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Military activities affecting civilians: A 16-year-old boy killed while throwing stones

This week, the IDF killed two Palestinians (including a 16-year-old child) and injured 20 others (including four children) during military operations in the West Bank. The killing of the child and the injury of one male occurred when the IDF opened fire at Palestinian stone throwers in Tuqu' village (Bethlehem); this took place in the aftermath of multiple search operations throughout Bethlehem governorate, during which the IDF raided the house of the headmaster of Tuqu' Boys School and reportedly threatened that the school would be demolished if students do not stop throwing stones at the IDF from the school. In another raid on Ni'lin village (Ramallah), the IDF injured two children and four adults, conducted a search operation and arrested four children and five adults.

In the Gaza Strip, despite the 19 June truce, a Palestinian man was shot and injured on 12 September by IDF soldiers stationed at the border east of Rafah. On 14 September, one rocket fired by Palestinian militants from east Jabaliya landed in Sderot city, within Israel, but did not result in casualties or damage. In response to this incident, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak ordered the closure of all the crossings into Gaza for the rest of the reporting week. In addition, on 16 September, two IDF tanks and two bulldozers entered about 150 meters into Central Gaza and carried out a levelling operation.

Gaza: Clashes between the Dughmush family and Al Qassam Brigades result in 12 fatalities and 42 injuries

On the morning of 15 September, a person from the Dughmush clan (an armed family mostly affiliated with the Army of Islam) who was allegedly suspected of criminal activities killed a police officer and injured another while the latter were pursuing him. Following this incident, the Palestinian police handed over their positions in Sabra area of Gaza City, considered a stronghold of the Dughmush family, to Al Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas. Al Qassam Brigades sealed the area and carried out search operations, during which armed clashes erupted between the two sides and culminated in the death of 12 people and the injury of 42 others. The fatalities include three children and eight armed persons from the Dughmush family and one police officer. The injured include at least 16 members of the

Dughmush family (two women and 14 men) and 10 police officers. Local reports indicate that heavy weaponry such as mortars, RPGs and heavy machine guns were used during the clashes.

About 9,000 students unable to attend schools in East Jerusalem

The PA Ministry of Education reported that approximately 9,000 Palestinian children from East Jerusalem cannot attend schools this academic year due to a shortage in classrooms. The Jerusalem Municipality, which is responsible for granting permits for building new schools or additional classrooms at existing schools, has not granted the permits necessary to accommodate the increasing numbers of students and this has led to overcrowding and a shortage in classrooms. There are also demolition orders pending against new structures which were built by schools to address the shortage.

Ongoing strike in the education and health sectors in the Gaza Strip

The teachers and health workers unions in Ramallah called upon their counterparts in the Gaza Strip to extend the strike for another week, until 23 September 2008. WHO has reported that the eleven hospitals run by the Ministry of Health were providing the required services, notwithstanding delays in service provision and a reduction in the number of elective surgical operations. In the education sector, about 1000 teachers gradually returned to school over the past week, raising the attendance level of former teachers to about 40% (compared to 32% last week). According to UNICEF, school students' attendance in public schools continues to stand at an average of more than 90%.

Huwwara Checkpoint: a woman gave birth to a stillborn baby

At Huwwara checkpoint, an IDF soldier reportedly delayed a man and his pregnant wife from Qusra village for 50 minutes on their way to a local hospital; the woman gave birth to a stillborn child while waiting at the checkpoint (Nablus).

On the same day, a Palestinian woman reportedly poured an acid on and injured an IDF soldier at Huwwara checkpoint, after which the IDF closed the checkpoint for one hour.

Barrier Construction: Land requisitioning, demolitions and demonstrations

This week, the IDF handed over a military order requisitioning 472 dunums of land from Jayyus and Falamiya villages to alter the route of the Barrier (Qalqiliya).

