



UNITED NATIONS

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

29 APRIL-5 MAY 2009

Latest developments since Tuesday, 5 May

- On 6 May, a Palestinian was killed by Israeli forces in the H2 area of Hebron city near the Ibrahimi Mosque in still unclear circumstances .
- An Israeli soldier was killed on 7 May during a military operation near Ramallah City. The circumstances of the incident are still unclear.
- OCHA released a new report on 7 May documenting how urban and agricultural areas of the Bethlehem governorate are constricted by a combination of Israeli infrastructure, including the Barrier, Israeli settlements, and Israeli administrative restrictions; only 13% of the governorate land is available for Palestinian development and natural growth.

West Bank

Military activities affecting civilians

This week, there was a decrease in Palestinian casualties in the context of Israeli military activities with the lowest casualties recorded since the end of March 09: fifteen injuries. Of these, twelve, including two children, were injured by Israeli military forces in anti-Barrier protests, two in settler-related incidents, and the remaining two were physically assaulted at a checkpoint.

Anti-Barrier demonstrations were held this week in the villages of Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem), Ni'lin and Bil'in (Ramallah). Three Palestinians were arrested by Israeli forces in the course of the protests, including the spokesperson of the Ma'sara village's committee against the Barrier. Cases of tear-gas inhalation by protesters were also reported.

There was no change from the previous reporting period in the number of either Israeli military search operations (115) or the number of Palestinians arrested by Israeli forces (77). Searches remain higher than the 2008 average of 103 search operations per week, and Israeli arrests of Palestinians remain below the 2008 average of 84 Palestinian arrests per week.

Israeli Settler-related violence and other incidents

Violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank, which sharply rose in recent weeks in the aftermath of the 2 April killing of an Israeli child from the settlement of Bat Ayin, declined during the reporting period. Violence, however, did not subside entirely, with three Palestinians injured by Israeli settlers, including one child. In addition, two other Palestinians from the village of Safa (Hebron) were injured when Israeli troops opened fire during a clash between the Bat Ayin settlers and Palestinian residents of the village (*included in the above figures*). In an incident in Ramallah district, Palestinians threw a Molotov cocktail at an Israeli bus near Sabtin village, however no injuries were reported from this incident.

Other reported settler-related incidents included stone-throwing at Palestinian vehicles along main conduit roads in the Qalqiliya governorate in the northern West Bank, tree-uprooting and property damage in Ramallah governorate, and continued harassment and denial of access by settlers of Palestinian herders to grazing areas in the Hebron and Bethlehem governorates in the southern West Bank. These attacks exacerbate the vulnerability of herder communities in the south, which are severely affected by Area C restrictions and the shortage of water.

East Jerusalem demolition orders and protests

In 2009, all Israeli demolitions of built-up residences (not including tents) in the West Bank due to the lack of permits occurred in and around East Jerusalem. During the reporting period, the trend continued with the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality issuing 26 additional demolition orders for Palestinians living in Beit Hanina and Wadi El Joz neighborhoods, and in the Old City. One of the demolition orders was for a two-story extension built over the Armenian Catholic Church to host visiting clergymen and other religious figures.

During the week, Palestinians from East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan staged a protest against Israeli military orders for evacuation of civilian homes. Of the 90 houses located in the area, most have received demolition orders, placing more than 1,000 Palestinians in Silwan at risk of losing their homes.

On 30 April, OCHA published a Special Focus report, *The Planning Crisis in East Jerusalem*, which examines Israel's demolition policy of unauthorized Palestinian structures since 2000, and provides background on the difficulties faced by Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem in their building efforts. There are approximately 1,500 outstanding house demolition orders affecting 9,000 Palestinians, but at least 60,000 Palestinians live in homes built without permits and face the threat of receiving demolition orders. Noting the hardship caused by demolitions and problems in the current planning process, the report calls upon Israel, the occupying power, to freeze all pending demolition orders and initiate adequate planning as an immediate first step to resolving the housing crisis. (Report available at www.ochaopt.org)

Access Restrictions

The general closure imposed by Israeli authorities on the West Bank on 26 April, due to Israel's Remembrance and Independence Day, ended this week on 29 April. During the closure, all Palestinians, including those with valid permits, with a few exceptions, were barred from entering East Jerusalem and Israel.

Gaza Strip

Military activities affecting civilians

The decrease in military activities seen in Gaza in recent weeks was interrupted, with Israeli airstrikes targeting tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border; preliminary reports indicate that two Palestinians died and four others were injured as a result. In addition, two other Palestinians were injured, including one adult female and a 14-year-old boy, when on 3 May troops stationed on the border fence north of Gaza opened fire on Palestinian farmers east of Jabalia. The injured child was transferred to an Israeli hospital. These are the first reported casualties resulting from Israeli military activities in the Gaza Strip since 4 April.

During the reporting period, the livelihoods of Palestinian fishermen continued to be affected by access restrictions imposed by Israeli naval forces; in two separate incidents, Israeli patrol boats opened fire on Palestinian fishing boats west of Gaza City and west of Rafah, forcing the fishing boats to return to shore.

Sporadic Palestinian rockets and mortars continued to be launched from Gaza towards the green Line and Israeli troops inside Gaza. No injuries Palestinian or Israeli casualties were reported in these incidents.

Unexploded ordnance

Three Palestinians, including two children, were injured when an unexploded ordnance detonated in an area east of Beit Lahiya. There were also reports of armed Palestinians testing mines in an open area east of Sheikh Zayed city, north of Gaza.

United Nations Board of Inquiry releases report on incidents

The United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry, commissioned by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, released a report which examined several incidents that took place in the Gaza Strip during Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive in which civilian death or injuries occurred at, and/or damage was done to, UN premises. The Board of Inquiry found that the Government of Israel was responsible for the death and injury of civilians in seven out of nine incidents investigated.

Israel's blockade of Gaza

Israel's 22-month blockade continues to affect all aspects of life. This week, 418 truckloads of goods, 26% of which were designated to humanitarian aid agencies, were allowed entry to Gaza. This represents only two thirds of the 2009 weekly average of truckloads (622). Construction materials, spare parts for public infrastructure and industrial, agricultural inputs including livestock, IT/computer-related items and others remain barred from entering Gaza.

Almost no new items were allowed entry into Gaza during the week. The ban on concrete and other construction materials, and limitations on cash allowed into Gaza, continue to hinder Gaza reconstruction efforts to rebuild homes and necessary infrastructure destroyed during "Cast Lead".

Fuel imports

Roughly 70% the weekly industrial fuel requirements for the operation of Gaza's Power Plant entered Gaza this week, holding steady for the second consecutive week at 2.2 million litres imported. Cooking gas imported into Gaza through Nahal Oz was only 54% of Gaza's weekly needs as estimated by the Gas Station Owners' Association (GSOA); cooking gas consumption remains rationed in the Gaza Strip.

The GSOA also estimates that diesel and petrol enter through the Rafah-Egypt border tunnels at a rate of nearly 100,000 litres of diesel and 70,000 litres of petrol per day. No petrol or diesel fuel has entered Gaza through the Nahal Oz fuel pipeline since 2 November 2008, except for limited quantities for UNRWA.

Referral Abroad Department

The Referral Abroad Department (RAD) in Gaza, which during the previous reporting period resumed work, continued operating normally. The last week's resumption followed an arrangement

between the authorities in Gaza and the PA in Ramallah, ending 36 days of disruption that began on 22 March 2009 when the Hamas authorities in Gaza seized control of the RAD over staff corruption allegations. From 27 -30 April, 262 referral cases had been processed after being financially approved by Ramallah.