

OCHA oPt

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humanitarian

UPDATE

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www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt ▪ hic9.opt@wavenet.unog.ch

OCHA oPt, c/o UNRWA West Bank Field Office, POBox 19149, Jerusalem ▪ Tel/fax +972-2-5890 459

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Overview

Two large IDF operations took place during the reporting period. In the largest military incursion into Gaza since the start of the Intifada, the IDF attacked densely populated residential areas in the eastern part of the city on 26 January with tanks and helicopters. In Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood dozens of buildings came under fire and around 60 industrial workshops were destroyed, 32 with explosives. Thirteen Palestinians, all in their early 20s, were killed and 37 people were injured, six seriously. In the nearby Shejaia neighbourhood over 60 stalls and shops went up in flames in the popular retail market. Tanks damaged roads, cars and water pipes, and telephone and electricity poles were knocked down.

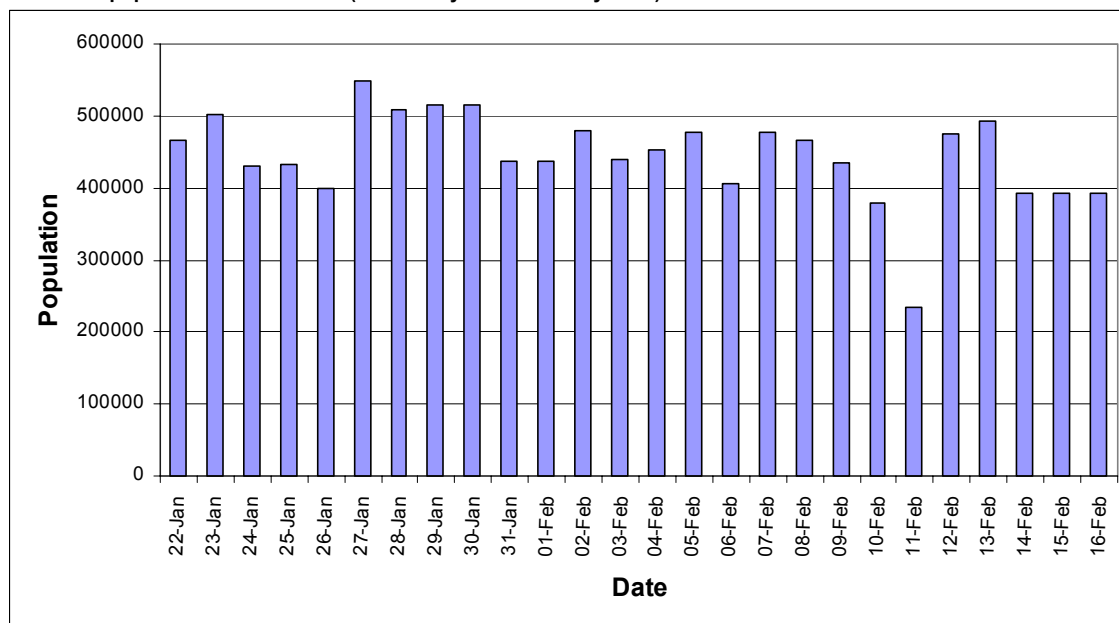
The IDF launched a four day search and arrest campaign in Hebron from 30 January to 3 February. The city was put under curfew and a tight closure was placed on the area. Cement blocks preventing the movement of vehicles were placed across streets in the city centre. The closure orders on Hebron University and Hebron Polytechnic were extended by six months and three weeks respectively. The IDF also closed down the local television and radio stations.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) documented 48 Palestinian deaths and 217 Palestinians injured during the reporting period. On 27 January, a 4-year-old child was killed and a 5-year-old child was injured near Rafah when the IDF opened fire on a group of children playing near the border fence. On 5 February, a 65-year-old woman was killed when the IDF demolished her home in Gaza. On 6 February, the IDF fired from a residential building it was occupying opposite Al-Wafa Medical Rehabilitation Hospital in Gaza killing two male paramedics.

