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occupied Palestinian territory

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

20 - 26 October 2010

West Bank

23 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces

During the week, Israeli forces injured 23 Palestinian civilians, for the most part during weekly demonstrations. Since the beginning of 2010, Israeli forces have injured 1002 Palestinians, up nearly 38 percent on the similar period in 2009 (727 injuries).

Twenty Palestinians and one Israeli activist were injured during weekly demonstrations in the Ramallah and Bethlehem governorates. These demonstrations were held in protest at the expansion of the Hallamish settlement on Nabi Saleh land and the construction of the Barrier in the villages of Bil'in and Al Ma'sara. In Nabi Saleh, Israeli forces fired tear gas canisters at demonstrators who were marching towards the village centre, resulting in the injury of 17 people. During the incident, one house was badly damaged and its contents were destroyed by fire. Approximately one-quarter of Palestinian injuries by Israeli forces in 2010 have occurred over the course of clashes that erupted during weekly demonstrations against the Barrier, settlement expansion and access restrictions.

This week, clashes erupted between Palestinians and the Israeli police, when police accompanied Jerusalem municipality officials with reminder notifications for demolition orders for a number of Palestinian houses in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem. As a result, an 11-year-old boy was injured in the head. The Municipality's intention to demolish a section of the neighborhood (Al Bustan) and displace its Palestinian residents in order to build a recreational park (officially announced in March 2010) has contributed to a recent rise of tensions. Almost daily friction continues to be reported between Palestinian residents, and Israeli settlers, their armed private guards (hired by the Israeli Ministry of Housing) and the Israeli Police.

Israeli forces physically assaulted and injured another two Palestinians in the Bethlehem area; circumstances of the incident remain unclear. Also this week, a Palestinian clashed with an Israeli soldier at a checkpoint controlling Palestinian access into East Jerusalem (Hizma checkpoint), injuring him.

During the week, Israeli forces conducted some 80 search and arrest operations in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), slightly below the weekly average for such operations in 2010 (93). In addition, three Palestinians were injured as a result of the explosion of an unexploded ordnance (UXO) inside a building in the Old City of Nablus. According to Palestinian sources, the UXO was left behind after the building was bombed by Israeli aircrafts in 2002.

Settler violence continues unabated during olive harvest

This week, OCHA recorded 17 incidents allegedly perpetrated by Israeli settlers that resulted in either Palestinian injuries or damage to property. The total number of incidents increased compared to the previous week (11 incidents) and is more than double the weekly average of incidents since the beginning of 2010 (6). Thus far in 2010, one Palestinian child has been killed and 95 other Palestinians have been injured in the context of settler-related incidents.

Thirteen (13) of the 17 incidents took place during olive harvesting, which began earlier this month. In an event held this week in the Turmus'ayya village (Ramallah), the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process stated that Israel, as an occupying power, must prevent violence against the Palestinian population and condemned settler attacks.

In two separate incidents this week, settlers clashed with Palestinians who were picking their olives in the villages of Burin (Nablus governorate) and Susiya (Hebron governorate). As a result, six Palestinians and one Israeli activist were injured. In the Susiya village, Israeli forces arrived on the scene and removed the settlers, while reportedly also seizing the olives picked by the Palestinians.

The remaining eleven incidents were recorded in the context of damage to property, including the burning of around 1,000 olive trees belonging to the village of Kafr Laqif (Qalqiliya governorate). While the cause of the fire remains unknown, stone-throwing settlers from the nearby settlement of Qedumim tried to prevent the Palestinian Fire Brigade from accessing the fire. In another two separate incidents, Israeli settlers uprooted over 30 olive trees in the village of Al Lubban ash Sharqiya (Nablus governorate) and Al Janiya (Ramallah governorate). In addition, a Palestinian woman reported that about 38 trees belonging to her family and located on the western side of the Barrier (in the Giv'at Ze'ev settlement area) were harvested and the olive crops stolen.

(Jerusalem governorate). In another seven similar incidents, settlers stole olives from trees belonging to the villages of Kifl Haris (Salfit governorate), Deir Ibbzi' (Ramallah governorate) and Kafr Qaddum (Qalqiliya governorate). In one incident in Kafr Qaddum, Israeli settlers opened fire, intimidating people who spotted them stealing the olives.

In a separate incident this week, settlers allegedly set fire to a storage room at the Girls' Secondary School in the village of As Sawiya (Nablus governorate), damaging the room and its contents.

Stop-work and eviction orders continue

While no demolitions took place this week, the Israeli authorities delivered stop-work orders against ten Palestinian-owned structures in Area C of the West Bank, due to the lack of Israeli-issued building permits. The structures, which are located in the Jericho, Hebron and Bethlehem areas, included five houses, three of which are inhabited, three animal shelters, and two water cisterns. Since January 2010, 261 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished in Area C of the West Bank and 39 in East Jerusalem. A total of 402 Palestinians, including 203 children, have been displaced. During the same period in 2009, 249 structures were demolished and 520 people were displaced.

Also in Area C, the Israeli authorities issued an evacuation order for a farm in the village of Deir Istiya (Salfit governorate) on the grounds that the area is "State Land". In addition, Israeli forces leveled two charcoal workshops belonging to Palestinians in the village of Barta'a Asharqiya (Jenin governorate), located on the western side of the Barrier on grounds that they operated without a permit. The workshops employed 20 people.

