



UNITED NATIONS
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

13 - 19 January 2010

Latest Developments since Tuesday, 19 January

• On an event held in Gaza on 20 January, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Max Gaylard, and the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) highlighted the impact of the blockade of Gaza on the health services provided to the population and called for an immediate opening of Gaza's crossings.

West Bank

Military activities affecting civilians; 15 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces

This week, Israeli forces injured 15 Palestinians throughout the West Bank, compared to 21 injuries last week and slightly below the 2009 weekly average of 17 Palestinian injuries.

Eight of this week's injuries, including the injury of two boys, occurred during the weekly anti-Barrier protests held in Bil'in village (four) and a protest against the expansion of Hallamish settlement in the Ramallah area (four). Another three Palestinians sustained injuries when shot by Israeli forces in two separate incidents, including a confrontation in Al Jalazun Refugee Camp (Ramallah) between stonethrowing Palestinians and Israeli forces and an incident involving farmers and internationals planting trees in the Al Rish Valley (Hebron), an area previously declared closed by the military. The remaining four Palestinians were wounded when physically assaulted by Israeli forces in a raid on Al Arroub Refugee Camp in the Hebron governorate (one), while trying to access Israel without a permit (one) and while working the land in the vicinity of the Beitar Ilit settlement in the Bethlehem governorate (two).

Israeli forces conducted 100 search operations inside Palestinian villages, the majority of which took place in the northern West Bank (66), slightly below the weekly average during 2009 (103). Also this week, in an arrest operation carried out in Hebron City, Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces clashed with family members of a suspected member of the armed wing of Hamas (Izz Al Din Al Qassam Brigade), in an incident involving extensive exchanges of fire; five family members, excluding the suspect, were arrested.

Settler-related incidents

During the week, there were seven settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians, resulting in one injury, while a further 11 incidents affecting Israeli settlers occurred during the week, leading to the injury of five settlers.

In East Jerusalem, a 16 year-old Palestinian girl was injured when she was physically assaulted by a female settler in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. On 15 January, Palestinians, together with Israeli and international peace activists marched towards the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood to protest Israeli settlers takeover of Palestinian houses in the neighbourhood. The Israeli police declared the protest illegal and ordered the participants to leave the area. After most of them refused to do so, the police arrested 17 Israeli protesters, including the Directors of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and Rabbis for Human Rights. The detainees were held in custody for 36 hours until a Magistrate Court ordered their unconditional release, after establishing that the arrests were carried out without legal justification.

Three of this week's incidents resulted in damage to Palestinian property: Israeli settlers from the Havat Ma'on settlement outpost uprooted 30 olive trees belonging to a Palestinian family from the village of Twani (Hebron); settlers from the Har Adar settlement threw stones at a Palestinian house in Qattanah village (Jerusalem), breaking its windows; and three vehicles and an agricultural tractor belonging to Palestinians from Immatin (Qalqiliya) were partially damaged by fire, allegedly started by Israeli settlers.

This week, Israeli security forces arrested six settlers from the Yitzhar settlement (Nablus). According to Israeli media reports, the six are suspected of setting fire and vandalizing a mosque in Yasuf village (Salfit) on 11 December 2009, allegedly as part of the "price tag" strategy in response to the partial freeze in settlement construction implemented by the Israeli authorities since November 2009. One further arrest of an Israeli student was reported at a Jerusalem-based yeshiva, in connection to the same incident.

The 11 incidents affecting Israeli settlers involved Palestinians throwing stones and Molotov cocktails towards Israeli vehicles driving on West Bank roads near Palestinian villages in the Ramallah, Qalqiliya and Hebron areas. Five of the incidents resulted in the injury of five Israelis, including a baby girl, and the remaining ended with damage to the vehicles; Israeli forces conducted search operations in the villages following some of the incidents.

New demolition in Area C

On 19 January, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) demolished part of a residence (five rooms and a fence) in Jaba' village (Jerusalem) due to the lack of a building permit. This demolition affected a Palestinian family of nine people, including five children, who are now staying in the part of the residence that was unaffected by the demolition (two rooms). In 2009 and 2010, the Israeli authorities demolished a total of 226 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C, resulting in the displacement of 431 people and affecting an additional 554 people.

Also in Area C, the ICA delivered eviction orders targeting seven tents, owned by three families, in Al Jiftlik area (Jericho) due to its location in a closed military zone; four of the tents are used as residences and three as animal shelters. The orders indicate that the three families should evacuate their tents within 72 hours, placing 29 Palestinians, including 23 children, at risk of displacement. Previously banned road re-opened for Palestinian use During the reporting period, the Israeli army began allowing Palestinian vehicles to access a previously banned segment of Road 3265 in the western Hebron governorate. This road was closed approximately seven years ago and left for the exclusive use of Israeli settlers commuting between the settlement outpost of Neghohot and Israel. This closure forced some 25,000 people living in 12 Palestinian villages along the road to make a long detour to reach their service centres in the cities of Hebron and Dura. The opening of the road this week follows a ruling by the Israeli High Court of Justice in October 2009, which established that the ban on the use of the road by Palestinians is illegal.

Gaza Strip

500 people affected by rainwater floods in Central Gaza

Following heavy rainfall on 17 and 18 January, flooding occurred in Central Gaza during the evening of 18 January. As a result, 88 families (approximately 500 people), mainly in the Al Mughraqa area, had to be temporarily relocated overnight to houses of relatives/friends while waiting for the water to recede. The vast majority of the affected households are registered refugees, including many Bedouin families living along the Wadi Gaza stream's banks.

