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September Overview

Reports released in September indicated that high rates of economic growth were recorded in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip over the course of the first half of 2010, compared with the parallel period in 2009. While these reports are encouraging, other indicators suggest that economic growth has yet to translate into tangible improvements in the lives of many people in the occupied Palestinian territory.



In the Gaza Strip, despite some reactivation of the private sector, between the first and the second quarter of 2010 (the period addressed by the reports), the unemployment rate increased from 39.7 to 44.3 percent of the workforce (relaxed definition), one of the highest rates in the world. Nearly 1.1 million Palestinians continue to rely on food assistance from the UN in order to meet their basic caloric needs. Ongoing restrictions on the import of construction materials and on the export of goods continue to impede the recovery of livelihoods and prevent efforts to address the huge level of housing needs

Israeli settlers from Yitzhar settlement throwing stones at farmers from Burin village harvesting their olives, October 2010. Photo by ISM

generated since the imposition of the blockade; it is estimated that over 68,000 new housing units are needed to meet natural population growth alone, more than ten times the housing needs created by destruction incurred during the 'Cast Lead' offensive.

Little progress has been achieved in the implementation of building projects carried out by international agencies. Since the announcement of the easing of the blockade in June 2010, the Israeli

ISSUES COVERED THIS MONTH

West Bank: Jerusalem clashes result in sharp increase in Palestinian casualties • Demolitions in East Jerusalem and Area C resumed • New Area C school opened; urgent interventions in 26 other schools impeded • Vulnerable communities in Area C affected by water scarcity • Two 'seam zone' communities at high risk of displacement

Gaza Strip: Casualties: civilians continue to bear the brunt of the conflict • Economic reactivation and reconstruction in Gaza remain confined • Electricity crisis continues amidst an increase in fuel imports • Academic year begins amidst severe shortage of classrooms • Update on medical referrals –

Issues across the oPt: Olive harvest about to start amidst concerns over access to land • Movement of humanitarian staff remains constrained • Update on CAP 2010

authorities have approved 17 UNRWA projects (schools and clinics), which constitute only three percent of the agency's construction plan for Gaza; however, approval for three of the projects was recently revoked and none of the remaining has been, so far, able to commence due to delays in the issuance of approvals for the entry of the required materials. Additionally, no progress can be reported regarding access of humanitarian staff to and from Gaza; during September, less than half of the applications submitted on behalf of UN local staff to enter or leave Gaza were approved.

In the Gaza Strip, lack of adequate space forced UNRWA to start the new school year by referring approximately 40,000 eligible children to schools run by Ministry of Education; UNRWA's schools already function on double and triple shifts. In Area C of the West Bank, hundreds of children returned to schools affected by unsafe or unhygienic conditions, or by the threat of demolition, and settler intimidation. A response plan addressing the situation in 26 of these schools, submitted by the humanitarian community to the Israeli authorities in January 2010, is yet to be answered.

Some of the same Area C communities, as well as tens of thousands of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, continue to live under the constant threat of displacement. The Israeli authorities have recently offered two Area C communities (400 people) located in the closed area behind the Barrier, to relocate to the so-called 'Palestinian side' of the Barrier, a move that came in the midst of a continuous deterioration in their access to services due to the Barrier and an increase in the issuance of demolition orders. After a respite that lasted more than a month, demolitions resumed in September, targeting eight livestock-related structures in East Jerusalem and in the Jordan Valley, in areas that have been declared by the Israeli authorities as 'nature reserves.'

Increase in civilian casualties

September also registered a worrying increase in civilian casualties. In East Jerusalem, violent clashes between Palestinian residents and Israeli forces resulted in the death of two Palestinians, including a 15-month-old baby, and the injury of nearly 100 others. This wave of violence was triggered by confrontations in the neighborhood of Silwan between private armed guards, hired by the Israeli Ministry of Housing to protect Israeli settlers, and local residents (unarmed). Tensions in Silwan have increased in recent months, particularly after the publication of a master plan for the neighborhood, which entails the displacement of hundreds of Palestinian residents living in houses without building permits.

In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army killed seven civilians this month, the highest figure since the beginning of 2010, and injured another 14, most of them while herding their flocks or collecting rubble in the restricted area along the perimeter fence. This type of incident has reduced, and in some areas totally eliminated, Palestinian access to 17 percent of the Gaza Strip, including some 35 percent of agricultural land, significantly undermining the livelihoods of tens of thousands.

Positive macro economic indicators, such as those recently reported, should not conceal the fact that for large segments of the Palestinian population, ongoing access restrictions and violence pervade all aspects of daily life, from their own safety to their ability to preserve their homes and livelihoods, as well as to secure enough food for their family and to ensure that their children are provided with minimal levels of education. Alleviating this situation of extreme vulnerability demands compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, including, at minimum, measures to safeguard civilians' lives, a full lifting of the Gaza blockade, the removal of restrictions to land use within Gaza, East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, and a freeze on house demolitions and settlement expansion.

West Bank

Jerusalem clashes result in sharp increase in Palestinian casualties

September 2010 witnessed a sharp increase in Palestinian casualties; three Palestinians were killed in the West Bank in the context of Israeli-Palestinian violence, and 132 others were injured, the largest number of injuries since March 2010. Additionally 11 Israelis, including six Israeli soldiers and policemen, were injured this month by Palestinians.

