



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

22 –28 JULY 2009

West Bank

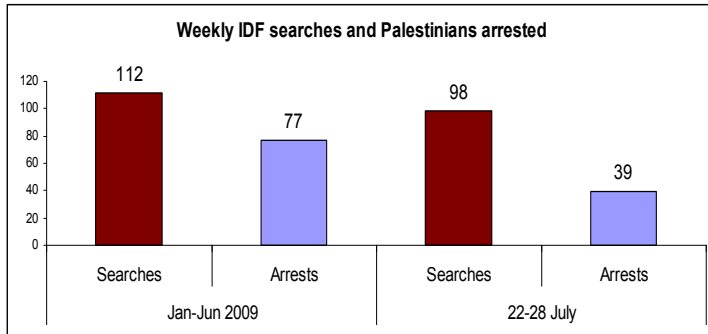
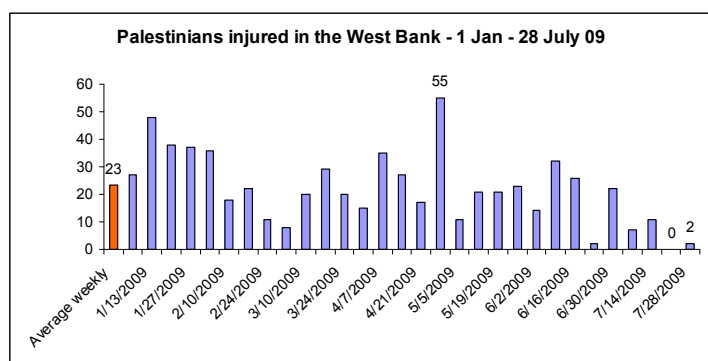
Decline in casualties due to Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues

This week, two Palestinians were injured due to physical assault by Israeli forces: one during a search operation in the H1 area of Hebron City and another in a protest in East Jerusalem. Although there were no Palestinian casualties due to the weekly anti-Barrier demonstrations held in Ni'lin and Bil'in (Ramallah), several cases of tear-gas inhalation were reported. For the last four weeks, there has been a general decline in the number of Palestinians injured due to Israeli military activities in the West Bank. From the beginning of January 2009 to 21 July, an average of 23 Palestinians were injured per week. (See also *Displacement* section)

Concerns over possible displacement in East Jerusalem and Area C

During the week, tensions ran high in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, as a group of Israeli settlers, accompanied by Israeli security forces, took over an uninhabited Palestinian house in the Kubaniyat Im Haroun, and repeatedly trespassed into private Palestinian residences on 27 and 28 July. The incidents sparked protests by Palestinians and international and Israeli activists, which resulted in the arrest of seven foreign nationals and one Israeli activist, as well as four Palestinians, including the former PA Minister for Jerusalem Affairs and the Director of the Centre for Jerusalem studies at Al Quds University, who was physically assaulted during the course of arrest. All those arrested were released on condition that they stay away from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood for 21-30 days.

In an adjacent section of Sheikh Jarrah, on 28 July, previously issued eviction orders against residents of two homes were extended until 10 August. The disputed residences are owned by two families, and are at the centre of a protracted legal dispute. A Jerusalem court ruled in favour of a group of Israeli settlers claiming ownership of the land on which the houses are built. The ruling places an estimated 51



Palestinians, including 22 children, at risk of displacement. The houses were built by UNRWA on land granted by the Jordanian government in the 1950s.

This week in Area C, the Israeli authorities distributed a total of 38 stop-construction orders against residential structures located in of the villages of Kafr Qalil (Nablus), Kifl Haris and Haris villages (Salft), and Khirbet Makhoul (Tubas), due to a lack of building permits. These types of orders precede the issuance of final demolition orders. Thirty of the houses are under construction and eight are already inhabited. At least 67 people, including 12 children, are at risk of displacement and an additional 55 people, including 13 children, will be affected.

Residents of closed military areas at risk of displacement

During the reporting period, there was a significant change in the types of permits issued by the Israeli authorities to the heads of three families living between the Barrier and the Green Line in Beit Yattir in the southern Hebron governorate. This area was designated a closed area in January 2009, following which all those residing or entering the area required permits. The families were initially issued 'permanent resident' permits, enabling them to reside in the closed area. They have now been issued with 'worker' permits, with the result that they can no longer reside in the area, but only enter during a specified period, from 5:00-17:00. A total of twelve people are at risk of being displaced.

Settler-related incidents in the West Bank

During the reporting period, six settler incidents were reported -- slightly fewer than the weekly average in the first six months of 2009 (7). In the village of Husan (Bethlehem), Israeli settlers from Betar Illit uprooted trees and set fire to Palestinian lands and crops; the extent of damage remains unclear. In the Nablus governorate, Israeli settlers erected a fence surrounding 40-dunums of land close to Bracha settlement. The land is cultivated with olive trees tended by Palestinians from the nearby village of Burin, who claim ownership of the land.

On 27 July, Israeli security forces evacuated three caravans erected in a new settlement outpost called Inbalim, near Ma'ale Mikhmas settlement. Confrontations took place with Israeli settlers, resulting in the injury of two Border Police (Ramallah). The next day, Israeli settlers established three structures in Gi'vat Egoz outpost, near Talmon settlement (Ramallah). (See also Displacement section for settler-related incidents in East Jerusalem.)

