Humanitarian Bulletin occupied Palestinian territory



MARCH- APRIL 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of Palestinian homes and livelihoods demolished by Israeli authorities in the West Bank so far in 2016 (as of mid-April), and the number of people displaced as a result, already exceeds the equivalent figures for the entire 2015.
- About 17 per cent of the homes destroyed or severely damaged during the 2014 hostilities in Gaza had been reconstructed; an estimated 75,000 people remain displaced.
- Palestinian rocket fire into southern Israel and Israeli airstrikes into Gaza continue putting civilian lives at risk and exacerbate the risk of further large-scale escalation; two Palestinian children killed in March.

MARCH FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	22
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	348
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	0
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	27
Structures demolished in the West Bank	176
People displaced in the West Bank	198

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2016

571 million requested (US\$)

20% funded





In this issue

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High level of demolitions continues across the West

Overview

The demolition of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures on the grounds of the lack of an Israeli building permit continued in the West Bank during March and April, placing households and entire communities at risk of forcible transfer. So far this year (as of mid-April), the Israeli authorities have demolished or confiscated nearly 600 Palestinian structures and displaced over 800 people. This is almost four times the monthly average for demolitions in 2015. More than one quarter of the targeted structures had been provided as humanitarian assistance, three times the monthly average in 2015. In his briefing to the UN Security Council on 18 April, the UN Secretary-General expressed his concern at the "alarming rate" of demolitions, noting that "Israel makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to acquire permits".

Ongoing preparations for a new Israeli settlement in the southern West Bank have raised additional protection concerns, as highlighted in this Humanitarian Bulletin. In the aforementioned briefing, the Secretary-General warned that the "creation of new facts on the ground through demolitions and settlement building raises questions about whether Israel's ultimate goal is, in fact, to drive Palestinians out of certain parts of the West Bank, thereby undermining any prospect of transition to a viable Palestinian state".

This Bulletin also details some of the challenges to the reconstruction of homes destroyed in the Gaza Strip during the 2014 escalation of hostilities, in particular issues related to the registration of land with the Gaza authorities and the lack of adequate planning. An OCHA report released in April, presents the findings of a survey of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Gaza as a result of such destruction, with an estimated 75,000 still homeless as we approach the second anniversary of the hostilities. As of writing, funding is still needed to reconstruct some 6,600 houses, or about 37 per cent of the overall caseload.

Referring to the Gaza Strip, the Secretary-General listed some recent concerns, including the continued failure of intra-Palestinian discussions to achieve genuine unity, the closing down of the Gaza Power Plant due to lack of fuel on 8 April, and the discovery of a tunnel crossing from Gaza into Israel on 18 April, described

as a "dangerous and provocative move". He noted that the conditions in Gaza are "intolerable", and strongly encouraged "all Member States to fulfill their commitments to support the reconstruction and development of Gaza".

The wave of violence that started in October 2015 continued into March with a number of Palestinian fatalities, the majority of them suspected perpetrators of attacks. The figures were slightly higher than those for the first two months of the year. Pre-existing concerns about the excessive use of force by Israeli forces in responding to Palestinian attacks were underscored during March by an incident caught on camera, showing the "apparent extra-judicial execution" of a suspected perpetrator by a soldier, who was later arrested and indicted of manslaughter. This Bulletin also covers Palestinian rocket fire into southern Israel and Israeli airstrikes into Gaza, which in March resulted in the killing of two Palestinian children and both of which exacerbates the risk of further large-scale escalation.

In his reference to the ongoing violence, the Secretary-General reiterated: "There can never be any justification for stabbings, vehicle attacks, shootings, incitements to violence, or the glorification of killers". He also noted that a "twenty-year-old Palestinian living under occupation has seen no political progress at all during his or her lifetime. Impatience and despair at that fact is one of the root causes of the violence... It is incumbent on all of us to do everything in our power to secure lasting peace".

