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HIGHLIGHTS

- Electricity supply in Gaza increased up to 18 hours a day in some areas, following the provision of additional fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant.
- Only 22 per cent of patients injured during the Gaza demonstrations, who were referred for follow-up surgery in the West Bank or Israel have been granted Israeli exit permits.
- 97 per cent of ground water extracted in Gaza is unfit for human consumption, generating the risk of a waterborne disease outbreak.
- The number of Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians and their property during 2018 grew by 57 and 175 per cent, compared with 2017 and 2016, respectively.

OCTOBER FIGURES

Palestinians killed (direct conflict)	30
Palestinians injured (direct conflict)	2,163
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	2
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	3
Structures demolished in the West Bank	50
People displaced in the West Bank	43

OVERVIEW

During the first week of November, residents of the Gaza Strip experienced some respite from the deteriorating humanitarian situation. First, the electricity supply increased up to 18 hours a day in some areas, from 4-5 hours in previous months, following the provision of additional fuel to operate the Gaza Power Plant. Second, around 27,000 civil servants, hired by Hamas after the 2007 takeover, were paid their August salaries, while 50,000 of the poorest families began receiving an US\$ 100 allocation. These developments have been made possible due to funding provided by the Government of Qatar, and following Israel's authorization of the entry of the fuel and cash into Gaza. In addition, while the 'Great March of Return' demonstrations along the perimeter fence continue, there has been a significant decline in clashes between demonstrators and Israeli forces and a resulting decrease in casualties.

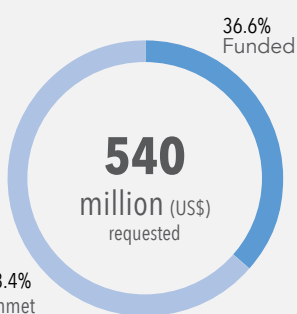
The reprieve proved to be short-lived due to the resumption of hostilities between 11 and 13 November. Although the calm was restored, as of the time of writing, the previous week's positive developments can do little to quickly resolve the longstanding, structural problems affecting Gaza, driven by years of blockade and internal divisions. These include high levels of unemployment and food insecurity, the overburdening of the health system, a shortage of clean water, and the isolation of nearly two million people from the external world.

As highlighted in one of this Bulletin's articles, despite the recent decline in casualties during the 'Great March of Return' protests in recent months, by end October the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces reached 171 (during demonstrations only), including 33 children, with the number of injuries exceeding 24,000. The health system in Gaza has been struggling to cope with the massive influx of injuries, with elective surgeries postponed and trauma patients discharged early. As of 21 October, 86 people injured during demonstrations, including 15 children, have undergone limb amputations, and the number of people in need of long-term limb reconstruction may reach up to 1,200 by the end of the year. Only 22 per cent of the 335 patients injured during demonstrations who were referred

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2018

540 million (US\$)
Requested

36.6% funded



for follow-up surgery in hospitals in the West Bank and Israel have been granted exit permits by the Israeli authorities.

Another article addresses the chronic state of emergency in Gaza's water and sewage sector. According to a recent study by the RAND Corporation, unless immediately reversed, this situation may trigger a disease outbreak, or other public health crisis, which risks spreading to Israel and Egypt. This has only been averted due to mitigating humanitarian interventions, including projects to ensure minimum amounts of clean drinking water, preventing raw sewage from overflowing, allowing some treatment of wastewater, and widespread vaccination. However, as in other areas, WASH agencies' interventions have been undermined due to unprecedented underfunding during 2018.

In the West Bank, the government of Israel has frozen the demolition of the Khan al Ahmar-Abu al Helu Bedouin community, despite an Israeli Supreme Court ruling in September permitting them to do so, and partially dismantled the designated relocation site. However, the threat of a mass demolition remains. The lack of adequate planning and demolition threats, along with other factors, generate what a Secretary-General report has referred to as a coercive environment,¹ placing many Palestinian households and entire communities in the West Bank, particularly in Area C, the H2 area of Hebron city and East Jerusalem, at risk of a forcible transfer.

The final article of this Bulletin addresses one such contributing factor: Israeli settler violence. Since the start of 2018, the number of attacks resulting in Palestinian casualties or damage to their property has registered a 57 and 175 per cent increase, compared with 2017 and 2016, respectively, and the highest levels since 2014. While the volume of Palestinian attacks against settlers declined, seven Israeli civilians have been killed in such incidents so far in 2018, compared to three in 2017. Among other consequences, settler attacks have involved the vandalizing of over 7,200 trees, undermining the income of Palestinian families, particularly during the olive harvest season, which is currently ongoing.

The recent inflow of cash and increase in electricity supply in the Gaza Strip can do little to quickly resolve the longstanding, structural problems affecting Gaza, driven by years of blockade and internal divisions.



Photo by 'Adel al-Amer/B'Tselem. © Israeli settlers, accompanied by Israeli soldiers, assault 'Urif village (Nablus), 6 July 2018.

MORE CASUALTIES SUSTAINED DURING THE 'GREAT MARCH OF RETURN' IN GAZA

While participating in a demonstration near the Gaza fence with Israel on 6 April 2018, a university student in his mid-twenties was shot and injured in his left hip by Israeli forces. He was standing about 30-40 metres from the barbed wire fence inside Gaza territory and burning a tyre with other demonstrators.

"It was my first time at a demonstration; I did not feel any danger as I was inside Gaza. I heard no warnings addressed to us by the Israeli soldiers, but suddenly I fell on the ground and started bleeding", he said.

Hospitalized in Gaza, his condition turned out to be so serious that his left leg was later amputated.

