



## OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

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## Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

11 – 17 February 2009

### Latest Developments

As of 18 February, the West Bank has received only 32% of the multi-year average rainfall for this time of the year, according to the Palestinian Water Authority. This minimal amount has increased the likeliness that 2009 will become the second consecutive year of severe drought. Among the most affected will be about 200 communities, who are not connected to a water network and rely to a large extent on traditional water sources.

On 18 February, following a suspension lasting almost two weeks, Israel allowed 188 tonnes of cooking gas into Gaza. Since the beginning of February, Israel has allowed entry to only 959 tonnes of cooking gas, less than one fifth of the estimated needs.

### Military activities affecting civilians

**Gaza Strip:** Violent incidents during the week by the Israeli military and Palestinian armed factions undermine the current cease-fire. The Israeli military carried out attacks by land, sea and air killing two Palestinians, including a 13-year-old child and an alleged fighter. Israeli air force jets and helicopters carried out seven air strikes injuring nine Palestinians: six were injured when an air strike targeted a wood factory in Jabaliya Camp, north Gaza and three during a strike on two alleged armed militants riding a motorcycle in Abassan, east of Khan Younis. The other air strikes targeted tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border, a police station, located south of Khan Younis, and a vehicle in Gaza City, where no injuries were reported.

Palestinian armed factions fired approximately six rudimentary rockets and 12 mortar shells from Gaza towards Israel. Palestinian fighters also detonated an explosive device close to an IDF patrol unit, east of Gaza City and soldiers responded with fire. No injuries were reported from these incidents.

Also during the week, Israeli patrol boats opened-fire on one occasion towards Palestinian fishing boats sailing along the coast near Deir El Balah. No injuries or damages to the boats were reported. According to the Gaza Fishermen's Syndicate, three fishermen have been

injured and ten fishing boats have been damaged near Gaza City and the Middle Area by Israeli patrol boats since the ceasefires took effect on 18 January. In addition, IDF troops fired towards Palestinian farmers east of Deir El Balah, forcing them to leave their land. On one occasion, IDF tanks and bulldozers entered Gaza, leveled land and conducted excavation operations before withdrawing.

In addition, a 45-year-old Palestinian woman was killed by a stray bullet fired by the Al Quds brigade of Islamic Jihad, which was training near her home in Al Moghraqa village, south of Gaza City.

**West Bank:** During the reporting period, the Israeli army killed a 16-year-old Palestinian boy during clashes with stone-throwing Palestinians in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2). In addition, 22 Palestinians, including ten children, were injured throughout the West Bank. Thirteen of the injuries occurred during the weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations in Ni'lin, Bil'in, Jayyous and Ma'asra villages. Five of the injuries were caused by rubber-coated metal bullets, one by live ammunition and seven by physical assault. Another three Palestinians from Ni'lin village, including two children, were injured during a clash with the Israeli army, following the uprooting of 25 olive trees in an area requisitioned by Israel for the construction of a "fabric of life" tunnel. The tunnel is designed to connect Ni'lin with

a neighboring village under road 446, which the Israeli DCL reported that Palestinians will be barred from using once the tunnel is complete.

During the week, Israeli security forces conducted 113 search operations throughout the West Bank, a slight increase compared to the weekly average during January 2009 (105). During the same period, 85 Palestinians were arrested, compared to a weekly average of 99 in January. Beginning at 8pm on 11 February, Israeli troops conducted a nine-hour-long operation in three Jordan Valley villages designated as Area B (Az Zubeidat, Marj Na'ja and Marj al Ghazal). During the operation, soldiers moved from house to house requiring that residents show their ID cards and answer various questions related to their residency in the village. No arrests were carried out.