Two of September's fatalities, as well 71 percent of all injuries (99 Palestinians and 2 Israelis), occurred in East Jerusalem between the 22nd and the 26th of the month, as a result of violent clashes between Palestinian residents and Israeli forces. This wave of violence began in the neighborhood of Silwan in the context of a confrontation between private security guards, hired by the Israeli Ministry of Housing to protect Israeli settlers in the area, and Palestinian residents. In the course of the confrontation, one of the guards shot and killed a 32-year old Palestinian man. This incident triggered protests and clashes in other areas of East Jerusalem. In one such clash, in Al 'Isawiya neighbourhood, the Israeli police fired tear gas canisters at stone-throwing demonstrators, resulting in the death of a 15-month old baby due to gas inhalation. Palestinian injuries during these events included a total of 17 children and

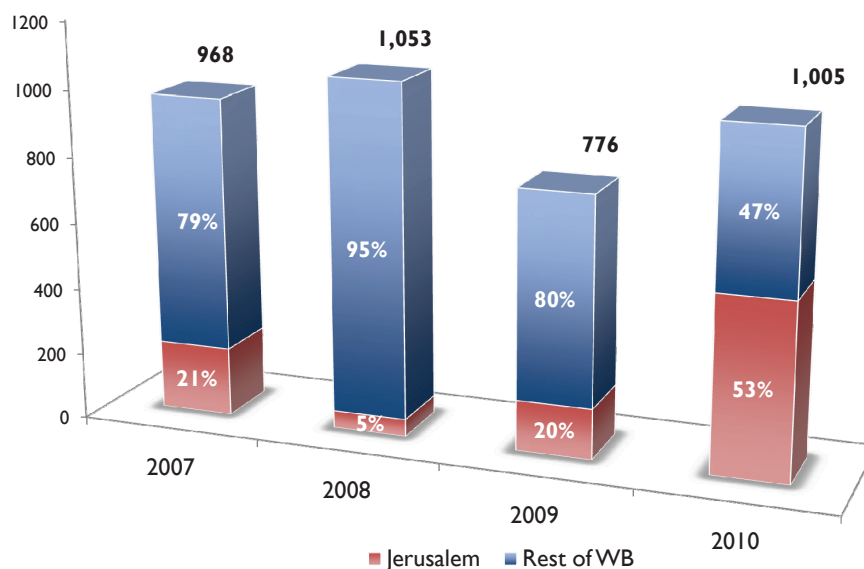
one pregnant woman. Eight Israeli vehicles and an Israeli tourist centre were burnt or sustained damages during the confrontations.

Increasing tensions and resulting clashes in East Jerusalem since the beginning of the year, mostly triggered by Israeli settler activities, account for 53 percent of Palestinian injuries in the West Bank, compared to only 20 percent in the equivalent period of 2009.

The third Palestinian fatality, a 38-year old militant affiliated with Hamas, occurred in the context of a raid by Israeli forces in the Nur Shams Refugee Camp (Tulkarm governorate). The precise circumstances of the killing, however, remain disputed; while the IDF spokesperson claimed that the soldiers opened fire in self-defense, according to Palestinian sources, the man was unarmed and was shot while asleep.¹

The remaining injuries (33 Palestinians and nine Israelis) occurred in a variety of circumstances, including weekly demonstrations against Barrier construction and settlement expansion, IDF search and arrest campaigns, and Israeli settler violence. In the context of the latter, OCHA recorded a total of 21 incidents resulting in Palestinian casualties (three incidents) or affecting Palestinian property (18 incidents). This is consistent with the monthly

**Palestinian injuries in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank
January - September**



FOCUS ON SILWAN

Since the late 1980s, Silwan has become one of the main centers for Israeli settlement activity. Charged with religious and nationalistic significance, Silwan is currently home to around 380 Israeli settlers, who live in properties taken over by various means from their original Palestinian residents. Settler activity in Silwan, as that in the heart of other Palestinian residential areas in East Jerusalem, is the source of ongoing tension and has a high potential for escalated violence. Settlements are surrounded by a security fence, and make use of armed security personnel, armored vehicles and closed circuit cameras. Palestinian residents report harassment and intimidation by settlers and their security guards, intrusion of their privacy and the barricading and closing-off of streets and public areas.² Following similar developments in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron City (H2), over 1,000 homes were vacated by their former Palestinian residents and more than 1,800 commercial businesses closed doors.³

average of incidents recorded since the beginning of the year (22), but is well above last year's monthly average (15). The majority of the incidents came in the context of retaliations for the killing of four settlers and the injury of two others last month by Palestinian armed group members. In one of the incidents, Israeli settlers (reportedly from Shilo and 'Eli settlements) fenced in and began farming 70 dunums of land belonging to families from Qaryut village (Nablus governorate).

Demolitions in East Jerusalem and Area C resumed

The Israeli moratorium on demolitions issued during the month of Ramadan ended in September, after a respite that lasted more than 30 days. During the month, OCHA recorded the demolition of eight structures at two sites in East Jerusalem and in Area C of the West Bank; both sites are located in areas that were declared by the Israeli authorities as 'nature reserves', and the demolitions were reportedly carried out by inspectors of the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) accompanied by the Israeli Border Police.

Seven of the structures demolished were located in the At-Tour neighborhood of East Jerusalem and used for livestock. In the course of the demolition, Israeli bulldozers carried out land leveling, which included the uprooting of 15 trees, and destroyed three water containers and several tons of animal feed. Four Palestinian families were directly affected. Since the beginning of the year, the Israeli authorities

have demolished 31 Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem,⁴ well below the 58 structures demolished in the equivalent period in 2009. The majority of the structures targeted during 2010 were either commercial or livestock-related structures and their demolition significantly undermined the livelihoods of the affected families.