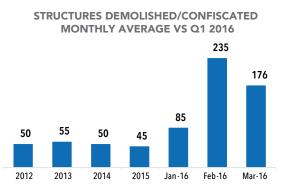
At risk of forcible transfer

The forcible transfer of protected persons from their normal place of residence is prohibited under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which also forbids deportations outside an occupied territory. Many Palestinian families and communities throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are at risk of forcible transfer as Israeli practices have created a coercive environment that puts pressure on them to move. Although Bedouin and herders in Area C bear the brunt of this pressure, forcible transfer also takes other forms. The two sections below are the first in a series of articles in the Humanitarian Bulletin highlighting a range of situations across the oPt where Palestinians have been placed at heightened risk of forcible transfer.

High level of demolitions continues across the West Bank

A vulnerable herding community in the Jordan Valley targeted for the third time this year

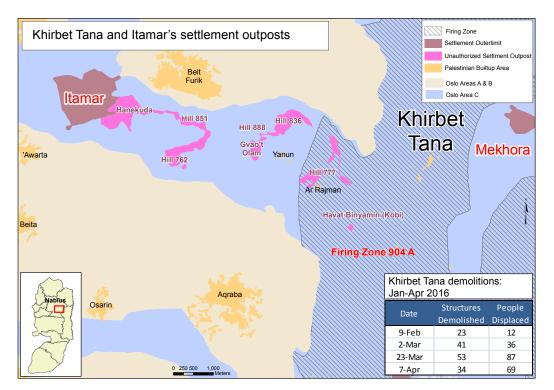
In March, the Israeli authorities confiscated demolished 176 Palestinian structures, displacing almost 200 people, including 77 children, and otherwise affecting an additional 274 people. This is almost four times the monthly average for demolitions in 2015. Most demolitions were on the grounds of lack of a building permit, which is nearly



impossible to acquire. Roughly 83 per cent of the structures demolished were in Area C (146), 16 per cent were in East Jerusalem (28) and two were punitive demolitions in Area A. Almost 500 structures have been demolished and more than 650 people displaced in the first quarter of 2016.

Demolitions in March 2016 were almost four times the monthly average for demolitions in 2015

More than half the structures demolished (94) were located in the Palestinian community of Khirbet Tana (Nablus). The targeted structures included 41 homes (35 inhabited), resulting in the displacement of 123 people, among them 46 children. The other structures destroyed were agriculture-related (36), latrine units (9), traditional ovens (7), a water reservoir and a school. Khirbet Tana is home to approximately 250 people who rely on herding and agriculture for their livelihood and have lived in the area for decades. Some



community structures date back to prior to the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967. The community is located in an area declared as a "firing zone" for Israeli military training purposes (Firing Zone 904A).

A longstanding petition filed with the Israeli High Court of Justice against the demolition orders pending against most of Khirbet Tana's structures was rejected in November 2015. As a result, in the first quarter of 2016, the community experienced three waves of demolition, two occurring in March and one in February.

Next to Khirbet Tana, within the boundaries of the firing zone, there are two Israeli settlement outposts, which were established in recent years without authorization from the Israeli authorities. Although the latter have issued dozens of demolition orders against structures in these outposts, only a few have been implemented.

Following a visit to Khirbet Tana, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the oPt, Robert Piper, stated that "destroying homes and livelihoods in order to place pressure on households to move places communities at risk of 'forcible transfer', a grave breach of the laws of

occupation".2

Also in March, 82 structures were demolished in 22 other communities. Only four other communities had demolitions that resulted in displacement: Ein el Qilt (Jericho), 46 people displaced; Rammun (Ramallah), 17 displaced; and Hebron city and Jinba (Hebron), eight persons displaced in each location. In East Jerusalem, 28 structures were demolished, almost equal to the total for the previous two months combined. The demolitions in the city of Hebron were punitive measures that targeted the family homes of suspected perpetrators of attacks against Israeli soldiers in November and December 2015; the displaced included three children.

