHC) centers in the Gaza Strip, to identify associated demographic risk factors and the ability of general practitioners to identify patients with psychiatric problems using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). The results of the study reveal that 37 percent of adult patients that sought PHC services showed psychological distress as measured by the GHQ-12. No difference has been detected between males and females. Older patients showed higher rates of prevalence (70 percent).

Number of drugs and disposals at zero level on the rise

In May, 82 drug items were at zero level, up from 65 in April. At the same time, 95 disposable items had reached zero level, up slightly from 90 in the previous month. Financial constraints; unavailability of some drugs items and supplies in the local market; procedures of procurement and logistics of the local authorities; and the non-adherence of donors to the donations guidelines are the main factors associated with this shortage. In addition to these factors, the entry of medical equipment and spare parts is additionally difficult due to the blockade and restrictions in importing these items.

Donation stocks received during “Cast Lead” have had only a moderate impact on these supply shortages, due to a widespread problem of short expiry dates, the preponderance of non-essential items, and a lack of variety in the items sent. In the

latter case, a narrow list of emergency and primary care items were donated in large quantities at the expense of items for specialized care. Although supplies have been arriving from the West Bank, the quantities and variety of items sent have been insufficient to significantly address current shortages. Moreover, despite receiving a large amount of medical equipment, much of it does not conform to MoH standards, are second-hand or in poor condition, and lack the required technical documentation. The Central Drug and Disposables store (CDS) continues its work on a final donation inventory report.

During May, WHO coordinated the entry of one shipment of medical drugs/disposables, while another four shipments of materials remained on hold by the Israeli authorities. The latter shipments contain x-ray materials, as well as medical and IT equipment. Since the end of “Cast Lead”, shipments of medical equipment in particular, have faced increasingly long delays at the border – over a month in some cases.

Table: Out of stock items March- May 2009

Store	March	April	May
Drugs	52	65	82
Disposables	68	90	95

Referral Abroad Department continues work

Following resolution of the internal dispute between the Hamas authorities in Gaza and the Ministry of Health in Ramallah in late April, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) continued normal operations throughout the month of May, with almost all RAD employees reporting to duty.

During the month, the RAD issued 1,080 referral documents: 41 percent for Egyptian hospitals; 33 percent for West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Jordanian and Israeli hospitals; and 26 percent for NGO hospitals in the Gaza Strip. Of the 489 applications for permits submitted to the Israeli District Coordination Office (DCO) during May, 55 percent were approved, 3 percent denied, and 42 percent were under review by the end of the month. About 4 percent of the applicants, all of whom are included in the last category (“under review”), were requested to meet with representatives of Israel’s Security Agency (formerly the GSS) in order to

have their applications processed. According to the Palestinian Liaison Officer at Erez, the total number of patients who actually crossed Erez was 303, 20 of whom crossed via back-to-back ambulance. In addition, 450 patients crossed to Egypt through the Rafah border crossing during its three-day opening in May. WHO confirmed that two patients died during May before accessing the medical facility to which they had been referred.

A Human Rights Council mission began investigating “Cast Lead”

The “International Independent Fact Finding Mission” appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate events related to the Gaza “Cast Lead” offensive, started its work on 4 May.²¹ The official mandate of the Mission is to “investigate all violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law that might have been committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, whether before, during or after”.²² In accordance with this mandate, the Mission will focus on relevant violations by all parties in the oPt and Israel.

Funding

As part of the Mid Year Review (MYR) of the Consolidated Appeal (CAP) for 2009, in the course of May, the humanitarian needs in all sectors were reassessed. The strategic objectives identified at the end of 2009 remain unchanged: providing humanitarian assistance; promoting and improving the protection of civilians; enhancing monitoring and reporting; and strengthening coordination structures. While the already substantial needs of the population in the oPt grew dramatically in the wake of the ongoing blockade and military action in the Gaza Strip, the inability to implement some of the projects due to the blockade has led to an overall downwards revision of the total request

Overall, the requested funding for six sectors has been reduced in the MYR, while the requests for another three sectors (Cash for Work and Cash

The Mission is headed by Justice Richard Goldstone, former member of the South African Constitutional Court and former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The three other mission members are Professor Christine Chinkin, who was a member of the 2008 “High Level Fact Finding Mission to Beit Hanoun”; Ms. Hina Jilani, who was a member of the 2004 “International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur”; and Colonel Desmond Travers, a former officer in the Irish Armed Forces and member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations.

The investigation will be based on an independent and impartial analysis of compliance of the parties with their legal obligations. To that end, the Mission intends, among other steps, to consult with a wide range of interlocutors who will include victims and witnesses, Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs, UN and other international organizations, community organizations, human rights defenders, medical and other professionals, legal and military experts, and other sources of reliable information relevant to its mandate, within and outside Israel and the oPt. The Mission, which will conduct its first visit to Gaza between 1 and 5 June 2009, will also seek consultations with relevant authorities.

