



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

P.O. Box 38712, East Jerusalem, Phone: (+972) 2-582 9962 / 582 5853, Fax: (+972) 2-582 5841 ochaopt@un.org, www.ochaopt.org

Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

11 – 17 March 2009

New Developments since 17 March

- For the second time in 2009, the Israeli High Court approved the demolition of a house in East Jerusalem as a “deterrent” measure. The house belongs to the family of a Palestinian who committed an attack in West Jerusalem in July 2008, killing three Israelis.
- The Israeli Civil Administration demolished three residential structures and one animal structure in Area C, just outside East Jerusalem, displacing 25 people, including 15 children.
- Nine truckloads carrying supplies needed for water projects were allowed into Gaza, including one carrying cement. However, due to restrictions on the entry of other essential materials, including water pipes, the benefit of these supplies is limited.
- Following a two-day-long drastic reduction in electricity production due to a technical failure, the Gaza Power Plant increased its production to 50 Megawatts (MW) (10MWs below the level of the past few weeks). As a result, scheduled power cuts declined from 8-12 hours/day to 4-5 hours/day.

West Bank

Military activities affecting civilians: injuries doubled

During the reporting period, one Palestinian boy was killed by Israeli security forces and 32 others, nine of them children, were injured. The number of injuries is over twice as high as the weekly average of injuries reported in the last month (14) and an approximately 20% increase over the weekly average during 2008 (27).

Also this week, on 15 March, two Israeli policemen were shot dead in the Jordan Valley, in an attack for which a Palestinian armed faction later claimed responsibility.

On 11 March, the Israeli military shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian boy in the Ramallah governorate. The shooting reportedly occurred after Molotov cocktails were thrown towards a group of Israeli soldiers near a settlement. Over half of those injured this week (18) were shot with rubber coated metal bullets or live ammunition - nine during weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations, four shot while trying to escape arrest near a settlement, and four during a military operation, all in the Ramallah governorate. The rest of the injuries (14) were caused by physical assault in various circumstances. Since the beginning of 2009, Israeli security forces have killed nine Palestinians and injured 196 others throughout the West Bank.

Search and arrest campaigns: During the week, the Israeli army carried out 107 search operations, slightly above the weekly average during 2008 (103). Some of the largest operations were reportedly triggered by Palestinian stone throwing towards Israeli vehicles travelling on West Bank main roads. One Israeli settler was injured during the week as a result of stone-throwing. One of the Israeli operations, which took place in Beit Ummar village (Hebron governorate), involved the imposition of a 23-hour curfew, the arrest of 32 residents and significant damage to four searched houses.

Demolitions in East Jerusalem continue

This week, two structures were demolished in East Jerusalem due to the lack of building permits - the top floor of a six-storey building and one room of a house, resulting in the displacement of 11 people, including eight children. Since the beginning of the year, OCHA has recorded the demolition of 16 structures in East Jerusalem due to lack of permit, displacing over 100 people, more than half of them children.

Major checkpoint being relocated

This week, the Israeli authorities began work on the relocation of Beit Iba checkpoint, the main checkpoint controlling Palestinian movement into and out of Nablus City from the west. The new site is located next to the Shave Shomron

checkpoint, which was recently opened for Palestinian traffic. This opening significantly eased access between Jenin and the central West Bank. Once the relocated Beit Iba checkpoint is operational, this improvement may be reversed as the checkpoint will assume control over all movement from Jenin southwards.

Land leveling for Barrier re-routing continues

In the Qalqiliya governorate, Israeli contractors continued leveling land and uprooting trees belonging to Palestinians for the re-routing of two sections of the Barrier. One section involves three Palestinian villages isolated, until now, by the Barrier in an Israeli settlement enclave (Alfe Menashe), south of Qalqiliya City. The relocation of this Barrier section will allow these villages to have access to the rest of the West Bank. However, it will significantly impact their livelihoods since the route cuts them off from large parts of their property, to which, until now, they had unlimited access.

The rerouting of the other section will result in the reconnection of 700 dunums of agricultural land, isolated by the Barrier, to two Palestinian villages. These sections of the Barrier are being rerouted in compliance with an Israeli High Court of Justice decision more than three years ago, following petitions submitted by Palestinians. Yet, the new routes are entirely located within the West Bank, contrary to the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 9 July 2004.

Gaza Strip Update Palestinian casualties

In various violent incidents during the reporting period, the Israeli military injured four Palestinian civilians, compared to six civilians injured during the previous period. Among those civilians injured this week were two farmers, one fisherman and another man injured during an incursion east of Rafah. A total of ten Palestinians have been killed and 40 others injured in Israeli-Palestinian violence since the ceasefires declared on 18 January 2009.

Also during the week, the Israeli air force carried out a number of air strikes mainly

targeting the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. Palestinian factions also continued the firing of homemade rockets and mortar shells towards southern Israel, targeting Israeli towns and a military base. No injuries on either side were reported.

Fuel shortage continues despite increase in fuel entering via Gaza-Egypt tunnels

While the Israeli ban on the import of petrol and diesel through the official crossings has continued since 2 November 2008, the Palestinian Gas Stations Owners Association reports an increase in the amount of fuel being transferred through the tunnels, with nearly 50,000 litres of diesel and 30,000 litres of petrol entering every day. As a result, petrol and diesel prices have decreased by 50 and 40 percent respectively.

While the quantity of goods entering through the tunnels has reportedly decreased since "Cast Lead", they remain an important lifeline for the Gaza population to supplement shortages of commodities, food, fuel and other goods caused by Israel's closure.

Restrictions on access to land and sea continue

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian access to land and sea inside the Gaza Strip continues to severely damage livelihoods. These restrictions include access of farmers to their land located in the north and east along the border with Israel, and access of fishermen to fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore.

Humanitarian agencies continue to face difficulties in service provision

The import of humanitarian goods remains subject to unclear and often inconsistent criteria at the Israeli crossings. For example, a number of food items were blocked during the week after being classified as "non humanitarian goods". Despite requests by humanitarian agencies, the Israeli authorities have refused to provide a comprehensive list of prohibited items.

Despite some improvement observed during the last month, Israeli clearance procedures for access into Gaza by INGO personnel continues to be very lengthy, hindering their capacity to provide aid and services.