



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS WEEKLY REPORT

23 February to 1 March 2011

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no weekly Protection of Civilians report next week due to internal capacity constraints. OCHA will issue a two-week report the following week.

LATEST DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1 MARCH

2 March: Initial reports indicate that the Israeli authorities demolished dozens of residential shelters and animal pens in the Khirbet Tana community (Nablus governorate). Israeli forces vandalized nine caves in the same community.

The same day, Israeli forces demolished a water cistern, a cave, two tents and an animal pen in the Al Baq'a area and Khashem ad Daraj Bedouin community in the Hebron governorate due to the lack of building permits.

2 March: The Israeli authorities announced that the Karni conveyor belt, used for the transfer of wheat grain, aggregate and animal feed, will be shut down permanently. The transfer of such goods will be shifted to Kerem Shalom Crossing.

West Bank

At least 33 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces

This week, Israeli forces injured at least 33 Palestinians, including nine children, mainly in East Jerusalem clashes. Thus far in 2011, Israeli forces have killed five Palestinians in the West Bank and injured 202 others, compared to one fatality and 143 injured in the same period in 2010.

At least 20 Palestinians were injured by Israeli forces in the East Jerusalem area of Silwan in clashes that erupted during a protest against settler activities. This included eight people, of whom four were children aged between 15 and 16, who were injured by rubber-coated-metal bullets; the remaining injuries were sustained after inhaling tear gas. Also in Silwan, an 11-year-old boy was injured when he was physically assaulted by an Israeli undercover unit during his arrest. The boy was released and hospitalized after his medical condition deteriorated. Five other boys from the area were arrested at the same time.

Also, six Palestinians, including two children (3 and 10), were injured during weekly demonstrations against the expansion of Hallamish settlement in the Ramallah governorate. Most of the remaining Palestinians (3) were injured this week when they were physically assaulted by Israeli forces in the Jericho, Qalqiliya and Tubas governorates. Overall this week, Israeli forces conducted around 110 search and arrest operations throughout the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, above the weekly average of 84 such operations conducted since the beginning of 2011.

Escalation in settler violence

During the reporting period, OCHA documented 15 settler-related incidents that resulted in two Palestinian injuries and damage to property, triple the weekly average for such incidents since the beginning of 2011. The vast majority of these incidents occurred following the dismantling of structures at the Havat Gilad outpost settlement (Nablus governorate) by Israeli forces and the evacuation of settlers on 28 February.

In one incident on 28 February, Israeli settlers from Yitzhar settlement entered Huwwara village (Nablus governorate) and threw stones and a Molotov cocktail at a house, setting it on fire. As a result, two children

suffered smoke inhalation and were evacuated to the hospital. In addition this week, in three separate incidents this week, three Palestinian children (aged 3, 6 and 11) were injured when settler vehicles ran over them. In 2010, eight Palestinian children were injured in similar incidents.

Also following the evacuation of the outpost, settlers pelted Palestinian-plated vehicles driving in the Nablus and Ramallah governorates, causing damage to several cars. In another three separate incidents occurring prior to 28 February, settlers set fire to two vehicles and vandalized another four cars in the villages of Burin (Nablus governorate) and Jit (Qalqiliya governorate).

Also, in five separate incidents, Israeli settlers attempted to take over Palestinian agricultural land by both uprooting and planting trees in the vicinity of settlements. Settlers from El'azar settlement uprooted 400 olive trees belonging to Al Khader village (Bethlehem governorate) and planted olive trees and grape vines on around 60 dunums of land in the same village. Also, farmers from 'Urif village (Nablus governorate) found 35 of their olive trees uprooted near the settlement of Yitzhar. Settlers also uprooted 16 olive seedlings in the Wadi Qana area (Salfit governorate). Also, Israeli settlers from Adei Ad settlement vandalized wheat planted on 150 dunums of land belonging to the village of Al Mughayyir village in the Ramallah governorate.

Demolitions and demolition orders continue

During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities destroyed an agricultural project benefitting one farmer in Deir Istiya village (Salfit governorate) in Area C of the West Bank due to the lack of permit. The stone walls and a fence surrounding 15 dunums of land were demolished and around 200 olive and fig seedlings were destroyed.

