



PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS WEEKLY REPORT

17-23 AUGUST 2011

Key issues

- The targeting of civilians and civilian objects is prohibited under international humanitarian law (IHL). The recent escalation in violence in southern Israel and subsequently Gaza has resulted in the killing of seven Israeli civilians and four Palestinian civilians and the injury of dozens of others during the reporting period. Numerous civilian structures also sustained damage inside Gaza during Israeli air strikes and several structures in southern Israel were damaged by Palestinian-fired projectiles. (see report below)

Latest development since 23 August

- *Eight Palestinian men, including a 62-year-old farmer, were killed, and 33 other Palestinians (of whom at least ten were children and six women) were injured, and civilian structures were damaged by Israeli air strikes and tank shell fire between 24 and 25 August. The air strikes mainly hit vehicles (allegedly carrying armed Palestinians), a sports club and tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. Also during this period, armed Palestinians fired dozens of rockets, including GRAD rockets, towards southern Israel, resulting in one Israeli injury.*

WEST BANK

Dozens injured in search-and-arrest operation

This week's clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and resultant injuries, were triggered mainly by search-and-arrest operations and access restrictions. On 21 August, during an Israeli raid in an area inside the Palestinian-controlled part of the city of Hebron (H1), clashes erupted between Palestinian residents and Israeli forces, resulting in the injury of 45 Palestinians, including around 13 children (aged between two months and 17 years). All the injuries were sustained as a result of tear gas inhalation. Over 40 Palestinians, most of them allegedly affiliated to Hamas, were arrested during the operation. The incident occurred following attacks in southern Israel on 18 August (see Gaza section). Overall this week, Israeli forces conducted over 50 search-and-arrest operations in West Bank cities and villages, slightly over half the weekly average of 90 operations since the beginning of the year.

Seven Palestinians were also injured in different areas of the Old City of Jerusalem in clashes that

Palestinian casualties by Israeli forces

Killed this week: 0

Killed in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 8 vs. 8

Injured this week: 67; 9 in demonstrations

Of whom were children: about 18

Injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 1,051 vs. 790

erupted between Israeli forces and Palestinian worshippers attempting to access Al Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers. In addition, weekly protests throughout the West Bank continued, resulting in nine Palestinian injuries, including seven children (aged between 12 and 14 years). The protests are mainly against restrictions on access to agricultural land near Karmeit Tzur settlement (Hebron governorate), the construction of the Barrier in the villages of Al Ma'sara (Bethlehem governorate) and Bil'in (Ramallah governorate), and the continuing closure of the main entrance of Kafr Qaddum village (Qalqiliya governorate). Eighty olive trees were damaged as a result of tear gas fired by Israeli forces in the latter demonstration.

A Palestinian boy injured by settlers; at least 60 Palestinian olive trees vandalized

This week, Israeli settlers from Migron settlement outpost (Jerusalem governorate) physically assaulted and injured a 12-year-old Palestinian Bedouin boy from Jaba' village with sticks and batons while he was grazing sheep near the settlement. The settlers also reportedly stole five sheep and killed three others by beating them with batons. Following the incident, Israeli forces arrested over ten settlers. In a separate event, settlers injured a Palestinian man with a stone near Sinjil village (Ramallah governorate), fracturing his jaw. In two separate incidents that led to damage to Palestinian property this week, Israeli settlers uprooted at least 60 newly-planted olive trees belonging to Qusra village (Nablus governorate) and set fire to three other trees belonging to Mikhmas village (Jerusalem governorate). So far in 2011, OCHA has documented 50 settler-related incidents that led to damage to some 5,800 Palestinian trees.

Further restrictions on access to East Jerusalem for Friday Ramadan prayers

Following attacks in southern Israel on 18 August, the Israeli authorities re-instituted additional

Settler-related incidents:

Incidents resulting in Palestinian injuries or property damage:
in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 251 vs. 179
Palestinians injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 122 vs. 68
Settlers injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 21 vs. 31

restrictions on access to prayers at Al Aqsa mosque on the third Friday of Ramadan (19 August). The vast majority of the Palestinian population, including all Gazans and over 40 per cent of the West Bank population continue to be denied access to prayers during Ramadan. Only men over 50 and women above 45 holding West Bank IDs and children below 12 years of age could cross into East Jerusalem without permits, while women between 35 and 45 were eligible for special permits. This week, access for men below 50, including those holding permits to work (with some exceptions) or pray, was denied. Also, men below this age were not allowed to enter the Old City, even if they are holders of Israeli IDs. According to the Israeli DCL, a total of 62,225 worshippers crossed the four authorized checkpoints (Qalandiya, Gilo, Shu'fat Camp and Az Zeitoun) along the Barrier, down from over 117,000 last week.