During March, 32 structures provided as humanitarian assistance were demolished or confiscated, three times the monthly average for 2015. All demolitions of humanitarian assistance took place in Khirbet Tana and Jinba. The latter is also located within a firing zone in the Massafer Yatta area of Hebron (Firing Zone 918).

Large-scale demolitions continued in April

During the first half of April, the Israeli authorities demolished another 93 structures, displacing nearly 200 people. The total number of structures targeted and individuals displaced since the beginning of 2016 now exceeds the total for all of 2015. The April incidents included the fourth wave of demolitions this year in Khirbet Tana and targeted 34 structures, including 13 donor-funded structures, leaving 69 Palestinians displaced, 29 of them children.

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Israeli bills would allow punitive expulsions from the west bank

Following the latest escalation in violence that started in November 2015, media reports stated that the Israeli authorities were considering the "deportation" of families of alleged assailants from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to the Gaza Strip or elsewhere as a response to "terrorist activities". 3 On 21 January 2016, in reply to a letter by the Israeli human rights organization Hamoked, the Ministry of Justice stated that there was no such intention "at this stage".4 Nonetheless, two related private bills were introduced in the Knesset in March 2016. These received support from the governing coalition as well as from some opposition parties.⁵



This section was contributed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The first – the Bill to Activate the Powers for Assigned Residency for Residents of the Area and their Families for their Participation in Terrorist Activities – is intended to allow for expulsions to Gaza, while the second - the Bill to Amend the Entry to Israel Law (Amendment-Cancellation of Visa and Permanent Residency for Terrorists and their Families for their Participation in Terrorist Activities) - seeks to allow deportation outside of the occupied Palestinian territory. On 23 March, the Knesset's House Committee decided to expedite these two bills. The Israeli Cabinet also asked the Attorney General to approve the proposed steps, although the media reported that latter had already indicated that these laws would contravene both Israeli and international law.7

Punitive deportations, expulsions, or removals - whether as so-called "assigned residence" or otherwise - amount to forcible transfer and a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 147). The current bills also raise the risk of collective punishment, prohibited by Article 33, and additional human rights concerns, particularly as involvement in "terrorist activities" appears to be defined very broadly.

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Palestinian family expelled from East Jerusalem following attack

On 10 March 2016, the Israeli authorities forced the family of a suspected perpetrator of a shooting attack to leave East Jerusalem. The attack, which had taken place two days before, resulted in the injury of two Israeli border policemen and the killing of the suspected perpetrator. The four eldest siblings and their mother were transported by the Israeli police to the Qalandiya checkpoint and ordered to leave East Jerusalem as they did not have a residency permit; their applications for permits were pending with the Israeli authorities at the time of the incident. Following the expulsion, the family, who had been living in East Jerusalem for a number of years, rented an apartment in a Jerusalem suburb (Bir Nabala).

New Israeli settlement in Hebron governorate raises humanitarian concerns

Preparations for a new Israeli settlement in a strategic location along Road 60 (the main north-south traffic artery in the West Bank) next to Al Arroub refugee camp in the northern part of Hebron governorate, have been ongoing for the past year, triggering a number of humanitarian concerns. The establishment or expansion of settlements in the occupied West Bank is illegal under international law and has become a main driver of vulnerability for the Palestinian population, generating the need for protection and assistance measures by humanitarian actors.

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According to an Israeli media report, in 2012 a settler organization secretly purchased a property in this location from a Swedish Christian shell organization that had purchased it a few years earlier from a Presbyterian church. The property is known as "Beit al Baraka" and consists of eight buildings on some 40 dunums of land. Over the past year the organization has carried out extensive renovation works on the property. In October 2015, the Israeli Defense Minister approved the amendment of the boundaries of the Gush Etzion settlement Regional Council to include the Beit al Baraka compound. Although the buildings can reportedly house dozens of families, it is currently unclear whether the new settlement will serve residential or touristic purposes.

