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September Overview

Internal tensions between authorities in Gaza and Ramallah are having an increasing humanitarian impact on Gazans' access to basic services, while Israel's closure of Gaza crossing points continues, with only a slight increase in the number of truckloads allowed entry. The ongoing closure has resulted in the proliferation of tunnels linking Rafah and Egypt, as Palestinians search for alternative means to import goods. However, more Palestinians were killed in tunnels collapses and related incidents in September, as a result of Israeli military activity in the oPt. In the West Bank, IDF restrictions on Palestinian movement are being further entrenched. The IDF resumed demolition of structures in Area C this month after a four-month lull and anti-Barrier demonstrations and related Israeli military activity again resulted in the majority of West Bank injuries.

Protection

Intense clashes between Hamas-affiliated security forces and the Dugmush family resulted in the death of 13 people, including three children, and the injury of 43 others. An additional 13 Palestinians were killed and ten injured in tunnel-related incidents in Rafah in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, five unarmed civilians were killed, including two children, and 130 others were injured, including 75 children, more than half of them in Barrier-related incidents. The number of attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property continued, but in smaller numbers. However, given the intensity of recent attacks, along with previous annual trends, there are concerns for the safety of Palestinian farmers about to embark on this year's olive harvest.

In the West Bank, 36 structures, including 17 used as seasonal residences, were demolished during the implementation of evacuation orders by the Israeli military. The structures belonged to herders living in four small hamlets in the Mu'arrajat area of the eastern Ramallah governorate. These were the first of their kind since April 2008. Concern exists for the future of an additional eight families of herders who received verbal and written evacuation orders against 38 structures, including at least eight residences. If carried out, 97 people, including 51 children, will be displaced.

Access and Movement in the oPt

A recently issued OCHA report notes that despite some positive steps taken by the Government of Israel that aimed at easing internal movement for Palestinians in the West Bank, their impact remains limited geographically. Of the 100 unstaffed obstacles that the Israeli authorities announced that they had removed during the period covered by the report (30 April to 11 September 2008), only 25 were significant



Palestinian worshippers attempting to access Jerusalem for Friday prayers during Ramadan. OCHA.

and counted by OCHA. Moreover, the number of obstacles increased by 3.3%. Overall, the OCHA survey found that the system of IDF-imposed movement restrictions is being further entrenched.

Access for more than 60% of the Palestinian population to pray at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was denied during the holy month of Ramadan (1-29 September). Palestinians from the Gaza Strip were denied entry, while the access of West Bank ID holders was regulated by a special age-based permit regime, valid only on the four Fridays during the month. This permit regime was better organized this year, resulted in less violence, and allowed greater numbers of Palestinians to attend prayers at the Al Aqsa mosque than during previous years.

There continued to be little improvement in the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza. The number of truckloads of imported goods allowed into Gaza increased slightly compared to August 2008. A total of 4,049 truckloads were allowed entry (3,565 in August), 42% of which were food supplies. The ongoing lack of imports, and hence limited transactions, closed businesses, high rates of unemployment and the lack of coordination between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank authorities, continued to damage the private sector in Gaza.

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Erez and Rafah crossings remained restricted during September; Erez continued to be open only for the movement of some diplomats, humanitarian workers, businessmen and critical medical cases with special coordination arrangements. A reported number of 2,122 Palestinians, 638 of whom were medical cases and 296 Palestinian businessmen, crossed to Israel and the West Bank during the month. The number of patients that crossed Erez during the first four weeks of September decreased by 38%, compared to the first four weeks of August. The Egyptian authorities reopened Rafah crossing in both directions on three days only during September. Approximately 2,676 Palestinians crossed to Egypt and 781 Palestinian patients returned to Gaza. Some 800 students who had been registered to leave for study abroad were stranded in Gaza when the crossing was shut early on 21 September.

Health and education in the Gaza Strip

The political tension between Gaza and Ramallah authorities continued throughout the month, affecting the access of the population of Gaza to basic services. Teacher strikes, which were extended on a weekly basis at 381 PA schools in Gaza, affected around 250,000 pupils. Though the impact of the health strike was more acute at the beginning of the month, by the end, all 11 hospitals, all but two PHC (Primary Health Clinics) centers, and all community mental health centers were functioning at full capacity and providing all services. However, there are concerns regarding the quality and timely provision of services. Of concern was the delay in the preparation and delivery of medical orders from the Central Drugs Store (CDS) to health facilities, as 48% of personnel in the CDS were on strike. The lack of coordination between Ramallah and Gaza authorities also affected the services provided by the CMWU (Coastal Municipalities Water Utility), leaving some 250,000 Gazans facing a severe water shortage.

Finally of considerable concern is the increasing number of drug items on the Essential Drug List that have reached zero level. Responsibility for the delivery of medical supplies to the Gaza Strip transferred from WHO to MoH in Ramallah in August. Since then, WHO monitoring indicates a growing shortage of drug items at the CDS in the Gaza Strip; by mid-August, 48 (11.5%) drug items out of the 416 most used essential drug list in the oPt were at zero level. In September, patients in Gaza demonstrated outside the CDS in Gaza, requesting the immediate delivery of essential drugs, such as for cancer treatment and hemodialysis.