Assistance, Coordination and Support Services, and Food Security and Nutrition) was revised upwards. The overall CAP request is now almost \$805 million, reflecting a reduction of approximately \$50 million. The actual funding of the CAP 2009 (including the Gaza Flash Appeal) as of the end of May stood at \$372 million; this represents about 44 percent of the original request, and is roughly the same percentage funded as at the MYR of the 2008 CAP.

Funding across sectors has varied. While food, coordination and health sectors have seen consistent support, other sectors are comparatively poorly-funded including shelter (11%), water/sanitation (16%), health (23%) and agriculture (25%).

The Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) supported two projects for Gaza during May.

Endnotes

- 1 Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the occupying power from transferring parts of its civilian population to the occupied territory.
- 2 Stop work orders precede demolition orders. A stop work order is issued after the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) has identified unauthorized construction, underway or completed, located outside the "Special Outline Plan" of a particular locale. The order invites the owner of the affected construction to submit a request for a building permit and appear at a hearing before the ICA's Sub Committee of Inspection at Beit El. If the owner does not apply for a permit, the Sub Committee automatically issues a final demolition order. If an application is received, the Sub Committee considers the request. In practice, however, according to information submitted by the Ministry of Defense to the Israeli Knesset, less than six percent of applications are approved. For additional details, see OCHA Special Focus, "Lack of Permit" Demolitions and Resultant Displacement in Area C, May 2008, available at www.ochaopt.org.
- 3 HCJ 2389/04, *Abdallah Hussein Bisharat and others vs. The Military Commander of Judea and Samaria and others*.
- 4 For further details on the rerouting see The Humanitarian Monitor, March 2009.
- 5 In addition to the self-demolition of the structure in Khirbet Samra, during the month, a Palestinian from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabal al Mukabbir demolished his own home under order of the Jerusalem Municipality, displacing eight people. In addition, the municipal authorities demolished three walls that surrounded residential structures in Al 'Isawiya neighbourhood. Also during the month, the Israeli authorities demolished a wall surrounding a public park located near the Ibrahim Mosque in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron city (H2).
- 6 In November 2008, a family living in the same area was forcibly evicted from its home after residing there since the 1950s. This eviction followed a Jerusalem court ruling in favor of a group of Israeli settlers claiming ownership of the land on which the house was built. The two buildings fined in May are affected by the same court decision, which is currently being contested. An estimated 500 persons currently reside in houses located on land in the contested area.
- 7 For information on incentives and financial benefits afforded to West Bank settlers, see B'Tselem, *Land Grab: Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank*, May 2002, pgs. 73 – 84.
- 8 At-risk communities, many of whom have experienced previous displacement include: Khirbet Tana (Nablus), Al Aqaba (Tubas), Tell al Khashaba (Nablus), Mughayyar al Deir (Ramallah), Mu'arrajat (Ramallah), Al Malih (Tubas), Massafer Yatta (Hebron), among others.
- 9 Available at: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_2009_05_25_english.pdf
- 10 Concluding Observations of the Committee against Torture, ISRAEL, CAT/C/ISR/CO/4, available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/docs/cobs/CAT.C.ISR.CO.4.pdf>
- 11 The Fourth Geneva Convention (article 76) requires that "Protected persons accused of offences shall be detained in the occupied country, and if convicted they shall serve their sentences therein."
- 12 Palestine Trade Centre (Paltrade). Gaza Crossings monthly report. May 2009.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). The Palestinian Housing and Establishment Census - 2007. February 2008.
- 15 Palestinian Federation of Industries (PFI). The need for a post-war development strategy in the Gaza Strip. March 2009.
- 16 Gaza wastewater treatment works was designed to treat 32,000 m³ per day, with effluent quality of 30 mg/L BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand-Measure of effluent strength) and 30 mg/L Suspended solids. It now treats 45,000 to 50,000 m³ per day, and consequently effluent quality is up to 100 mg/L BOD and 100 mg/L suspended solids. A new project is planned to upgrade the capacity of the works to 70,000 m³ per day (CMWU data).
- 17 WHO Nutritional Surveillance System launched at the MoH (Ministry of Health) Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities.
- 18 A 7 percent in February 2009 compared to an average level of 4.4 percent in 2006 and 4.2 percent in 2007.
- 19 A 1.2 percent compared to the average level of 2.3 percent in 2006 and 2.2 percent in 2007.
- 20 The level of anemia in February 2009 was 65.5 percent, which is slightly lower than its average level in the year 2006 (68.2 percent) and lower than its average level in 2007 (72.1 percent).
- 21 The appointment of the mission followed the adoption on 12 January 2009 of resolution S-9/1 by the United Nations Human Rights Council at the end of its 9th Special Session.
- 22 See Press Release from 8 May 2009, available at: <http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/BC7C60F307A16D1BC12575B000315895?opendocument>

CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

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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