In Area C of the West Bank, the INPA demolished a large animal shack used to house hundreds of cows and sheep in the Bedouin community of Um al Obor in the northern Jordan Valley. The demolition impacted the source of livelihood of the entire community, consisting of 60 people, including 34 children. Since 1967, the Israeli authorities have designated approximately 13 percent of the West Bank as a 'nature reserve', where any land use is prohibited.⁵ In the course of the past two years, the Israeli authorities have invested increased efforts in enforcing restrictions on Palestinian access to, and use of, these areas, including the imposition of fines on Palestinians herding their livestock there.

Also this month, the Israeli Civil Administration issued 60 demolition and stop-work orders against Palestinian structures in Area C due to their lack of building permits, affecting approximately 250 people.

New Area C school opened; urgent interventions in 26 other schools impeded

With the beginning of a new academic year, a new school serving approximately 300 Palestinian

children from the Bedouin community of Arab Al-Jahalin, was opened this month. The school, which was funded by the Government of Germany, in partnership with UNDP, is located in Area C in the outskirts of East Jerusalem. The building of this school occurred after the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) issued a hard-to-obtain building permit.

As a rule, Palestinian construction in Area C is only allowed within the boundaries of the detailed plans issued by the ICA, which together cover less than one percent of Area C, much of which is already built-up. Such plans have been approved for only a minority of Area C villages and these fail to meet the needs of Palestinian communities. Some 70 percent of Area C and is not available for Palestinian planning or permit application as it has been allocated over the years to the Israeli military use or to Israeli settlements.

As a result, thousands of children throughout Area C returned to schools that are functioning under very difficult conditions. Of these schools, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has identified 26, as the most vulnerable and in need of a swift humanitarian response. Poor conditions include unsafe or unhygienic facilities (22 schools); the threat of demolition due to the absence of permits (10 schools), and ongoing intimidation by Israeli settlers (5 schools). An emergency response plan submitted by the HCT to the ICA in January 2010 to address the situation affecting these schools is yet to be answered.⁶

Vulnerable communities in Area C affected by water scarcity

The limited access to water by vulnerable communities located in Area C is of increasing concern. While rainfall levels last winter almost reached the annual average, most traditional water sources are by now entirely depleted, posing a significant challenge for these communities which are not connected to the water network. Access to water by these communities is essential, both for

the fulfillment of their basic household needs and for the maintenance of their herding livelihoods.

The WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) component of the HCT response plan for Area C (see previous section) included 14 projects, targeting a population of approximately 52,000 people who are paying more than 20 NIS per cubic meter for tankered water (compared to 4.5 NIS at source), and/or who have consumption averages of less than 60 liters per person/day (compared to 100 liters recommended by WHO).

Seven of these projects consisted of the installation of water 'filling points', aimed at reducing the cost of tankered water. While in June 2010 the Israeli authorities informed OCHA that six of the filling points had been approved, and only one rejected (Al Hadidiya in the northern Jordan Valley), as of the end of September, only three were operational. Moreover, one of the three, installed next to Tuwaneh village, south-east of Hebron City, is operating at less than a quarter of its expected capacity, leaving most of the planned beneficiaries (about 5,000 residents living in the 'Massafer Yatta' area) unserved. To address the current gap in south Hebron, Action Against Hunger (ACF) is implementing a water-tankering project, funded by the Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF). The project is reaching 660 families who were receiving less than 30 litres per capita per day and who were paying more than 20 NIS per cubic meter.

Two 'seam zone' communities at high risk of displacement

Arab ar-Ramadin al-Janubi (300 people) and 'Arab Abu Farda (100 people) are Bedouin communities, located in Area C, in the closed area between the Barrier and the Green Line south-east of Qalqiliya City. Most of their residents are registered refugees, who were displaced from their homes in the northern Negev area during the 1948 war.