Protection of Civilians

Inter-factional fighting in the Gaza Strip continued

Intense clashes took place on 15 and 16 September 2008 between Hamas security forces and the Dugmush family.

These followed clashes in early August 2008 with the Fatah-affiliated Hillis family in the Shuja'iya area of Gaza City. The September incident began after a 20-year-old police officer was killed, and another injured, while pursuing a member of the Dugmush family accused of criminal activity on 15 September 2008. According to the police, the armed suspect shot at the police before fleeing. Subsequently, the police handed over their positions around the Sabra quarter (a Dugmush family stronghold) to the Al Qassam Brigades (the military wing of Hamas), which sealed the area and conducted house-to-house searches of the accused. Armed clashes erupted between the two sides and continued into the next day, resulting in the death of 13 people, including additional police officers and eleven members of the Dugmush family (including three children and eight armed family members). Forty-three others were injured, including two women. It was reported that heavy weaponry including mortars, RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) and heavy machine guns were used by both sides.

Gaza Strip: 13 Palestinians killed in tunnel-related incidents

In September, 13 Palestinians were reported killed and ten injured either as a result of tunnel collapses, closures or accidents, including electrocution. Approximately 40 people have been killed as a result of tunnel incidents since the beginning of the year. Moreover, throughout September, as was the case in August 2008, the Egyptian security forces reportedly closed and destroyed many tunnels on the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza. On 5 September, Egyptian forces located and closed three tunnels and, on 23 September, five Palestinians were killed and four others injured as a result of a tunnel explosion close to Rafah. Media reports suggested that the tunnel was being destroyed by the Egyptians at the time, but this remains unconfirmed.

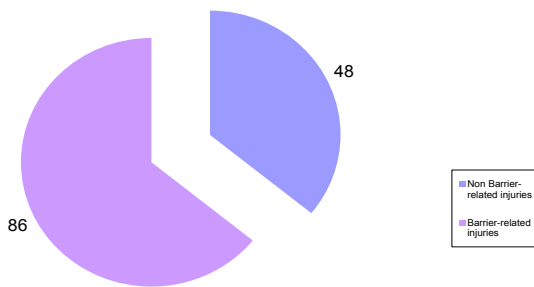
In light of the inability of many Gazan businessmen to conduct trade through Gaza official crossings (Karni, Sufa and Kerem Shalom), Rafah tunnels have become a vital lifeline to obtain needed goods over the last year. Media reports estimate the number of tunnels to be in the hundreds, employing up to 6,000 Palestinians. On 25 September, the Hamas authority police introduced new regulations to control trade through the tunnels. A list of conditions were announced, among which was that all tunnel operators must meet certain standards in order for their tunnels to be licensed and allowed to operate. Numerous tents covering tunnel entrances are visible in the Rafah area and the industry is increasingly becoming open and controlled. The extent of the tunnel network is a direct result of the continued restrictions on access. The reopening of the Gaza crossings remains a primary need for improving economic and humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip.



Ni'lin and Bil'in: anti-Barrier demonstrations and military operations

During September, 86 people, including 62 children, were injured by the Israeli forces during anti-Barrier demonstrations or military operations in Ni'lin and Bil'in villages in the Ramallah governorate, a 12% decline compared to August (98)². The highest single-incident casualty toll took place on 8 September when three IDF units stormed Ni'lin village, fired rubber-coated metal bullets and shot a large number of tear gas canisters and shock grenades towards houses, shops and the Ni'lin Secondary Girls School—three children were injured with rubber-coated metal bullets and 50 girls required medical attention for tear gas inhalation after canisters were fired inside their school when more than 600 students and teachers were present. In the same incident, two IDF soldiers were reportedly injured by stones.

Barrier-related injuries vs. non Barrier-related injuries - September 2008



Injuries in Barrier-related incidents constituted 66% of the total number of conflict-related injuries or deaths in the West Bank in September, equal to the percentage during August. The most significant incident occurred in Ni'lin in September when the IDF shot a man with four rubber-coated metal bullets at close range while they were storming his house. He was critically injured and lost an eye. In a similar case of excessive force, several Israeli human rights groups protested a light indictment (“improper behaviour”) brought by the military against an IDF soldier who had shot with a rubber-coated metal bullet a handcuffed and blindfolded man in Ni'lin in July 2008. On 28 September, the Israeli High Court instructed the Military Advocate General to reconsider the indictment in a way that will reflect the gravity of the incident and provide an answer within 40 days.

Settler violence against Palestinian civilians continues as olive harvest approaches

During the month, there were 25 settler-related incidents recorded. Of these, four resulted in Palestinian casualties, and nine caused damage to Palestinian property. The September incidents represent a 38% decrease from the August 2008 total. Despite the decrease in incidents

recorded in September, as of the end of the month, the monthly average of settler-related incidents in 2008 (38) was significantly higher than the monthly average in 2006 (20) and 2007 (24).

The most violent reported incident in September involved Israeli settlers from the settlement of Yizhar in the northern West Bank: On 13 September, a nine-year-old Israeli settler was stabbed and injured, reportedly by a Palestinian, in an outpost next to the settlement. Following this, Israeli settlers from Yizhar, many of them armed, marched into the nearby village of 'Asira Al Qibliya, set fire to houses, broke windows, cut water pipes and vandalized home gardens. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert referred to this attack as a 'pogrom' and called on the police to investigate the case and hold the perpetrators accountable.