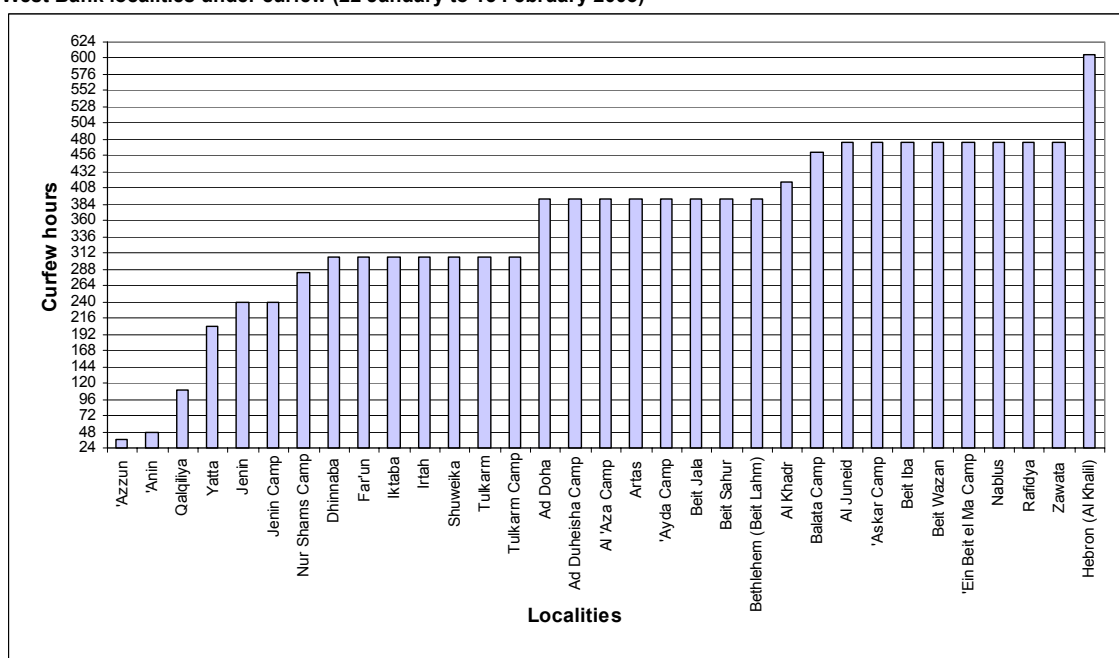
Curfews & Closures

There was no significant change in the number of locations under curfew in the West Bank during the reporting period. The worst hit area was Hebron where the curfew was lifted for only 19 hours in 26 days, followed by Nablus, Bethlehem and Tulkarm. An average of 445,777 people in 57 localities were placed under curfew for between 1-22 days from 22 January to 15 February. In 24 localities curfews were imposed for at least 12 hours on only one occasion.

West Bank population under curfew (22 January to 15 February 2003)



West Bank localities under curfew (22 January to 15 February 2003)



A number of UNRWA schools in Nablus, Camp No.1 (Nablus), Bethlehem, Tulkarm and Hebron were forced to close due to curfews and UNRWA health centres in Hebron and Bethlehem were also unable to open on several occasions.

On the eve of the Muslim feast of Eid Al-Adha on 10 February, the Israeli Authorities announced an indefinite closure on the oPt, prohibiting all Palestinians, including those with permits to enter Jerusalem and Israel. Earlier, Israel's office for the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT, 30 January-5 February) had announced a series of steps to ease conditions for Palestinians

during the Eid Al-Adha, including allowing Palestinians into Jerusalem to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque and avoiding imposing curfews on Palestinian cities.

According to COGAT's report (30 January-5 February), Palestinian public transportation between towns in the West Bank was resumed on 30 January after being banned following a suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv on 5 January. Women, children (under 15 years) and men over 45 years are now able to travel, however men under 45 years must apply for permits. Nevertheless, movement between towns and villages remains arduous, time-consuming and often dangerous and Palestinians are forced to walk often long distances across checkpoints. COGAT also reported that the Qalqiliya, Jericho, Taybe (Tulkarm), Bethlehem and Beitunia checkpoints were open for goods (using the "back to back" transfer system), while Jalame (Jenin) was only open for incoming goods and Tarqumia (Hebron) for incoming food. Food, gas and fuel were allowed to enter Nablus. In Gaza, 500 trucks were allowed to enter daily through the Al-Muntar/Karni cargo crossing, and the Suffah crossing was open for workers.