Tension and violence

Al Arroub camp has long been a flashpoint for confrontations with Israeli forces, which are positioned in and around a military watchtower near the entrance to the camp. There have also been recurrent incidents in the past few years of stone-throwing by Palestinian youths at Israeli vehicles travelling on Road 60. In 2015, UNRWA recorded 115 search and arrest operations and 53 violent confrontations, resulting in one fatality and 35 injuries among Palestine refugees. Since October 2015, the Gush Etzion roundabout to the north of the camp has been the site of multiple Palestinian stabbing, ramming and shooting attacks against Israeli soldiers and settlers. The establishment of a new settlement in the immediate vicinity of the camp and the junction is likely to increase the existing high levels of tension and violence.

Threats to livelihoods

The population and/or operation of the settlement on a permanent basis is likely to result in the adoption of security measures, including restrictions on Palestinian access. The area surrounding Beit al Baraka is privately owned by farmers from Beit Ummar village and is intensively cultivated with olives, grapes, almonds, apples and seasonal vegetables. Based on common practice in other settlements, farmers have expressed concern about the possible installation of additional fences around the property and the imposition of restrictions impairing access to the area. This is in addition to pre-existing concerns related to the paving of an alternative by-pass road to the section of Road 60 passing next to Al Arroub camp that may involve the expropriation of land and uprooting of trees.¹⁰

Additionally, on 14 January 2016, the Israeli authorities demolished two barracks belonging to refugees from Al Arroub camp, previously used as chicken coops, on the grounds that they lacked an Israeli building permit. Two days later, the authorities demolished a concrete wall and a water cistern on the same grounds, and bulldozed a nearby plot of land, uprooting 85 olive, almond and grape trees. These incidents have triggered concerns about the potential demolition of existing structures and crops with outstanding demolition or evacuation orders following the opening of the settlement.



Risk of forced eviction

A Palestinian refugee family of seven has lived in one of the compound's structures for about 40 years under an informal understanding with the Presbyterian church, which employed the head of household in the compound. Over the past few months, the family has been under pressure from the Swedish organization to vacate the building. On 6 February 2016, three family members (all adult siblings) were prevented by Israeli soldiers from entering their home unless they signed several documents related to their eviction, which they refused to do. The soldiers also carried out a search of the house. To date, two of the individuals are still denied access to the compound, while the remaining five family members continue to reside on the site. They live in a very tense environment due the outstanding threat of eviction and the access gate being under the control of private security guards. The family recently petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court against their eviction and obtained a temporary injunction until a court decision is issued on their case.



NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

This section was contributed by the Norwegian Refugee Council on behalf of the Shelter Cluster

Housing, land and property rights issues pose further challenges to Gaza reconstruction

Reconstruction opens an opportunity for proper urban planning

As the reconstruction of homes destroyed in Gaza during the 2014 conflict progresses and further pledged funding becomes available, issues have emerged related to the housing, land and property (HLP) rights of affected families and urban planning.

HLP issues are evident in the Shujaiyeh neighbourhood to the east of Gaza City, which was one of the most devastated areas: 24 per cent of the 11,000 totally destroyed homes in Gaza were located here. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) estimates that only 20 per cent of the land in this area is registered in the name of the current owner.¹²

Registration of land may have been deterred by the expenses involved and the difficulties in obtaining the full range of ownership documents. Some owners lost property deeds in the conflict, while others hold incorrect registration numbers for land plots. The absence of a proper land survey makes it difficult to confirm the boundaries of land parcels and

Status of home reconstruction

By the end of March 2016, about 17 per cent (3,000) of the approximately 18,000 homes destroyed or severely damaged had been reconstructed or repaired following cash assistance from UN agencies or other international support.¹¹ It is estimated that 75,000 people remain displaced. The repair and reconstruction of an additional 3,700 homes, or 21 per cent of the caseload, is currently ongoing. Funding has been confirmed for some 5,100 homes (28 per cent of the caseload) to be repaired or reconstructed in 2016, leaving a funding gap for 5,991 homes, or about 34 per cent of the caseload.

can lead to disputes. In addition, many properties are subject to ongoing inheritance proceedings due to the death of owners, including some who died during the 2014 conflict.

