



## OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

P.O. Box 38712, East Jerusalem, Phone: (+972) 2-582 9962 / 582 5853, Fax: (+972) 2-582 5841 ochaopt@un.org, www.ochaopt.org

# Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

**23 – 29 July 2008**

## Military activities affecting civilians

This week was the sixth consecutive week without IDF incursions into Gaza. On 23 July, however, the IDF shot and injured a 17-year-old Palestinian boy while he was collecting scrap metal near the border in North Gaza, the fifth such injury since 19 June. The number of Palestinian child casualties in 2008 on the Gaza/Israel border stands at four deaths and six injuries. In addition, IDF patrol boats opened fire towards Palestinian fishing boats on one occasion, forcing them to return to shore. Palestinian militants fired five rockets towards southern Israel, three of which landed in Gaza, resulting in no casualties or damage.

By contrast, the IDF and Border Police continued to conduct intense military activities in the West Bank, including 120 search operations and 85 arrests, resulting in the injury of 65 unarmed civilians, 15 of whom were children. On 29 July, after a Barrier demonstration in Ni'lin, the Israeli Border Police killed a 10-year-old Palestinian boy after shooting him in the head. The Israeli Border Police also raided three Palestinian houses in Al 'Eizariya (Jerusalem), fired shock grenades therein, injured three men with rubber-coated metal bullets and another two with a sword wielded by one of the officers. All the injured persons were unarmed civilians, two were reportedly shot at a distance of 0.5 metres, and a third was shot at a distance of three metres. In another operation in Hebron City, the IDF killed a Hamas militant who refused to surrender by bulldozing an uninhabited house in which he was hiding and burying him under the rubble. Moreover, during the week, an Israeli Border policeman died of wounds sustained on 11 July when he was shot, along with another policeman, by unknown persons in East Jerusalem.

## Gaza City explosion triggers arrests and raids

Three explosions took place in Gaza City on 25 July; one led to the killing of a four-year-old girl and five Hamas members and the injury of 17 others including three children and one woman, another resulted in the death of a person planting an explosive device, and the third caused significant damage to the house of a Hamas leader and PLC member. No one claimed responsibility for the explosions; however, Hamas authorities accused Fatah insurgents of carrying them out.

Following the explosions, Palestinian security forces in Gaza erected a large number of

checkpoints throughout the Strip, arrested more than 270 Palestinians (primarily those affiliated with Fatah) and raided more than 173 community-based organisations and NGOs. Raided institutions include 62 working with the UNRWA summer games programme, 56 of which were closed, and nine out of 23 UNICEF-supported centres, all of which were closed. As a result, more than 20,000 youngsters benefiting from these programmes and centres were negatively affected.

Overall, in the four days following the explosions, 13 Palestinians were injured in the Strip in inter-factional violence. Also, since 28 July, security forces affiliated with Hamas have banned the entry of three daily newspapers (Al-Quds, Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat) into Gaza.

Meanwhile, out of 128 arrests reported this week by Palestinian security forces in the West Bank, 107 were in the northern West Bank and were predominantly individuals deemed to be affiliated with Hamas.

## Anti-Barrier demonstrations

Demonstrations against Barrier construction continued during the reporting period. In total, seven demonstrations took place in Ni'lin and one in Bil'in this week. In addition to the ten-year-old boy killed by the Israeli Border police, these demonstrations resulted in the injury of 41 demonstrators, including 12 children, by rubber-coated metal bullets, one Israeli journalist with a tear gas grenade, and five IDF soldiers by stones. One of the injured children entered into a comma after being shot with two rubber-coated metal bullets in the head. The IDF also arrested the father of the 14-year-old girl who filmed the shooting in Ni'lin on 7 July of a handcuffed and blindfolded man by an IDF soldier from about 1.5 metres away. During July, 131 Palestinian protestors, including 21 children, as well as 13 Israeli and international protestors were injured in demonstrations in Ni'lin. Overall, the injuries during Barrier demonstrations constitute 54% of West Bank injuries for July.