According to the residents, representatives from

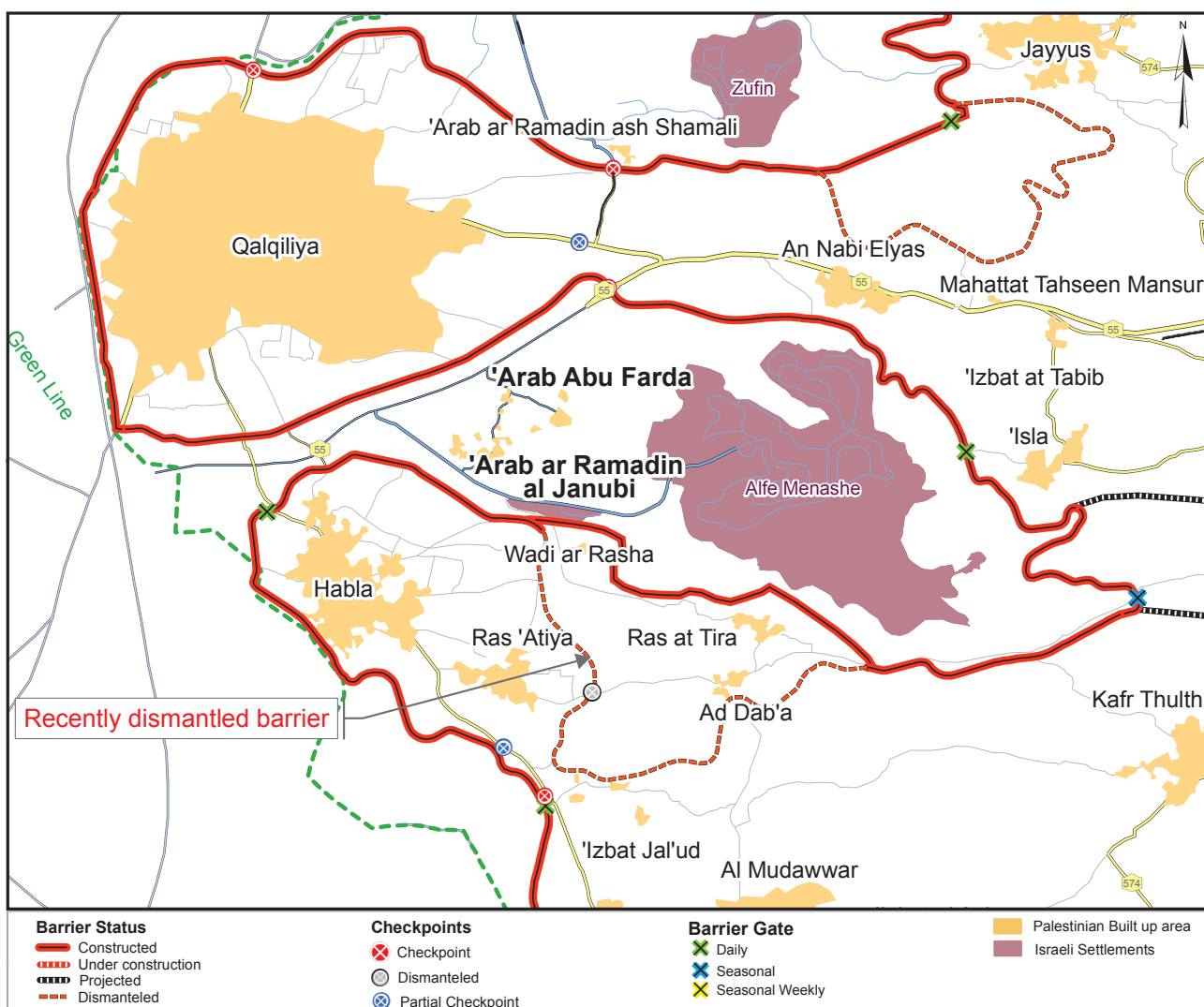
the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) have recently approached them and verbally offered to relocate them to an alternative site on the 'West Bank side' of the Barrier. While the residents refused to discuss such offers, this development raises concerns, as it comes in the midst of continually deteriorating living conditions in these communities, including the increasing risk of demolitions.

Following the construction of the Barrier around the settlement of Alfe Menashe, five Palestinian communities located next to that settlement (including the two mentioned above), were enclosed in an enclave that formed part of a larger area declared 'closed' by the Israeli military (this area is also referred to as the 'seam zone'); Palestinian residents were required to obtain permits to continue living in their homes, while other Palestinians were

required to obtain 'visitor permits' to access the area. As a result, residents lost access to what was left of their herding areas (after the establishment and expansion of the Alfe Menashe settlement) and their livelihoods were further reduced, mostly, to precarious employment in the Alfe Menashe settlement and in Israel.

In May 2010, following a prolonged litigation, the Israeli authorities completed the rerouting of the Barrier around the enclave. As a result, three of the five communities were re-connected with the rest of the West Bank. However, the residents of the two remaining isolated communities (Arab ar-Ramadin al-Janubi and 'Arab Abu Farda) lost access to services previously available in the three communities that had been located within the enclave and are now on the other side of the Barrier (shopping, schools and

Map: Two Palestinian communities isolated by the Barrier in Qalqiliya governorate



basic medical aid). For example, all children must now travel farther and cross a Barrier checkpoint to reach their schools; entry of foodstuffs into the enclave (particularly meat and eggs) is subject to severe restrictions.

Finally, virtually all the structures in these communities (mostly shacks and animal pens) have been gradually issued demolition orders due to their lack of building permits; these orders can

be executed at any moment. In the case of Arab ar- Ramadin al-Janubi, most of the village's land is formally registered under the residents' name in the land registry. In the past years, this community submitted to the ICA two master plans, which, if approved, could have allowed for the issuance of building permits; however both plans were rejected on the grounds that they did not meet the required technical standards.