#### **West Bank access developments**

##### ***Removal of roadblocks in Hebron governorate***

On 16 February, the Israeli authorities removed six movement obstacles in Hebron governorate, allowing direct vehicular access between various communities and Road 60, the main north-south traffic artery in the area. The most significant among the removed obstacles was an earthmound that blocked vehicular movement between the town of Bani Nai'm (16,000 residents) and Road 60. Its removal has reduced the travel time between the town and Hebron City, the main economic and service hub in the area, from 40 to 15 minutes. These removals follow the trend in improved access between Hebron City and the rest of the governorate observed during 2008.

Also during the reporting period, a new "humanitarian lane" for pedestrians was opened at Gilo checkpoint, the only access point available to Palestinians holding Israeli-issued permits for entry to East Jerusalem from the southern West Bank. This lane is meant to serve patients, the elderly, women and children going to or from school. The opening of the lane follows numerous reports of hardship by these

vulnerable groups experienced at this crossing.

##### ***Herders prevented access to the closed area***

During the reporting period, despite holding the necessary permits, Palestinian herders from northern Tulkarm and Jenin districts were denied entry to their land in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line with their livestock (including approximately 1,000 sheep). According to the PA Ministry of Agriculture, its Israeli counterpart indicated that the measure is aimed at preventing the spread of an infectious disease identified in adjacent areas within Israel. The lack of access to grazing areas has forced herders to purchase increasingly expensive fodder, thus further eroding their source of income.

##### ***East Jerusalem-area community further isolated by the Barrier***

The Israeli DCL reported that it started issuing the permits that are now required for Palestinian residents of Dahiyat al Bareed who hold West Bank ID cards to continue to live in their homes. Dahiyat al Bareed is a community adjacent to East Jerusalem that was separated from the rest of the West Bank by the Barrier. The need for these permits stems from the 5 January 2009 declaration of some areas between the Barrier and the Israeli-declared boundary of Jerusalem as a "closed military area" or "seam zone". However, according to the Israeli DCL, permits are currently being issued to only 110 of the 140 West Bank ID holders living in the community, rendering the other 30 at risk of displacement. Moreover, on 16 February, the Israeli authorities closed a gate in the Barrier, disconnecting Dahiyat Al Bareed from the rest of the West Bank. As a result, residents are now forced to use Qalandiya checkpoint, which is frequently crowded and may take up to 1-2 hours to cross.

##### ***Appeals against the seizure of land planned for settlement expansion rejected***

On 12 February, an Israeli military appeal committee rejected eight of nine appeals submitted by Palestinians against the declaration of approximately 1,700 dunums

belonging to Artas village in Bethlehem governorate as “state land”. This land, which was added in the past to the municipal area of the Efrat settlement, has been reportedly allocated by the Israeli authorities for the expansion of the settlement by 2,500 additional housing units. Following the rejection of the appeals, Israeli settlers from Efrat and other neighboring settlements planted several trees on the land.

#### **Demolitions in Jerusalem governorate continue**

During the reporting period, a Palestinian residence in the community of Beit Hanina in East Jerusalem was demolished by its owners, following receipt of a demolition order by the Jerusalem municipality due to the lack of a building permit. This measure was aimed at avoiding the fees and fines that would have been imposed by the Municipality if the latter carried out the demolition. Seven people, including five children, have been displaced as a result. Two days later, Israeli security forces dismantled and confiscated one Bedouin residential tent in the Latoon Abu Jumaa community located in Area C, east of East Jerusalem, in the area planned for the expansion of the Ma’ale Adumim settlement (E1). As a result, ten people, including five children, were displaced. This demolition follows one carried out in the same area on 3 February that resulted in the displacement of 25 people.

#### **Gaza update:**

##### ***Average daily truckloads remain below needs; one truckload exported***

An average of 113 truckloads per day entered the Gaza Strip during the reporting period through the Kerem Shalom crossing and the Karni conveyor belt, roughly the same as during the previous period (117). This compares to the daily average of 246 truckloads received in the third week of July 2008, one month following the Egyptian-brokered “calm” between Palestinian factions and Israel, and 475 truckloads in May 2007, prior to the Hamas take-over of Gaza. Almost half (46%) of all truckloads were aimed at humanitarian aid agencies, with food supplies accounting for 82%. No livestock or construction materials were

allowed entry. Sufa and Rafah crossings remained closed.