While the number of settler-related incidents decreased in September, there are concerns that settler violence will increase during the October olive harvest as has been the case during past harvests. Over the past two years, settler-related incidents reached their annual peak during the last quarter of the year, during which the olive harvest takes place. This, combined with the fact that some of the September attacks were aimed at Palestinian farmers, continues to place settler violence as a serious humanitarian concern.

Demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures: 98 people, including 59 children, affected

A total of 98 Palestinians, including 59 children, were affected by demolitions during the month. On 9 September, 36 structures were demolished by the Israeli military, including 17 seasonal residences, belonging to herders living in four small hamlets in the Mu'arrajat area of the eastern Ramallah governorate. The demolitions were carried out two months after three separate evacuation orders had been distributed to the small communities because they are located in “closed areas.” The structures were uninhabited at the time of the demolition as they are used by the herders during winter months; between October and April. A total of 95 people, including 59 children, living less than two kilometers away, have been affected by these demolitions. These demolitions were the first to take place in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) since April 2008. Since the beginning of 2008, 241 demolitions took place in the West Bank (including 37 in East Jerusalem). As of May 2008, more than 3,000 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank had pending demolition orders.

In addition, on 22 September, eight families living in a herding community adjacent to Ma'ale Mikhmas settlement in the Ramallah governorate received verbal and written evacuation orders against their 38 structures, including at least eight residences. If carried out, 97 people, including 51 children, will be displaced. The residents reported that



the orders specified that they should move a few hundred meters away because their current location is within a "closed military zone", as defined by the Israeli military.

In East Jerusalem, a one-room structure at the entrance of Shufat Refugee Camp was demolished on 16 September without prior official authorization. It remains unclear who authorized the demolition as both the Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli DCL stated that they had no knowledge of the demolition, which was carried out by the contractor working on the construction of the Barrier. The three Palestinians who had used the demolished structure as a taxi dispatch office reported that they had received verbal but not written warning of the impending demolition from the Barrier contractor one week before the demolition was carried out.



Structures demolished by the IDF in the Mu'arrajat area on 9 September. (OCHA)

Child Protection

In September, two children were reported killed and 75 injured in conflict-related incidents, the majority of which were injured during Barrier-related incidents in Ni'llin village. On 13 September, a 16-year-old child was killed when the IDF opened fire at Palestinian stone throwers in Tuqu' village (Bethlehem). On 20 September, IDF soldiers shot and killed a 15-year-old Palestinian boy from 'Asira al Qibliya village (Nablus) while he was near the fence of Yizhar settlement. IDF troops alleged that the boy was carrying a fire bomb. (See section on settler-related incidents herein). In addition, a 17-year old Palestinian boy from Ad Duhiesha refugee camp was injured with a live bullet when IDF soldiers opened fire at him while searching his house in the camp. He was subsequently arrested.

The greatest number of child casualties occurred during the IDF's 8 September attack on the Ni'llin Secondary Girls School, during which three children were injured with rubber-coated metal bullets and another 50 girls required medical attention for tear gas inhalation after canisters were fired inside their school. (See Protection section for more details). During the month, twelve children were reportedly injured by rubber-coated metal bullets shot at them during anti-Barrier demonstrations in Ni'llin village.

In addition, 59 children were affected by the IDF's 9 September demolition of 36 structures in the Mu'arrajat area of the eastern Ramallah governorate (see Protection section for more details). Bedouin children, like those affected by the September demolitions, are particularly at-risk of displacement due to the demolition of their shelters. The majority of all Bedouin/herding communities living in Area C have outstanding demolition orders on their structures.

Access and Movement

OCHA releases new Closure Update

In September, OCHA released the main findings and analysis of a new West Bank closure survey covering the period between 30 April and 11 September 2008. According to the report, during that period the Government of Israel took more steps aimed at easing internal movement for Palestinians in the West Bank than it had during the prior reporting period. However, while these steps are positive and welcomed, OCHA's survey found that the overall system of movement restrictions is being further entrenched. The total number of obstacles throughout the West Bank reached 630, a 3.3% increase compared to the figure reported at the end of the previous reporting period. The survey also found that almost three quarters of the main routes leading into the 18 most populated Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank are either blocked or controlled by an IDF checkpoint. Almost half of the secondary routes into these areas, established over time as alternatives to the main routes, are also blocked or controlled by a checkpoint. (Available at OCHA's website; www.ochaopt.org).

World Bank and IMF: Restrictions on access of people and goods continue to negatively impact the Palestinian economy

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released their economic monitoring reports³ on 22 September, ahead of the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) annual meeting. The World Bank report found some indications of a slowing of the downward spiral of the West Bank economy in 2008, however, it expresses serious doubts as to whether the cycle of growth required for Palestinian economic recovery had begun. The report noted that the economic activity in the Gaza Strip continued to weaken and the improvement in the West Bank was marginal at best. The Palestinian economy's dependency on aid may have increased due to under investment and related capital depreciation.