Gaza Strip

Casualties: civilians continue to bear the brunt of the conflict

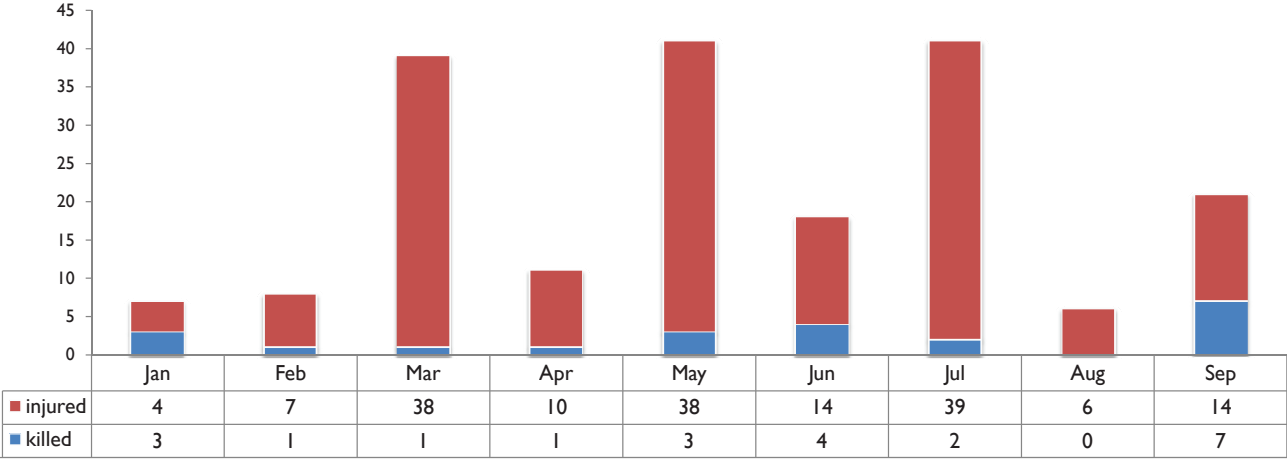
September 2010 witnessed the highest number of Palestinian civilian fatalities since the beginning of the year, with seven civilians killed, in addition to four Palestinian armed group members. Israeli forces also injured 15 Palestinians, 14 of whom were civilians. No Israeli casualties were reported this month in Gaza or southern Israel. Since the beginning of the year Israeli forces have killed 21 Palestinian civilians and injured another 170, which constitutes 40 and 87 percent respectively of all Palestinian fatalities and injuries in Gaza. During this period, one civilian (a foreign national) was killed in southern Israel by rocket fire.

The majority of this month's fatalities (8 of 11) occurred in the restricted area along the fence and off the shore, in the context of access restrictions enforced by the Israeli military.⁷ In one incident, two boys (16 and 17 years old) and a 91 year old man

were hit and killed by tank shells, while herding their flock in an area approximately 500 meters from the fence, next to Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza. 43 goats were also killed. According to an investigation by the Israeli army, Israeli soldiers mistakenly opened fire on the civilians as they suspected that one of the boys was preparing to launch a rocket propelled grenade.⁸

Shooting incidents along the fence also resulted in eight Palestinian injuries (all civilians). Six of these individuals were collecting rubble/scrap metal to be recycled for the construction industry. Some rubble collection sites are located in restricted areas, such as the former settlement area in northern Gaza, the former industrial area next to the Erez crossing, and the former Gaza Airport south of Rafah, bringing consequent risks to this activity. The demand for building supplies to rehabilitate and reconstruct damaged and destroyed buildings, combined with ongoing restrictions on the import of construction

Chart: Civilian casualties in Gaza during 2010 (direct conflict)



materials as part of the blockade, has led to the rise of a lucrative but dangerous market based on recovering and recycling building materials.

Access restrictions are also enforced in fishing areas beyond three nautical miles of the shore. In one incident, Israeli naval forces opened “warning fire” at Palestinian boats off the Beit Lahiya coast, killing a 22 year old fisherman. According to Al Mezan Human Rights Centre, the boats were fishing two nautical miles from the shore. To date in 2010, three fishermen have been killed and five others have been injured in similar incidents.

The remaining three fatalities were tunnel workers killed during Israeli airstrikes targeting the tunnels operating under the border with Egypt. While the easing of import restrictions into Gaza since June 2010 has triggered a sharp decline in the level of activity through these tunnels, it is estimated that up to 300 out of 1,000 alleged existing tunnels are still functional, although not all operate at the same time.

Palestinian armed factions launched a number of rockets/mortars at southern Israel, some dropping short, however no casualties or damage was reported on either side.

Economic reactivation and reconstruction in Gaza remain confined

The sweeping restrictions on the import of most construction materials and on the export of goods, imposed by the Israeli authorities in the context of the blockade over Gaza, continue to impede economic recovery and improvement in the livelihoods of the population. These restrictions have remained in place despite the easing of restrictions on the import of other goods, following an Israeli announcement on 20 June.

While this easing has led to a significant increase in the volume of imports compared with recent times, imports are still only at one third of pre-

blockade volumes. Imports in September were 30 percent lower than those seen in August (3,569 vs. 5,177 truckloads), partially due to the more limited opening of the crossings due to the Jewish and Muslim holidays. This decline may have also been affected by the large influx of truckloads immediately after the 20 June announcement, including those carrying goods that were stored in the West Bank and Israel for many months awaiting clearance, as well as market saturation of certain goods. Foodstuffs have continued to make up the majority of imported items (60 percent).

The entry of raw materials for some local industries since the easing of restrictions has allowed the resumption of operations in some industrial establishments, particularly in the areas of garment manufacturing, furniture and food processing. The Palestine Trade Centre (Paltrade) estimates that during June-July 2010, 1,365 industrial establishments were operational (at levels varying between 20 to 60 percent of their full capacity), compared to 117 in 2008. These represent 35 percent of the industries that were active prior to the imposition of the blockade (3,900 establishments).⁹

By contrast almost no improvement was observed in the construction sector, which before the blockade employed approximately 50,000 people, and now only employs around 1,500.¹⁰ The main reason is that under the new import regime, most construction materials are defined as ‘dual-use’ items only permitted for projects supervised by international organizations. This restriction is one of the most significant factors impeding improvement in employment rates. It also means that it is impossible to address the significant housing needs in Gaza.