## Demolitions in East Jerusalem continue

This week, the Jerusalem Municipality continued to demolish Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem which face building code violations. It destroyed with explosives a five-storey building owned by six Palestinians families in Beit Hanina, displacing 60 people, including 20 children. Although a permit had been received

prior to construction, the completed structure exceeded the permit's specifications. To license the additional area, the owner paid a fine and received permission from the Municipality. The demolition was carried out after the municipality revoked the additional license. Before the demolition, the Border Police, accompanied by trained dogs, injured six people when they forced residents out of the building, reportedly stole money and jewellery, prevented residents from removing any furniture, and caused damage to 20 vehicles. Overall in July, six buildings were demolished in East Jerusalem, resulting in the displacement of 99 people, including 45 children.

### Israeli settlers' violence

Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians several times this week, resulting in the injury of two Palestinians by settlers from Kohav Hashahar settlement (Ramallah) and another two by settlers from Ma'ale Adumim settlement (Jerusalem). On three occasions, Israeli settlers from Havat Ma'on settlement harassed children walking from Tuba hamlet to a summer camp in Tuwani village and injured one international accompanying the children (Hebron). Israeli settlers also prevented Palestinians from grazing their land near Susiya settlement (Hebron).

In addition, Israeli settlers in the H2 area of Hebron City threw stones and empty bottles at Palestinian houses, damaging at least ten houses. In Nablus, Israeli settlers from Yitzhar settlement threw stones at Palestinian houses and vehicles, damaging the post that supplies electricity to Burin village (pop. >2,500), setting fire to about 200 dunums of olive trees and closing the segment of Road 60 near the village for four hours. Three days later, Israeli settlers from Bracha settlement set fire to ten dunums of land and one house belonging to farmers from Burin village.

During July, a total of 38 attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians and their property were reported, compared to 26 in June. These attacks resulted in the injury of ten Palestinians.

### Update on the closure of Rafah Crossing

One hundred children organised a march this week to call on the Egyptian government to open Rafah Crossing, which has been closed since 9 June 2007. Since then, Rafah has exceptionally opened on several occasions to allow medical and other cases to cross to Egypt or return to Gaza; this week, for example, five Palestinian patients returned to Gaza after receiving medical treatment in Egypt and several Hamas and DFLP representatives crossed to Egypt. This week, the estimated 600

third-level students in Gaza with educational opportunities abroad have formed a representative group to highlight their plight and sent a letter to the UN Secretary General. These students have been trapped in Gaza for a year now and risk losing the scholarships they were offered if they are unable to leave. Overall, police officers at Rafah Crossing estimate that at least seven thousand people have applied for permits to leave Gaza for medical treatment, schooling, trading and other reasons.

### Access restrictions in the Hebron governorate: Birth at a road block

Between 25 and 29 July, alongside several military operations, the IDF severely restricted Palestinian movement throughout the Hebron governorate. The restrictions included the closure of two major junctions, Al Fawwar and Al Fahs, for an average of four hours a day. The closure of Al Fawwar junction blocked the only access point of some 150,000 people to Hebron City, while the closure of Al Fahs prevented commercial trucks from the industrial zone in Hebron/H2 from accessing Road 60.

On 27 July, the IDF closed the Beit Kahil Bridge with an earthmound for one day, effectively cutting off the population of Beit Kahil, Tarqumiya, and Idhna (with a combined population of 60,000) from Hebron City. As a result, a woman from the town of Tarqumiya had to give birth in a car while waiting for an ambulance to take her to the hospital. The IDF also slowed down vehicular movement through Halhul Bridge, thus hindering the access of Hebron City's 170,000 residents northwards and the movement of people living in 25 communities north of Hebron to their working places and service centres in the city. In addition, 36 flying checkpoints were reportedly deployed by the IDF in the Hebron governorate, which is about 40% of the reported flying checkpoints in the West Bank this week.

#### **Protection of Civilians Weekly Briefing Notes – New Format**

*Following the change in the format of this report since 9 July 2008, please be informed that detailed information on casualties, house demolitions, settler incidents, curfew, flying checkpoints, search and arrest operations, rockets, mortars and airstrikes, which appeared in the previous format, will be gradually made available in a searchable format on OCHA's website as of 15 August 2008.*