



## OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

P.O. Box 38712, East Jerusalem, Phone: (+972) 2-582 9962 / 582 5853, Fax: (+972) 2-582 5841 [ochaopt@un.org](mailto:ochaopt@un.org), [www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)

## Protection of Civilians Weekly Report No. 271

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### Military activities affecting civilians

In the Gaza Strip, there were no Palestinian or Israeli casualties due to direct-conflict incidents. For the first time since the ceasefire began on 19 June, two IDF bulldozers guarded by two tanks entered approximately 200 metres into the Gaza Strip east of Khan Younis, detonated an explosive device and withdrew. IDF patrol boats continue to fire at Palestinian fishing boats at sea, forcing them to return to shore—this week, two incidents of this sort occurred. In addition, two rockets were fired by Palestinian militants towards southern Israel, both of which landed in Gaza not causing injuries or damage.

In the West Bank, there was a significant decrease in IDF search operations (79 compared to 120 last week) and a minor decrease in the number of reported arrests/detentions of Palestinians (70 compared to 85 last week). However, civilian casualties continued to fall. A 17-year-old boy died of wounds sustained when he was shot by the IDF in Ni'lin. The incident occurred when large numbers of Palestinians were trying to enter Ni'lin to participate in the funeral of a 10-year-old boy killed by the Border Police the day before. Twenty unarmed civilians, including six children were also injured by the IDF during military operations and anti-Barrier demonstrations in Ni'lin.

The Israeli Border Police also entered the Jerusalem National Theatre (Al Hakawati), where various schools were organising a celebration of the high school matriculation exams (*Tawjih*). Claiming that the celebration is under the auspices of the Palestinian Authority, which is not authorized by the Israeli authorities to operate in East Jerusalem, the Border Police stopped participants from entering the hall, forced everybody out and cancelled the event.

### Demolitions

In East Jerusalem, the IDF demolished one uninhabited structure due to the lack of building permit and another 100-metres<sup>2</sup> cement floor in the Ras al 'Amud neighbourhood that was constructed to prevent the accumulation of rain water or dust in front of a house located at the bottom of a valley. In addition, the Israeli civil administration handed over two demolition orders against two houses (10 people) in the village of 'Arab ar Ramadin al Janubi, which is located in Area "C" inside the Alfe Menashe settlement enclave (Qalqiliya). Following the construction of the Barrier, the IDF had declared

the village a closed military zone, forcing residents to obtain permits to continue living in their homes.

### Inter-factional fighting: highest weekly casualty toll since mid-June 2007

#### Gaza Strip

On 2 August, armed clashes erupted between the de-facto Hamas government's security forces and the Fatah-affiliated Hillis family in the Shuja'iya quarter of Gaza City, following the family's refusal to hand over individuals suspected of perpetrating the Gaza beach bombing on 25 July. The clashes, which involved the firing of mortar shells, RPGs and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in civilian areas, culminated in the death of two Hamas security officers and eleven armed men and the injury of 103 others, including 20 officers, 17 children and six women. This constitutes the highest weekly casualty toll due to factional violence since the Hamas take-over in mid-June 2007. Five houses were also burnt down, displacing more than 25 people. The police declared the "Hillis neighbourhood" a closed military zone, hindering civilian access to and from the area for three days (2–4 August).

A total of 188 men and children of the Hillis family fled towards the Nahal Oz Crossing. The IDF fired warning shots to control the approaching crowd but later allowed the people to reach the crossing. At the crossing, the IDF shackled their hands and blindfolded them, forced them to undress down to their underclothes and kept them undressed for a prolonged period of time. This treatment was filmed and broadcasted worldwide. Of those who fled, 92 Palestinians were transferred to the West Bank, 60 were returned to Gaza and 36 were either hospitalised or put in custody.

Detentions linked to the Gaza beach explosion continued during the reporting period throughout the Strip. More than 230 persons were detained by the Gaza police, primarily those affiliated with Fatah and the Hillis family. Raids on NGOs and CBOs have likewise continued; since 26 June, more than 185 institutions have been raided and closed down and only 23 have re-opened or resumed work. The Gaza police also closed down the PFLP-affiliated Al Sha'b radio station.