In the same vein, the IMF report stated that the Palestinian economy continued to be weakened by the restrictions on movement and access in the West Bank and the isolation of the Gaza Strip. The restrictions dampened private sector



activity and constrained the implementation of the foreign public-funded development projects. In addition, the sharp rise in global food and energy inflation in the first half of 2008 was amplified in the West Bank and Gaza by restrictions on movement and access. Real incomes eroded and production costs increased, therefore reducing real aggregate consumer demand and export competitiveness of West Bank and Gaza producers. These negative factors have offset the benefits from the significant increase in the flow of external budgetary assistance to the PA and improved private sector confidence following the deployment of Palestinian security forces in major cities of the West Bank.

A Palestinian woman gives birth to a stillborn baby at Huwwara checkpoint, Nablus

On 5 September, after being refused passage by IDF soldiers, a Palestinian woman from Qusra village gave birth to a stillborn child at Huwwara checkpoint. Following the incident, the Israeli Military Advocate General launched a criminal investigation into the event and suspended implementation of a disciplinary punishment of 14 days in detention against one of the soldiers involved in the incident, which had been issued immediately after the event.

More than 60% of Palestinian population denied access to Jerusalem for prayer during Ramadan

Access for more than 60%¹ of the Palestinian population to pray at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was denied during the holy month of Ramadan (1-29 September). Palestinians from the Gaza Strip were denied entry, while the access of West Bank ID holders was regulated by a special permit regime, valid only on the four Fridays during the month. Special age-restricted "prayer" permits were issued for men between the ages of 45 and 50 and women between 30 and 45, who are married with children and had passed a security screening. Men and women above these ages and children below 13 were allowed for Fridays' prayers without a permit. Elderly and disabled people who met the age criteria, however, were frequently unable to access Jerusalem because the person assisting them did not meet the age requirements. The Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs estimated that 90,000, 120,000, 200,000, and 320,000 Muslims attended prayers at Al Aqsa Mosque during each of the four Fridays, respectively. These figures included Palestinian worshippers with Israeli citizenship, Jerusalem residents, West Bank ID holders and other Muslims.

The Israeli military maintained a heavy presence at Qalandiya and Gilo checkpoints each Friday, when OCHA monitors witnessed cases of Israeli soldiers pushing and occasionally hitting people to control the large crowds attempting to pass. There were reported cases of individuals denied access, despite possessing valid permits or meeting age requirements. Overall, however, access to Jerusalem during Ramadan this year was better organized, resulted in less

violence, and allowed greater numbers of Palestinians to attend prayers at the Al Aqsa mosque than during the past few years.

Within the West Bank, opening hours were extended during Ramadan at the checkpoints around Nablus and at several others in the north. Also, Palestinians with Israeli citizenships, who have been denied access to Nablus City since the beginning of the intifada, were allowed to enter the city in their vehicles during Ramadan.

UNRWA mobile clinics denied access into communities in the Barrier enclaves

On 12 September, an UNRWA mobile health clinic was denied access into Kallet an Nu'man for a second time in two months. The village, located within Bethlehem governorate, falls within the Israeli expanded municipal boundary of Jerusalem and is isolated from Bethlehem by the Barrier. Border police at the checkpoint refused to allow the team to pass because they do not have permits for Jerusalem. UNRWA mobile health clinics have likewise been unable to access the Barta'a enclave in the northern West Bank since November 2007.

Gaza Access: little improvement in September

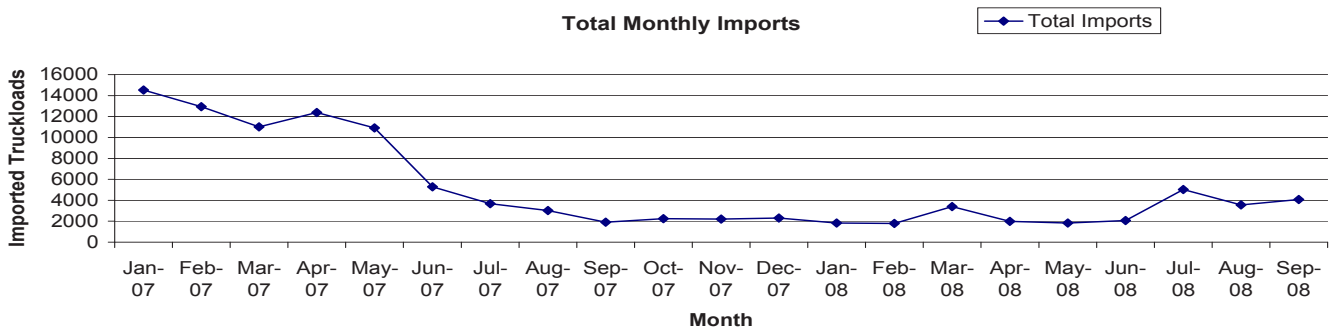
During September, there continued to be little improvement in the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza, and thus living conditions remained difficult. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) reported that the unemployment rate in Gaza increased from 29.8% in the first quarter of 2008 to 45.5% in the second quarter.

