



UNITED NATIONS

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS WEEKLY REPORT

16 - 22 February 2011

LATEST DEVELOPMENT SINCE 22 FEBRUARY

An escalation in violence took place in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel during 23 and 24 February, resulting in the killing of an armed Palestinian and the injury of 12 other Palestinians. Incidents included a series of Israeli shelling and airstrikes, along with Palestinian firing of mortar shells and one Grad rocket that hit Be'er Sheva' City

West Bank

34 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces

This week, Israeli forces injured 34 Palestinians, including 12 children (aged between two months and 16), most of them during demonstrations (24). Thus far in 2011, five Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank and 169 have been injured, compared to one fatality and 114 injured in the same period in 2010.

Eleven Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli forces in the East Jerusalem area of Silwan that erupted during a protest against settler activities in the area. Among those injured were seven children, including two infants (two-months-old and nine-months-old), who were injured after inhaling gas from a tear gas canister that hit a room inside a house. Another 13 Palestinians, including three children, sustained injuries during anti-Barrier demonstrations in Ramallah (Bil'in) and Tulkarm (Deir Ghusun) governorates, and in a protest against access restrictions in the Hebron governorate (Beit Ummar). Also this week, two boys (aged 15 and 16) were shot and injured while they were walking near the Barrier in Qatanna village (Jerusalem governorate).

Most of the remaining injuries (7) occurred during Israeli search and arrest operations in East Jerusalem (5) and in the Hebron governorate (2). Overall this week, Israeli forces conducted around 88 search and arrest operations throughout the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, slightly below the weekly average of 92 such operations during 2010.

Settler-related incidents

During the reporting period, OCHA documented seven settler-related incidents that resulted in two Palestinian injuries and damage to property, compared to a weekly average of five incidents recorded since the beginning of 2011. A number of incidents of trespass and access prevention perpetrated by Israeli settlers were also reported.

In one incident on 22 February, Israeli settlers from Bracha settlement entered Burin village (Nablus governorate) and pelted houses with stones, injuring a 16 year-old boy. Israeli forces arrived to the scene after about half an hour and removed the settlers. Afterwards, settlers threw stones at Palestinian-plated vehicles driving in the area, causing damage to 25 cars. The settlers returned to the village later that day and set fire to a vehicle inside a house yard. In another incident, settlers from Maskiot settlement physically assaulted and injured a woman inside her tent in the nearby Bedouin community of 'Ein el Hilweh (Jordan Valley).

In two separate incidents during this week, Israeli settlers uprooted around 270 olive trees and seedlings in the Duma village (Nablus governorate), and ten olive trees in At Tuwani village (Hebron governorate).

Around 700 olive trees belonging to Palestinians have been uprooted by Israeli settlers since the beginning of 2011.

Lack of adequate law enforcement on violent Israeli settlers continues to be of serious concern. According to the Israeli media, the Israeli Police released four Israeli settlers allegedly involved in an incident that occurred on 28 January, during which a 17-year-old Palestinian was killed and his 24-year-old friend was seriously wounded. Israeli Police do not intend to indict the settlers due to lack of sufficient evidence. However, the Police later summoned the 24-year old Palestinian for questioning and arrested him for stone-throwing during the incident. According to the media, the youth was brought before a military judge, who approved his remand into custody until the end of his prosecution.

According to Israeli sources, an Israeli bus driving in the Ramallah area sustained damage when Palestinians hurled stones at it.

Escalation in Area C demolitions

During the week, the Israeli authorities demolished 38 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C of the West Bank due to the lack of building permits, displacing 52 people, and otherwise affecting another 112. This is the highest number of structures demolished in a single week since early August 2010.

On 20 February, Israeli forces demolished 16 structures, including four residential shelters and 12 animal pens in the community of Khirbet Tana in the Nablus governorate. According to the Israeli authorities, the area of the community has been declared a “firing zone” for training and therefore entry or residence there is prohibited. This is the second time in less than a month and the fourth time since January 2010 that this community has experienced extensive demolitions. The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, Maxwell Gaylard, visited the community and condemned the demolitions in a statement, stressing that the community has limited options to sustain their livelihoods. He also added that “under international law, Israel, as the occupying power in the oPt, is prohibited from destroying property belonging to individuals or communities except when absolutely required by military operations”.

Twenty-two (22) additional structures were demolished in Area C, including: seven residential tents and two water cisterns in Susiya (Hebron governorate); six animal shelters, a fodder warehouse and a concrete foundation of a mosque (previously demolished in November 2010) in Khirbet Yaza village (Tubas governorate); and four water cisterns and an agricultural room next to Bani Na’im town (Hebron governorate). In East Jerusalem, an owner of a house in Sur Bahir village was forced to demolish his residence after receiving a demolition order; seven people, including four children were displaced. Also this week, OCHA recorded the delivery of 24 stop-work and eviction orders against Palestinian-owned structures, half of them residential. Also, the Israeli High Court of Justice asked the village council of Burin village to seal a mosque in the village, claiming that the mosque does not have a building permit.

