



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

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Protection of Civilians Weekly Report

28 January – 3 February 2009

"The destruction I saw was devastating – both in human and material terms. The magnitude of loss of life and injury to the civilian population is bound to have a lasting impact on the mental and physical well-being of the Palestinians in Gaza. All aspects of life and livelihood have been affected." Under-Secretary-General John Holmes, 2 February 2009, Gaza Flash Appeal Launch

Latest Developments: 4 - 5 February 2009

- The Rafah crossing spokesperson reports that the crossing will be closed for Palestinians from today, 5 February, onward. According to the spokesperson, only internationals who have crossed into Gaza during the previous weeks will be allowed to exit the Gaza Strip via the crossing. Palestinian medical cases will be allowed to cross in and out on an ad hoc basis, as was the case prior to 27 December. Movement of cargo through Rafah will no longer be permitted, apart from exceptional cases. (Rafah Crossing opened on 31 December 2008 and has remained opened for movement of persons and cargo on all days since then. This opening was based on an exceptional arrangement to assist in evacuating war wounded and facilitating the entry of medical supplies, medical personnel and media). Egyptian authorities have yet to confirm the closure. (5 February)
- Media reports indicate that Israeli naval forces took command of a Lebanese ship, reportedly carrying humanitarian supplies, that was bound for Gaza. (5 February)
- Israeli security forces killed a Palestinian militant during an operation in the West Bank village of Qabatiya (Jenin). (5 February)
- Israeli security forces demolished three residential structures in 'Esawiya in East Jerusalem. Two of the structures were inhabited, while the third was under construction. Owners of a fourth house slated for demolition the same day managed to get a court order postponing the demolition. Initial estimates place the number of people displaced by these demolitions at 20. This brings the number of persons displaced in East Jerusalem in 2009 to 73 (including at least 26 children). (4 February)

Gaza cease-fire partially holding

A number of incidents by Palestinian militants and Israeli forces undermined the cease-fire in the Gaza Strip during the week. Palestinian militants fired at least eleven rockets and two mortar shells from Gaza towards southern Israel, while seven mortar shells were fired targeting Israeli troops operating in Gaza. Also, Israeli media reports indicated that four mortar shells that were fired from Gaza on 1 February injured two Israelis and that one Grad rocket landed in a residential neighborhood of Ashqelon city centre, resulting in property damage.

Israeli air force jets and drone plans carried out over 10 air strikes in the Gaza Strip, resulting in the death of a reportedly alleged Palestinian militant and the injury of 15 Palestinians, including nine children (seven UNRWA school students and two other girls). Targets of these strikes included tunnels along the Egypt-Gaza border; an alleged militant on a motorcycle in Khan Younis; a building near a rocket launching site, east of Rafah; a cluster of caravans utilised by the police northeast of Nuseirat camp; a vehicle with alleged militants travelling east of Rafah; and a Hamas military base in the Abasan area east of Khan Younis.

The air strikes targeting the tunnels on the Egypt-Gaza border caused people living nearby to flee their homes in fear. Prior to the strike, residents had been warned by the Israeli military via recorded phones messages of the imminent shelling of these areas.

Flash appeal for Gaza launched in Geneva

On 2 February, the Gaza Flash Appeal was launched in Geneva. Amounting to \$613 million, it is a strategic plan incorporating 106 NGO and 82 UN projects to respond to the emergency humanitarian and early recovery needs of the Gaza population. A copy of the appeal can be obtained at www.reliefweb.int or at www.ochaopt.org.

West Bank casualties

In the West Bank, one Palestinian was killed and 36 were injured, including 10 children, during the period. A 34-year-old Palestinian man from the town of Bani Na'eim (Hebron) was killed during the week after Israeli soldiers opened fire on his vehicle in the area of Massafar Yatta (Hebron). According to eyewitness statements, an Israeli army patrol in the area had opened fire in the air, indicating that the vehicle should stop. Another patrol, apparently believing that the shot had been fired from the car, then opened fire on the vehicle. The IDF, however, stated that the killing occurred after soldiers were fired upon by a gunman in the vehicle. Four Palestinians males, who were in the car as well, were injured in the incident. They were only allowed to be evacuated to an Israeli hospital for treatment several hours after the shooting took place.

Eight Palestinians, including four children, were injured during the week in demonstrations protesting Israeli military activity in Gaza, while three Palestinians, including one female and one child, were injured during search and arrest operations. Other injuries were caused during clashes with Israeli security forces (5) and an IDF assault on a shepherd (1). Settlers injured seven Palestinians, including five children during the week. In one incident, a man, aged 40, from Kafr Qaddum (Qalqiliya) and his four children (three daughters, aged 8, 9, 12, and a son, aged 11) were physically assaulted when Israeli settlers attacked the children while they were filling water from a well on their land. In contrast to previous weeks, there were no Palestinian injuries during the period during anti-Barrier protests. However, a 28-year-old foreign female peace activist was injured by a live bullet, shot at her by Israeli soldiers during an anti-Barrier demonstration in Ni'lin village (Ramallah).

