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Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

25 February - 3 March 2009

New Developments since Tuesday, 3 March

- On 4 and 5 March, four Palestinian militants were killed and ten others, including nine civilians, were injured in three separate Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip.
- On 4 March, the Israeli authorities removed the Er Ras / Kafriat checkpoint, including all related infrastructure. The checkpoint controlled all traffic to and from seven villages in the southern Tulkarem district (approximately 12,000 people) to Tulkarem city.
- Two seven-storey Palestinian buildings in Al Tori (Abu Tor) neighbourhood in Jerusalem with a total of 32 apartment units were issued with demolition orders to be executed within 20 days. An estimated 250-300 Palestinians will be displaced.
- In the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, two families, Hanoun and Al Ghawi, were given orders to vacate their homes within ten days. The pending evacuations will displace an estimated approximately 70 Palestinians, including 25 children.
- On 5 March (day of publication), a Palestinian tractor driver attacked a police car and a civilian bus. Two Israeli police were lightly injured, and the perpetrator was shot and killed.

West Bank

East Jerusalem: Demolitions and demolition orders in continue; general strikes in the West Bank protesting pending demolition of Al Bustan neighbourhood

During the week, there were five demolitions in East Jerusalem due to the lack of building permits. One of them occurred in Ein al Lozi quarter of Silwan neighbourhood, displacing a family of eight, including six children. The owner, Mahmoud Abassi, received the demolition order eight days earlier, on 22 February. The house was completed in mid 2008, and no demolition order was received until last week. Mr. Abassi, together with several neighbours, had submitted a detailed urban plan for consideration to the Israeli Jerusalem municipality for their area some three years ago, but the plan was not approved. The other East Jerusalem demolitions occurred in Sur Bahir (a house under construction), and Al Tori (Abu Tor) (a small grocery store).

On 3 March, the owners and residents of 55 apartment dwellings in Ras Khamis area adjacent to Shu'fat Refugee Camp in East Jerusalem were given demolition orders with 72-hour notice. Approximately 40 people live in the buildings.

On 28 February, a general strike was held throughout the West Bank protesting the pending demolition of an entire quarter in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Palestinian residents of the area were given demolition orders in 2005 citing reasons including lack of building permits or a "demolition for the benefit of the community". In place of the Palestinian neighbourhood, an archaeological park is to be built. The demolition of the Al Bustan neighbourhood will displace and render homeless an estimated 1300-1500 Palestinians.

Military Activities affecting civilians

Violence during the week between Palestinians and Israeli armed forces in the West Bank has dropped dramatically in comparison with other weeks, reaching the lowest point since the third week of November 2008, and representing only 20% of the 2008 average weekly number of Palestinian casualties inflicted by Israeli armed forces. This week, five Palestinians, including one child, were injured by Israeli military forces.

Not reported last week: On 23 February Israeli forces shot and killed a 14-year-old Palestinian boy participating in a demonstration in the H2 area of Hebron city.

During the week, Israeli security forces conducted 116 search operations throughout the West Bank, the same as the previous week—slightly higher than the weekly 2008 average of 101 searches. Israeli forces arrested 77 Palestinians; lower than the 2008 average of 84 arrests per week. The number of flying checkpoints reported during the week (77) was close to the 2008 average of 75 flying checkpoints/week.

Unexploded ordnance On 26 February and unexploded ordnance (UXO) exploded killing one minor in Khirbet Yarze and injuring two others. Khirbet Yarze is located east of Tubas city, in a closed military area where the Israeli military has conducted military trainings in the past. In 2008, two Palestinians were killed and five others injured throughout the West Bank by UXOs.

Anti-Barrier demonstrations Weekly anti-barrier demonstrations continued in the villages of Bil'in, Ni'lin (Ramallah), Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem) and Jayyus (Qalqiliya). In Ni'lin village, four Palestinians were injured, including a 17-year-old old Palestinian boy by Israeli forces. Cases of tear-gas inhalation were also reported. In Jayyus, the demonstration was cut short when the IDF imposed a curfew on the village.

Flooding in the West Bank

Barrier-related Due to sudden rain, flooding occurred in the agricultural areas near the Barrier in Zeita and Baqa Ash Sharqiya villages. Agricultural fields were severely damaged due to blocked culverts and drainage pipes under the wall. The extent of damage still not confirmed. At least 35 dunums of greenhouses from Zeita and Baqa Ash Sharqiya villages were affected.