The ongoing lack of imports, and hence limited transactions, closed businesses, high rates of unemployment and the lack of coordination between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank authorities, continued to damage the local private sector in Gaza. According to Pal-Trade, 98% of Gaza's industrial operations remained non-operational (3,800 industries) and nearly 40,000 farmers in the agricultural sector, and more than 70,000 workers in other private sectors, have been laid off since the Hamas takeover of June 2007 and its resulting Israeli-imposed restrictions.

Prior to the January 2006 PLC elections, businesses in the Gaza Strip functioned at 76% of their production capacity. By November 2007 this had fallen to 11%, and by September 2008 this had declined further to less than 5% of capacity (Palestinian Businessmen's Association figures). The Palestinian Federation of Industries stated in a recent study that due to the closure more than 66% of Gaza industries will require working capital in order to reopen.

Truckloads entering Gaza

During September, there was little increase in the number of truckloads of imported goods allowed into Gaza, compared



to August 2008. A total of 4,049 truckloads were allowed entry, including 1,726 truckloads of food supplies (43%), 1,359 of gravel (34%), 179 of cement (4%), 342 of fuel (8%), and 443 truckloads of other items (11%) including hygiene and cleaning supplies, medical supplies, agricultural materials, education materials and stationery, industrial and electrical appliances. There was a noticeable decline in the number of truckloads carrying hygiene and cleaning supplies (82% less than in August), industrial/electrical appliances (33% less) and the non-edible consumables (39% less).

September total imports represented only 30% of the December 2005 level, that is, before the Palestinian elections, (the corresponding figure was 27% in August 2008) and 37% of the May 2007 level, that is, prior to the Hamas takeover; (the figure for August 2008 being 33%). Thus, imports for the month were slightly up from the August figures, when 3,565 truckloads entered. Exports continue to be barred.

Sufa crossing, which had been operating as an alternative to the closed Karni crossing, was closed on 13 September and goods have since been redirected through the Kerem Shalom crossing. The Israeli authorities have stated that they intend to have only one goods crossing open at a time. The crossing is completely controlled by Israel and has a limited capacity to handle 70-80 truckloads/day. It is now the only goods crossing in operation.

Fuel imports remain below actual needs

In September, only 17% of petrol, 67% of diesel, 49% of cooking gas and 85% of industrial fuel (for the power station) daily needs were met. Power cuts decreased slightly as the electricity demand was reduced due to the cooler weather. Hamas authorities in Gaza continued to enforce the coupon rationing system, which was introduced in April 2008, to cope with the reduced and irregular amounts of fuel supplied to Gaza. However, on 25 September, authorities temporarily suspended the diesel rationing until 5 October, as Israel allowed in extra diesel ahead of the closure for the Muslim and Jewish holidays. (2,701,380 litres, while actual weekly needs are estimated to be 2,100,000.).

Construction projects still on hold due to absence of materials

For the third consecutive month, gravel continued to

constitute a high percentage of imported commodities. However, it could not be effectively utilized with the limited amount of cement and without other complementary materials. Construction projects valued at US\$240 million (PalTrade figures), including US\$149 million worth of UN construction projects, are still on hold due to the absence of construction materials such as cement, iron reinforcement steel, and other supplementary materials. UNRWA reports that it alone has US\$93 million worth of projects on hold due to the lack of building materials, including projects to build or repair homes for refugees living in substandard conditions, along with the construction of five new schools and water and waste-water projects, among others. The furniture sector, which previously provided employment for 5,500 labourers, has lost an estimated US\$30 million worth of income since June 2007. An estimated 97% of workshops are now non-operational due to the continued lack of raw materials. Only 30 out of the 600 registered workshops are still operational, targeting the local market.

Erez

During September, Erez was open on 23 days for the movement of diplomats, humanitarian workers, businessmen and critical medical cases with special coordination arrangements. On 15 and 16 September, Erez crossing was closed, except for emergency medical and humanitarian cases, in response to the firing of a homemade rocket from Gaza towards Sderot. On 30 September, the crossing was closed for the Jewish New Year. A reported number of 2,122 Palestinians, of whom 638 were medical cases (330 patients and 308 family members), and 296 Palestinian businessmen holding Businessmen Cards (BMC), crossed to Israel and the West Bank during the month.

Rafah terminal

During September 2008, the Egyptian authorities re-opened the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip on 15 and 20 - 21 September, to allow movement in both directions. However, the crossing closed early on 21 September, leaving 800 students, who had registered with the Ministry of Interior for travel that day, inside Gaza. At the end of the month, they were still trying to reach their places of study abroad. The crossing was partially open on three other occasions to allow Palestinian medical cases to return to Gaza. Approximately 2,676 Palestinians crossed to



Egypt during September, including more than 1,100 "Omra" pilgrims, over 300 medical cases and a delegation of nine persons from the Arab Liberation Front. 781 Palestinian patients returned to Gaza.

Access of Palestinian patients to specialized health services outside the Gaza Strip

The referral abroad department and the Health Coordination Office have been closed since the first day of the strike which started on 30 August 2008. However, the directors of the two departments are processing the papers from home for the patients with the following categories: cancer, cardiology, pediatrics and live-saving cases. The number of patients that actually crossed Erez Crossing during the first 4 weeks of September (333) decreased by 38%, compared to the number of patients that crossed Erez during the first 4 weeks of August (540).