Reports by the World Bank and the IMF issued during September indicate that relatively high levels of economic growth were recorded in the Gaza Strip during the first half of 2010 compared to the same period of 2009.¹¹ This growth has been attributed to the large inflow of humanitarian assistance and the thriving tunnel operations, along

with some easing of the Israeli restrictions prior to the latest announcement (of 20th June). However, the increased levels of economic activity are barely reflected in unemployment levels, one of the key determinants of poverty and food insecurity. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, between the first and the second quarter of 2010, the unemployment rate (relaxed definition) increased from 39.7 to 44.3 percent, which is one of the highest rates in the world.

Ban on building materials impedes progress on UN building projects

Before any construction project carried out by an international organization can be implemented, it must pass three layers of Israeli authority approval: at the policy level (approval 'in principle'), at the technical level (detailed schedule), as well as approval for each individual truckload. The Israeli authorities provide these approvals on condition that a monitoring system is set up by the implementing agency that guarantees that the imported materials are in fact used for the stated purpose.

Since the announcement of the easing in June to the end of September, 17 UNRWA projects involving the construction of schools and clinics, have passed the first two layers of approval. The value of these projects is approximately USD 20 million, which is only 3 percent of the total workplan submitted by UNRWA to the Israeli authorities. Since their approval, only 2 percent of the controlled building materials needed for these projects have passed

the third layer of approval and entered Gaza (29 truckloads during September), mainly due to the limited capacity of the crossings. Another major obstacle impeding the smooth transfer of materials for approved projects is the lack of transparency of the clearance process, as the process is verbal and there is room for conflicting interpretations.

Imports of WASH materials increase but remain controlled

During September, a total of 81 truckloads carrying WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) related materials entered Gaza, a significant increase compared to a monthly average of about 20 in the first half of 2010. Despite this increase, no progress could be achieved in the implementation of dozens of small and medium sized pending WASH projects throughout Gaza, as the majority of the imports (74 truckloads) consisted of construction and other materials for only two large-scale sewage treatment projects funded by the World Bank and the Government of Germany. Despite the June 2010 announcement, there is little evidence of changes in the procedures required for the import of WASH materials. These have remained similar to those implemented for building projects (see above), regardless of their definition as 'dual-use' or non-controlled items.

Electricity crisis continues amidst an increase in fuel imports

During September, a total of 8.2 million litres

IMPORT OF CAPITAL GOODS REMAINS HEAVILY CONTROLLED

According to the Israeli announcement of 20 June, the import of goods not defined as 'dual-use' items will be allowed without restrictions (subject only to the crossings' capacity). In practice, while a variety of previously banned machines and equipment have been allowed into the Gaza Strip, their entry has been subject to a number of Israeli clearance procedures. While the processing of an import request for industrial machinery may take 2 to 3 weeks, a request for telecommunications equipment and for chemical materials (not defined as a 'dual-use' items) may take over 6 weeks. Even though most requests have so far been approved, they have resulted in prolonged delays, unpredictability and larger expenses (e.g. storage). In fact, since the announcement of the easing, only consumer goods can be imported to Gaza without prior clearance.

of industrial fuel needed to operate the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) entered Gaza. This constitutes a significant increase compared to August (5.5 million litres) and is the highest figure recorded since the beginning of 2010. However, levels still remain lower than average amounts of fuel purchased prior to December 2009 (9.5 million litres) when a funding crisis emerged, and levels are far below what is needed to operate the plant at full capacity (13 million litres). The Gaza and Ramallah authorities have begun implementing a joint mechanism to collect electricity bill fees, and this has allowed increased amounts of fuel to be purchased in this period. Under this mechanism, 170 NIS are automatically deducted from the salaries of Gaza and Ramallah governmental staff for their electricity consumption.

More fuel has meant that the GPP has been able to operate two of its turbines (instead of one) during most of the month, therefore reducing the scheduled outages from 8-12 to 4-6 hours a day on average. However, during the last days of the month, the GPP was again forced to turn off one of the turbines due to a fuel shortage caused by funding issues, resulting in longer power cuts.

The Palestinian Energy and Natural Resource Authority reported that a request to purchase additional 30-50 MWs of electricity from Israeli Electricity Corporation has yet to be approved by the Israeli government.

The electricity crisis throughout the Gaza Strip continues to affect daily life in Gaza, particularly as regards the provision of essential basic services. Electricity cut-offs significantly impair water supply to households, and this means that 20 percent of Gaza's population only receive running water once every five days (6-8 hrs), while 50 percent have water once every 4 days (6 hrs), and 30 percent have water only every two days (6-8 hrs). Service providers continue to rely extensively on backup generators and other alternative devices, which are unreliable as there as spare parts are not always available. Many Gazan households are forced to use

Latest Developments

During October, the Israeli government approved the entry of two electricity transformers and a transformer bay that will be installed at the GPP in order to restore the lost power transforming capacity incurred after the 2006 Israeli attack on the GPP. Installing these transformers will increase electricity generation capacity to nearly 120 MWs.

dangerous portable generators. According to local sources, since the beginning of 2010 approximately 30 people have been killed and about 40 injured in generator-related accidents.

Academic year begins amidst severe shortage of classrooms

As a new school year began, overcrowding remains one of the major challenges for the education sector in Gaza: 79 percent of government schools and over 90 percent of UNRWA schools are running double shifts and the average classroom density stands at 38 students. Shortage of construction materials due to the ongoing blockade imposed by Israel since June 2007 has significantly exacerbated this problem.

