

Humanitarian Update — Gaza 17 - 23 May 2002

Compared to the situation earlier in May there is now less fear of an imminent IDF incursion in the Gaza Strip but the overall situation remains tense.

On 19 May IDF partially destroyed 2 factories in the east of Gaza City. One of them used to be an oxygen factory, which had already been out of use for four months being located in a dangerous area. IDF is also reported to have uncovered and destroyed a factory for the manufacturing of Kassam rockets in the southern part of the city on 23 of May.

Furthermore 3 houses were destroyed in Al-Mughraqa on 21 May. Two of them were under threat of destruction for more than a month. However, the destruction was stopped by an act of the Israeli Supreme court. In the same quarter of Al-Mughraqa, the IDF destroyed the asphalt road over more than 200 meters.

There was some land destruction in Deir El Balah this week. 6.5 dunum and 200 meters of water pipeline have been destroyed. The IDF also bulldozed 2,5 dunum in the south of Gaza City, around the Netzarim settlement.

CASUALTIES

During the last week at least fifteen persons have been wounded and one person killed. Most of the casualties occurred in Rafah, on the Gaza/Egypt border.

CLOSURES

The internal closure regime and movement restriction introduced by the IDF at the end of March continues to be enforced without major modifications.

The "Netzarim" checkpoint at the crossing between the main road through the Gaza Strip and the by-pass to the Netzarim settlement is still closed. For the last 22 days all traffic has been diverted to the coastal road.

The Abu Houli checkpoint between Deir el Balah and Khan Yunis are now generally open twice a day with some exceptions. On Saturday, 18 May, the checkpoint only opened from 8.30 Am to 6 PM. On Wednesday 22 May the checkpoint only opened in the afternoon. In total, this last week the road was open for 43 hours out of 168 hours. While open, priority to pass was given to settlers and army personnel on the by-pass road crossing the "Palestinian road". The closure results daily in huge congestions.

In the Al-Mawasi area, a few persons have not been able to come back to their homes after the IDF imposed 24 hour curfew between 12 and 19 May.

Restriction of movements in and out of Al-Mawasi has been tightened further this week. Only students with student id-cards and teachers of the school in Mawasi are now allowed to pass. On 22 May, the IDF started to distribute magnetic cards to the residents of Al-Mawasi. Only those with the magnetic cards will be allowed to cross the checkpoint.

Agricultural producers have managed to export some vegetables and fruit, but no goods have been able to enter Al-Mawasi for several days. There are, however, so far no reports of food shortages.

The situation of the 180 residents of the enclosed area of Seyafa has deteriorated some more during this week. The checkpoint used to open twice a day (6.30 AM to 9 AM and 1 PM to 4 PM) but this week the checkpoint was closed twice, on the morning of 20 and 22 May. As a result of this closure the children were not able to attend school. The procedure at the checkpoint is getting more restrictive and more searches of Palestinians than previously are reported.

The IDF have ordered the confiscation of an area of land between the sea and the Ely Seiny settlement thus effectively establishing a complete closure of the area. A ruling by the Supreme Court on the confiscation of the land and the erection of an electric fence has been postponed from 23 to 26 May.

Also the Karni crossing is reported closed for three days continuously now.