

---

## HUMANITARIAN BULLETIN

### MONTHLY REPORT

MAY 2015

---

#### Overview

##### Accountability for violations of international law: a vital priority

The devastation of residential areas across the Gaza Strip and the resulting mass displacement over the course of the hostilities of summer 2014 were unprecedented. The latest figures emerging from damage assessments carried out by the United Nations indicate that over 12,500 housing units across Gaza were totally destroyed and nearly 6,500 were severely damaged. Almost 150,000 additional units were damaged to some degree, but are still inhabitable.

In late June, the Independent Commission of Inquiry appointed by the Human Rights Council to investigate alleged violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law in the context of the 2014 summer events in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), including the West Bank, and Israel, released its report. The Commission attributed the massive scope of destruction of homes in the Gaza Strip to various practices adopted during the course of hostilities, including Israel's policy of targeting residential buildings in airstrikes; Israel's use of artillery barrages in residential neighbourhoods; and the launching of attacks near to or from within heavily populated areas by Palestinian armed factions. In multiple incidents related to these practices, the Commission found credible evidence of violations of the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attack under IHL, possibly constituting war crimes.

Due to the slow pace of reconstruction, approximately 100,000 people remain displaced and are currently accommodated with host families, in rented apartments, prefabricated units, tents and makeshift shelters, or in the rubble of their previous homes. Their living conditions continue to raise a range of protection concerns, including overcrowding, limited access to basic services, lack of privacy, tensions buildings in airstrikes; Israel's use of artillery barrages in residential neighbourhoods; and the launching of attacks near to or from within heavily populated areas by Palestinian armed factions. In multiple incidents related to these practices, the Commission found credible evidence of violations of the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attack under IHL, possibly constituting war crimes.

The hostilities also resulted in extensive damage to agricultural assets. The Bedouin community of Um an Naser, located in the Access Restricted Area (ARA) near Gaza's perimeter fence, is one such affected community. Despite the significant scope of the damage and ongoing access constraints, support by humanitarian and development agencies and donors has enabled local farmers to complete a successful spring harvest.

Albeit in a different context and scale, the destruction of civilian property and the displacement of people are ongoing concerns in the West Bank. For the second consecutive month, there was a decline in the number of Palestinian-owned structures demolished or dismantled by the Israeli authorities in Area C and East Jerusalem due to lack of a building permit. However, the Israeli army resumed military training exercises in the northern Jordan Valley during May, leading to the temporary displacement of four herding communities located in "firing zones", which cover approximately 18 per cent of the West Bank. This type of displacement disrupts community livelihoods, spreads fear among children and impedes access to schools. Some communities in this area have been temporarily displaced more than 20 times since 2012.

The Independent Commission has urged all the relevant parties "to take immediate steps to ensure accountability, including the right to an effective remedy for victims." However, the report also noted that "the persistent lack of implementation of recommendations —made by previous commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions, United Nations treaty bodies, special procedures and other United Nations bodies, in particular the Secretary-General and OHCHR— lies at the heart of the systematic recurrence of violations in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2014\\_07\\_01\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_07_01_english.pdf)

Complete document in PDF format (Requires Acrobat Reader)