Two fishermen injured in September and sardine season set to open in October

The fishing sector in the Gaza Strip is a deep-rooted tradition and constitutes one of the main pillars of the economy, especially where other economic activities are limited. Only about 40 km of the coastline of the Gaza Strip (45 km long) is permitted for fishing. There are no suitable fishing harbours and facilities remain basic. There are nearly 3,000 registered fishermen in the Gaza Strip, and 2,000 others working in the fleet servicing side of the industry. A further 35,000 dependants (assuming a seven-person family size) rely upon the industry as their primary source of income and have become progressively impoverished since the second intifada and the gradual implementation of restrictions.

Over the last five years, fishermen have not been permitted to fish beyond 6-8 nautical miles, though according to the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian fishing zone is 20 nautical miles and according to the Bertini Commitments of 2002, 12 nautical miles. Ever-present Israeli patrol boats make the fishing area in effect further reduced. Restrictions have been imposed by the Israelis on the grounds of security, particularly noting concerns over the smuggling of weapons and other contraband items. During September, the IDF in patrol boats opened fire at Palestinian fishermen's boats on eight occasions. This resulted in the injury of two fishermen, one of whom was hospitalized.

The most important times of the year for fishing are the sardine seasons occurring in autumn and spring. October marks the beginning of the next sardine season. To gain maximum economic benefit, the current fishing range needs to be increased to at least 12 -15 nautical miles. The fishing catch yielded 3,600 tonnes in 1999 compared to 2,702 tonnes in 2007. While the sardine catch, itself, declined by only about 4% in 2007 (1,953 tonnes) compared to 1999 (2,025 tonnes), it was made up of young not fully-grown

sardines fished near the seashore, as a result of the limited fishing zone. These small fish fetch less at market, and their catch contributes to a depletion of fish stock in the years to come, as they have not yet reproduced.

Lack of blank passports in Gaza

Since the Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007, there has been a lack of new blank passports in Gaza. The PA issues 250,000 new passports a year, of which 40% is slated for Gaza. Since the beginning of 2008, Gaza has received only 15,600 new blank passports from Ramallah. As of August 2008, all new passports that were kept for urgent humanitarian cases had been issued, and as of end of September 2008, 2,500 people were urgently awaiting new passports. The Gaza authorities are now stamping new expiry dates over the old ones. This is a critical issue for those awaiting urgent humanitarian exit. In total 20,000 new passports are required to deal with the backlog of requests. In mid-August President Abbas ordered new passports to be sent urgently to Gaza, however, as of 30 September, no passports had arrived.

Socioeconomic

UNRWA's Microfinance Department increases loans distribution

The informal sector in the West Bank continues to grow due to the poor economic situation. While unemployment has slightly decreased (from 25.7% to 23.2%), prices continue to rise, with the consumer price index (CPI) showing a 4.6% increase in August 2008 since the beginning of the year. This has led to a decline in purchasing power. Moreover, food insecurity continues to rise and households spend on average 56% of their income on food⁴. More and more economically marginalized people, especially women, run small enterprises at home or work as peddlers. As a result, there is a significant need for micro-finance programmes, including small loans for poor and low-income families. UNRWA's Microfinance Department operates two lending products to address this situation: the Consumer Lending Product (CLP) and the Microenterprise Credit (MEC). The number of loans under the CLP increased by about 8% in August 2008 compared to July 2008⁵, while the number of loans distributed under the MEC increased by about 3%.⁶ Due to the increasing interest of MEC clients to access higher loan amounts, MD (Microfinance Department) developed

Sonia Al-Khatib, from Nablus city, is an MEC success story. She has managed to expand her nursery and school, called "Altaleem Alhadeeth", by using successive MEC loans. She received an initial loan for US\$850 in 2002 to purchase equipment and stationary for the nursery. Since then, she has received four additional loans, which have enabled her to expand the nursery by renting a second floor and a courtyard in the same building. She also purchased two buses for student transportation. She is currently providing 43 jobs for local staff. Upon asking her about her future plans, she hopes to be able to loan larger amounts through the MEC+ product and eventually build her own school, as property rents are high.



the MEC+⁷ loan, which distributes larger amounts and has a longer repayment period.

Education

Education strike in the Gaza Strip

The teachers' and MoEHE civil employees' strike, which began on 24 August 2008, continued unabated throughout September, being extended on a weekly basis. On 23 September, the three Pro-Fatah Unions in Ramallah extended the strike for two further weeks until 7 October. The strike has affected about 250,000 pupils, grades 1-12, in 381 PA schools, employing 10,000 teachers in the Gaza Strip. Initially, more than 60% of teachers at PA schools adhered to the strike call but, according to MoEHE statistics, teacher attendance slightly improved after 15 September, as more than 1,400 teachers returned gradually to their schools. Pupil attendance was approximately 98% throughout the period.

Approximately 6,000 new teachers were appointed by the Hamas authorities in Gaza to replace teachers on strike. The new teachers, selected from the waiting list at the Ministry, were offered 5 months short-term (SSA) contracts, paying 1,000 NIS per month.

