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Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

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Latest developments: 11 – 12 February 2009

Paltrade reported that one truckload carrying nearly 50,000 cut flowers was allowed to exit the Gaza Strip today, 12 February, through Kerem Shalom crossing. This is the first time since 18 January 2008 that Israel allows any exports from Gaza.

Military activities affecting civilians

Gaza Strip: Incidents during the week by the Israeli military and Palestinian militants undermined the cease-fire: Palestinian militants fired three rudimentary rockets from Gaza towards Israel causing damage to a number of cars. In addition, on two occasions, Israeli media reported that one mortar shell and one rudimentary rocket were fired from Gaza and landed in Israel. No casualties or damage were reported. Israeli air force jets and helicopters carried out three air strikes, targeting the tunnels on the Egypt-Gaza border, an agricultural area west of Beit Lahia and a police station south of Khan Younis. No injuries were reported. On one occasion, IDF tanks and bulldozers entered approximately 300 meters into Gaza and leveled land before withdrawing.

In two separate incidents, two reported militants were killed by Israeli troops after approaching the border line, one near Sufa crossing, and one north of Beit Hanoun. In the former, the militant was reportedly carrying an explosive device. In addition, a Palestinian fisherman was injured after Israeli patrol boats opened fire towards Palestinian fishing boats west of Rafah, forcing the boats to return to shore.

Also during the week, three Palestinian men were killed and seven others were injured in the Gaza Strip in different circumstances. One of the fatalities and five of the injuries occurred when unknown perpetrators detonated an explosive device at a cafe in Gaza city, destroying it. Other fatalities included a 24-year-old Palestinian man who was killed inside a tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border, when the tunnel reportedly collapsed while the man was working inside, and a 48-year-old man whose body was brought to

Al Aqsa Hospital two days after he was allegedly arrested by Gaza police. Also during the week, one militant was injured when a mortar shell exploded at the launch site and two militants were injured when an UXO they were handling exploded.

West Bank: In the West Bank, Israeli security forces killed a 23-year-old Palestinian militant in his home in Qabatiya (Jenin governorate) after troops exploded the door of his home and entered. In addition, 18 Palestinians, including four children, were injured by Israeli security forces during the week. Of these, one fifteen-year-old male child from the village of Husan (Bethlehem governorate) was injured after being shot by Israeli troops while walking towards his home, located along Road 375. Ten others (including two children) were injured during anti-Barrier demonstrations and seven (including two children) were injured in clashes between IDF troops and stone-throwing Palestinians. Also during the week, a 30 year-old Palestinian man from Jalqamus (Qalqiliya governorate) was found dead inside a Palestinian Authority prison. According to the PA, the man hung himself. The man's family disputes this.

Alleged "collaborators" executed or abused by Palestinian armed groups

According to a report issued on 3 February by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), at least 32 Palestinians have been killed by members of the Gaza security services and unidentified gunmen since 27 December. Of these, 17 were prisoners and detainees who fled the Gaza Central Prison after it was bombarded by the Israeli air force on 28 December 2008. In addition, PCHR documented dozens of other cases where suspected collaborators were arbitrarily detained and then severely beaten and tortured.

Demolitions and land confiscation in East Jerusalem

The Israeli authorities demolished four structures in East Jerusalem during the week. All of these were residential structures, one of which was still under construction. As a result of the demolitions, 22 people, including 10 children, were displaced. An additional three families were affected by the demolition of the house under construction. These incidents follow the demolition of nine structures in East Jerusalem demolished during the previous reporting period. Thus far in 2009, a total of 75 Palestinians, including 36 children, have been displaced in East Jerusalem as a result of the Israeli authorities' demolition of structures.

Also in East Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities have declared the confiscation of two plots of land for "public use" in the At Tur neighborhood of Mount of Olives. One plot is 7.5 dunums and the other is 9 dunums. According to signs posted at the sites, anyone able to prove ownership of the land can contact the Jerusalem Municipality within two months of the announcement of confiscation in order to receive compensation. Located on the two plots are an estimated 45 housing units (in structures ranging between one and three stories), most of which are inhabited.