Gaza Strip

Incidents near Gaza's fence continue; six people injured

During the reporting period, Israeli forces injured six Palestinian civilians, all of whom were wounded near the fence dividing Israel and the Gaza Strip. So far in 2010, 54 Palestinians (including 22 civilians) have been killed and another 216 Palestinians (including 191 civilians) have been injured in conflict-related incidents in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian access to areas up to 1,500 metres from the fence (17 percent of the Gaza Strip's territory) continue. In two separate incidents, Israeli forces stationed at the fence opened fire at Palestinians collecting scrap metal north of Beit Lahiya, injuring four people. In the same context, an elderly man was injured when Israeli forces opened fire at Palestinian farmers picking olives in fields located approximately 400 metres from the fence, east of Khan Younis. A mentally disabled man was injured when he reportedly approached the fence. Also, on five different occasions, Israeli bulldozers and tanks launched incursions a few hundred metres inside Gaza and withdrew after leveling land.

Barring access to fishing areas located beyond three nautical miles from the shore continues. In two separate incidents, the Israeli navy opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them to return to shore. No injuries were reported, however, one boat sustained damage. In 2010, three fishermen have been killed and five others have been injured in such incidents.

This week, Palestinian armed factions launched a number of rudimentary rockets and mortar shells at southern Israel, including at military bases located along the fence. No Israeli injuries or damage to property were reported.

26 civilians injured in an explosion

On 20 October, an explosion occurred inside a Hamas security compound in the Rafah area. As a result, 26 civilians were injured, including 18 children (of whom, 15 were students in their classes at the time of the incident), an elderly man, and seven other bystanders. The injuries were caused mainly by shattered glass fragments. The explosion also resulted in severe damage to the compound, four UNRWA schools and one UNRWA health centre in the vicinity. Circumstances surrounding the incident remain unclear.

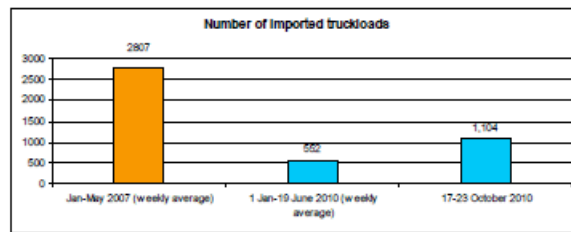
Tunnels continue to claim lives; three Palestinians killed and three injured

Despite reports about the slow-down in the volume of tunnel activity since the June 2010 easing of the Israeli blockade, tunnel-related incidents continue. In two separate incidents this week, three Palestinians were killed while working inside tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, two by electrocution and one as a result of a fall. Another three Palestinian workers sustained injuries due to electrocution and suffocation. In 2010, 43 Palestinians have been killed and 85 others have been injured in different tunnel-related incidents, including air strikes, tunnel collapses and other incidents of electrocution and the explosion of gas cylinders.

Limited construction materials for UN building project continue to enter

The import of most construction materials into the Gaza Strip continues to be banned, except for projects under international supervision, which were approved by the Israeli authorities. Since the easing of the blockade, announced on 20 June, the Israeli authorities have approved 13 UNRWA building projects (mainly schools and clinics) for implementation, representing 1.7 percent of the total building plan submitted by the agency. Despite approval, actual entry of materials for these projects has been significantly delayed, partially due to capacity constraints of the conveyer belt functioning at the Kami crossing, which is used for the transfer of aggregates and wheat. So far, only 39 of 226 truckloads of materials requested by UNRWA for these projects have been able to enter Gaza (or less than 20 percent).

This week (17-23 October), a total of 1,104 truckloads entered Gaza, slightly above the number of truckloads that entered last week (1,097), and less than 40 percent of the weekly average of truckloads that entered Gaza in the first five months of 2007, before the imposition of the blockade. Food items continue to make up the majority of goods entering Gaza (47 percent), which before the blockade constituted less than 20 percent of total imports.



Fuel shortages continue; power cuts increase to 16 hours per day; access to running water remains a challenge

This week, the imports of industrial fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) slightly declined compared to the previous week (1.89 vs. 1.93 million liters), representing only 60 percent of the weekly estimated amount of fuel needed to operate the plant at full capacity (80 MW). However, the total provision of electricity throughout the Gaza Strip stands at about 30 percent below the estimated daily demand of about 300 MW. Only around 60 MW of power are produced by the GPP and 120 MW and 17 MW are purchased from Israel and Egypt, respectively, providing Gaza with less than 200 MW. This shortfall results in average daily power cuts of 4-6 hours. On 22 October, the plant was forced to shut down one of two operating turbines for about three days after exhausting its fuel reserves, reducing power production to 30 MW. This situation triggered an immediate increase in electricity outages of up to 16 hours per day throughout Gaza. In the early afternoon of 24 October, the plant was able to reactivate the second turbine and power cuts were reduced once again.

The daily power cuts continue to affect daily life throughout the Gaza Strip, as well as the provision of essential services, including water supply, sewage treatment and removal, and the functioning of health services. Access to running water also continues to be a daily challenge for the population due to power cuts. 20 percent of Gazans living in areas including Gaza City, Rafah and Jabaliya, have access to running water only once every five days (6-8 hours); 50 percent have access once every four days (6 hours); and 30 percent receive running water once every two days (6-8 hours).