During September, the Gaza MoEHE stated it would terminate contracts of the striking staff, teachers and principals, and media agencies reported that about 2,500 teachers who were not on strike would have their salaries cut by the Ramallah MoEHE. This latter claim was later denied by the authorities in Ramallah. At the end of the month an estimated 50% of teachers were on strike, and disarray and confusion remained in the education system, along with concern regarding the standard of education in PA schools.

9,000 East Jerusalem children unable to attend school this year

The Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education reported that approximately 9,000 Palestinian children in East Jerusalem are unable to attend schools this academic year (2008/2009) due to an insufficient number of classrooms available to accommodate all of them. According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), the shortage of 1,500 classrooms in Israeli-run municipal schools in East Jerusalem leaves half of all school-aged children unable to enroll in the public education system. Of these remaining children, 32,000 children attend private, UNRWA, or informal schools, such as those run by the Islamic Waqf, but approximately 9,000 are unable to enroll in any school. Construction of new or expansion of existing private or informal schools has been limited or almost impossible because the Jerusalem Municipality does not regularly grant the requisite building permits. In Beit Safafa and Shufat, at

least two private schools have received demolition orders for having constructed additional classrooms without building permits. In 2007, the Israeli government committed to build 400 additional classrooms in East Jerusalem over the next five years, however, no construction has yet taken place.

Disruption days at schools

Thousands of school children in the oPt were affected by school closures and partial disruption as a result of Israeli military activity and internal Palestinian violence in September. The killing of two children by the IDF; one in Bethlehem and one in northern Nablus (see child protection section), and the subsequent closure of schools, in mourning of the killed boys, disrupted a total of 3,130 children's schooling for at least one day. On 14 and 15 September, nine schools in Bethlehem were closed following the killing of a 16-year-old boy, and, on 28 September, a number of schools in northern Nablus were closed, following the killing of a 15-year-old student. Moreover, on 15 and 21 September, Beit Iksa Boys Secondary school and Beit Iksa girls Secondary school were partially disrupted in East Jerusalem, due to the closure of the Beit Iksa checkpoint, which prevented teachers from reaching schools. On 11 September, schools in northern Nablus were partially disrupted due to a closure of Huwwara checkpoint, which caused 250 teachers to reach schools late. These events were in addition to the 8 September attack on the Ni'lin Secondary Girls School, during which three children were injured with rubber-coated metal bullets and another 50 girls required medical attention for tear gas inhalation, after canisters were fired inside their school. In the Gaza Strip, five PA schools with 2,500 children were unable to function on 16 September due to the clashes between the Dugmush family and Hamas security forces in Gaza.

Water and Sanitation

CMWU / PWA issue: 250,000 Gazans facing severe lack of water due to lack of diesel

The lack coordination between the PWA (Palestinian Water Authority) in Ramallah and the MoA (Ministry of Agriculture) in the Gaza Strip during September continued to impact the supply of water in the Gaza Strip. Since August 2008, the CMWU (Coastal Municipalities Water Utility) has not received diesel, which is needed to operate its water wells, wastewater pumping stations and wastewater suction trucks. Initially the humanitarian impact was limited. However, the impact became acute in September. The CMWU reported that 50% of wells were out of fuel and could operate only if there was an electricity supply. In five wells in Middle Gaza there was no fuel or electricity and thus 250,000 people were experiencing a severe lack of water. There is an ongoing heightened fear of flooding from



sewage pumping stations as fuel reserves reach critical levels. UNRWA donated 30,000 litres of diesel to the CMWU for emergency use (20,000 in August and a further 10,000 in September) while talks continued to resolve the situation. As of the end of September, the issue remained unresolved and the situation was critical.

Health

Health Strike

In response to the dismissal of 40 health workers by the Hamas authority, the Palestinian Union of Health Workers in Ramallah called a 'total health strike' to start on 30 August for four days. The strike was renewed each week throughout September and is now scheduled to end on 14 October, though it may be extended further. In an attempt to break the strike, the Hamas security forces in Gaza have forced many of the essential and key staff to report back to duty, hence the disruption to services in key areas has been reduced.

During the first week of the strike, approximately 48% of hospitals' health personnel and 65% of Primary Health Care (PHC) health personnel were on strike. Two hospitals declared a "state of emergency" and suspended elective surgical operations. Other hospitals tried to work at full-capacity, but with some delays. Twelve PHC clinics closed due to staff shortages along with two community mental health centres. All functioning clinics limited their services to sick-baby and non-communicable disease clinics.

During the second week, those adhering to the strike decreased to 35% of hospital staff and 47% of PHC personnel. The two hospitals remained in an emergency state, the number of PHC centres closed reduced to seven, while open clinics increased their services to include everything except antenatal care and family planning.

By 24 September, those adhering to the strike reduced further to 28% of hospital staff and 41% of PHC personnel. The 11 hospitals, all PHC centers, except two which remained closed, and the community mental health centers were all functioning at full capacity and providing all services. However, the quality and timely provision of services raises concern.

During the strike the Gaza MoH closed the private clinics of those doctors abiding by the strike. It also relocated or demoted some key staff to other positions and referred health personnel who had not reported to work for 15 days to the Strike's Crisis Management Committee (SCMC) to decide upon their future. The SCMC ruled that technical staff who had been on strike would be accepted back, with various exceptions. However, physicians who went on strike and whose private clinics were closed needed to submit a written request to hospital directors stating their commitment to duty in order to re-open their clinics.