The number of Palestinians arrested by Israeli security forces in the West Bank during the period decreased, with a total of 96 Palestinians arrested, reversing the trend of increasing arrests reported during the previous period. Between 1 January and 31 December 2008, the Israeli authorities carried out at least 5,254 search operations in the West Bank and arrested 4,263 Palestinians. In the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces carried out 56 search operations, resulting in 791 arrests.

Noticeable increase in demolitions and displacement in Jerusalem district

The Israeli authorities demolished 21 Palestinian-owned structures, including 9 residential structures, in nine separate incidents over the course of three days during the period. Seventy-six (76) Palestinians, including 42 children, were displaced as a result. An additional 29 families (approximately 170 people, including 115 children) were affected by the demolitions.

The home demolitions in East Jerusalem were the first of their kind in 2009: on 28 January, the Israeli authorities destroyed a 140 m² apartment in Silwan (Jerusalem), displacing eight (8) Palestinians, including five children. On the same day, a two-storey residence in the Beit Hanina neighborhood of East Jerusalem was demolished, displacing 45 people, including 21 children and two elderly persons. Other residential structures demolished include four residential structures (out of six total structures demolished) in the "E1" area, east of East Jerusalem. The structures demolished in E1 displaced 23 people, including 16 children, all Bedouin and registered refugees. The structures were demolished for lacking the requisite building permit in Area C. These were the first inhabited structures demolished in Area C in 2009.

New West Bank areas declared "seam zones": parts of Salfit, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem

On 5 January 2009, three military orders were issued declaring land between the Barrier and the Green Line in parts of the Salfit, Ramallah, Jerusalem and northern Bethlehem governorates a closed military area ('seam zone'). These orders follow a similar order, previously reported, declaring the area between the Barrier and the Green Line in Hebron governorate closed. Once land has been declared closed, Palestinians require IDF-issued 'visitor' permits to access their land behind the Barrier. These are the first such orders to be issued since October 2003, when all of the land between the Barrier and the Green

Line in the Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqiliya governorates was designated as closed. Based on OCHA's monitoring of Barrier-affected communities in the northern West Bank since 2003, these measures give rise to serious humanitarian concerns regarding Palestinians' continued access to land, services and livelihoods.

During the week in the southern West Bank, Israeli soldiers informed the Palestinian residents who live beyond the Beit Yatir checkpoint, located south of the town of Yatta (Hebron) that they have until 28 February 2009 to apply for the "permanent resident" permit that will allow them to stay in their homes in the closed area. Three households, with a total of 24 residents, currently reside in this area and farm around 60 dunums of agricultural land located there. They are the only residents who will reside in the closed area in the Hebron governorate.

Gaza update:

Thousands of Gazans homeless

As of 2 February, three non-school UNRWA shelters remained open in Jabalia, Beach Camp and Deir Al Balah, hosting 388 displaced people. Although most people have left the shelters since the cease-fire, thousands of Gazans remain homeless. The preliminary report of the shelter/IDP joint rapid needs assessment, organized between 22 and 25 January, indicates that, in surveyed localities in Gaza, 10,991 displaced households, or 71,657 people, were staying with host families. The total number of internally displaced persons remains unknown.

Damage to structures

An initial survey, conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that over 14,000 homes, 68 government buildings and 31 non-governmental organizations were totally or partially damaged during the three weeks of fighting in Gaza. As a result, UNDP estimates that 600,000 tons of concrete rubble will need to be removed.

Between 22 and 25 January, international and local NGOs operating in Gaza conducted a joint rapid needs assessment of the level of damage to housing units and the location and numbers of people still displaced. The survey was conducted in all localities and neighborhoods in Gaza, except for refugee camps, which are covered by UNRWA. In 48 of 61 localities which have reported results, the survey found that about 22.6 percent of housing units were damaged or destroyed. Of those damaged, 16.7 percent reported light to moderate damage, 3.2 percent reported severe damage, and 2.6 percent reported that the homes had been destroyed. Most of the damage has been reported in rural areas which have higher non-refugee populations, meaning the non-refugee population has been disproportionately affected by the damage to housing. This data is preliminary and further full assessments are underway.

Electricity situation improved

The electricity situation improved on 3 February as the Gaza Power Plant has been able to begin running the second turbine after receiving additional industrial gas. Production level currently reaches 60 – 65 mw. The total power deficit is now approximately 25%, allowing GEDCO (Gaza Electricity Distribution Company) to reduce the power cutting schedule previously implemented: Gaza city and north Gaza will now face power cuts three times per week, for eight hours each time, compared to eight hours per day previously, and the Middle Area will face power cuts twice a week, also for eight hours each time. There are no scheduled cuts for Khan Yunis and Rafah. This does not, however, account for unscheduled cuts faced by the population due to localized damage to the network or pressure on the network.