This week also, the Israeli authorities delivered stop work orders against 23 structures, including 20 houses, a school, a mosque and a tent in the villages of Ar Ramadin in the Hebron governorate Qibya and Beit 'Ur Al Tahta in Ramallah governorate. Another demolition order was issued against a five-storey Palestinian residence comprising 22 apartments in the Beit Hanina neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. At least 120 people reside in the building.

Since the beginning of 2011, 98 Palestinian-owned structures have been demolished in East Jerusalem and Area C, displacing 174 people – a sharp increase compared to the same period in 2010 (56 demolitions and 129 people displaced).

Gaza Strip

Escalation in violence: three Palestinians killed and 22 others injured in air strikes and tank shelling

This week, Israeli forces killed two Palestinians (including one civilian) and injured 22 others (including at least 10 civilians, of whom five are children aged between 1.5 and 17), in various incidents across the Gaza Strip. This is the highest number of injuries recorded in a week since late May 2010. Since the beginning of 2011, eight Palestinians (including three civilians) have been killed in the context of Israeli-Palestinian violence in the Gaza Strip and 58 Palestinians (at least 44 civilians) have been injured. In addition, a number of rockets, including two Grad rockets, were launched by Palestinian armed factions at southern Israel, with no reported injuries.

One Palestinian was killed and 18 others were injured in incidents involving air strikes and shelling. On 23 February, an armed clash erupted between armed Palestinians and Israeli forces after Palestinians detonated an explosive device near Israeli troops conducting an incursion into the Gaza Strip. During the incident, Israeli forces fired tank shells, killing one armed Palestinian and injuring eight Palestinians (including civilians, of whom three were children). Later that day, Palestinian armed factions fired four rockets, including one Grad rocket, which hit Beer Sheva city in southern Israel. While no injuries were reported, several houses and vehicles sustained damage. Israeli Air Forces responded by launching a series of air strikes, which continued over the reporting period, targeting Palestinian houses, commercial buildings and military training bases across the Gaza Strip.

As a result, ten Palestinians (including at least 6 civilians) were injured and five houses were totally destroyed and ten other houses and seven commercial structures sustained damage; five families comprising 32 people, including 20 children, were displaced. According to Al Mezan Human Rights Center, the owner of one of the destroyed houses received a phone call from Israeli forces ordering him to evacuate his house. This is the first such incident that has occurred since the Israeli offensive "Cast Lead" on Gaza.

Also this week, on 27 February, a man was killed in an explosion that took place near the fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel, east of Gaza city. Palestinian reports indicated that the explosion was due to an air strike, while the Israeli army spokesperson denied any responsibility for the incident.

On 28 February, Israeli forces killed one Palestinian worker who was collecting rubble and scrap metal near the fence in the Beit Lahiya area, the first such fatality in 2011. This fatality followed the killing of a farmer while working his land in the vicinity of the fence in January 2011. According to Al Mezan Human Rights Center, Israeli forces took custody of the worker after he was injured, however, he apparently died while in Israeli custody as his body was returned to Gaza a couple of hours later. In three separate incidents this week, Israeli forces injured three other workers near the fence, bringing the total number of workers injured in similar incidents near the fence since the beginning of 2011 to 19. These incidents occur in the context of Israeli restrictions on access to areas up to 1,500 meters from the fence (17 percent of Gaza Strip's territory). Also, on eight separate occasions Israeli forces launched incursions a few hundred metres into the Gaza Strip and withdrew after leveling land. One farmer was injured when a shell hit a house during one of the incursions.

Access restrictions continued to be enforced on fishing areas beyond three nautical miles from the shore. In three incidents this week, Israeli naval forces opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats; while no injuries were reported, one boat caught fire.

Also this week, a 12 year-old girl was killed and another person was injured in Khan Younis while handling an explosive device inside a house.