While UNRWA has recently rented the facilities of ten governmental schools to operate in additional shifts, an estimated 40,000 children eligible to enroll in UNRWA schools could not be enrolled due to a shortage of classrooms. These children were therefore referred to Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) schools, administered by the Gaza authorities, meaning that they are now under an additional burden. Even though the MoEHE hired new teachers to meet the increasing number of students, a shortage of qualified teachers in Arabic, mathematics, and English is reported.

The MoEHE estimates that it needs 130 new schools to address the current and expected number of students in the coming few years, while UNRWA assessed that it needs at least 100 new schools in the coming years. While in July 2010 the Israeli authorities approved in principle the construction of 8 new schools by UNRWA, detailed approval for the import of the required materials was given

only at the end of this month, and the actual entry of materials and construction is expected to start only in October. If construction proceeds smoothly the schools should be ready for the next academic year.

Update on medical referrals

In September, the Referral Abroad Department (RAD) in Gaza approved 1,248 applications by Gazan patients to be referred to medical facilities in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Israel, Jordan and Egypt. For 309 of the approved applications, necessary treatment was available in the Gaza Strip in either NGO or private hospitals, while the remaining 939 patients had to leave Gaza to be treated in hospitals in Egypt (44.1 percent), East Jerusalem (22.6 percent), Israel (21.9 percent), the West Bank (10.5 percent) and Jordan (0.9 percent). The proportion of referrals to Egypt has increased

since last June, due to the permanent opening of the Rafah border crossing for humanitarian cases, following the Gaza flotilla incident on 31 May.

Patients referred elsewhere outside the Gaza Strip need to submit their applications to the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) for the issuance of permits to leave Gaza through the Erez crossing. Due to the numerous Israeli holidays, in September the Israeli DCL only processed 626 applications for permits to exit Gaza, approximately one third lower than in the previous three months. Of these applications, 85 percent (532) were approved - the highest rate of approvals since the beginning of the year- 13 percent (80) were delayed and two percent (14) were denied. Cardiovascular diseases, oncology, ophthalmology, orthopedics and neurosurgery were the main causes for referrals, accounting for almost half of all cases.

Issues across the oPt

Olive harvest about to start amidst concerns over access to land

The olive harvest season throughout the oPt officially starts in the second week of October. The olive is the symbol of Palestinian society and its connection to the land. Some 45 percent of agricultural land in the oPt (930,000 dunums) is planted with an estimated 10 million olive trees, making 15-19 percent of the agricultural output and providing a significant source of income for around 71,000 families. The vast majority of the olive yield (up to 95 percent) is used for olive oil, while the rest is used for pickles, table olives and soap. Olive picking is done manually and it usually involves extended families, with more than half of the Palestinian population participating.

The olive industry follows a two-year cycle, with sharp fluctuations between alternative seasons. The yield of 'peak season' can reach up to 36,000 metric tons of olive oil while an 'off seasons' can produce as little as 6,000 metric tons. Even though 2010 is a

'peak season' of the cycle, due to adverse climatic conditions the expected yield is estimated at only 18,000 metric tons. Other factors, including limited access and inadequate protection to farmers and their property, threat to undermine the olive output of vulnerable communities throughout the oPt:

Areas in the vicinity of Israeli settlements

In the West Bank, access to groves located within or in the vicinity of some Israeli settlements raises particular concern due to the existence of physical barriers and/or settler violence and intimidation. Following a landmark judgment by the Israeli High Court of Justice in 2006, the Israeli army began implementing a number of measures to secure Palestinian access to such areas.

Among those measures is the designation of specific periods of times when following 'prior coordination', farmers are allowed to pick their olives under the protection of the Israeli forces. In

2009, , this mechanism was implemented on areas located in the vicinity of 57 settlements, affecting access to farmers from over 100 Palestinian communities. This regime is also implemented in cases where Palestinian land has been fenced in by Israeli settlers without any official authorization.

While these measures have generally reduced the number of attacks on farmers while soldiers are present, they have had little impact on the number of attacks on Palestinian agricultural property at other times. During the 2009 olive season, for example, OCHA documented 18 attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers that resulted in property damage or other losses. Most of these incidents involved the uprooting of or setting fire to olive trees, and the stealing of olive produce.

Moreover, information produced by Israeli NGOs indicates that despite the filing of official complaints with the Israeli police, in most cases no one is held accountable for these attacks. According to *Yesh Din*, of the 27 complaints involving vandalism against Palestinian trees followed up by the organization prior to the 2009 harvest season (January and September), 26 were closed without indictment and one is still under investigation. As pointed out by a number of Israeli official commissions, this lack of adequate law enforcement on Israeli settlers is a key factor contributing to persistent settler violence.

Areas isolated by the Barrier

Since 2003, Palestinian farmers in the northern West Bank have been required to apply for visitor permits to access their olive groves in the area between the Barrier and the Green Line (the so called “Seam Zone”). In 2009, this measure was extended to most areas in the central and southern West Bank.

While a larger number of permits are approved each year on the eve of the olive season, many applications are still rejected, mainly due to ‘security reasons’ or insufficient proof of ‘connection to the land’. Moreover, many more farmers choose not to apply for permits, often as a matter of principle.