Access to Gaza for NGOs continues to be difficult

Humanitarian staff for NGOs continued to face significant difficulties accessing the Gaza Strip via Erez crossing during the reporting period. At a meeting of the Association of International Development Agencies' Sub-group on Gaza, 75% of attending organizations indicated that they were facing difficulties accessing the Gaza Strip. Procedures for entry remain inconsistent and unpredictable, making difficult planning an effective response to the humanitarian crisis. Some organizations have been waiting up to 25 days (from the submission of their first request) to hear a response to their application. The Israeli

authorities have indicated that all outstanding applications will be processed within five days. They credit the current backlog to the considerable influx of applications for entry.

UNRWA aid confiscated by Gaza police personnel

On 3 February, UNRWA reported that over 3,500 blankets and 406 food parcels were confiscated from a distribution store at Beach Camp in Gaza by police personnel. This took place after UNRWA staff had earlier refused to hand over the aid supplies to the Gaza Ministry of Social Affairs. The police subsequently broke into the warehouse and seized the aid by force. The aid was due to be distributed to five hundred families in the area.

UNRWA has condemned the confiscation and demanded its immediate return. UNRWA stresses that it has a strict system of monitoring aid delivery and ensuring that its assistance reaches only the intended beneficiaries. UNRWA officials are on the ground overseeing the delivery of aid and taking all possible steps to avoid its diversion.

Visit of Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, arrived on 2 February to conduct a visit to Gaza and southern Israel to ascertain first-hand the impact of the recent conflict on children. The Special Representative will liaise with stakeholders to ensure that children are protected and their needs are addressed in the aftermath of the recent hostilities. The visit is undertaken within the framework of her General Assembly mandate as an independent moral voice and advocate for children in armed conflict.

Crossings

Between 26 January and 1 February, 479 truckloads entered Gaza through Kerem Shalom, including 314 for aid agencies, a decrease of more than 20 percent compared to the previous week. The Israeli authorities have assured the humanitarian community that Kerem Shalom would be improved to allow 150 trucks per day. However, capacity did not exceed a daily total of 120 truckloads between 26 January and 1 February. Only a very restricted list of items is being allowed in. Also, 335 truckloads carrying grains for human and animal consumption entered Gaza via the Karni conveyor belt, compared to 329 during the previous period.

From 25 January – 31 January, 1,155,000 litres of industrial fuel for the power plant and 267 tons of gas entered Gaza via the Nahal Oz crossing. An additional 264,000 litres of industrial fuel and 95 tons of gas entered on 1 February.

Health

Most health facilities in the Gaza Strip have resumed normal operation. Referral abroad of patients requiring specialized care also has resumed, although at a lower level than before the crisis. According to WHO's 29 January initial health needs assessment, enduring risks include complications and excess mortality in patients with chronic diseases as a result of the suspension of treatment and delayed access to health care during the conflict; diarrhea outbreaks from water-borne and food-borne diseases as a result of the lack of access to clean water and sanitation and the weak public health surveillance system; as well as long-term mental health problems as a result of the conflict, on-going insecurity and the lack of protection. The lack of access to specialized care remains a serious concern.

Estimates are that approximately half of the 5,300 injured may suffer life-long impairment

Of the 1.4 million people living in the Gaza Strip, international and national agencies working in the fields of disability and rehabilitation estimate that as many as half of the 5,300 injured during Israel's military operation may suffer life-long impairment, exacerbated by the inability of rehabilitation workers to provide early intervention. These agencies highlight the importance of providing early intervention for those newly injured; reestablishing and strengthening the capacity of rehabilitation services and disabled peoples organizations to respond to the increased needs throughout the Gaza Strip; and ensuring that people needing specialist rehabilitation intervention unavailable in the Gaza Strip are transferred without delay to the three national rehabilitation centres in the West Bank which are ready to receive patients. This is

especially critical given that Al Wafa Hospital, the main provider of specialist rehabilitation services in Gaza, sustained severe damage and is not yet fully operational.

Water and sanitation

The ICRC reported during the week that some 300,000 people in the Gaza Strip still have no tap water, according to the Gaza water authority. Preliminary findings of the Palestinian Hydrology Group's initial rapid needs assessment of households shows that some 5,700 roof-top water tanks were completely destroyed and 2,900 damaged during the three weeks of Israel's military operation. A couple of areas (Al Atatra and Izbet Abed Rabbo) had 50% of their water network destroyed, while other areas sustained damage to 30-35 percent of their water network.

Immediate assistance is needed to repair and rebuild water and sewage infrastructure. CMWU reports that repairing the water and wastewater network and related facilities will cost approximately \$6 million. Though some work is ongoing, CMWU will be unable to complete the repair without the entry of needed spare parts into Gaza. On 28 January, ICRC requested approval from the Israeli authorities for the entry of 36 trucks containing repair material; only 13 trucks were allowed into Gaza. PVC pipes that ICRC had previously cleared were refused entry by the Israeli authorities.