Gaza Strip

Eight people killed in tunnel incidents along Gaza-Egypt border

This week, nine Palestinians were killed and 16 others were injured in tunnel collapses. The tunnels, situated under the border with Egypt and largely regulated by the Hamas authorities, have provided access to goods that would otherwise be unavailable, as well as some relief from unemployment. Almost all possible goods are reportedly smuggled through them, including construction materials, livestock, fuel, cash, food products and weapons. While reliable statistics are not available, various sources indicate that the number of tunnels has drastically increased since the imposition of the blockade, to an extent that at any given time there are up to 600 of them operating, employing thousands of people in smuggling, tunnel construction and maintenance, and other related economic activity. Human rights groups have raised concerns over the employment of children in the tunnels.

While the tunnels have provided some short term relief to the blockade, they are not a sustainable

alternative to the official crossings. In addition, they pose high safety risks for those employed in this activity; since June 2007, at least 85 people died in tunnels' incidents, mainly following the collapse of tunnels and electrocution, and another 144 were injured.

Military activities affecting civilians

There were no casualties in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reported in Gaza this week. However, Israeli military forces continued to enforce access restrictions on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the coast and agricultural areas in the 300-meter "buffer zone", along the border with Israel, by opening fire in the direction of farmers and fishermen approaching the restricted areas. In addition, in four separate incidents, IDF tanks and bulldozers entered into the border areas and conducted land levelling. Sporadic Palestinian rocket and mortar shells continued to be fired from Gaza towards Israel and IDF troops operating at the border line.

Other casualties

This week, four people died in incidents of reckless use of weaponry and "honour" crimes. In one incident, two armed Hamas members were killed when an explosive charge they were handling prematurely exploded. In a separate incident, an 18-year-old man was killed when hit by a stray bullet. Also a 27-year-old woman was beaten to death by her family in a crime committed in the name of honour in Jabalia.

Gaza educational system unprepared for new school year

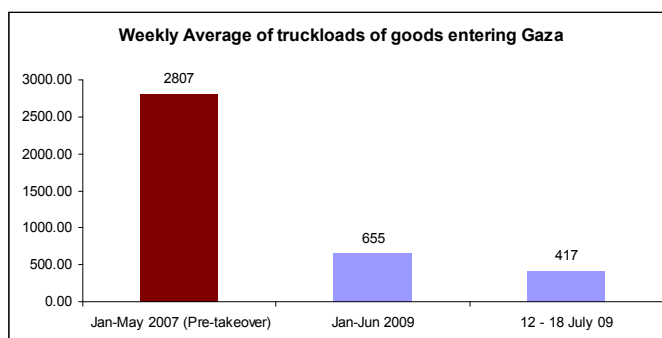
A joint press conference held in Gaza this week by the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) and the United Nations (UN) called for the lifting of Israeli restrictions on construction material entering Gaza. During the "Cast Lead" military offensive, 18 schools in Gaza were destroyed and at least 280 schools and kindergartens were damaged. Gaza authorities are unable to build new schools, even or repair damaged schools, resulting in overcrowded schools throughout Gaza. In Gaza North, for example, approximately 9,000 students from 15 damaged schools are accommodated in 73 schools in the same area, with 4,000 students attending classes in two schools. In addition to needed repairs, according to the Gaza Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 105 new schools are needed to accommodate the growing student population. However, with construction materials mostly restricted from entry into Gaza, some 1,200 North Gaza secondary students may not have school accommodations in the forthcoming 2009-2010 school year.

Israel allows diesel and petrol imports for the first time since 2 November 2008

For the first time since 2 November 2008, 40,000 liters of petrol and 100,000 liters of diesel allocated for private use were allowed entry from Israel to Gaza on 27 July, via Nahal Oz fuel pipelines. The Gas Stations Owner Association (GSOA) indicated that the fuel was entered at the request of local companies to test demand for Israeli fuel in a market saturated with fuel entering through pipelines of the tunnels under the Gaza-Egyptian border. According to the GSOA, although Israel is willing to allow 75,000 liters of petrol and 800,000 liters of diesel per week, the fuel is not likely to be bought by local Gaza companies, as the price of Israeli petrol is more than twice the price of Egyptian petrol (5.90NIS/lit vs. 2.70NIS/lit for the Egyptian petrol).

Imports through Gaza Crossings

This week, a total of 417 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, less than 37% of the weekly average reported during the first five months of 2007, before the Hamas takeover, and approximately 23% below the weekly average of truckloads entered in the first six months of 2009 (655). Approximately 82% of this week's imports were made up of food items. The entry of essential goods, including materials needed for reconstruction, water and sanitation projects, agriculture, and industry, remain barred or restricted to limited quantities.



Imported cooking gas at 39% below needs (12-18 July 2009)

The amount of cooking gas entered into Gaza decreased slightly this week to 1,032 tons from 1,083 tons previously. This is approximately 23% more than the weekly average since the end of operation "Cast Lead", but still only 61% of Gaza's estimated weekly needs. There are no reports of cooking gas entering regularly via tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border.