GAZA STRIP

Violence escalates resulting in multiple deaths and injuries

This week saw an escalation in hostilities in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel, which took place after the killing of eight Israelis, including six civilians, and the injury of about 30 others in a series of attacks on 18 August along the Egypt-Israel border and in southern Israel. According to Israeli sources, at least seven of the attackers, allegedly members

Palestinian casualties by Israeli forces

Killed this week: 14
Of whom children: 2
Killed in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 70 vs. 42
Injured this week: 59
Of whom children: at least 10
Injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 379 vs. 178

of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), had infiltrated into Israel from Egypt and were killed. Also, five Egyptian policemen were killed during the attacks. No Palestinian armed faction claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Following the attacks, Israeli forces launched a series of air strikes on the Gaza Strip, while Palestinian armed factions inside Gaza intensified rocket fire towards southern Israel, resulting in the deaths of 15 Palestinians and one Israeli and the injury of 59 Palestinians and 16 Israelis.¹ Israeli air strikes between 18 and 21 August hit a number of houses, governmental buildings, a police station, military training bases, tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border and open areas. As a result, 13 Palestinians, including three civilians, of whom two were children (aged 2 and 5), were killed. In one incident on 18 August, five alleged members of the PRC and a two-year-old child were killed when an air strike hit a house in the Rafah area. Also, on 19 August, an air strike targeted an alleged member of an armed group in Gaza City, killing him, his five-year-old son and his bother. Another Palestinian died on 19 August of wounds he sustained earlier when Israeli forces targeted an armed group in Gaza City on 16 August. Additionally, 59 Palestinians, including 54 civilians (of whom at least 10 are children), were injured. Of those, 23 injuries were sustained in one incident when an air strike hit a governmental building in Gaza City on 19 August.

In the same period, Palestinian armed factions fired dozens of rockets, including GRAD rockets, towards southern Israel, hitting a number of houses, an empty school and open areas. On 20 August, one Grad rocket hit Beer Sheva City, killing one Israeli civilian and injuring 13 others; and another rocket hit a house in Ofakim town, injuring a baby and a nine year-old. Another Grad rocket dropped short inside Gaza, west of Beit Lahiya, hitting a Palestinian house and killing a 12-year-old child and injuring five other Palestinians on 19 August.

1. The Palestinians casualties include a 12-year-old boy killed and five Palestinians injured by rockets, fired by Palestinian armed factions that fell short of their targets.

Following the recent escalation, the Ministry of Health again re-iterated its appeal, urging local and international health partners to help Gaza hospitals secure sufficient medical supplies. Gaza hospitals continue to suffer from shortages in medical supplies, with nearly 150 medicines and 160 types of medical disposables reportedly at zero level.

After calm was declared by Palestinian factions on 22 August, no Israeli air strikes took place. However, a number of rockets were fired by Palestinian armed factions towards southern Israel, causing no injuries or damage to property.

Impact of recent events on property and infrastructure in Gaza

Assessments are underway to estimate the level of damage to private property and public infrastructure caused by Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip. Thus far, damage has been reported to numerous residential structures, at least four governmental buildings, seven local NGOs or associations, 11 stores and supermarkets, three factories, two mosques, a private company, a school, and a fuel station. Among infrastructure damaged is a newly-built sewage pumping station near Nusairat Refugee Camp in the Middle Area, which was supposed to start functioning in the coming months, serving over 130,000 people. The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility main office in Gaza also sustained damages during the Israeli air strikes. In addition, the Al Qastina School, north of Gaza, sustained damage to some windows, doors and frames when a GRAD missile fell short. The Gaza Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which announced that it will rehabilitate the school in advance of the start of the new school year, reported that the school has frequently sustained damage as a result of conflict-related violence.

Limited access through Rafah continues

Access for Palestinians into Egypt through the Rafah Crossing, controlled by the Egyptian authorities, continues to be limited to specific categories of people, including patients, students, foreign passport holders and those with visas to other countries. Due to the ongoing access restrictions, Border and Crossing authorities in Gaza continue prioritizing travel requests and to implement a registration mechanism, with nearly 25,000 to 30,000 people registered and waiting to exit in the coming months. During the reporting period, a daily average of 757 people left Gaza to Egypt (the majority were pilgrims) and another 369 entered Gaza per day, with a total of 37 people denied entry to Egypt for unspecified reasons.

Movement of goods (Kerem Shalom Crossing):

Imports:

Truckloads that entered Gaza this week: 1,166

Of which carrying food: 40%

Weekly average since the beginning of 2011: 949

Weekly average before the blockade: 2,807

Exports:

Truckloads that left this week: 0

Weekly average since the beginning of 2011: 6

Weekly average before the blockade: 240

Gaza crossings with Israel:

Despite the recent escalation, the crossings controlled by the Israeli authorities functioned as scheduled, although for shorter hours. For example, the Kerem Shalom Crossing was only partially opened during 21 and 22 August, allowing reduced amounts of good to enter Gaza.

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