It is vital to ensure support for families who are struggling with documentation issues that could prevent them from receiving reconstruction assistance. In addition, many people built their homes without building permits form the Gaza authorities, resulting in a lack of proper urban planning and public spaces. The fundamental issue now is whether to rebuild these areas quickly as they were before, resulting in overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure and a lack of public spaces, or to Build Back Better¹³ in a way that meets the community's needs, resolves previous problems and creates a better living environment. Reconstruction presents an opportunity to mainstream women's HLP rights, strengthen civil society and ensure long-term improvements.

Post-conflict reconstruction in other contexts proves that the process is as important as the end result. 14 Some promising projects are currently underway: UN-Habitat, in partnership with the NRC and the Palestinian Housing Council, has engaged in participative spatial planning in the heavily damaged area of Khuza'a, including consideration of future It is estimated that 75,000 people remain displaced in Gaza.

Findings of IDP registration and vulnerability profiling survey released

In April, OCHA published the key findings of an inter-agency re-registration and vulnerability profiling survey carried out from mid-August to December 2015 among internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹⁵ The survey targeted over 16,000 households whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged during the 2014 hostilities and collected detailed information on their current living conditions and needs. The full results of the survey have been made available to all relevant actors in a unified database that is intended to enhance humanitarian coordination, programming and advocacy.

The report is available at: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/idps_report_april_2016_ english.pdf



development needs. In Beit Hanoun, the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, with support from the Italian Development Cooperation Agency (AICS), is implementing a positive example of community-based participative planning for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of over 200 units in An-Nada and the neighboring Al-Izba community, and the rehabilitation of 19 partially damaged buildings.

Extensive reconstruction implemented within a reasonable timeframe, and providing a durable solution to the plight of displaced people, is essential to reduce vulnerability, enable the realization of human rights, and to avoid an environment conducive to a new round of violence. However, addressing complex problems takes both time and human and financial resources. Alongside consideration of key HLP issues, other measures required include the removal of restrictions on imports of building materials and equipment; a solution to the internal Palestinian divide to allow the relevant Palestinian authorities to discharge their government functions effectively; the involvement of affected populations in the reconstruction of their community; and expedited disbursement of funds pledged by donors for the reconstruction of Gaza.

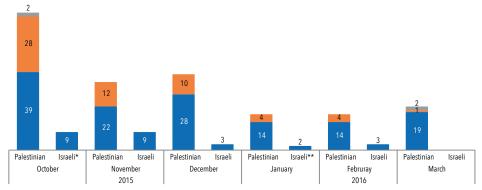
March was the first month since the escalation of violence in October 2015 in which no Israeli fatalities were recorded.