Several people in the affected areas sustained mild injuries and were taken for medical treatment. In some areas, flood water reached up to 50-70 cm inside houses, ruining and damaging many household items, including mattresses, bedding and food stocks. Many sheep, mainly owned by Bedouins, chickens and other livestock in the area drowned. In addition, agricultural land was damaged as a result of swamping. The precise scope of damage to housing and agricultural land and property is currently being assessed.

In response to the flooding, the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs in Gaza, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), UNRWA and other agencies and NGO partners, have distributed items including, blankets, mattresses, food, clothing, baby milk, hygiene kits, kitchen sets and emergency cash assistance to the affected families. Drinking water supplies and distribution mechanisms have not been affected. In addition, the local municipalities began clearing roads and pathways to ensure access to the affected areas and the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) deployed three mobile pumps and began extracting water from the flooded houses.

Due to fast intervention by the authorities and humanitarian actors, the immediate situation of the affected families has been largely stabilized. It is expected, however, that the floods will have a longer term effect on some families due to the loss of property, livestock and livelihoods.

No direct-conflict casualties; access restrictions to fishing areas continue

During the reporting period, there were no Palestinian casualties in the context of Israeli-Palestinian violence, compared to seven Palestinians killed and three others injured last week. Since the end of Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive on 18 January 2009, a total of 84 Palestinians and one Israeli have been killed and another 160 Palestinians and seven Israelis injured, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza and southern Israel.

Israeli forces continued during the week to enforce access restrictions on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore, which have been imposed since January 2009. In this context, Israeli naval forces opened warning fire towards Palestinian fishing boats in five separate incidents. In one of these incidents, west of Rafah, seven fishermen were arrested by Israeli forces, which also requisitioned the boats; Israeli forces released six of the fishermen and kept the three boats. The reduction in the sea areas accessible by Palestinian fishermen has been the main factor behind the sharp decline in the fishing catch from 3,117 tonnes in 2008 to 1,850 tonnes in 2009, according to the Fishing Syndicate in Gaza.

In addition, on three separate occasions during the reporting period, Israeli forces entered a few hundred metres within Gaza and conducted land-leveling operations.

Palestinian armed factions continued to fire rudimentary rockets towards southern Israel during the week, including at military bases, resulting in no injuries or damage to property; a number of rockets reportedly landed inside the Gaza Strip or exploded prematurely, but did not result in casualties or damage.

Seven Palestinians injured in a tunnel-related incident

On 16 January, seven Palestinians sustained burns after a fire broke out in one of the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. Since the end of Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive, at least 70 people have been killed and 130 others injured in various tunnel-related incidents. The population of the Gaza Strip heavily depends on the tunnels to access goods otherwise unavailable due to the Israeli-imposed blockade. Recent media reports about Egyptian works being carried out along the border with Gaza and aimed at shutting down tunnels' activity have triggered concerns over a possible decline in the supply of goods to Gaza.

Gaza imports through the crossings remain below needs (10- 16 Jan 2010)

A total of 534 truckloads of goods entered Gaza, a 28 percent increase compared to the number of truckloads that entered last week (418). This week's figure constitutes only 19 percent of the parallel weekly average during the first five months of 2007 (2,807 truckloads), before the Hamas takeover. Similar to previous weeks, food and hygiene items made up the majority of imported goods . 455 truckloads or 85 percent of total imports. The remaining 15 percent included a limited number of truckloads carrying agricultural materials, medical supplies, non-edible consumables, electric appliances and glass.

To date, Gaza has received 35 truckloads of glass, after Israel lifted the ban on glass on 29 December; the ban had been in place since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007. Entry of other major essential goods, such as materials for reconstruction, including cement, spare parts for water and sanitation projects, other electrical materials, IT equipment and vehicles, remain either restricted to limited quantities, or barred from entry.

Limited shipments of cut-flower carnations and strawberries exited Gaza during the reporting period: a total of 18 truckloads carrying 498,000 cut flower carnations and 27 tonnes of strawberry were allowed to exit Gaza. From 10 December 2009 until 16 January 2010, 11 truckloads of cut flowers and 22 truckloads of strawberries have exited Gaza. The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) indicated that 300 tonnes of strawberry and 30 million cut flowers are slated for export during this season (ending on 15 February for strawberries and 20 May 2010 for cut flowers).

Fuel Update (10-16 January 2010)

The fuel pipelines located at the Kerem Shalom Crossing operated on four days, while Nahal Oz fuel pipelines, which have been officially closed since the beginning of the year, exceptionally operated on one day during the reporting period. The amount of cooking gas that entered this week was more than twice the quantity that entered during the last week (914 tonnes vs. 424 tonnes). The Gas Stations Owners Association (GSOA), however, indicated that at least 2,000 tonnes of cooking gas have to be transferred into Gaza, without interruption, on a weekly basis (at least 250 tonnes per day) to overcome the ongoing shortfall in the gas. Since November 2009, the shortfall has led to a gas rationing scheme throughout the Gaza Strip, in which quantities of gas available at the Palestinian

General Petroleum Corporation (PPC) are being distributed to bakeries and hospitals first, as a priority.

Approximately 2.2 million litres of industrial gas entered Gaza this week, constituting approximately 68 percent of the weekly amount of fuel needed to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) at full capacity. According to the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO), scheduled rolling blackouts continue to affect the majority of the population, up to 32 hours a week.

No commercial petrol or diesel entered Gaza via Kerem Shalom crossing, with the exception of 40 litres of petrol for UNRWA, which entered via Nahal Oz. Egyptian petrol and diesel, which is transferred through the tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border, remains available on the open market, with nearly 100,000 litres of diesel and 100,000 litres of petrol transferred into Gaza per day.