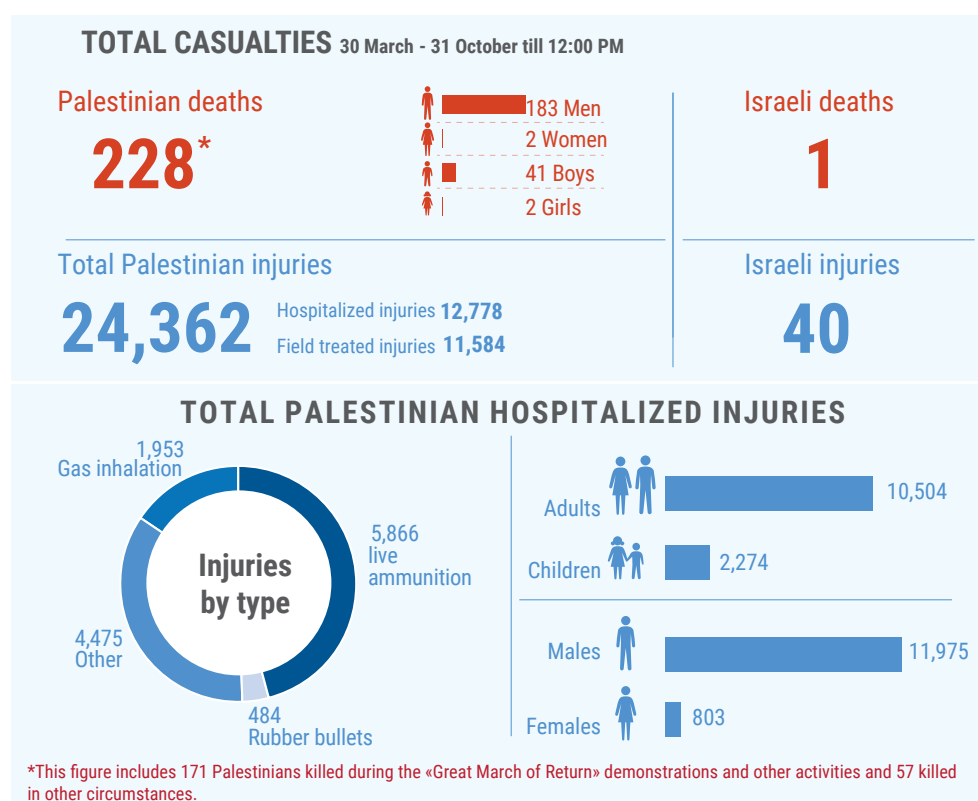
The student remained in intensive care in a critical condition and suffered from post-operative complications, including a severe infection. As a result, he was referred for medical treatment to a West Bank hospital and applied for a permit from Israel to leave Gaza, as is required. Due to a delay by the Israeli authorities in approving his permit request, he was unable to leave Gaza on time for his medical appointment. Following a legal intervention by Al Mezan Center for Human Rights,² the Israeli authorities approved the exit request. After receiving initial treatment in the West Bank, he returned to Gaza with a long road ahead to recovery. Another appointment to fit an artificial limb and receive rehabilitation was set for early October at a West Bank medical centre. Again, the student was unable to leave Gaza for treatment due to delays by the Israeli authorities in approving his exit request, which is *still pending*.



This article was written by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with contributions by Protection Cluster partners

"It was my first time at a demonstration; I did not feel any danger as I was inside Gaza. I heard no warnings addressed to us by the Israeli soldiers, but suddenly I fell on the ground and started bleeding".

University Student injured in the hip.



As reported by the World Health Organization (WHO), up to 21 October 2018, 86 amputations had taken place in Gaza on people injured during demonstrations, including 15 children.³ Initial screening indicates that approximately 1,200 patients will require long-term limb reconstruction that can involve up to seven surgeries and extensive rehabilitation and treatment for up to two years.⁴ Many services are unavailable in Gaza as the health care system is already overstretched and unable to cope with the massive influx of trauma casualties; elective surgeries have been postponed and trauma patients are discharged early.

By the end of October, only 74 of 335 exit permit applications (22 per cent) had been approved by the Israeli authorities for Palestinians injured during the 'Great March of Return' demonstrations and requiring medical treatment outside Gaza, paid for by the Palestinian Authority.⁵

Meanwhile, the university student is trying to cope with his new condition: *"It is hard to recover from such an experience, both physically and emotionally"*, he explained.

The Gaza Community Mental Health Programme is supporting him with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). The programme has identified high levels of trauma, depression and anxiety in injured demonstrators and their families, many of whom are unable to afford medicines for their injuries.

Other Protection Cluster partners specialized in Child Protection and MPHSS have provided initial psychological first aid to at least 7,124 injured people and their families, including at least 2,084 children. More specialized MHPSS services were provided to 949 of these people, including 461 children, and case management services to 291 injured children. The response is well below needs as over 52,000 people, including more than 26,000 children, are estimated to require MHPSS as a result of the violence experienced at the fence.

Since the start of the 'Great March of Return' demonstrations on 30 March 2018 and up to the end of October, 171 Palestinians have been killed, including 33 children, during the demonstrations. A further 57 people, including 10 children, were killed in other contexts, including Palestinian attacks, Israeli airstrikes and infiltration attempts into Israel, according to information collected by OCHA. One Israeli soldier was killed by a Palestinian sniper. A total of 24,362 Palestinians have been injured, of whom nearly one quarter are children, including 5,866 people (24 per cent) hospitalized due to live ammunition injuries. A total of 40 Israelis have been injured.

According to WHO,⁶ by 6 October 2018, three health workers had been killed and 462 injured in 270 recorded incidents against health staff and facilities; 75 ambulances, five other health service vehicles and two health facilities were also damaged.⁷

Protection Cluster partners have repeatedly indicated that under international law, all Palestinians, including children, have the right to freedom of expression and demonstration. The Israeli and Palestinian authorities are required to respect, protect and fulfil freedom of assembly and expression for all Palestinians.⁸

Only 74 of 335 exit permit applications had been approved by the Israeli authorities for Palestinians injured during the Gaza demonstrations requiring medical treatment outside Gaza, paid for by the Palestinian Authority

Israeli sources have indicated that demonstrations along the fence during September and October became more violent, with increased throwing of Molotov cocktails and homemade grenades, the launching of incendiary kites and balloons,⁹ and attempts to breach the fence by Palestinian demonstrators.

Even when taking the reported rise in Palestinian violence into consideration, concerns remain about the excessive use of force, including lethal force, by Israeli forces during the demonstrations.

The killing of children in the demonstrations along the fence is of particular concern. Humanitarian agencies in the oPt have called on all actors to ensure that children are never the target of violence, and must not be put at risk of violence or encouraged to participate in violence.¹⁰

In accordance with international norms,¹¹ Israeli forces policing the Gaza fence must use only necessary and proportionate means to discharge their duties. Exceptionally, they may resort to lethal force in cases of extreme necessity, as a last resort in response to an imminent threat of death or risk of serious injury. All allegations of possible violations of international human rights and humanitarian law must be duly and promptly investigated and the perpetrators held to account. Civil remedies, including financial compensation, are also clearly established under international law.¹²

According to media reports,¹³ the Israeli military advocate general has ordered the opening of criminal investigations into the killing of three Palestinians by Israeli forces during the Gaza demonstrations: a man shot in the back on 30 March, a 21-year-old female health volunteer killed on 1 June, and a 15-year-old boy killed on 13 July. All investigations are ongoing.

Humanitarian agencies in the oPt have called on all actors to ensure that children are never the target of violence, and must not be put at risk of violence or encouraged to participate in violence



Palestinian injured during a demonstration protesting the naval blockade on the beach near the fence, northwest of Beit Lahiya, September 2018.