At risk of displacement in Khirbet Tana (Nablus governorate)

During a previous reporting period (26 January), the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected a petition submitted by two Israeli NGOs on behalf of the residents of Khirbet Tana, a village located to the east of Beit Furik, in an area declared by the Israeli military in the past a "closed military zone". The petition requested the High Court to order the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) to prepare a planning scheme for the village that would allow the revocation of the demolition orders pending against most/all of the approximately 25 structures in the village and the issuance of building permits. The Court rejected the petition, accepting the ICA claim that it has reviewed the case based on "objective considerations" and found no justification for introducing changes in the status of the area. This decision paves the way for the execution of the demolition orders and the displacement of the approximately 180 residents of the village. The affected families are

herders living in caves, block houses with tin roofs and tents, some of them on a seasonal basis. In July 2005, the Israeli army demolished 22 structures, including the school. They were later rebuilt with the support of an Israeli NGO. In 2008, OCHA recorded the demolition of 252 structures (including 142 residential structures) by the Israeli authorities due to lack of permit in Area C of the West Bank. Over 600 people, including nearly 200 children were displaced as a result.

Settlers attack Palestinian property in the West Bank

Israeli settlers carried out a number of attacks on Palestinian property during the week, including ransacking a house in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron city (H2), preventing Palestinian farmers from accessing agricultural land (Bethlehem governorate) and uprooting olive trees (Qalqiliya governorate). In the Bethlehem governorate, Israeli settlers placed three mobile caravans in the Ein Al Qasees area (located between the settlements of El'azar and Neve Daniel). There are currently 15 total caravans in the area. The owner of the land, who is from Al Khader village, reports that he has a court decision proving ownership of the land and ordering that the caravans be removed. In the Salfit governorate, Israeli settlers from Tappuh began levelling land belonging to Palestinians from Yasuf village. The settlers have taken control of an estimated 100 – 150 dunums of land for expansion. They have levelled 10 dunums thus far.

Gaza update:

NGOs continue to face difficulties accessing Gaza

Humanitarian staff for NGOs continued to face difficulties accessing the Gaza Strip via Erez crossing during the reporting period. Of the 178 requests by various NGOs monitored by OCHA during the month of January, only 18 international staff from medical NGOs were given permission to enter Gaza from Israel. This was followed by a small number of unexploded ordnance clearance technicians. NGO requests have taken over 20 days to be processed. The Israeli authorities have indicated that the backlog is due to the influx of applications for entry following the cease-fire. According to the Israeli authorities, as of 9 February, 80 percent of outstanding requests had been processed.

Crossings: Average daily truckloads remain below needs

An average of 117 truckloads per day entered the Gaza Strip during the reporting period, compared 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 on 19 June, and to the daily average of 475 truckloads in May 2007, prior to the Hamas take-over of Gaza.

Of the total of 700 truckloads allowed entry, 39% (270) were for humanitarian aid agencies. Food supplies accounted for 81% (564 truckloads) of imported supplies and non-edible consumables made up 5%. The remaining truckloads were divided among medical supplies and industrial/electrical appliances (7%) and hygiene/cleaning supplies (7%). No livestock or construction materials were allowed entry.

Sufa crossing was closed on all scheduled days during the week. It was last open 12 September 2008. The Karni conveyor belt for the import of grains was partially operational on three out of five and a half scheduled days, while the cement lane, which was last open on 29 October 2008, was completely closed. Nahal Oz fuel pipelines were open on three out of six scheduled days – two of these days were partial openings as only industrial gas for the Gaza power plant was allowed entry. Kerem Shalom goods crossing was partially open on five out of six scheduled days. On 10 February, all crossings between Gaza and Israel were closed due to the Israeli elections.

Rafah crossing was again closed during the week. According to the crossing spokesperson, internationals who entered previously into Gaza will be allowed to exit via the crossing. Also, Palestinian medical cases will be allowed to cross in and out on an ad hoc basis, as was the case prior to 27 December. Movement of cargo through Rafah will no longer be permitted, apart from exceptional cases. (Rafah Crossing opened on 31 December 2008 and remained opened for movement of persons and cargo on all days until its closure on 5 February. This opening was based on an exceptional arrangement to assist in evacuating war wounded and facilitating the entry of medical supplies, medical personnel and media).