In the Hebron district, for example, while nearly 80 percent of applicants received permits (370 out of 470) to cross Khirbet Al Dier gate during the 2009 olive harvest, the overall number of farmers dropped dramatically compared to the previous year before the permit regime was instigated and an estimated 1,500 farmers were able to access their olive groves.¹²

Most of the crossings along the Barrier (46 out of a total of 77) are only open during the olive harvest period and only for a limited amount of time during those days. As a result, essential activities such as ploughing, pruning, fertilizing and pest and weed management cannot be carried out on a regular basis affecting the quality and quantity of the yield.

Areas along Gaza’s perimeter fence

Over the past ten years, the Israeli military has gradually expanded restrictions on access to farmland on the Gaza side of the 1949 ‘Green Line’. Since late 2008, Palestinians have been totally or partially prevented from accessing land located up to 1,000-1,500 meters from the Green Line (depending on the specific area). Access restrictions are primarily enforced by opening live fire on people entering the restricted areas, as well the leveling of the land and the uprooting of trees located there. It is estimated that during the ‘Cast Lead’ offensive approximately 155,000 olive trees were destroyed.¹³ Every year some 5,000 metric tons of potential oil yield are lost as a result of the leveling of and/or lack of access to 7,300 dunums of land along the perimeter fence.¹⁴

Additionally, farmers throughout the Gaza Strip have been affected by import restrictions imposed by Israel in the context of the blockade since June 2007, primarily restrictions on the import of olive seedlings. While, these restrictions have been eased recently, seedlings planted during the past three years were mainly locally produced and of lower quality.¹⁵

Movement of humanitarian staff remains constrained

Despite a recent commitment by the Israeli authorities to facilitate the access of humanitarian staff to and from Gaza as part of the general easing of the blockade, no improvement has been observed, particularly in regard to national staff. During September, UN Agencies submitted 38 requests for national staff members to enter/exit the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing, of which only 47 percent are so far approved. 5 percent of the requests were denied and the remaining are pending. In comparison, the average rate of approval for similar applications during the first six months of 2010, prior to the announcement on the easing of the blockade, was 76 percent.

In the West Bank, UN staff reported 43 access incidents (delays or denied access) at Israeli checkpoints during the month of September, roughly the same as the monthly average of incidents since the beginning of 2010. Over half of these incidents occurred at checkpoints controlling access to East Jerusalem, following demands for internal searches of UN vehicles, in violation of the UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities.

Future access to East Jerusalem is of growing concern. The Israeli authorities have recently confirmed that in the course of 2011, the Crossing Points Administration (CPA) of the Ministry of Defense will begin assuming control of the Barrier checkpoints controlling access to and from East Jerusalem. These checkpoints are currently managed

by the IDF and the Israeli Police. As has occurred at other checkpoints managed by the CPA, it is expected that UN national staff will be required to leave their vehicles, undergo a body search and walk through the checkpoint, and that CPA personnel will demand that UN vehicles are searched (unless the driver is an international staff member holding an Ministry of Foreign Affairs card). If implemented, this change will severely undermine the capacity of humanitarian agencies to continue operating in and/or from East Jerusalem.

Update on CAP 2010

Following the CAP 2010 mid year review, the overall request was reduced from US\$665 million to USD 603 million. As of 13 October 2010, funding levels stand at USD308.9 million or 51 percent of the total appeal. UN agencies have obtained 52.3 percent of their appeals while NGOs have received only 30.4 percent. Sectors with low levels of funding received to date include: Agriculture (19 percent), Cash for Work and Cash Assistance (29 percent), Education (26 percent), and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (32 percent).

In the Gaza Strip, for example, only three out of 21 agriculture projects have been funded to date. Most of the unfunded projects are small-scale NGO projects. While many of them address the root causes of food insecurity and could have long-lasting impact on the livelihoods of poor households, it seems that donors have preference for large-scale projects.

End Notes

In recent months, the Food Security, Agriculture and Cash for Work and Work Assistance sectors have developed a common food security framework, and it is expected that this initiative will increase overall funding for the agriculture sector.

1. Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Press release, 19 September 2010.
2. ACRI, *Unsafe Space*, September 2010.
3. B'Tselem and ACRI, *Ghost Town: Israel's Separation Policy and Forced Eviction of Palestinians from the Center of Hebron*, May 2007.
4. At least six additional structures were demolished in 2010 by their owners, displacing 22 people.
5. While most of these areas fall within Area C, they also include land formally defined as Area B in the eastern Bethlehem governorate that was intended to be handed over to the Palestinian Authority, under the Wye River Memorandum of 1998.
6. See OCHA, *Area C Humanitarian Response Plan Fact Sheet*, September 2010.
7. See, OCHA, *Between the Fence and the Hard Place: The humanitarian impact of Israeli-imposed restrictions on access to land and sea in the Gaza Strip*, August 2010.
8. See, BBC, *Israeli army admits three killed Gazans were civilians*, 14 September 2010.
9. Palestine Trade Center, *Gaza Crossings Bi-Monthly Monitoring Report*, June-July 2010.
10. Ibid.
11. Both reports were submitted to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. According to the IMF, real GDP growth in the first half of 2010, compared to the first half of 2009, is estimated at 16 percent for Gaza.
12. OCHA, *The Humanitarian Monitor*, December 2010.
13. Ministry of Agriculture in Gaza.
14. OCHA and WFP, "Between the Fence and a Hard Place", August 2010.
15. Information from FAO.

CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

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), Campaign for the Right to Enter, Action Against Hunger (ACF),

MORE INFORMATION: Yeheskel Lein, lein@un.org, +972 (0)2 5829962