This article was written with the support of UNICEF on behalf of the WASH Cluster

STUDY WARNS WATER SANITATION CRISIS IN GAZA MAY CAUSE DISEASE OUTBREAK AND POSSIBLE EPIDEMIC

A recent [report](#)¹⁴ prepared by the RAND Corporation warns that if the chronic state of emergency in Gaza's water and sewage sector continues, an endemic disease outbreak or other public health crisis is imminent, with the risk of it spreading to Israel and Egypt.¹⁵ The projection is based on data collected by Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) partners and authorities over previous years, analysis of the expected impact of recent developments, and lessons learnt from disease outbreaks in Haiti, Yemen and Iraq. The report emphasised that cooperation between the Palestinian Authority, Israel and Egypt is vital if an epidemic is to be pre-empted.

The main causes of the water and sanitation crisis are the depletion and poor quality of Gaza's single coastal aquifer, which is the source of 95 per cent of all water in Gaza. Until the 1990s the aquifer provided Gaza Strip inhabitants with drinkable tap water. Today 97 per cent of this water is unfit for human consumption based on World Health Organization (WHO) standards. The primary driver of contamination of the aquifer is the longstanding over-extraction of almost three times more water than is naturally replenished by rainfall.¹⁶ This practice results in increasing intrusion of seawater. The sea also flushes back to the shores of Gaza large amounts of untreated or insufficiently treated sewage that is dumped into the sea, mainly due to the energy crisis.¹⁷ Open sewage runoff and agrichemicals also seep into the aquifer.

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The water and sewage situation in Gaza, including the contamination of the aquifer, has been exacerbated over the past decade by a range of other factors that include damage to infrastructure during the recurrent hostilities; insufficient, unreliable and fluctuating electricity available to operate WASH facilities¹⁸; import restrictions on materials and equipment categorised by Israel as “dual use” items which cover some 70 per cent of WASH-related equipment;¹⁹ and funding shortages for damaged and worn infrastructure, salaries and maintenance.

Despite geographical variations in water quality across Gaza and efforts to improve the quality of water extracted (by mixing it with desalinated water or with water purchased from Israel), most water piped to households through the network is unfit for human consumption. This water is for use solely for domestic purposes other than drinking or cooking.

Residents in Gaza are aware that most tap water is unfit for human consumption and 9 out of 10 people rely on desalinated water, 81 per cent of which comes from the private sector.²⁰ It is purchased in containers or tanks at prices 10-30 times more expensive than piped water, thus posing a heavy burden on already impoverished families.

Apart from the economic burden, this situation generates a range of health hazards. Although the quality of desalinated/purified water is better than that of piped water, desalination/purification does not necessarily remove all pollutants, compounded by the fact that desalination plants do not function at full capacity due to the poor power supply.²¹ In addition, contamination may occur during the transportation and storage cycle as a result of unmaintained or unsanitary water trucks and points of distribution. According to data collected in March 2016, less than a third of desalinated water vendors (48 of 154) were licensed and monitored.

People are aware that tap water is unfit for human consumption and 9 out of 10 rely on desalinated water, 81 per cent of which comes from the private sector and is 10-30 times more expensive than piped water.

MONITORING WATERBORNE DISEASES, AND DISEASES LINKED TO POOR PERSONAL HYGIENE AND LACK OF WATER

According to RAND, one-fourth of all diseases in Gaza are waterborne. In 2009, UNICEF reported that 12 per cent of deaths in children and infants were caused by diarrhoea. In 2011, 26 per cent of all childhood diseases in Gaza were identified by UNICEF as waterborne. In 2016, poor water quality and access to water contributed to over a quarter of all reported diseases in Gaza, according to WHO. In the same year, the Palestinian Ministry of Health identified several diseases stemming from poor personal hygiene, including acute hepatitis A, typhoid fever and acute diarrhoea. These diseases can jeopardize the nutritional status of newborns and infants, and may lead to stunting and developmental delay. In 2016, viral meningitis was identified as the most common infectious disease observed in children in Gaza; recurrent outbreaks in 1997, 2004 and 2013 disproportionately affected children and infants on each occasion. Although the causes of this disease can vary, it is apt to spread faster in areas with a poor water supply and poor personal hygiene. It is estimated that difficulties in epidemiological data collection may mask more severe public health effects emerging from the water and wastewater crisis.

These factors lead to increased risks of chemical and biological contamination in both natural and desalinated water. Chemical contamination includes a rise in nitrates and chloride, while biological contamination may include the formation of viral and bacterial pathogens associated with waterborne diseases, with children especially at risk.²²

Responding to the water and sanitation crisis

The longstanding water and sanitation crisis affecting Gaza requires massive infrastructural investment, a sustainable solution to the energy crisis, the lifting of access restrictions and political solutions, both internally and with Israel.

The fact that an epidemic has not yet occurred is due mainly to mitigating humanitarian responses, including WASH projects focused on ensuring clean drinking water, preventing raw sewage from overflowing into the streets and some treatment of wastewater; the supply of emergency fuel to operate essential facilities and services; and projects such as vaccinations delivered via UNRWA to some 77 per cent of the population in Gaza who are registered as Palestine refugees.

“When the water is cut, all the sterilization process from machines, instruments, beds and rooms is affected. Even when water is available, doctors and nurses are often unable to sterilize their hands to carry out surgery because of the water quality.”

SURGEONS ARE UNABLE TO WASH THEIR HANDS PRIOR TO SURGERY DUE TO LACK OF CLEAN WATER

Water is frequently unavailable at Al-Shifa, the largest hospital in Gaza. When it is available, it is not fit for use. Water is “either cut off, rusty or salty”, says Dr. Nassir Hammad, head nurse of the Surgical Department. This is particularly challenging given that the prepping of patients and medical staff sterilization processes requires clean water rather than the unsafe water currently provided through the network.



Medical staff showing rusty water available through water network, Al Shifa hospital, Gaza, November 2018

“When the water is cut, all the sterilization process from machines, instruments, beds and rooms is affected. Even when water is available, doctors and nurses are often unable to sterilize their hands to carry out surgery because of the water quality.”

Medical staff try to find solutions to keep operations on schedule, including checking if there is water in other departments, purchasing water where possible and using sanitizing gels. The hospital has even asked patients coming to undergo surgery to either bring water from other departments or bathe before coming to the hospital.

Apart from the dangers associated with these measures, they are not reliable solutions. According to Dr. Hammad: *“In many cases, operations have had to be rescheduled due to the lack of water, or we wait until water is available.”*

Post-operation infections could be reduced through the use of clean water but is being addressed by using sanitizing gels. The problem of sanitizing equipment remains unresolved, and the salty water available from the network has caused medical tools to rust and valuable medical equipment to malfunction. Replacement equipment is difficult to obtain due to funding shortages, access-related limitations and the short life span of this equipment in light of the ongoing water crisis.