Unrelated to the Barrier Following the sudden rains, flooding affecting approximately 170 houses in a valley in the Tulkarem district, including ten to twenty houses severely affected. In the Jordan Valley, flooding also occurred in the Jiftlik area, causing damage to homes and agricultural land of some 60 families.

Settler Violence

During the reporting period, two Palestinians were injured in Israeli settler violence. A seven-year-old Palestinian girl from the Wadi Al Hussein neighbourhood in the Israeli controlled part of Hebron City (H2), sustained injury to the head while en route home from school when settlers from Kiryat Arba settlement threw stones at her. Another man was assaulted by Israeli settlers in the same area the following day.

On 28 February, Israeli settlers uprooted approximately 130 trees from fields belonging to three Palestinian families from Jinsafut village (Qalqiliya).

In East Jerusalem, three Israelis threw stones at a group of Palestinian children, and then reportedly broke into the home of the As Sabagh family in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. The Israeli police arrived to the scene and arrested the two perpetrators. No injuries were reported. The family issued an official complaint at the police headquarters in West Jerusalem.

Gaza Strip Update

Violence Israeli airstrikes and Palestinian rocket attacks continue despite the “unilateral” ceasefire declared separately by both Israel and Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, on 18 January. During the reporting period, Israeli armed forces conducted fourteen airstrikes, mostly targeting the smuggling tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border, injuring four civilians. Over the weekend Palestinian rocket fire hit the Israeli town of Ashkelon—some 16 kilometres from the Gaza-Israeli border, landing near a school. No injuries were reported, but two houses sustained minor damage.

Imports During the reporting period, 466 truckloads entered Gaza a 26% decrease from the prior reporting period, and approximately 83% of the average weekly imports for the year 2008. Out of the 466 truckloads, 94 were comprised of grain entered through the Karni conveyor belt. Of the remaining items, notably five truckloads carried eleven prefabricated school-classrooms with the capacity of accommodating 500 students.

The Israeli criteria used for processing and determining import requests into Gaza remain opaque. All rejections are issued verbally. In response to access constraints and interferences in the delivery of aid by the Israeli authorities, and to a lesser degree, by the PA and the authorities in Gaza, humanitarian partners produced a joint Framework of Principles based on well-established international humanitarian principles, as a guide for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, to clarify requirements needed for delivery of assistance.

Food Although food is generally available in the Gaza Strip, prices for some essential food items (e.g. fresh meat and fruit) have increased in recent weeks due to scarcity of supply, and for other commodities (e.g. sugar, wheat), the Gaza authorities have been forced to put price restrictions in place. Since November, there has been a marked shortage of animal feed, as well as heating

fuel for chicken farms. As such, local meat production has been greatly affected and Gaza's population is forced to rely on frozen imports for its protein.

No agricultural raw materials were allowed into Gaza during the reporting period. Since the beginning of 2009, most agricultural imports consisted of animal feed or supplements (544 truckloads) which do not sufficiently meet Gaza's needs. Excepting a few truckloads of eggs and seedlings, no other types of agriculture-related raw materials have been allowed into Gaza in 2009. Agricultural raw materials including fertilizers, seedlings, and construction material for farm facility reconstruction are needed but are currently restricted from entry into Gaza.

Tunnel incidents Tunnels under the border with Egypt continue to be used to import commodities banned or supplied in insufficient quantities through the official crossings. Two of these tunnels collapsed during the reporting period due to faulty construction, resulting in five Palestinians killed. In 2008, at least 51 Palestinians died and 69 others were injured in tunnel related incidents.

Shelter In mid-February, the UNDP began a cash distribution program on behalf of the Palestinian Authority for Palestinians with destroyed or damaged homes, but distribution has slowed due to shortage of cash within the Gaza Strip.

On 28 February, after two years of postponement, the NGO, GVC-Italia succeeded in importing two water desalination plants into the Gaza Strip for use in Al Bureij Refugee camp. The plants have the capacity to provide an estimated 50 cubic meters of water per hour, enough for 22,000 persons. Piped water is still not available for all Gazans--50,000 people do not have access to piped water; an additional 100,000 Gaza residents receive water for a few hours only every 7-10 days, including in parts of Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Gaza City and Rafah. Thousands are relying on trucked water to their homes.

Electricity With the exception of ten percent of the population with no access to electricity due to grid damage, electricity has been restored to pre-“Cast Lead” operation levels. Scheduled rolling power blackouts remain in place: 8 hours three times per week in the Gaza and North Gaza governorates, 8 hours of power cuts every third day in Middle Area and Khan Younis, and 4-6 hours of power cuts every third day in Rafah. As of 2 March, the power deficit in Gaza remains at 19 percent.