Attacks and clashes continue into March

Sporadic rocket fire at Israel and airstrikes in Gaza remain a concern

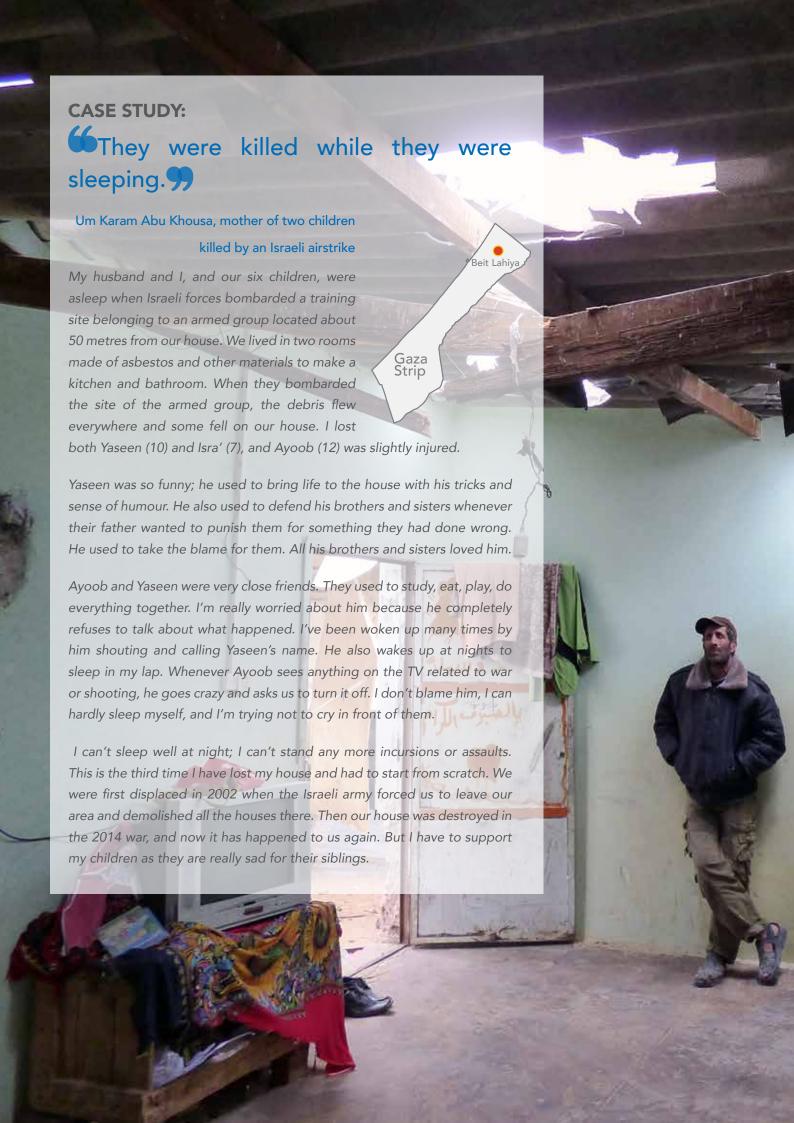
During March, 22 Palestinians, including five children, were killed by Israeli forces in various incidents across the oPt and Israel, including 19 suspected perpetrators of attacks; this is slightly higher than the number of fatalities during the first two months of the year, but well below those recorded in the last quarter of 2015. According to the Israel Security Agency, the overall number of Palestinian attacks (the majority of them involving Molotov cocktails and resulting in no casualties) declined during March by over 25 per cent compared with the previous two months. March was the first month since the escalation of violence in October 2015 in which no Israeli fatalities were recorded, but a foreign national was killed in a stabbing attack in Jaffa (Israel) on 8 March and 11 Israelis were injured.





- * Excludes one Israeli killed on 18 October in an attack perpetrated inside Israel by an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin, who was also killed during the incident.

 ** Excludes three Israelis killed on 1 January in an attack perpetrated inside Israel by an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin, who was also killed at a later stage.
 - Attacks and Alleged Attacks



In one of the attacks, on 24 March, two Palestinians stabbed and wounded an Israeli soldier in Hebron city: one was shot dead and the other wounded by Israeli forces. Video footage of the scene, a few minutes after the incident, recorded an Israeli soldier shooting at the head of the wounded Palestinian, who was lying on the ground and not posing any apparent threat. The spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed concern about the "apparent extra-judicial execution" and the fact that this may not be a lone incident. The soldier was detained by the Israeli authorities and subsequently charged with manslaughter.¹⁷

During March, Israeli forces injured 348 Palestinians, including 94 children, mostly during protests and clashes. These figures mark the continuation of a downward trend. About 10 per cent of these injuries were caused by live ammunition and the rest by tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment, rubber bullets or physical assault.