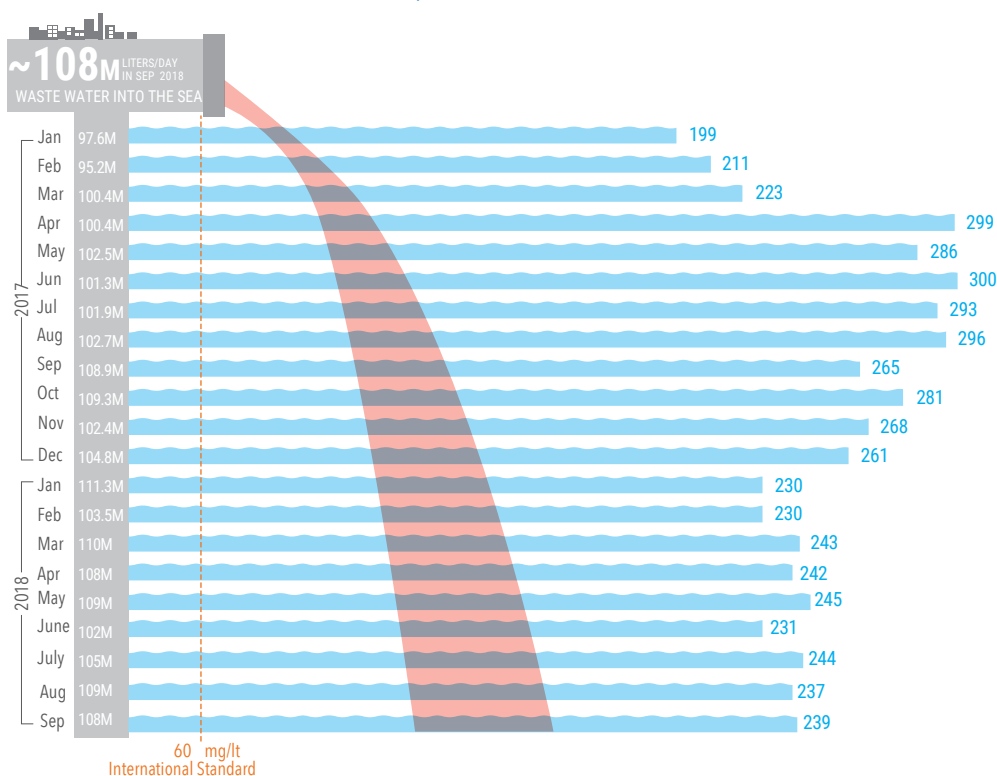
However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to mitigate the impact of the water and sanitation crisis. At a time of increased need, funding for the oPt is at an all-time low. By October, only US\$197.7 million had been secured of a requested \$539.7 million for the 2018 [Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\)](#), i.e a mere 36 per cent. The situation regarding interventions by the WASH cluster is even worse: only 21.7 per cent of \$45.5 million in funding required for responses in 2018 has been so far provided.²³ In fact, nearly all agencies requesting funding through the HRP have received less funding in 2018 than in previous years, including UNRWA whose operations have been undermined by the US government ceasing its financial support to the Agency.²⁴

Lack of funding for lifesaving humanitarian responses has been challenged further by the electricity crisis. This has diverted funds for emergency fuel to operate backup generators and forced other components of planned WASH humanitarian responses to be put on hold.

Humanitarian interventions planned by the WASH cluster for 2019, assuming the availability of essential funds and energy, include the establishment, extension or rehabilitation of water distribution and sanitation systems and infrastructures; improvements to WASH facilities in key service institutions; supplying households without sanitation facilities to end open defecation and ensure access to at least basic sanitation; and providing WASH facilities with emergency power requirements (fuel and/or renewable energy), equipment and maintenance to enable lifesaving operations to continue.²⁵

only 21.7 per cent of \$45.5 million appealed in 2018 for WASH interventions in Gaza has been so far provided

POLLUTION LEVELS OF WASTEWATER FLOWS INTO THE SEA MG/LITRE OF BOD*



HIGH LEVEL OF VIOLENCE BY ISRAELI SETTLERS; RISE IN ISRAELI FATALITIES

The high level of Israeli settler violence against Palestinians reported during the first four months of 2018 in an earlier [Humanitarian Bulletin](#), continued through October as the annual olive harvest began. Since the start of 2018, OCHA has documented 217 incidents attributed to Israeli settlers that have resulted in Palestinian casualties (60 incidents) or in damage to Palestinian property (157 incidents).²⁶ As a monthly average, this is the highest level of incidents recorded since 2014 and represents a 57 and 175 per cent increase compared with 2017 and 2016 respectively (see chart).

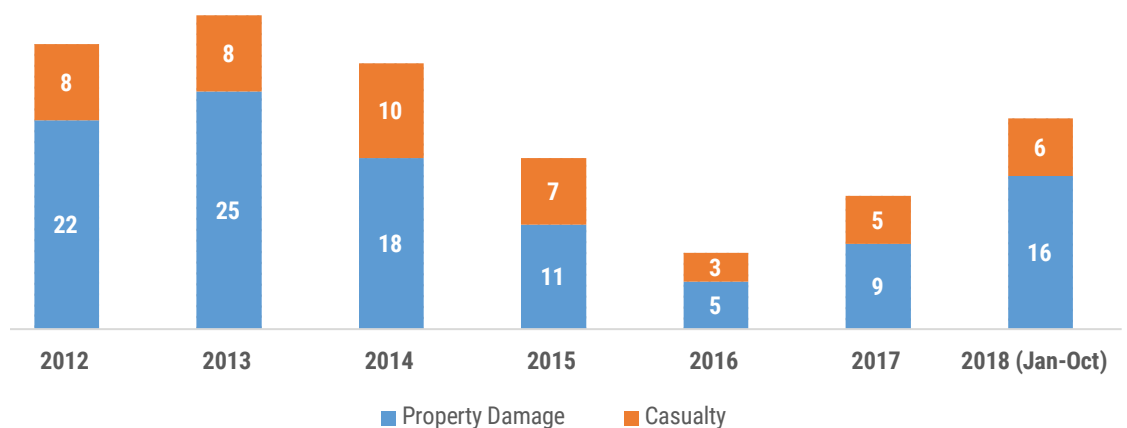
The most frequent type of incident so far in 2018 involved the vandalizing of trees, crops and other agricultural property (71 incidents); stone-throwing and vandalizing of Palestinian homes and vehicles, including arson (81 incidents); and various forms of physical assault, most of which targeted farmers and herders (35 incidents).