The IDF's closure of Jericho and the restrictions on the movement of people, imposed in 2001, was lifted on 29 January 2003, according to COGAT. In addition, Palestinians holding Jerusalem IDs will now be able to enter Jericho for economic purposes.

In Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza, the IDF destroyed four bridges on the main roads leading into the town on 25 January, leaving only one access road open near the Beit Hanoun/Erez border crossing. The IDF is now controlling all movement of people, vehicles and goods to and from the town.

Elsewhere in Gaza, local curfew regimes continue to operate in a number of areas next to settlements and settler bypass roads: the 18.00-0600 curfew regime around the Abu Houli junction/checkpoint (Abu Al-Ajeen and Qarrara areas), imposed on 26 February 2002, remains in place. A 19.00-06.00 in Al-Mugharaqa area close to the Netzarim settlement has been in place since June 2002. The ban on private vehicles entering the Al-Mawasi area (encircled by the Gush Katif settlement bloc in south-west Gaza), imposed in November 2000, continues. The movement of Palestinian pedestrians in and out of Al-Mawasi is restricted – only males over 40 years and females over 35 years are permitted to cross.

House & Land Destruction

According to UNRWA, the IDF carried out 42 demolitions in the West Bank during the reporting period, including: 22 in Beit 'Enan (Hebron) on 2 February, reportedly due to "illegal construction"; one in Ras al Amud (Jerusalem) built without a permit; and seven houses were demolished as a form of collective punishment (two belonging to families of suicide bombers, two belonging to militants who are accused of carrying out shooting attacks, two belonging to "wanted" activists, and one house belonging to the family of a detainee). In addition, one stone factory and two houses were demolished in Khirbet Bani Hareth (Ramallah), as well as one village council building in Tamir (Bethlehem), and one shop in Rumane (Jenin). Demolition orders were issued on 106 shops and 11 houses in Nazlat Issa (Tulkarm) and on one refugee house in Aida camp (Bethlehem).

The IDF also confiscated 15 dunums of land in Aba and Qabatiya in the Nablus area on 23 January, and it was reported on 16 February that land confiscation orders were handed out in Zabuba (Qalqiliya) and Rummana and Tinik (Jenin) for the construction of the "Separation Wall". In Kufr Thult, south of Jayyus near Qalqiliya, some 800 olive trees were reportedly uprooted on 1 February to make way for the construction of the "Separation Wall".

In Gaza, between 22 January and 6 February, the IDF totally demolished 46 Palestinian houses and partially demolished 23 others, leaving more than 400 civilians, mostly children and women, homeless. The IDF also levelled 459 dunums of agricultural land with olives, citrus fruits and almonds, mainly in Beit Lahia and Jabalia (northern Gaza) and Deir El-Balah (middle Gaza). IDF tanks and bulldozers invaded Tel As-Sultan neighbourhood in eastern Rafah and destroyed the town's two main water-wells. The wells had been producing 260 cubic meters of water every hour, providing around 50% of the town's water resources.

Humanitarian Access

Ambulance operators and medical aid providers continued to encounter severe difficulties in their day-to-day operations. Some 62 incidents where ambulances were delayed for more than 30 minutes were reported between 1-30 January 2003, a six-fold increase over 1 November through 31 December 2002. Over 50% of delays reported were in the Nablus area (Huwwara and Beit Iba checkpoints) followed by Tulkarm (10 incidents), Jenin and Jericho (Hamra checkpoint). The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRSC) reported 24 incidents involving their ambulances and medical teams in the West Bank between 18-31 January; 50% of the incidents reported took place in the Nablus area, and several serious incidents occurred in Gaza:

