



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

5 - 11 January 2011

LATEST DEVELOPMENT

12 January: the Israeli authorities demolished 13 structures, including a class room, in the Area C community of Dkeika in the Hebron Governorate, due to the lack of building permits. Fifty people, including 30 children, have been displaced as a result.

West Bank

Two Palestinians killed and 12 injured

During the reporting period, Israeli forces killed two Palestinians and injured 12 others in various incidents throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The number of Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank since the beginning of 2011 has now reached four.

On 7 January, at around three in the morning, a special unit of the Israeli military shot and killed, allegedly by mistake, a 66-year-old Palestinian civilian during a search and arrest operation. The unit broke into the man's house, located in the Palestinian Authority (PA)-controlled area of Hebron City (H1), in the course of an operation aimed at arresting five alleged members of Hamas' military wing, who had been released from a PA prison the day before; one of them resided in the same building as the victim. The five men were ultimately arrested and taken into Israeli custody. According to the Israeli media, the Israeli army has expressed regret over the killing of the civilian and opened an investigation.

The following day, Israeli soldiers staffing the Al Hamra checkpoint (also known as Beka'ot) shot and killed a 25-year-old Palestinian man from Al Yamun village (Jenin), who was approaching the checkpoint in the pedestrian lane, and refused to stop after being called to do so by the soldiers. The Israeli army's spokesperson issued a statement indicating that the man carried explosives and a knife; however, according to the Palestinian DCL, he was unarmed. Al Hamra checkpoint is used by the army to restrict Palestinian access into the Jordan Valley. After the incident, a group of Israeli soldiers physically assaulted and injured a 19-year-old Palestinian man, who was on duty guarding a telecommunication tower located 1.5 km away from the checkpoint; the circumstances of the incident remain unclear. During the previous reporting period, another Palestinian civilian was killed while approaching the same checkpoint.

Also this week, ten Palestinians, including two children and four women, were injured during the weekly anti-Barrier protest in the village of Bil'in (Ramallah) during clashes with Israeli forces. Some 1,000 people, including Palestinian politicians and international and Israeli peace activists, participated in the demonstration, which was held also in commemoration of a woman who died after inhaling tear gas during the previous week's protest. In a related development, this week the Israeli Military Court of Appeal decided to extend the prison sentence of the head of the "Popular Committee Against the Wall" in Bil'in, from 12 to 16 months, after the prosecution argued that his initial sentence was too lenient. The man, who has been convicted of "organizing and participating in an illegal demonstration," has been recognized by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience.

The situation in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem remains tense. Clashes between Israeli forces and local residents broke out on the night of 7 January in the course of a raid conducted in the area, during which at least one Palestinian man was physically assaulted and injured, and several others suffered from gas inhalation and physical assault; two houses sustained damages. According to the Israeli media, three Israeli policemen were also lightly injured.

Overall, during the week, Israeli forces conducted a total of 85 search and arrest operations throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, compared with a weekly average of 92 during 2010.

Settler-related incidents

This week, OCHA recorded three incidents involving Israeli settlers that resulted in damage to Palestinian property and none resulting in Palestinian injuries, compared to a weekly average of six incidents during 2010.

One of the incidents took place in the village of Qusra (Nablus) and involved the uprooting and stealing of some 100 olive seedlings belonging to three families, comprising 17 people. In a separate incident in the neighboring village of Jal'ud, according to the village's council, a group of Israeli settlers seized and leveled approximately 65 dunums of land belonging to several families in the village. The land is located in the vicinity of Shvut Rahel settlement outpost, in an area that was declared closed by the Israeli military, on the eve of the last olive harvest, allegedly to prevent friction between settlers and Palestinians.

In an additional incident this week in the same area, which did not result in damages, Israeli settlers from Shilo settlement gathered at a water spring next to the village of Duma and prevented Palestinian access to the area for several hours. This spring serves as the main water source for domestic and livestock consumption for several families in the village.

Also this week, one Israeli settler was reportedly injured after Palestinians hurled stones at his vehicle, while travelling on Road 60 near Halhul (Hebron).