In 2018 three Palestinians were killed by Israeli settlers and 83 were injured, including at least 20 children. In the most recent incident, on 12 October, a 45-year-old Palestinian woman, mother of eight, was killed and her husband injured after being stoned when driving through the Za'atra/Tapuach checkpoint in the northern West Bank. Although the assailants remain unknown, Israeli security sources indicated that there is a "high probability" that they are Israeli settlers.²⁷ The other two fatalities were a Palestinian boy killed after he stabbed and killed an Israeli settler, and a Palestinian man killed after he reportedly attempted to stab an Israeli settler.²⁸

Properties damaged during incidents this year include some 7,200 Palestinian-owned trees and more than 300 vehicles. As in previous years, the majority of the trees vandalized were olive trees. However, there has been a significant increase in the targeting of grapevines, with a total of 12 incidents resulting in damage to over 2,300

So far in 2018, OCHA has documented 217 incidents attributed to Israeli settlers that have resulted in Palestinian casualties (60 incidents) or in damage to Palestinian property (157 incidents), the highest level of incidents recorded since 2014.

MONTHLY AVERAGE OF INCIDENTS LEADING TO PALESTINIAN CASUALTIES OR PROPERTY DAMAGE



vines. For example, on 23 May, unknown assailants cut 440 grapevines planted from five to 35 years ago on four dunums of land next to Road 60 near Halhul village (Hebron), and sprayed “price tag” and offensive graffiti in Hebrew on rocks nearby; the damage was estimated by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture at over \$177,000.

Palestinian access to some cultivated areas requires authorization (also known as ‘prior coordination’) with the Israeli authorities on the grounds that these are ‘areas of friction’. Approximately 90 Palestinian communities own land within or in the vicinity of 56 Israeli settlements and settlement outposts where ‘prior coordination’ is required. These areas are designated as ‘closed military zones’ and access is permitted only to Palestinian owners during specific times, mostly during the olive harvest and ploughing seasons. Although these procedures have the stated aim of protecting Palestinians farmers and their property, 26 of this year’s settler attacks resulting in casualties or property damage were recorded in areas requiring ‘prior coordination’.

Nablus governorate continues to be the region most affected by settler violence, accounting for 40 per cent of incidents in 2018 (86 incidents), the majority in areas surrounding the settlement of Yitzhar and its adjacent outposts.²⁹ Nablus is followed by Hebron and Ramallah governorates with 17 and 16 per cent of incidents, respectively. One of the hotspots in Ramallah governorate is the settlement outpost of Adei Ad, identified as the source of at least eight attacks primarily affecting farmers from Turmusayya village.

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RESPONDING TO SETTLER VIOLENCE

Settler violence undermines the physical security and livelihoods of Palestinians in various parts of the West Bank. Humanitarian actors seek to respond by providing protection and other forms of assistance, including for vulnerable groups such as children and women. Humanitarian interventions include the deployment of a protective presence in high-risk areas; psychosocial support to victims; the installation of protective infrastructure; documentation of cases; legal counselling; and livelihood support.

For example, Première Urgence Internationale, an NGO providing assistance and protection in the West Bank, recently repaired a road in Burin (Nablus), a community particularly affected by settler violence from outposts surrounding Yitzhar settlement. The original road that connected six families residing on the outskirts of Burin with the rest of the village was precarious and unsuitable for cars, leaving the families more vulnerable when settler attacks occur. The renovation has facilitated rapid access to the area by other residents during a settler attack, and enabled the rapid evacuation of people injured during attacks or subsequent clashes with Israeli forces.

Clashes with Israeli forces

The figures cited above exclude incidents of settler raids in Palestinian localities and entries to religious sites there, which did not result in casualties or damage *by the settlers themselves*: many of these incidents generated friction between settlers and Palestinians that triggered the intervention of Israeli forces and subsequent clashes with local residents.

Since the start of 2018, there have been 37 settler raids/entries triggering clashes with Israeli forces that resulted in the death of two Palestinians and 446 injured (see case study for details of the latest fatality in October 2018). The average number of clashes per month with Israeli forces following settler raids/entries has increased significantly in 2018 compared with previous years.

Palestinian attacks on Israeli settlers and other Israeli civilians

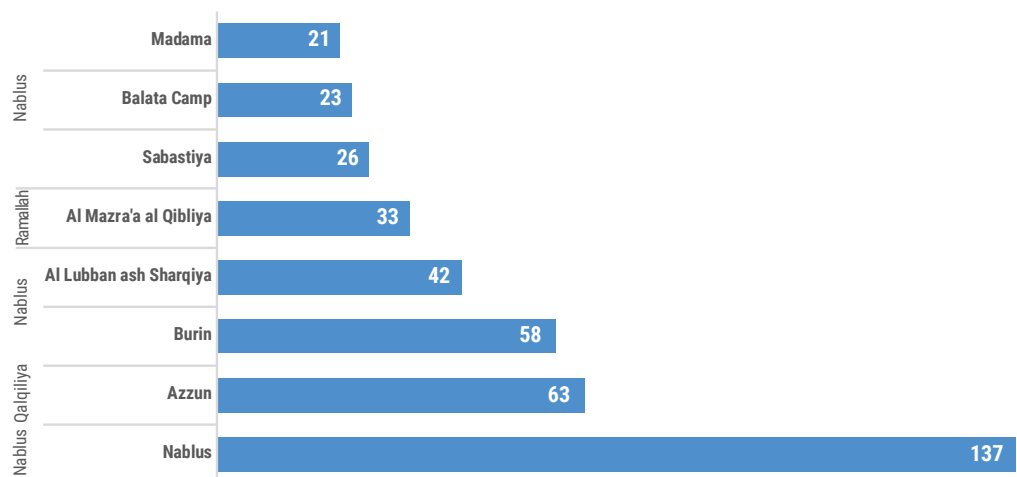
Since the start of 2018, OCHA has recorded a total of 144 Palestinian attacks against Israeli settlers and other Israeli civilians in the West Bank resulting in casualties or damage (based on Israeli media reports). As a monthly average, this is 33 per cent lower than in 2017 (21 incidents per month).

Despite the decline in the number of incidents, fatalities among Israeli settlers and other civilians increased in 2018: seven people were killed in the first ten months of 2018 compared with three in all of 2017. The latest fatal attack took place on 7 October, when a Palestinian man employed in the industrial area of Barkan settlement shot and killed an Israeli man and woman, also injuring another woman.

Some of the peaks in settler violence against Palestinians recorded this year occurred within two or three days immediately after the killing of Israeli settlers by Palestinians and were presumably in retaliation.

Despite the decline in Palestinian attacks against settlers, fatalities among Israeli settlers and other civilians increased in 2018, with seven killed compared with three in all of 2017.

