



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

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Health and Education strikes in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank: Humanitarian concern

Health Strike - On 29 August, the Health Workers' Union in Ramallah called for a strike in the Gaza Strip (from 30 August to 2nd September) in protest of the decision taken by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza to dismiss approximately forty employees. Of eight MoH hospitals surveyed, an estimated 48 percent of health personnel are on strike, of which 31 percent are medical doctors, 25 percent nurses. In response, the MoH in Gaza has threatened striking MoH staff with closure of their private clinics, pharmacies, laboratories, and X-ray facilities. Three MoH hospitals declared emergency status and suspended all non-emergency health service, while another seven maintained full capacity despite the strike. Twelve of 56 primary health care facilities were reportedly closed due to the strike, and the remaining open facilities have limited their services to neonatal care and non-communicable disease treatment. Antenatal, family planning, preventive medicine and epidemiology clinics are closed.

Education Strike - Approximately fifty percent of PA schools teachers in Gaza were on strike for the second consecutive week, with student attendance reported at 80 – 98 percent. Civil employee attendance at the Ministry of Education was estimated to be 60 percent. Hamas authorities continued to recruit new teachers as replacement for those on strike. On 1 September, approximately 80% of the administrative staff of Al Aqsa University joined the strike. On 2 September, nine West Bank and two Gaza universities implemented a one-day strike, called for by the General Union of University Employees, demanding pay increases to compensate for rising inflation.

Gaza: 50% Decline in Imports of Commodities; Increase in Diesel imports

The daily number of imported truckloads continued to decline, now reaching less than half the amount in the last two weeks of July (126 vs. 295). The flow of construction materials has also sharply declined, with only 33 truckloads of cement arriving compared to 65 of the previous week.

During the reporting period, there was an increase in the amount diesel supplies allowed into Gaza – accounting for 73% of weekly diesel requirements.

For all other types of fuel supplies, there was no improvement from the previous weeks' shortage rates (17% of petrol, 68% of cooking gas and 87% of industrial gas for power plant daily needs were met, respectively). Petrol fuel remained unavailable in the

open markets and authorities in Gaza continued to enforce the coupon rationing system.

During the month of August, due to shortage of fuel, the Gaza power plant was able to produce an output of 60-65MW—well below its 80MW full capacity. Electricity is cut twice a week for a total average of 16 hours in most of the Gaza Strip. Rafah Governorate receives its electricity supply from Egypt; however, because of the low voltage produced, it depends largely on electricity generators.

Over 3,300 Gazans cross Rafah: Over 1,000 Returned by Egypt

On 30 August, Egypt opened the Rafah crossing for two days, allowing for approximately 4400 people to cross in both directions. For unclear reasons, 1,140 were not allowed to enter Egypt. Among those who left Gaza, 400 are Palestinian patients, as well as more than 100 students with valid documents to study abroad, Egyptian citizens and foreigners. Though Rafah crossing has been closed since 9 June 2007, it has exceptionally opened on several occasions.

Military activities affecting civilians

Search and arrest operations in the West Bank

In the West Bank, 82 IDF search operations and 41 arrests/detentions of Palestinians were reported. The highest number of search operations took place in the Qalqiliya governorate (24 searches). The highest number of detentions took place in Nablus Hebron and Qalqiliya (11, 9 and 5, respectively). PA security forces in the West Bank conducted eleven search operations, and thirty PA-enforced detentions were reported. All PA led search and arrest operations took place in the northern governorates of the West Bank. The highest number of PA led searches also took place in the Qalqiliya governorate (five search operations), and the governorates with the most PA enforced detentions were also Nablus and Qalqiliya (nine and thirteen detentions, respectively).

During an IDF search operation in Ni'lin village, a 40-year old Palestinian man was critically injured when shot with four rubber-coated metal bullets at close range, three of which hit his face and required the removal of one eye. According to eye witnesses, he was shot when Israeli forces stormed his brother's house to arrest the son. The injured man, who suffers from a speech disorder, tried with difficulty to tell the Israeli forces to wait and not enter the house; According to the Israeli forces, the man attempted to take one of the soldiers' firearms; however, the

casualty's family, as well as other eye witnesses, denied this claim.

Previously unreported

On 24 August, owing an agreement between Israel and the PA, 198 Palestinian prisoners from all over West Bank were released from Israeli jails.