One truckload of cut flowers (nearly 50,000 flowers) was allowed out of Gaza on 12 February through the Kerem Shalom Crossing. This is the first time since 18 January 2008 that Israel has allowed any exports from Gaza.

##### ***Fuel remains in short supply***

No petrol, diesel or cooking gas was allowed entry to Gaza from Israel during the reporting period (for an update on cooking gas see Latest Developments above). Petrol and diesel were last allowed entry for public use on 2 November 2008 and cooking gas was last allowed in on 4 February 2009. A total of 2,172,000 liters of industrial fuel for the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) was allowed into Gaza during the week, less than 70% of the quantity needed to operate at full capacity. The amount of fuel coming into Gaza through the tunnels along the Rafah-Egypt border has reportedly decreased.

##### ***Scheduled power cuts continue***

The GPP continued to operate below its full capacity, creating a power deficit of 19% throughout the Gaza Strip. In addition to unscheduled power cuts, the following scheduled power cuts remain in place: 8 hours three times per week in the Gaza and North Gaza governorates; 8 hours every third day in the Middle Area and Khan Yunis; and 4-6 hours every third day in Rafah. According to GEDCO, 10-15 percent of the electrical network is not yet functional. Due to localized damage, certain areas still do not receive electricity, notably Al Qurem, Izbet Abed Rabbo and Al Atatra.

##### ***Access to basic food commodities continues to be difficult***

According to findings from WFP’s market survey, high prices have been reported for red meat, poultry and eggs due to the shortage in animal feed. As a result, many people cannot purchase these commodities. Fresh vegetables are available in the market and prices are stable. A crucial factor influencing food security in the weeks and months to come is the resumption of a cash economy and employment, without which

most Gazan households will continue relying on food aid, cash assistance and emergency temporary job creation schemes. According to WFP and FAO, food consumption and nutritional status are also likely to deteriorate if urgent repairs of the water network and damaged housing units are not undertaken.

***50,000 still have no access to running water***

As of 16 February, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), Gaza's water utility, reports that 50,000 people did not have access to running water and an additional 150,000-200,000 receive water only every 7 to 10 days.

Although emergency repairs to water wells and network facilities are still ongoing, major repairs cannot take place without the entry of needed spare parts into Gaza, which remains problematic. According to the Palestinian Hydrology Group, 3,000 litres of fuel leaked into the wastewater infiltration basin of the Beit Lahiya Emergency Wastewater Treatment Plant, posing a risk of chemical contamination of the aquifer. The education sector reports a continued shortage of drinking water in schools.

***WHO releases new needs assessment for the Gaza Strip***

On 16 February, WHO released its initial health needs assessment in the Gaza Strip, following the latest military conflict. The assessment indicates that by the time of its release, most health facilities were operational; immunization and other public health programmes had fully resumed; full stocks of drugs were in place in most hospitals; referral abroad for patients requiring specialized care, including the chronically sick, had resumed, but at a lower level than before the crisis; and electricity supply was back to its pre-emergency status, but was still of concern in some areas. However, the health system remains affected by the blockade imposed since June 2007, which has resulted, inter alia, in a deterioration in the functionality of medical equipment due to the lack of maintenance and spare parts, and a lack of training opportunities for medical staff.

The main risks and challenges ahead include (but are not limited to) the treatment for people with traumatic injuries and hearing impairment caused by explosions due to inappropriate follow-up; potential risks for women who went into labour during the crisis; complications and excess mortality in patients with chronic diseases due to suspension of treatment and delayed access to health care; epidemic outbreaks of water and food-borne diseases due to limited access to clean water and sanitation and a weak public health surveillance system; long-term mental health problems due to the effects of the conflict; and restricted access to specialized tertiary care.