PALESTINIAN INJURIES BY ISRAELI FORCES FOLLOWING SETTLER RAIDS/ENTRIES BY LOCALITY JAN-OCT 2018



Other settler incidents during this period included the vandalizing of cars and the spraying of offensive graffiti. These have been attributed by some media reports to a practice known as “price tag”, which aim to exact a price from Palestinians for the removal, by the Israeli authorities, of structures in settlement outposts. Since the beginning of 2018, a number of removals and evictions took place in small settlement outposts associated with radicalized young settlers in Nablus governorate.³⁰

Gaps in accountability

As the occupying power, Israel has the obligation to protect Palestinian civilians from all acts or threats of violence, including by Israeli settlers, and to ensure that attacks are investigated effectively and perpetrators held accountable. The failure to do so has been a longstanding concern of the humanitarian community in the oPt and is believed to contribute to the persistently high levels of settler violence.

In a report issued in October 2018, the Israeli Ministry of Justice (MoJ) stated: “In recent years, Israeli authorities made considerable efforts to enhance law enforcement in the West Bank, which [...] included the establishment of designated taskforces, increased allocation of funds, and the addition of professional manpower.”³¹ According to the report, between January and July 2018, the Israeli police opened a total of 35 investigations related to settler violence against Palestinians, of which four led to the indictment of suspects, four were closed and the rest are still ongoing.

According to the Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din, of 185 investigations monitored by the organization which were opened between 2014 and 2017 and reached a final stage, only 21, or 11.4 per cent, led to the prosecution of offenders, while the other 164 files were closed without indictment.³² The equivalent rate of indictment for the period 2005-2013 was 7.5 per cent (73 of 978 investigations).

Concerns about lack of accountability exist with regard to both attacks on Palestinians and their property, and also to the takeover of Palestinian private and public (or ‘state’) land by settlers. Law enforcement against takeovers has been minimal, and in most cases required extensive litigation in the Israeli courts. In recent years the Israeli authorities adopted several policies to retroactively legalize (under Israeli law) the takeover of Palestinian land.

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© Photo by OCHA

Cut down and vandalism of 120 olive trees in Al Mughayyir village (Ramallah) by Israeli settlers from Adi Ad settlement, 14 October. Photo taken by a community member.

Since 2011, at least 29 unauthorized settlement outposts built on land classified by the Israeli authorities as public land have been retroactively issued with building permits, or are in the process of being authorized. In January 2017, the Israeli Parliament passed a law allowing the expropriation of private Palestinian land, which was taken over and built on by settlers, provided that they had received explicit or implicit support from the authorities; the implementation of the law has been frozen by the Israeli Supreme Court following petitions challenging its legality under international law and Israeli (constitutional) law.

Official endorsement by the Israeli authorities of the illegal takeover of Palestinian land by settlers has two main ramifications with regard to settler violence. First, this policy has enabled the entrenchment and growth of settlement outposts, some of which have been a consistent source of attacks against Palestinians.³³ Secondly, official endorsement appears to promote an atmosphere of impunity, which may also contribute to settler violence.

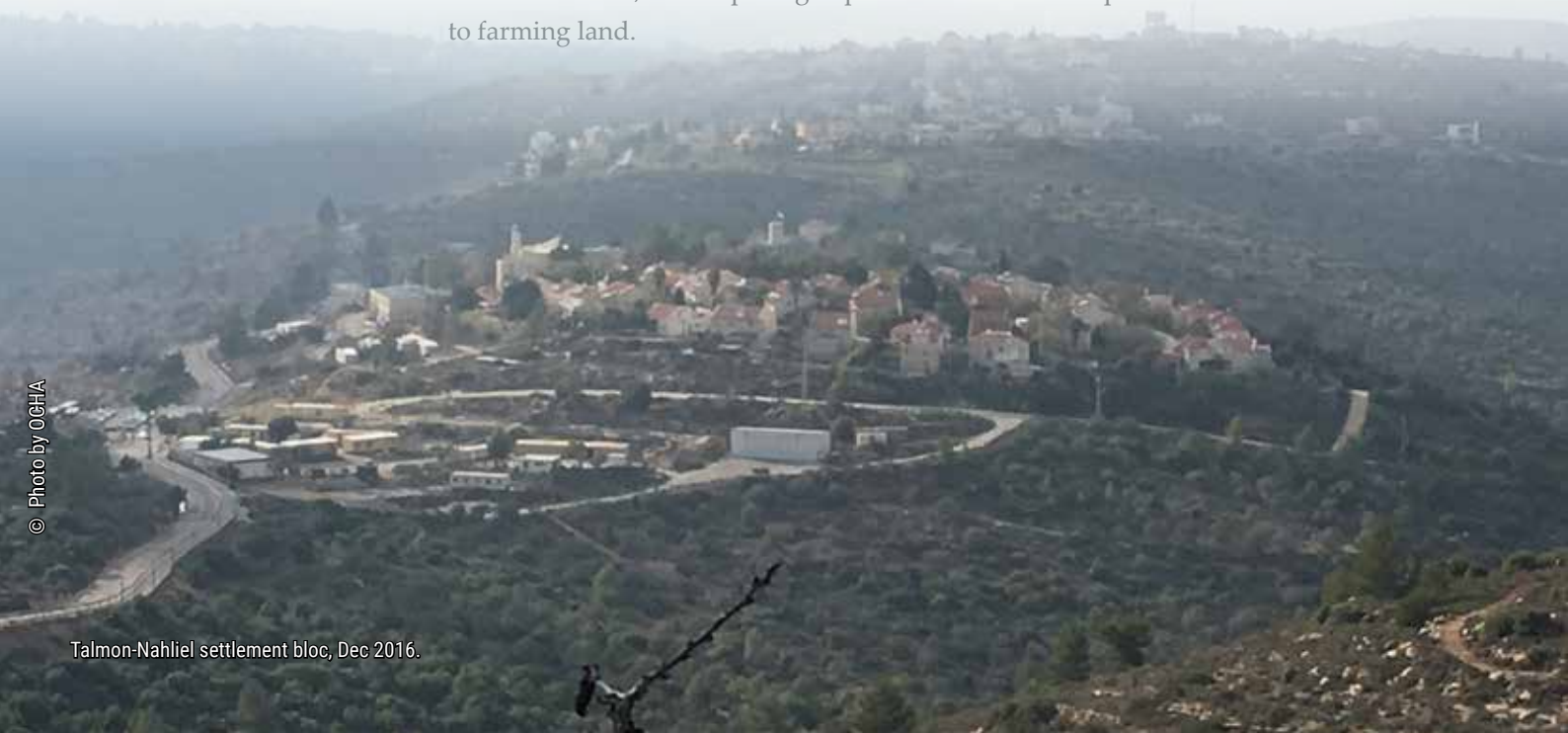
In at least some instances, settler violence is not random but is a calculated effort towards the de facto expansion of settlements.

Settler violence and settlement expansion

The establishment and continuous expansion of settlements is a key driver of humanitarian vulnerability. It deprives Palestinians of their property and sources of livelihood, restricts access to services, and creates a range of protection threats that, in turn, have triggered demand for assistance and protection from the humanitarian community.