- The IDF delayed a PRSC ambulance carrying a woman in labour at Kalandia checkpoint on 27 January, which resulted in the baby being delivered in the ambulance.
- An ambulance transporting patients from Rafidia Hospital to Sadet Qarawa was delayed for more than one hour by the IDF in Nablus on 28 January.
- In Beit Hanoun (north Gaza) on 25 January, the IDF fired on a PRCS ambulance destroying its windscreen, despite the ICRC's prior coordination with the IDF to allow the ambulance safe access. The ambulance was on its way to provide assistance to 8 civilians who had been injured when the IDF had partially demolished their house.
- On 24 January, the IDF fired on an ambulance east of Maghazi refugee camp (middle Gaza) and prevented it from evacuating the body of a 25-year-old Palestinian man who was mentally disabled and who had been shot by the IDF. The ambulance was permitted access the following day.
- In Rafah (south Gaza) on 29 January, a PRCS ambulance was denied access to two Palestinians who had been injured during clashes in Tel Es-Sultan near Rafah. An Israeli tank fired at the ambulance for about 10 minutes preventing the medical team from reaching the injured.
- In the Al-Mawasi area on 5 February, the IDF stopped a Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) team, beat the head of the delegation and denied him access to the enclosed area, despite MSF receiving prior entry clearance from the IDF.

UNRWA teachers continued to face severe problems reaching their schools due to closures and curfews. UNRWA staff members also reported reoccurring delays at checkpoints despite the Israeli Government's assurance of free and safe passage for local staff members of international humanitarian organisations and its commitment to facilitate UNRWA's work. Some of the incidents reported by UNRWA include:

- An UNRWA medical team travelling to Jiftlif was delayed at the Huwwara checkpoint (south of Nablus) for more than two hours on 27 January;
- Marked UN cars travelling from Jenin and Tulkarm to Nablus were delayed for more than three hours on 31 January;
- UNRWA food distribution teams on their way to Camp No. 1 (Nablus) were denied access to the camp on 1 February;
- Two food distribution trucks were prohibited from passing the Beit Iba checkpoint and were forced to return to Nablus after a three hours delay on 6 January.

International non-governmental organisations in the oPt reported several unjustified delays of their national staff members, despite staff members carrying IDs clearly identifying them as working for international humanitarian organisations. COGAT (30 January-5 February 2003) reported that 641 permits (out of a quota of 800), allowing national staff entry into Jerusalem and Israel, had been issued (583 in the West Bank and 58 in Gaza) and that Palestinian and foreign employees of international organisations are able to move freely through checkpoints in the West Bank by showing the ID card issued by their organisation.

Please refer to OCHA's web site for road maps showing checkpoints and barriers:
<http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/thememaps/Roads/>

Fisheries

Differing Israeli regulations continue to apply to the Gaza fisheries. Fishermen from Gaza and Deir El-Balah are prohibited from sailing; Khan Younis harbour is closed; and the Rafah and Al-Mawasi fishermen's access to the sea is strictly limited to a maximum of 3 nautical miles, which is economically unviable.

Labour Mobility

Since 7 January 2003, Israeli permits for work inside Israel (construction, agriculture, industry and services) are only being issued to Palestinian male workers who are married and over 35 years and to married females over 25 years. Palestinian traders and businessmen applying for permits must be aged 27 and married or single and over 40 years. The criteria for workers in Israeli settlements and industrial estates was changed from 35 years to 25 years and married.

According to COGAT, in the period 30 January-5 February 2003, 35,509 work permits were issued and delivered, an increase on 34,256 in the last week in January:

- 15,966 for employment in Israel (4,742 in the West Bank; 11,224 in Gaza) out of a quota of 25,000;
- 8,148 for employment in Israeli settlements (5,931 in the West Bank; 2,217 in Gaza);
- 4,658 for the Erez industrial estate (Gaza);
- 356 for the Atarot industrial estate (A-Ram, West Bank) out of a quota of 1,500;
- 6,381 for traders and businessmen (3,409 in the West Bank; 2,972 in Gaza) out of a quota of 8,000.

Health

IDF land and aerial attacks on Beit Hanoun (northern Gaza) during the last two weeks in January destroyed a large waste water network as well as a major portion of the main water network, according to the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG, 28 January 2003). The flow of sewage and waste water into the streets near homes poses a serious public health risk. PHG reported that the destruction to the water network, estimated at some \$US 50,000, has left the southern part of the town without water.

Lack of funding for UNRWA's 2003 emergency appeal has forced the Agency to cancel hospitalization payments for refugees, according to a press release on 10 February. Normally the Agency fully covers hospitalization costs for special hardship cases, the poorest of refugees, who account for 5.5% of registered refugees in the West Bank and 9.1% in Gaza (UNRWA in Figures, June 2002).