Since the beginning of 2011, 96 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished in East Jerusalem and Area C, displacing 171 people – a sharp increase compared to the equivalent figures in 2010 (51 demolitions and 129 people displaced).

Gaza Strip

Incidents along the fence continue; three Palestinians killed and five others injured

This week, Israeli forces killed three Palestinians and injured three others in the vicinity of the fence separating Israel and the Gaza Strip. Another two Palestinians were injured by a rocket fired by armed Palestinian factions that dropped short near the fence. Since the beginning of 2011, six Palestinians (including at least two civilians) have been killed in the context of Israeli-Palestinian

violence in the Gaza Strip, and another 36 (including 34 civilians) have been injured compared with 10 fatalities and 19 injuries in the same period in 2010.

In one incident on 17 February, Israeli forces targeted and killed three Palestinian men in the vicinity of the fence, northwest of Beit Lahiya. The status of the victims remains disputed. According to the IDF spokesperson, the three men were militants attempting to plant explosives near the fence, while human rights groups in Gaza reported that the three were civilians attempting to illegally enter Israel.

In two separate incidents this week, three Palestinian workers, including a 17 year-old-boy, were injured while collecting rubble and scrap metal near the fence. Thus far in 2011, 16 workers have been injured in similar circumstances. Such incidents occur in the context of Israeli restrictions on access to areas up to 1,500 metres from the fence (17 percent of Gaza Strip's territory). Also, on one occasion, Israeli forces launched an incursion with bulldozers and tanks a few hundred meters into Gaza and withdrew after conducting land leveling.

Access restrictions continued to be enforced on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore; in one incident, Israeli naval forces opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats in Khan Younis, resulting in no injuries or damage to boats, however, the Israeli navy arrested three fishermen and released them the next day.

A number of rockets were launched by Palestinian armed factions targeting southern Israel, resulting in no Israeli injuries or damage to property. In one incident on 17 February, two Palestinians, including a 5-year-old child and a woman, were injured and a house sustained minor damage when one of the rockets dropped short in the Deir El Balah area, hitting a residence. Since the beginning of 2011, one Palestinian has been killed and three others have been injured in the similar incidents.

Rafah Crossing re-opens

The Rafah Crossing, controlled by the Egyptian authorities, was partially re-opened on 18 February, following its closure since 30 January in response to the events in Egypt. Several thousand Palestinians stranded in Egypt were allowed to cross from Egypt to the Gaza Strip. On 22 February, the crossing was further opened in both directions, allowing a limited number of authorized humanitarian cases, including patients, students studying at universities abroad, and people holding foreign passports or visas to third countries to cross into Egypt. According to the Border and Crossings Authority, access into Egypt is limited to 300 people per day from 11:00-4:00 pm. Due to the ongoing restrictions on travel, a registration mechanism for authorized travelers has been launched, with nearly 2,000 people, including approx. 700 medical cases and their companions, waiting to exit Gaza. Overall between 18 and 22 February, approximately 300 Palestinians were able to leave Gaza and 2,300 others were able to enter.

Limited entry of wheat and construction materials continues to affect humanitarian assistance

The limited opening of the conveyer belt at the Karni Crossing continues to result in shortages of wheat grains and construction aggregates. This week, 2,457 tonnes of wheat grain entered Gaza, around 67 and 58 percent below the weekly average since the beginning of 2011 and the estimated weekly needs. As of 21 February, wheat stocks were sufficient for around eight days, well below the 30 days normally held.

This week, UNRWA and WFP, which usually purchase flour from local mills, reported that the limited entry of wheat grain since the beginning of February continues to affect food distribution to nearly one million beneficiaries. UNRWA indicated that it would be forced to suspend its food distribution on 24 February if it does not receive additional supplies of flour. WFP's current food distribution cycle was put on hold between 17 and 21 February. However, WFP was able to resume it

on 22 February following the importation of flour to substitute locally-produced flour. The dependency of the poorest population on food assistance has increased in recent months due to a sharp increase in the market price of wheat flour (some 50 percent since August 2010).

Similarly, the delays in entry of construction materials (primarily steel and cement), originally sent on the Turkish flotilla, forced UNRWA to suspend four ongoing projects, mainly including shelters, a kindergarten and a refugee service centre. Since the June 2010 easing of the blockade, Israel has approved 43 UNRWA projects worth 11 percent of the total work plan submitted by the agency. In addition to the shortage of aggregates, implementation is also impeded by a multi layered system of approvals required by the Israeli authorities before materials are allowed into Gaza.