A series of case studies published in this Humanitarian Bulletin between November 2016 and February 2017 indicated that, in at least some instances, settler violence is not random but is a calculated effort towards the de facto expansion of settlements.

The case studies suggest that violence and intimidation, supplemented by various types of access restriction implemented concurrently by both settlers and Israeli forces, have reduced or eliminated Palestinian presence in some areas and facilitated settlement expansion. These restrictions include the deployment of roadblocks and checkpoints; prohibition on the use of roads by Palestinian vehicles; the designation of areas as closed for military purposes or as “nature reserves”; the fencing off of privately-owned Palestinian land; and imposing a ‘prior coordination’ requirement for Palestinian access to farming land.



SETTLER VIOLENCE AND SETTLEMENT EXPANSION: THE CASE OF CENTRAL RAMALLAH GOVERNORATE

The findings of a research study published in the [Humanitarian Bulletin](#) issued in December 2016 highlighted the dynamics of de-facto settlement expansion in areas surrounding the Nahliel and Talmon settlements in central Ramallah governorate. The research found that the area controlled by the settlements where Palestinian access is severely restricted or impossible, is almost 2.5 times larger than the official Israeli-designated municipal boundaries of these settlements (15,100 vs 6,200 dunums). According to official Israeli records, over half of the land within these de facto boundaries is privately owned by Palestinians from six nearby villages: Beitillu, Ras Karkar, al Janiya, Deir Ammar, Mazra'a al Qibliya and Kobar, where approximately 20,000 Palestinians live.

In the two years since publication of the study, settlement expansion and de facto control over the area has been further entrenched, alongside sustained levels of violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property. This has had a detrimental impact on the livelihoods and security of Palestinians in the affected communities.

During this period, the Israeli authorities approved planning schemes for three unauthorized residential outposts, established in previous years within the de facto boundaries of Nahliel and Talmon, for the construction or retroactive "legalization" of around 460 housing units.³⁴ Development of water springs in the area as tourist sites has also continued. In one of the five springs taken over by settlers in the past (Ein Misraj on al Janiya village land), several new caravans were installed and a number of incidents were documented involving the harassment of Palestinian farmers in the area. This has further limited the ability of Palestinian farmers and herders to rely on these springs for irrigation and watering of livestock.

Since early 2018, Israeli settlers began opening, without building permits or formal authorization, two new roads on land belonging to residents of Mazra'a al Qibliya and Ras Karkar villages (see map): work on the former was subsequently halted following a court order, while construction on Ras Karkar land is ongoing. During the latter work, settlers took over some 10 dunums of land and planted it with approximately 500 olive saplings.

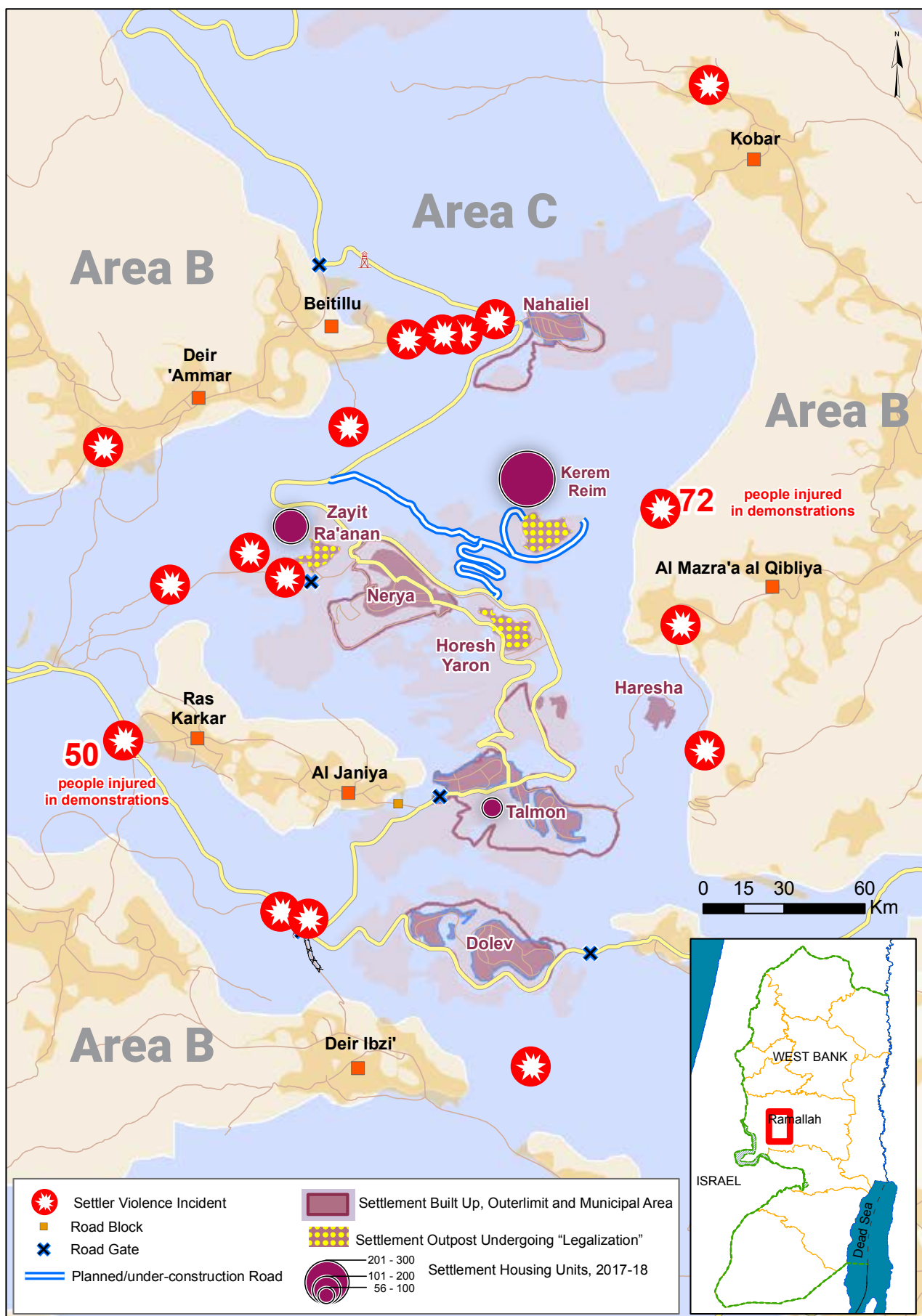
These developments have prompted regular protests in both villages, many of which evolved into clashes with Israeli forces and settlers. In the latest incident in al Mazra'a al Qibliya on 26 October, a 33-year-old Palestinian was shot and killed by Israeli forces after Israeli settlers raided the village during a demonstration. In total, 118 Palestinians have been injured in protests in these two villages since February 2018, including 28 children.