Demolitions in Area C and East Jerusalem continue

During the week, the Israeli authorities demolished a total of seven Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem and Area C, due to the lack of Israeli issued building permits, nearly the same as the weekly average of demolitions during 2010 (eight). Because of inadequate zoning and planning for Palestinians, obtaining a building permit from the Israeli authorities in Area C and East Jerusalem is almost impossible.

Two of the demolished structures – a residential home and a house used for agricultural purposes – were located in an Area C section of the 'Azzun 'Atma village (Qalqiliya). As a result of the demolitions, a woman and her three children were displaced and the livelihood of a family of six affected. The remaining five structures were located within the Israeli-declared boundary of Jerusalem and included two animal barracks, in Al Suwwani and Wadi al Joz neighborhoods; two commercial structures, on Salah al Din Street and in Hizma village; and a fence in the Old City. The livelihoods of five families were affected by the demolitions.

East Jerusalem hotel demolished to clear way for new settlement

On 9 January, Israeli bulldozers accompanied by Israeli Police forces, demolished a currently uninhabited building that functioned in the past as a hotel ("The Shepherd Hotel"), located in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. The building was constructed in the 1930's as a

residence for the Jerusalem Mufti, Hajj Amin Al Hussein. While developments since then concerning ownership over the building remain unclear, an Israeli settler organization, claiming ownership since 1985, had obtained the approval of the Israeli planning authorities to establish a new settlement, initially containing 20 housing units, on this site.

Owing to its strategic location, Israeli settler groups have in recent years made persistent efforts to take over land and property in Sheikh Jarrah, in order to establish new settlements in the area. As a result, since 2009, over 60 Palestinians have lost their homes and another 500 remain at risk of forced eviction, dispossession and displacement in the near future. The development this week triggered widespread condemnation throughout the international community.

Gaza Strip

Violence escalates

Armed clashes and military activities, including Palestinian rocket fire towards Israel and Israeli airstrikes within Gaza, intensified compared to the previous week. Overall, Israeli forces killed two Palestinians, one of whom was a civilian, and two foreign nationals, and injured another three Palestinians. One Israeli soldier was also killed and another four soldiers and three nationals of Thailand were injured. Since the beginning of 2011, two Palestinians, two foreign nationals and one Israeli were killed in the context of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict-related violence in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel, and six Palestinians (all civilians), three foreign nationals and four Israelis were injured.

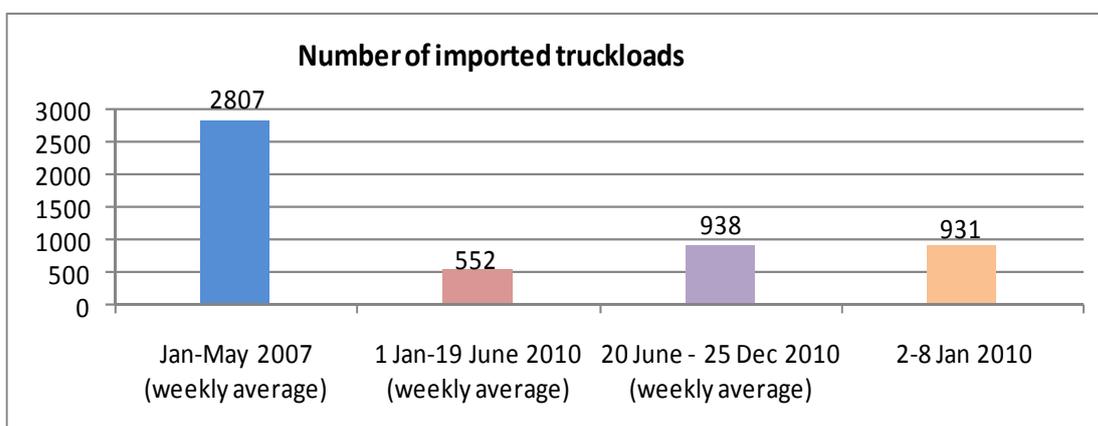
One of the Palestinian fatalities was a 65-year-old farmer shot on 10 January while cultivating his land, approximately 600 meters from the fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel, northwest of Beit Hanoun. On several other occasions during the week, Israeli forces opened 'warning' fire at farmers and workers collecting scrap metal near the fence, resulting in no casualties. These incidents occur in the context of Israeli restrictions on access to areas up to 1,500 metres (17 percent of Gaza Strip's territory) from the fence. In the same context, on three separate occasions during the week, Israeli forces launched incursions with bulldozers and tanks a few hundred meters into the Gaza Strip and withdrew after conducting land leveling. Access restrictions are also enforced on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore. In three separate incidents, Israeli naval forces opened fire towards Palestinian fishing boats, resulting in no injuries. In one incident on 11 January, Israeli forces detained four fishermen and seized their boats.