Gaza fishing boats attacked

Off the coast of Gaza, on 29 August, Israeli naval patrol boats pursued Palestinian fishing boats and arrested nine fishermen west of Beit Lahia. According to Al Mezan Centre, the intercepted boats were floating beyond Gaza's territorial waters towards Israel. The fishermen on board were reportedly taken for questioning in Israel. They were later sent back to Gaza via the Erez crossing. On 1 September, two Palestinian fishermen were injured when IDF patrol boats fired one grenade targeting Palestinian fishing boats west of Beit Lahia. (North Gaza). The following day, six Palestinian fishermen including four children were arrested at sea—west of Beit Lahia. The four children were later released. Apart from these incidents, by and large, since 19 June the truce between Israel and Hamas is holding.

Anti-Barrier Demonstrations

Five anti-Barrier demonstrations took place this week at Ni'lin village (Ramallah). On 28 August, eleven demonstrators, including eight Palestinian children and three Palestinian male civilians) were injured by rubber-coated metal bullets. Six of these injuries were above the chest, and in one case, the rubber-coated metal bullet penetrated the chest and lodged near the heart, causing internal bleeding. One international demonstrator suffered asphyxia. Seven Israeli soldiers sustained injuries from stoning. A family not participating in the demonstration, including nine children and a 22 year old pregnant woman, experienced tear-gas induced asphyxia and had to be treated at the local clinic. In the morning hours immediately preceding the demonstration, Israeli forces stormed the village in an attempt to prevent the planned demonstration. They shot shock grenades and tear gas canisters into houses, causing tens of cases of asphyxia among the residents, and prevented ambulances from entering into the village to provide the needed aid. A four month-old baby girl, suffering asphyxia was rushed to the local clinic. In addition, during the weekly anti-Barrier demonstration held in Bil'in (Ramallah) on 29 August, a Palestinian male was shot in the head by Israeli forces with a rubber-coated metal bullet.

Palestinian killed by unexploded ordnance

On 29 August, a 24 year-old Palestinian man from Al Mansura (Jenin) was killed by unexploded ordnance (UXO) in a field left by the Israeli military near 'Arraba village. While this is the first death caused by unexploded ordnance in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2008, there have been eight such injuries reported.

Femicide in Gaza

During the reporting period, a 28 year-old Palestinian woman was stabbed to death by members of her family in Khan Younis. She had been arrested with a concealed explosives belt in Khan Younis by security forces on 15 August, and was released on 30 August. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights issued a press release calling the incident an "honor crime". (Khan Younis)

Settler related incidents

On 27 August, a old Palestinian man from the H2 area of Hebron City sustained injuries to the face when a group of settlers stoned his house. On 2 September, a group of Israeli settlers stoned a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council near the evacuated settlement of Khomesh. On the same day, Israeli police prevented a group of Israeli settlers from entering Beit Safafa village in Jerusalem. No arrests or injuries were reported.

Access in the West Bank

In the West Bank, for the third consecutive week, there was a decrease in the reported number of flying checkpoints. A total of 62 flying checkpoints were reported this week, approximately 13% fewer than the previous week. The highest numbers of flying checkpoints were reported in Qalqiliya governorate (14 flying checkpoints).

For the month of Ramadan, Israeli authorities have extended the operating hours of several key checkpoints including Huwwara, Beit Iba, 'Asira ash Shamaliya, 'Awarta checkpoints (Nablus), Jalama checkpoint (Jenin), and the 'Azzun 'Atma and Ras 'Atiya Barrier checkpoints (Qalqiliya). Despite the extended opening hours, long delays and queues were reported in major roads leading to Nablus (Huwwara and Beit Iba), the northern West Bank (Tappuah), the northern Jordan Valley (Tayasir and Hamra), Jerusalem (Qalandiya, and Ar Ram), and the central and southern West Bank (Jericho DCO). On road 90, within the Jericho governorate, Al Auja checkpoint is currently not operating while Muarrajat road remains closed for renovation. It is expected to reopen at the end of September 2008. An Nwemeh partial checkpoint (Jericho) now operates in lieu of Al Auja checkpoint. While An Nwemeh allows all Palestinians to travel north to the Jordan Valley from Jericho, only Palestinians with Jordan Valley residency may pass with their private cars.

Protection of Civilians Weekly Briefing Notes – New Format

As of 20 August 2008, please be informed that data on casualties are available in a searchable format on OCHA's website (URL: <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc>). Detailed information on house demolitions, settler incidents, curfew, flying checkpoints, search and arrest operations, rockets, mortars and airstrikes, will be gradually made available in the near future.