
Humanitarian situation in West Bank and Gaza remains a concern – UN official

18 January 2012 – The United Nations humanitarian chief today reiterated her concern over the impact of Israel's continued settlement activity in the West Bank and its adverse effects on economic development and Palestinians' access to basic services.

"I also spoke about zoning and planning regulations on Area C," [Valerie Amos](#), the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told reporters after briefing the Council, referring to the over 60 per cent of the West Bank where Israel retains control over security, planning and building. A report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in August last year estimated that 150,000 Palestinians live in the West Bank's Area C, which has the most significant land reserves available for Palestinian development, as well as the bulk of Palestinian agricultural and grazing land. Ms. Amos also voiced her concern over the ongoing blockade of Gaza and the impact the closure has had on economic development in the area. Some 300,000 Israeli settlers live in approximately 135 Israeli settlements and 100 settlement outposts in Area C, with the settler population growing at a significantly faster pace than in Israel, according to the report entitled 'Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank.' Ms. Amos also voiced her concern over the ongoing blockade of Gaza and the impact the closure has had on economic development in the area. Israel imposed the blockade for what it called security reasons after Hamas, which does not recognize Israel's right to exist, ousted the Fatah movement in Gaza in 2007. Also of concern is the dismantling of the Karni crossing into and from Gaza, which she said will have the effect of reducing commercial activity, particularly exports from Gaza into the West Bank and Israel. The closure of the Karni crossing "will have the impact of de-developing Gaza rather than re-developing Gaza," said Ms. Amos, who is also the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.