Water

The findings in the latest Water and Sanitation, Hygiene (WaSH) Monitoring Report (No. 6, December 2002), point to a deterioration in the water and sanitation situation in the oPt. According to WaSH, in almost all the surveyed communities connected to a water network high unemployment has resulted in a high percentage of families who cannot afford to pay their water bills. In many cases non-payment of bills is 100%, such as in 'Einabus (Nablus), and 95% in Al-Mawasi (Rafah) and Shuyukh al'Arrub (Hebron). The Israeli water company Mekorot has seriously reduced the supply of water to many Palestinian communities over the past two years and there are fears that supplies will be completely cut. For example, 'Einabus (Nablus) is only receiving 20% of normal supply and 'Ein el Beida (Tubas) and Deir Samit (Hebron) are only receiving 40%. In the mainly rural communities that depend on tankered water many families cannot afford to buy water from the tankers. At the same time, tankered water prices have gone up as a result of increased transportation time and costs due to closures and curfews. Many families also can no longer afford to pay fees for the wastewater evacuation tankers,

and the resulting pollution is having a negative affect on sanitation and hygiene in the communities. The report also looks at how water wells and supplies are being affected by Israel's construction of the "Separation Wall" with more than 30 groundwater wells being affected in the Qalqiliya area. The report notes that some of the neediest communities are falling through the gap and are not being assisted by relief efforts.

The Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) has launched a new website: Palestine Water for Life Campaign <http://www.phg.org/campaign>. This campaign website contains information on water and sanitation issues in the oPt and aims to serve as a useful resource for humanitarian efforts as well as for advocacy work in defence of Palestinian water rights.

Food Aid

UNRWA

UNRWA's Commissioner-General in a statement on 10 February warned the international community that as no donations have been pledged to UNRWA's emergency activities in the oPt for 2003, supplementary food aid for 1.1 million people and other emergency assistance will come to an end by late March. UNRWA appealed for US\$ 94 last December to fund its emergency activities for the first half of 2003. If no funds are forthcoming the Agency will be forced to lay off 1,600 staff in the West Bank who have been employed through the emergency job creation scheme. UNRWA has already been forced to cut the size of the food ration parcel it provides to 120,000 refugee families in Gaza. The Agency is appealing that the oPt is not forgotten, particularly at this critical time in the region.

UNRWA emergency food distributions: Gaza (26 January to 4 February), West Bank (22 January to 7 February):

Area	No. of Families	No. of Beneficiaries	No. of Parcels
Gaza	21,372		
West Bank		84,954	42,477
<i>Content of food parcels: Wheat flour, rice, sugar, vegetable oil & pulses</i>			

World Food Programme

WFP's price monitoring shows that the prices of basic commodities (wheat flour, rice, sugar, vegetable oil, lentils and milk powder) remained relatively stable throughout January in the oPt.

WFP food distribution through implementing partners (16-31 January):

Area	No. of Families	No. of Beneficiaries
Gaza	28,079	140,395
West Bank	5,761	28,805
<i>Content of food parcels: Wheat flour, rice, sugar, vegetable oil & pulses</i>		

Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU):

More than 18,396 particularly vulnerable families in the Gaza Strip benefited from the sponsorship programme organized by the PGFTU and funded by Saudi Arabia.

Under a pre-selected criteria of sponsoring large families of at least nine persons, 2,044 of the poorest families will redeem their 500 Saudi Riyal (US\$ 130) monthly allowance against basic food and non-food items until the end of December 2003.

ANERA

ANERA has launched a pilot project – Milk for Pre-School Children – in cooperation with 10 kindergartens in Gaza. The project aims to enhance the nutritional status of some 10,000 children. Each child will receive a 250ml bottle of milk daily.

Islamic Relief UK

Islamic Relief UK has distributed some 26,450 tins of luncheon meat to about 2,820 beneficiaries throughout the Gaza Strip. In cooperation with PARC, 12,700 tins were given to 1,270 female farmers and 1,750 were distributed in Al-Mawasi area in cooperation with Al-Mawasi Charitable Society.