



OVERVIEW OF THE CRISIS

The major drivers of humanitarian vulnerability in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) remain unchanged in 2015. The situation is characterized by a protracted occupation, now approaching its 50th year, the systematic denial of Palestinian rights, and continuing conflict, punctuated by frequent outbreaks of violence. The most recent escalation, which spread from East Jerusalem to the wider oPt in October, has been characterized by violent clashes between Palestinian civilians and Israeli forces. In the West Bank, continuing settlement expansion and the lack of a horizon for ending the occupation are major sources of frustration and conflict. In Gaza, years of blockade and recurrent outbreaks of hostilities have eroded basic infrastructure, service delivery, livelihoods and coping mechanisms. oPt-wide, high food insecurity (26 per cent), poverty (25 per cent), and labour force unemployment rates (25 per cent) indicate the fragility of the economic situation. An estimated 2.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the oPt, including 1.2 million refugees mostly in the Gaza Strip, and Area C and East Jerusalem of the West Bank. Overall, the context remains that of a protracted protection crisis driven by lack of respect for international law,

and a lack of accountability for violations.

GAZA STRIP

This year witnessed a relaxation in some of the Israeli-imposed restrictions on Gaza, including the marketing of some goods to the West Bank and to Israel; an increase in the exit of Palestinians through the Israeli-controlled Erez Crossing; and the removal of aggregates from the list of goods identified by the Israeli authorities as having a "dual use." However, the remaining "dual-use" (both civilian and military) restrictions continue to impede basic service delivery and hamper reconstruction efforts for IDPs while, on a monthly basis, the volume of exports remained at 10 per cent of what exited Gaza before the blockade was imposed in 2007.¹ The impact of the eight-year long blockade has been exacerbated by the almost continuous closure by Egypt of the Rafah passenger crossing since October 2014, confining the vast majority of the 1.8 million Palestinians to Gaza.

The blockade and three major escalations of hostilities in the last six years have inflicted large-scale destruction on Gaza's economy, productive assets and infrastructure. A chronic energy crisis, with power outages reaching 12-16 hours a day, also impairs service delivery, students' educational outcomes, the functioning of hospitals and medical equipment and the operation of more than 280 water and wastewater facilities. No major new displacement was recorded in Gaza during 2015, but an estimated 95,000 IDPs remain homeless as a result of the 2014 hostilities (the majority UNRWA registered refugees) of whom 78,000 continue to need temporary support. Although repairs to moderately-damaged homes and educational and health facilities have progressed, the rate of reconstruction of the approximately 18,000 houses that were completely destroyed or severely damaged in 2014 is very slow.²

By August 2015, donor disbursement of pledges made at the October 2014 Cairo Gaza reconstruction conference was only 35 per cent. Negligible progress by the Government of National Consensus (GNC) in intra-Palestinian reconciliation has prevented 40,000 public sector employees from receiving their full salaries for over a year. The fragile economic situation is indicated by high rates of poverty (39 per cent); unemployment (41.5 per cent, exceeding 60 per cent among youth); and food insecurity, which at 47 per cent of households, is compounding low resilience and high vulnerability to shocks. In 2015, per capita GDP in Gaza is 72 per cent below the level it was in 1994.

WEST BANK

Tension increased in East Jerusalem in the latter part of 2015, with violence spreading to Israel, the wider West Bank and Gaza in October, characterized by almost daily attacks on Israelis, and widespread confrontations with Israeli forces. This led to 17 Israeli fatalities (as of end of November) and the highest number of casualties recorded in a single month (October) among West Bank Palestinians (69 deaths and 7,392 injuries) since OCHA began monitoring conflict-related casualties in 2005. The escalation has also led to a sharp increase in arrest and detentions, including of children, and increased restrictions on movement and access in Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and the wider West Bank. This deterioration must be seen in the context of the prolonged occupation, stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations towards a two-state solution, the expansion of settlements, illegal under international law and lack of accountability, including for settler violence.

Palestinians in the West Bank continue to be subject to a complex system of control, including physical (the Barrier, checkpoints, roadblocks) and bureaucratic barriers (permits, closure of areas) which restrict their freedom of movement. Israeli policies, including the planning regime in place, continue to curtail the ability of Palestinians in Area C and East Jerusalem to plan their communities and build homes and infrastructure. By end-October 2015, the Israeli authorities had demolished or dismantled 471 structures, displacing 581 people, at least 200 of whom were refugees. Over 7,000 Bedouins and herders, the majority of whom are refugees, living in 46 communities in the central West Bank are at risk of forcible transfer due to a "relocation" plan by the Israeli authorities, while other communities such as Susiya and those of Massafer Yatta in the southern West Bank are also at high risk of displacement.

Although the economic situation in the West Bank is not as fragile as Gaza, in September, prior to the escalation of violence, the International Monetary Fund was projecting growth in the West Bank to decline from five per cent in 2014 to 1.8 per cent in 2015, 'assuming the political status quo, with no change in restrictions and/or security conditions.'³ A total of 16 per cent of households are considered moderately or severely food insecure in the West Bank, with low purchasing power and limited resilience, with refugees residing in camps representing the highest level of food insecurity.

/...

Endnotes

1. OCHA Gaza movement and access database.

2. As of November 2015, according to the Shelter Cluster, only one of the 11,000 totally destroyed homes had been rebuilt, repairs to some 1,255 of the 6,800 severely damaged, 86 of the 5,700 major damaged and 69,356 of the 147,500 minor damaged have been completed.

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/2016_hrp_22_january%202016.pdf

Complete document in PDF format (Requires Acrobat Reader)