Three workers injured in a tunnel-related incident

On 27 February, three Palestinian workers were injured when a tunnel under the Gaza-Egypt border collapsed. Since the beginning of 2011, two Palestinians have been killed and 13 others have been injured in such incidents. In 2010, 46 Palestinians were killed and 89 others were injured in various tunnel-related incidents, including air strikes, tunnel collapses and electrocution. Tunnel activity has declined since the Israeli decision to ease the blockade on 20 June 2010 and following the recent Egyptian events. However, tunnels are still the main source for a number of goods that continue to be prohibited through the official crossings with Israel, primarily building materials.

Three children killed in incidents related to shortages of cooking gas

In one incident on 26 February, three Palestinian children (2, 4 and 15) died after sustaining severe burns and their mother was injured as a result of the explosion of a kerosene stove inside their house. The majority of the population in the Gaza Strip is forced to rely on unsafe cooking alternatives, including kerosene stoves, due to shortages of cooking gas. This week, 692 tonnes of cooking gas entered Gaza, constituting 58 percent of the required weekly amount of 1,200 tonnes. Since the beginning of February, an average of 81 tonnes of cooking gas was transferred per day to Gaza, compared to a daily amount of 98 tonnes in previous months.

According to the Gas Stations Owners Association, a rationing scheme introduced in November 2008 due to increased winter demand remains in place, with less than 10 out of 28 cooking gas stations partially operating at any given time, with priority given to hospitals, chicken hatcheries, and bakeries. The primary reason for cooking gas shortages remains the limited capacity of the Kerem Shalom crossing, which lacks a storage facility on the Palestinian side; such a facility existed at the Nahal Oz crossing, which was closed by the Israeli authorities at the beginning of 2010.

Rafah Crossing continues to open

The Rafah Crossing, controlled by the Egyptian authorities, has remained open since 18 February, following its closure on 30 January in response to the events in Egypt. Access continues to be limited to authorized humanitarian cases, including patients, students studying at universities abroad, and people holding foreign passports or visas to third countries to cross into Egypt. A registration mechanism was launched as a result of the ongoing restrictions on travel remains in place, with thousands of people waiting to exit Gaza. Overall between 23 February and 1 March, a daily average of 263 Palestinians were able to leave Gaza and 102 others were able to enter. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), there are thousands of Gazans who have been stranded in countries abroad for more than one month due to emergency measures taken by Egyptian authorities that prevent their entry into Egypt through Cairo Airport to access the Gaza Strip.

Shortages of wheat continue; limited entry of construction materials continues to affect building projects

The limited opening of the Karni conveyer belt continues to result in shortages of wheat grains and construction materials. This week, 3,666 tonnes of wheat grain entered Gaza, around five percent below the weekly average since the beginning of 2011 and 13 percent below estimated weekly needs. As of 28 February, wheat stocks were sufficient for around ten days, well below the 30 days normally held. The decline of wheat continues to affect delivery of food assistance to nearly one million beneficiaries by UNRWA and WFP, which usually purchase flour from local mills. The dependency of the poorest population on food assistance has increased in recent months due to a sharp increase in the market price of wheat flour (by some 50 percent since August 2010).

Similarly, the delay in entry of construction materials, which were originally transported on the Turkish flotilla, forced UNRWA to suspend six projects during the last two weeks. Since the June 2010 easing of the blockade, Israel has approved 43 UNRWA projects worth 11 percent of the total work plan submitted by the agency. In addition to the shortage of aggregates, implementation is also impeded by a multi-layered system of approvals required by the Israeli authorities before materials are allowed into Gaza.

Overall this week, between 20 and 26 February, a total of 1,018 truckloads entered the Gaza Strip, representing approximately 36 percent of the weekly average of imports recorded before the imposition of the blockade in June 2007. Food items made up around 42 percent of the imports, compared to less than 20 percent prior to the blockade.

Exports were limited to a few shipments of cut flowers. A limited amount of cherry tomatoes also left Gaza this week. Since the beginning of the season, from 28 November until 26 February, a total of 260 truckloads of strawberries (407 tonnes), cut flowers (7.4 millions stems), and sweet peppers (6 tonnes) have been allowed to leave Gaza. Since the imposition of the blockade in June 2007, only 773 truckloads of exports (strawberries and cut flowers) have left Gaza, compared to a monthly average of 1,086 in the first five months of 2007.