Fuel in short supply

No petrol or diesel was allowed entry to Gaza from Israel during the week. Petrol and diesel were last allowed entry for public use on 2 November 2008. A total of 188 tonnes of cooking gas were allowed in – only 10% of the 1,750 tonnes required to meet weekly needs identified by Palestinian sources. Also, 1,763,200 litres of industrial gas for the power plant were allowed entry, only 56% of the 3,150,000 litres the power plant needs to operate at its full 80MW capacity. Also, the amount of fuel coming into Gaza through the tunnels along the Rafah-Egypt border reportedly has decreased.

The short supply of fuel as a result of the closure has forced the majority of the 240 fuel stations in Gaza to close. Long queues of cars waiting for fuel rations were seen at those fuel stations remaining open in the Gaza Strip.

UNRWA aid returned

UNRWA lifted the suspension on the movement of its humanitarian supplies into Gaza during the week, after the Gaza authorities returned all of the supplies confiscated on 3 and 5 February. UNRWA had suspended its movement of aid into Gaza on 6 February, following the confiscation of ten trucks of food aid by the Ministry of Social Affairs on 5 February. This incident followed the confiscation of food aid and blankets from an UNRWA distribution centre on 3 February. UNRWA had announced that the suspension would remain in place until all aid was returned and credible assurances were provided that there would be no further interference to the import and delivery of aid.

UNRWA assistance

As of 9 February, UNRWA emergency food assistance is being distributed to between 25,000 – 30,000 people each day. The agency reports that it is unable to increase the number of people it feeds each day, as thousands of tonnes of food and other humanitarian assistance remain backlogged in Israel, the West Bank and Egypt. Compounding the issue, UNRWA is running out of plastic bags used in its food distribution, due to the refusal of the Israeli authorities to allow the plastic pellets for making bags into Gaza. Also, UNRWA has still not received permission to import the necessary paper to print the remainder of its textbooks; 60% of children are thus still without textbooks.

Three UNRWA shelters remain open; thousands remain homeless

As of 9 February, three non-school UNRWA shelters remained open in Jabalia, Beach Camp and Deir Al Balah, hosting 388 displaced people. Thousands of Gazans remain homeless, although the current total number of internally displaced persons remains unknown. Priority needs for the population include blankets, mattresses, plastic sheeting, kitchen kits, hygiene kits, water tanks and clothing.

50,000 still have no access to running water

As of 9 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 received water only every 5 or 6 days. Although emergency repairs 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, solid waste is accumulating in most areas affected by the hostilities (with the exception of Gaza City, where only Az Zaitoun and Ash Sheikh 'Ijleen face problems with solid waste).

Scheduled power cuts continue

On 6 February, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) was forced to reduce production from 60 to 30 MW due to a shortage of fuel. Fuel supplies to the power plant resumed on 8 February, allowing the GPP to turn on the second power-generating turbine on the afternoon of 9 February, bringing power production back up to 60 MW. The following scheduled power cuts remain: 8 hours three times per week in the Gaza and North Gaza governorates, and 6-8 hours two times per week in the Middle Area. Khan Yunis and Rafah have no scheduled

power cuts. This does not include unscheduled power cuts, arising from localized damage or pressure on the system.

Significant numbers of Gazans in need of long term treatment

Based on preliminary figures from the MoH, Handicap International estimates that 30 percent of those who were injured during the hostilities are at risk of becoming permanently disabled and will require rehabilitation or other specialised health care services to prevent or mitigate their disability. This figure is subject to change as more data is received and verified.

WHO estimates that 25,000 to 50,000 new people are likely to be in need of psychological intervention for longer term effects of the hostilities. Groups particularly at risk include separated children, people with pre-existing mental disabilities, pre-existing or new physical disabilities, elderly who have lost family support and female-headed households.

Israel allows limited transfer of cash

During the week, Israel allowed the transfer of NIS 170 million (\$42 million) from banks in the West Bank to the Gaza Strip. According to the Bank of Palestine, this transfer will enable the Palestinian Authority to pay the salaries of its 70,000 Gaza-based employees.

Damage to educational facilities

A UNDP rapid damage assessment of 170 out of the 407 government and private schools in the Gaza Strip found that ten schools (eight government and two private) were severely damaged, and that 160 government and ten private schools were partially damaged, during the Israeli military operation. Eight kindergartens were severely damaged and 60 were partially damaged. According to UNRWA, as of 9 February, an average of 98% of the nearly 200,000 students in UNRWA schools was in attendance over the past week.