Whilst the immediate trigger of the demonstrations was road construction by Israeli settlers, local residents reported to UNOCHA that the concern is essentially the cumulative trend of land control by Israeli settlers that is gradually swallowing up all of the village's land.

In the meantime, Palestinian access to areas surrounding Nahliel and Talmon settlements continues to be hampered by settler violence. Since January 2017 OCHA has recorded 23 incidents in this area resulting in either Palestinian casualties or damage to property. Property damage by Israeli settlers included the vandalism of some 220 olive trees and saplings, a water well, and dozens of vehicles; theft of crops; spraying anti-Palestinian graffiti; and throwing stones at Palestinian farmers and houses. Of note, four of the incidents involved raids and vandalism of property in Area B in three of the affected villages (Ras Karkar, al Mazra'a al Qibliya and Kobar).

During the past 2 years, the authorities approved planning schemes for three unauthorized outposts, established in previous years within the de facto boundaries of Nahliel and Talmon settlements, for the construction or retroactive "legalization" of around 460 housing units.

SETTLER VIOLENCE AND SETTLEMENT EXPANSION IN WESTERN RAMALLAH



ENDNOTES

1. Report of the Secretary-General, Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, A/73/410, 5 October 2018
2. Al Mezan Center for Human Rights and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights provided legal aid services to least 29 injured demonstrators requiring an exit permit for medical treatment outside Gaza, of which seven applications were successful.
3. WHO, *Situation Report*, oPt, 7-20 October 2018.
4. Information provided by WHO.
5. Information provided by WHO.
6. WHO, *Situation Report*, oPt, 7-20 October 2018, page 5.
7. *Ibid*, page 5. A specialized health centre for people with disabilities and the Ministry of Health central ambulance station were damaged as a result of an Israeli air strike on 14 July.
8. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Articles 19 and 21, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Articles 13-15.
9. According to the Israeli authorities, incendiary kites and balloons launched from Gaza since late April have caused over 1,500 fires on cultivated land and nature reserves, but have not resulted in any Israeli casualties.
10. See for example: Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator in the oPt, 29 September 2018. Also: Joint press statement from the Humanitarian Coordinator in the oPt, the Head of OHCHR in oPt and the UNICEF Special Representative in State of Palestine, 1 August 2018.
11. Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials Articles 2-3 and Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, Principles 5, 9 and 13-14.
12. ICCPR Articles 2,14,26, and Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.
13. Y. Kubovich, "Israeli military opens criminal probe", Ha'aretz, 21 August 2018; Y. Kubovich, "Israeli army opens criminal investigation into killing of Gaza paramedic", Ha'aretz, 29 October 2018.
14. The report, *The Public Health Impact of Gaza's Water Crisis: Analysis and Policy Options*, describes the relationship between Gaza's water problems and its energy challenges, and examines the implications of Gaza's water crisis for public health. It reviews the state of the current domestic water supply and water sanitation in Gaza, and analyzes water-related risks to public health in Gaza with potential risks for Israel and Egypt. RAND Corporation, Preface.
15. The report highlights the periodic closure of Israel's Ashkelon desalination plant in 2016 due to pollution from Gaza as an indication of the impact of Gaza's crisis on Israel.
16. The average extraction is 160 million cubic metres (MCM) per year versus average replenishment of 60 MCM. Shira Efron, J. R. (2018). *The Public Health Impact of Gaza's Water Crisis*. Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation. p 12.
17. The energy crisis includes lack of both sufficient electricity and fuel. The rising electricity deficit in recent decades has been driven by the lack of infrastructural development despite rapid population growth. Since 2017 this has been aggravated by internal divisions following disputes between the PA and Hamas over the funding and taxation of fuel, and the collection of electricity charges. HNO Overview, 2018.
18. Piped water reaches most homes for only a few hours every 3-5 days due to the inconsistent electricity supply.
19. RAND Corporation, p 4.
20. AFD, Public-Private-NGO Partnership for Adaptation to the Drinking Water Crisis in the Gaza Strip – Concept Paper – May 2016, page 1.
21. Capacity was as low as 15%. RAND Corporation, page 16, based on Emergency Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Group, 2016.
22. RAND Corporation, pages 27-38.
23. RAND Corporation, p. 40.
24. RAND Corporation, p 33.
25. RAND Corporation, p. 36.
26. UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service, visited on 1 November 2018 accessed at: [<https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/633/summary>]
27. The US has substantially reduced its funding in the oPt, including deciding not to disburse more than \$200 million from USAID's approved budget for the 2017 fiscal year in the West Bank and Gaza, cutting \$25 million to the East Jerusalem hospitals network, and, most recently, \$10 million to Israeli and Palestinian co-existence groups.
28. This will be achieved through a three-pronged approach. Firstly, ensuring all communities and key institutions such as schools, early childhood development centres and healthcare facilities, have access to safe drinking water services and domestic water services. Secondly, promoting more sustainable solutions for safe water and sanitation services wherever possible to reduce aid dependency. And thirdly, providing adequate sanitation services jointly with hygiene promotion by providing and/or rehabilitating sanitation facilities for households and key education and social service institutions such as schools, Early Childhood Development centres and healthcare facilities.
29. Both categories are mutually exclusive. Incidents resulting in both casualties and property damage are classified as resulting in casualties.
30. A. Harel, Killing of Palestinian Woman in West Bank Increasingly Suspected to Be Jewish Terror Act, Ha'aretz, 26 October 2018.
31. The first incident took place on 26 July at Adam settlement (Jerusalem governorate) and the second on 8 April near Ma'ale Adumim settlement.
32. For an in-depth analysis of patterns of violence around Yitzhar settlement, see Yesh Din, Yitzhar – a case study, August 2018.
33. See for example Elisha Ben Kimon, "Increasing tensions between Israeli security agency and hilltop youth", Ynet, 17 April 2018 (in Hebrew); Yotam Berger, "Five right wing activists arrested", Ha'aretz, 31 January 2018.
34. Israel, Ministry of Justice, Israel's Investigation and Prosecution of Ideologically Motivated Offences Against Palestinians in the West Bank, October 2018, p. 1.
35. Yesh Din, Law enforcement on Israeli civilians in the West Bank, Monitoring Update 2005-2017, December 2017.
36. Regarding outposts surrounding Yitzhar settlement, see Yesh Din, Yitzhar – a case study, August 2018; for outposts linked to Itamar settlement see: OCHA, The Humanitarian Bulletin, July 2018;
37. The outposts are Kerem Reim (previously known as Nahlei Tal), Horesh Yaron and Zeit Ra'anana.