#### West Bank

In the West Bank, Palestinian security forces carried out 17 search operations and 75 arrests/detentions, compared to last week's ten search operations and 128 arrests/detentions. Almost all of the arrests took place in the

northern West Bank (72) and include 49 persons allegedly affiliated with Hamas. Additionally, Palestinian security forces closed down Al Anwar Cultural Centre in Dura for one year due to its affiliation with Hamas (Hebron). In the Ramallah governorate, Bir Zeit University was closed for one day following Fatah-Hamas clashes among the students. On another front, tensions between Palestinian security forces and Hizb Al Tahrir (Liberation Party) were reported throughout the West Bank, leading to the arrest of 26 party members and the cancellation or interruption of five demonstrations organised by the party to commemorate the collapse of the Khalifate and the Ottoman Empire.

### Settlers' violence: Dramatic increase in casualties

During the reporting period, Israeli settlers injured twenty Palestinians, including five children and five women. This is the highest weekly total of Palestinians injured by Israeli settlers recorded by OCHA since January 2005 and brings up the number of Palestinian injured by Israeli settlers in 2008 to more than 80 injuries, including 13 children. The large number of casualties this week was due to the continuous attacks by settlers from Tel Rumeida, Al Rajabi House and Kiryat Arba settlements against Palestinian houses and property in the H2 area of Hebron City, particularly in the Wadi Al Nasara and Tel Rumeida areas. These attacks have resulted in the majority of casualties (16 out of 20) and the damage of 15 vehicles.

Also this week, Israeli settlers, reportedly from Havat Gil'ad outpost, burnt down 50 dunums of olive trees belonging to farmers from Immatin (Qalqiliya). In another incident, Israeli settlers tried to establish an outpost in Dahiyat Al Salam neighbourhood of Shu'fat but were evacuated by the IDF (Jerusalem).

### Five killed and eight injured in family feuds

In two separate incidents this week, three people were killed and three injured during family feuds in the Jerusalem and Bethlehem governorates. In one incident, three houses belonging to the family of the perpetrator of the killing were set on fire in Al Fureidis village, displacing more than 50 people (Bethlehem). In the Gaza Strip, two people were killed and five others injured due to family feuds. Overall in 2008, 16 Palestinians have been killed and 85 have been injured due to family feuds, the vast majority of whom (13 deaths and 69 injuries) have occurred in the Gaza Strip.

### Access-related incidents

A total of 58 flying checkpoints were reported this week, a 33% decrease compared to last week. The majority of these checkpoints were deployed in the Qalqiliya and Hebron governorates (11 and 17, respectively). In addition, delays and long queues were reported on major roads controlling access to Qalqiliya City (Qalqiliya North and DCO), Nablus City (Huwwara and Beit Iba), the northern West Bank (Tappuah), the northern Jordan Valley (Tayasir and Hamra), Jerusalem (Qalandiya, Rafat and Jaba'), Ramallah (Jaba'), and the central and southern West Bank (Jericho DC). In Ni'lin, the IDF entirely closed the village's entrance for two hours on 3 August and prevented anyone who is not a resident of Ni'lin from entering for the next 12 hours.

Twenty-eight Palestinian medical patients who had received treatment in Egypt were allowed to return to Gaza via the Rafah Crossing, which has remained officially closed for more than a year since 9 June 2007.

Five Palestinians were also killed this week and 30 others were injured due to the collapse of tunnels along the Gaza-Egypt border. Since the beginning of the year, 17 have been killed and 54 injured in those circumstances. The tunnels, which are generally poorly constructed, have been increasingly used since the closure of the border in June 2007 to transport commercial goods, alongside arms and explosives. Meanwhile, Egyptian security forces continue to locate and destroy constructed tunnels and reportedly destroyed eight tunnels during the reporting period.

#### **Protection of Civilians Weekly Briefing Notes – New Format**

*Following the change in the format of this report since 9 July 2008, please be informed that detailed information on casualties, house demolitions, settler incidents, curfew, flying checkpoints, search and arrest operations, rockets, mortars and airstrikes, which appeared in the previous format, will be gradually made available in a searchable format on OCHA's website as of 15 August 2008.*