In Jerusalem, at the entrance of Shu'fat refugee camp, a bulldozer operated by the contractor constructing the Barrier demolished a one-room structure used as a taxi dispatch and 10 olive and fruit trees owned by a Palestinian family living adjacent to the Barrier construction site. On 9 September, the family had been verbally notified by contractor representatives of the impending demolition and uprooting of trees but did not receive any written notification. It remains unclear who authorized the demolition.

In Bil'in, five Palestinians and one Israeli journalist were injured by the IDF during the weekly demonstration against Barrier construction in the village (Ramallah).

Settler violence

On 13 September a caravan inside an outpost next to Yitzhar settlement was set on fire and a nine-year-old Israeli settler was stabbed, reportedly by a Palestinian. Following this incident, Israeli settlers from Yitzhar, many of them armed, marched into the nearby village of 'Asira Al Qilbliya, set fire to one house, broke windows, cut water pipes and vandalized home gardens. According to reports by Israeli human rights groups, IDF soldiers present in the village during the attack refrained from taking any steps to stop the attacks. The IDF subsequently imposed a 24-hour curfew on this village as well as the neighbouring village of Madamma and carried out a search campaign that led to the injury of eight Palestinians and the arrest of another four. The Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert referred to this attack as a "pogrom" and called on the police to investigate the case and hold the perpetrators accountable. In a separate incident in the same area, Israeli settlers from Itamar settlement burnt about 400 olive trees belonging to Palestinians from 'Awarta village (Nablus).

In the old city of Jerusalem, a fight broke out between Palestinians and Israeli settlers that led to the injury of three Israeli and two Palestinian youths. In Silwan (Jerusalem), construction workers at the "City of David" settlement attacked and injured two Palestinians while residents were attempting to prevent the workers from building a room on Palestinian land to use as a dumping site. In Ni'lin (Ramallah), more than 100 Israeli settlers from Hashmonaim settlement marched under the protection of the IDF towards Palestinian worshippers performing Friday prayers next to

their land and threatened them through loudspeakers.

Access during Ramadan

Access into East Jerusalem for the second Friday of Ramadan was restricted to men over 50, women over 45 and children under 13, without permits, and for men between 45-50 and women between 30-45 years of age who were granted permits. An estimated 120,000 worshippers, including Palestinians with Israeli IDs, were able to reach Al Aqsa Mosque, compared to 90,000 the previous week. Also on every Friday of Ramadan, the IDF has closed Qalandiya checkpoint for vehicular movement between pre-dawn and mid-afternoon hours. In addition, during Ramadan, the IDF has extended the opening hours at checkpoints around Nablus (Huwwara, Beit Iba, 'Asira ash Shamaliya, Beit Furik and 'Awarta) and at Jalama, 'Azzun 'Atma and Ras 'Atiya checkpoints.

Gaza Crossings: Gravel imports disproportionately higher than complementary construction materials

Between 7 and 13 September, the total number of imported truckloads increased for the second consecutive week (1,256 compared to 916 and 630 the previous two weeks) but remained lower than the number of truckloads allowed into Gaza in late July (1,478). Out of a total of 1,256 truckloads, 622 contained construction materials, 485 food and 149 had other materials (e.g. medical supplies, stationary, agricultural materials etc.). The increase can be primarily attributed to an increase in the amount of imported gravel (561 vs. 231 the previous week), most of which remained useless due to the shortage of complementary construction materials, cement in particular.

New Closure Update released by OCHA

On 19 September OCHA released the main findings and analysis of a new West Bank closure survey covering the period between 30 April and 11 September 2008. According to the report, during that period the Government of Israel took more steps aimed at easing internal movement for Palestinians in the West Bank than it had during the prior reporting period. However, while these steps are positive and welcomed, their impact is limited geographically. Moreover, the total number of obstacles throughout the West Bank reached 630, a 3.3% increase compared to the figure reported at the end of the previous reporting period. The report is available at OCHA's website.