Another two men, allegedly Egyptians, whose affiliation (or lack of) remains unclear, were killed on 5 January by the Israeli military in the vicinity of the fence east of Jabalia, while reportedly trying to illegally enter into Israel. Finally, a 24-year-old member of a Palestinian armed faction was targeted and killed in an Israeli airstrike, while riding a motorcycle in the town of Deir Al Balah; two other bystanders were injured during the attack. Another man was injured in a separate air strike targeting a military base in the Khan Younis area.

In one of the armed clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces that occurred near the fence on 8 January, one Israeli soldier was killed and another four injured by 'friendly fire'. Palestinian armed factions increased the frequency of rocket and mortar firing at military bases and civilian communities in southern Israel. One of the attacks resulted in the injury of three Thai nationals employed in an Israeli community, located near the fence.

Gaza Crossings

Between 2 and 8 January, a total of 931 truckloads entered the Gaza Strip, slightly below the weekly average since the Israeli announcement to ease the blockade on 20 June 2010 (942 truckloads). This week's figure, however, represents only 33 percent of the weekly average of imports recorded before the imposition of the blockade in June 2007. Food items made up around 65 percent of the imports, compared to less than 20 percent of total imports prior to the blockade.



Exports remained limited to a few shipments of strawberries and cut flowers. Since the beginning of the season on 28 November, a total of 133 truckloads of strawberries (204 tonnes), cut flowers (1,394,000 stems) and sweet peppers (one truckload carrying one tonne) were allowed to leave Gaza. The 8 December announcement by the Israeli authorities to allow more exports from Gaza remains unimplemented. Since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007, only 393 truckloads of exports (strawberries and cut flowers) have left Gaza, compared to a monthly average of 1,086 in the first five months of 2007.

Daily power cuts remain up to 6 hours; cooking gas shortages continue

Fuel imports to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) declined by 11 percent this week compared to the amount of fuel which entered last week (0.72 vs. 0.80 million litres). This week's figure constitutes around one-third of the 3.15 million litres needed to operate the plant at full capacity. Despite the shortage, the GPP managed to continue operating two turbines, producing a total of 60 megawatts (MW) of electricity, up from 30 MW produced in recent months. The amount of fuel needed to operate the second turbine is being met by mixing industrial fuel with diesel fuel used normally for cars. The total provision of electricity throughout the Gaza Strip is less than 200 MW (including electricity purchased from Israel (120 MW) and Egypt (17 MW)); i.e. about 30 percent below the estimated daily needs. The majority of the population continues to experience power cuts of 4 to 6 hours a day, down from power cuts of 8 to 12 hours per day during the past months.

This week, approximately 717 tonnes of cooking gas entered Gaza, representing 60 percent of the estimated weekly needs of gas (1,200 tonnes). According to the Gas Stations Owners Association, a rationing scheme, re-introduced in December 2010, remains in place, with only 10 out of 28 cooking gas stations operating at one time, leaving more than half of the households in Gaza with a lack of cooking gas. The limited capacity of Kerem Shalom crossing, which lacks a storage facility on the Palestinian side, remains one of the primary reasons for cooking gas shortages; such a facility existed at the Nahal Oz crossing, which was closed by the Israeli authorities at the beginning of 2010.