During the month, NGO-run health facilities reported an increase in the number of patients visiting their PHC centers and the hospitals' outpatient clinics during the strike.

Drug and medical supplies

Forty-eight percent (48%) of personnel working in the Central Drugs Store (CDS) adhered to the strike (65 out of 135). As a result, a delay in the preparation and delivery of medical orders from the CDS to health facilities was reported.

By the end of August 2008, responsibility for the delivery of medical supplies to Gaza had been transferred from WHO to the MoH in Ramallah. This decision has affected the availability of drugs at the CDS in Gaza due to a number of factors, including political and security conditions; the MoH's lack of capacity in coordinating; and the complex and lengthy coordination process that the MoH has to go through to coordinate the entry of drug shipments into the Gaza Strip. During the month, local pharmaceutical suppliers were requested by the MoH in Ramallah to hold back the delivery of pharmaceutical shipments to the CDS in the West Bank, due to the lack of storage capacity in Ramallah warehouses and the lengthy coordination process for sending supplies into Gaza.

Since the transfer of duties, WHO monitoring indicates a growing shortage of drug items at the CDS in the Gaza Strip; by mid-August, 48 (11.5%) drug items out of the 416 most used essential drug list in the oPt were at zero level. This number increased to 63 (15%) by mid-September and reached 94 (22.6%) at the beginning of October. Another 48 drug items were at a stock level of 1-3 months by mid-September. WHO is concerned that this trend will continue if the MoH in Ramallah continues to face difficulties in the coordination process. In September, patients demonstrated outside the CDS in Gaza, requesting the immediate delivery of essential drugs, such as for cancer treatment and hemodialysis. WHO facilitated the entry of one shipment of urgently needed drugs into Gaza on 25 September. The shipment contained essential drugs for: chemotherapy for cancer patients; hemodialyses for renal failure patients and hormonal therapy for patients with diabetes insipidus.

In the Gaza Strip, the number of medical supplies at zero level reached 128 (21.4%) items out of the 596 essential medical supplies. In the West Bank, the number reached 120 (20%).

Humanitarian Funding

Preparations for the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) 2009

To initiate the 2009 CAP process, five district level workshops were conducted, including in Gaza, in order to identify the most pressing humanitarian needs in the oPt for the coming year. Following these workshops, a two-day



national level workshop was held in Ramallah, attended by approximately 140 members of the humanitarian community, including international and local NGOs, UN agencies, representatives of the PA and donors.

The most likely scenario identified for 2009 is that there will be little or no improvement in the humanitarian situation despite the positive developmental initiatives taken by the PA through the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP), and the donor pledges at the Paris conference in December 2007. Close coordination with the PA was undertaken to ensure the complementarity of the CAP with the PRDP, and to avoid overlap.

CAP 2009 will target vulnerable groups mainly in Gaza but also those identified in the West Bank especially Area C communities, the poorest, and those affected by the Barrier including East Jerusalem. Response will have a strong focus on protection including access, and will also include the sectors of cash assistance, food security, water and sanitation, health, agriculture and education. Enhancing monitoring and reporting on the humanitarian situation and the corresponding assistance will be a main goal of the CAP 2009. The 2008 CAP is currently 64% funded, which places the oPt above the global average (59%) of CAP funding in 2008⁸.

Humanitarian Emergency Response Fund (HERF) response to drought in the oPt

A wave of prolonged frost in the winter and drought during the summer caused severe losses for farmers and herders in the oPt. The total rainfall last winter reached only 55% and 65% of the annual average in the southern and northern West Bank respectively, affecting mainly crops and grazing areas. This was compounded by the ongoing scarcity of water in the oPt. In response to the weather crisis, agencies, including NGOs, Water and Sanitation sector members, and OCHA conducted an assessment to identify gaps not covered by already existing projects. Subsequently, six NGOs submitted proposals for funding through the HERF, with a total budget of US\$1,031,572. The fund is already depleted and will resume supporting additional emergency projects once replenished.

End Notes

1. OCHA calculations based on PCBS (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics) population figures. 2007.
2. The number of injuries (96) in Ni'lin and Bil'in villages presented in August report covered all injuries in Barrier-related incidents, including anti-Barrier demonstrations and search and arrest campaigns conducted by the IDF.
3. World Bank. Palestinian Economic Prospects: Aid, Access and Reform. September 2008. www.worldbank.org/ps. IMF. Macroeconomic and Fiscal Framework for the West Bank and Gaza: Second review of progress. September 2008.
4. Palestinian Economic Prospects: Aid, Access and Reform, The

World Bank, September. 2008.

5. In July 2008, 2,096 loans were distributed. In comparison, 2,261 loans were distributed in August. 08. MD, UNRWA, 2008.
6. In July 2008, 3,747 MEC loans were distributed. This increased to

The following UN Agencies, local and international NGOs and organisations participate in sector working groups and regularly provide information to the Humanitarian Monitor: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), Al Haq, Badil, Save the Children (UK), Defence for Children International – Palestine Section (DCI-PS), Oxfam GB, Palestine Hydrology Group (PHG), ACF-E, AAA, ACPP, ACAD, and members of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM).

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