One of the gravest incidents took place on 12 March when fragments from a missile fired by an Israeli aircraft at a military training facility in northern Gaza hit a nearby home, killing two Palestinian siblings and injuring another (see *Case Study*). The Israeli authorities said the airstrike was carried out in response to the shooting of rockets into Israel by a Palestinian faction the previous day, which resulted in no casualties or damage. An Israeli airstrike carried out in similar circumstances on 11 October 2015 killed a 26-year-old pregnant woman and her three-year-old daughter.

Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks put the lives of Israeli and Palestinian civilians living at or near the launching and landing areas at risk.

While the August 2014 ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has largely held, since April 2015 there has not been one month without the shooting of at least one rocket or mortar from Gaza into Israel. According to the Israeli Security Agency, the largest number of rockets/mortars launched were recorded in October 2015 and January 2016, with seven each month, followed by March 2016 with five. According to the Israeli authorities, Israeli air strikes and other armed actions on Gaza are in response to these incidents although they usually target military training facilities rather than the source of fire.

Although Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks during this period did not result in casualties, they put the lives of Israeli and Palestinian civilians living at, or near the launching and landing areas at risk. Palestinian civilians are also exposed to the Israeli airstrikes that follow these attacks; risks are exacerbated by the location of military facilities within or next to civilian areas, the high population density in Gaza and the unstable nature of many homes. Moreover, the experiences of the last decade indicate that both Palestinian and Israeli attacks have the potential to trigger a greater escalation depending on the gravity of the results.

- 1. See Press statement by the Spokesperson of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 30 March 2016, available at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=18540&LangID=E
- Press release, 28 March 2016, available at: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/hc_state-ment_demolitions.khirbet%20tana_english.pdf
- 3. Gili Cohen, "Israel's Defense Establishment Mulls Deporting Terrorists' Families to Gaza", Haaretz, 24 November 2015.
- 4. Available at: http://www.hamoked.org/files/2016/1160051_eng.pdf
- 5. Jonathan Lis, "Israeli Finance Minister Backs Deportation of Terrorists' Families From West Bank to Gaza", Ha'aretz, 15 March 2016.
- 6. http://m.knesset.gov.il/Activity/committees/knesset/News/Pages/23316.aspx
- 7. Barak Ravid, Netanyahu Seeks Attorney General's Authorization to Deport Terrorists' Families From West Bank to Gaza, Ha'aretz, 2 March 2016.
- 8. H. Levinson, "Defense Minister Ya'alon Awards Controversial Church to Settlement Bloc", Haaretz, 3 October 2015.
- 9. H. Levinson, "Israeli Defense Minister OKs Addition of West Bank Church Compound to Settlement Bloc", Haaretz, 6 January 2015.
- 10. See Peace Now, Infrastructure Projects Agreed with the Settlers, 11 November 2014.
- 11. Shelter Cluster Palestine: Shelter Cluster Monthly Report, March 2016.
- 12. NRC Factsheet 4: Reconstruction in Shujaiya neighbourhood, Gaza Housing Land and Property Rights series, April 2015
- 13. This concept was widely adopted after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. It constitutes the reconstruction of communities in a manner that addresses underlying vulnerabilities and makes communities less vulnerable to disasters by strengthening resilience as part of the reconstruction process.
- 14. "The tendency...was for government, donors and the media to focus on the number of houses constructed as a measure of achievement. However, the most successful programmes acted as a catalyst for recovery... paving the way for future development." Lessons from Aceh, p. 9, http://www.dec.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/lessons-from-aceh.pdf
- 15. OCHA, In the Spotlight, Gaza: internally displaced persons, April 2016. Available at: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/idps_report_april_2016_english.pdf
- 16. See Israel Security Agency, Terror Data and Trends, Monthly report: March 2016, available at http://www.shabak.gov.il
- 17. Press statement, 30 March 2016, available at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=18540&LangID=E
- 18. Ibid.