

OCHA

occupied Palestinian territory

humanitarian UPDATE

16-31 AUGUST 2003



www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt ▪ ochaopt@un.org

Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

OCHA oPt, MAC House, PO Box 38712, East Jerusalem ▪ Tel +972-2-582 9962 | 582 5853 ▪ Fax +972-2 582 5841

INSIDE Overview ▪ Demolitions and Confiscations for the Wall ▪ Intensified Closures in Tulkarem and Qalqilya ▪ IDF Military actions in Nablus ▪ Missile attacks in Gaza and IHL ▪ Reinstated Checkpoints

Overview:

The last two weeks witnessed a dramatic turn for the worse in the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While both IDF and Palestinian militant attacks had been on the increase in early August, by the middle of the month, the violence reached a new intensity after several IDF assassinations and a suicide bombing of a Jerusalem bus on 19 August, killing 21 civilians, including seven children and teenagers.

As a result, over a dozen civilians have been killed and hundreds injured, over fifty Palestinian shops and homes have been demolished and/or damaged, and over 50 acres of agricultural land destroyed. The IDF increased its military presence in several Palestinian towns and villages placing them under curfew and/or strict closure. It also reinstated many of the checkpoints and roadblocks it had removed previously.

At the same time, construction of the "Wall" continued with a new intensity around Tulkarem and in the Jerusalem area. In order to advance the Wall's construction, the IDF demolished 122 Palestinian shops (with an estimated annual turnover of \$10 million) and 7 homes in Nazlat Issa and issued over a dozen new confiscation orders for approximately 17km of Palestinian land around Jerusalem.

Alert: OCHA Report on the Jerusalem Wall to be released on September 15th.

Report will include the most up-to-date maps of the wall's current and projected trajectory in and around the Jerusalem area.

- Over a ¼ of a million Palestinians will be affected.
- 170,000 square-meters of Palestinian land is being seized to construct the Jerusalem sections of the Wall.
- The construction will constitute the most profound change to the Jerusalem boundaries since 1967.

Israel's security concerns for its civilian population remain a serious issue. The military incursions, severe closures and the Wall construction, however, must be considered in proportion to the significant negative humanitarian impact on entire populations in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Wall... 129 Palestinian Houses and Shops Demolished



In the largest single demolition operation in years, the IDF destroyed 7 residential houses and 115 shops and workshops in Nazlat Isa on 21 August and seized four acres of property on which these buildings were located. On 31 August, the IDF demolished an additional 7 shops. Residents were given 30 minutes to evacuate homes and premises before the demolitions started. These demolitions have nearly completed the destruction of the town's commercial area.

Some 82 shops in the same area were destroyed by the IDF in January 2003.

Nazlat Isa is a main Palestinian commercial centre for the Tulkarem area. The yearly turnover for the recently demolished enterprises was approximately US\$10 million, according to the town's Mayor. The commercial value of the land seized is estimated to be over a million dollars (approximately \$280,000 /acre).

This appears to be the final round of demolitions in Nazlat Isa before the actual construction of the Wall in place of these buildings. The demolitions will have severe consequences for the future survival of the town as a commercial trade centre.

The Wall... Approximately \$3 million dollars of Palestinian land seized by IDF

Last month, the IDF served residents of Zeita village with an order to seize around 60 acres of land to begin construction of a second wall west to the existing one. Approximately 180 acres had already been seized for this section of the wall from villages in this area.

On 27 August, the IDF began to uproot olive trees and destroy farmland from Zeita village for this section of the Wall. Palestinian farmers expect about 10,000 trees to be uprooted in the Zeita, Nazlat Issa and Qaffin areas along the Wall's projected trajectory. The estimated total property loss is \$3 million (\$12,000/acre).

Three villages with a combined population of 6000 residents will be caught between the



two walls in an isolated enclave: Nazlat Isa, Baqa Ash Sharqiya and Nazlat Abu Nar.

The Wall... Facilitating the complete closure on 100,000+ Palestinians in Qalqilya, Tulkarem and surrounding villages

Both Qalqilya (pop. 45,000) and Tulkarem (pop. 43,000) have been entirely sealed off – the checkpoints and gates at entrances of the cities are effectively closed. The sealing of these cities has been facilitated by the newly erected Wall which has surrounded Qalqilya entirely and many parts of Tulkarem.

In addition, many of the approximately 50,000 Palestinian residents of the 20 surrounding towns and villages are also under strict closures regimes. The IDF is allowing only humanitarian vehicles through the gates it has erected at the entrances of these villages. All other movement in and out of these areas must be closely coordinated with the IDF. As most of the towns and villages in the Qalqilya and Tulkarem area are interdependent on each other, the closures have caused severe difficulties for the local population to reach schools, health clinics, work places, and maintain contact with family relatives.

Nablus... IDF Actions in Civilian Areas

Following the suicide bombing on 19 August, the IDF escalated its presence in Nablus, imposed curfew in parts of the city and carried out military operations in heavily populated civilian areas. The IDF destroyed by explosives, the doors and/or walls of approximately 40 shops and demolished two homes. In addition, IDF soldiers temporarily occupied approximately 30 houses for up to 48 hours, often confining large numbers of people inside. Access to humanitarian organizations to enter these houses was permitted by the IDF in some cases.

Five surprise invasions of the commercial district of Nablus during the shopping hours were carried out by the IDF. The IDF entered the district in tanks and armoured jeeps, creating panic among the population. As a result of this increased military activity in Nablus, 2 Palestinians were killed and over 60 injured – 29 from live ammunition.

Access to Nablus remains restricted only to residents of the city. Over 170,000 Palestinian residents of villages and towns dependent on Nablus for goods and services are prohibited from entering the city. Nablus residents are prohibited from leaving the city.

Gaza...Six missile attacks in civilian areas

Six IDF missile attacks on vehicles travelling on civilian roads in the Gaza Strip have occurred in the last two weeks, killing 14 Palestinians and injuring 58, including several children. In addition, an eight year old girl was killed from shrapnel from IDF gunfire near Khan Younis. The IDF stated that the missile attacks were aimed at Hamas militants and leaders responsible for past attacks and for planning future ones, although none of those killed were tried and convicted for such offences. Palestinians have fired mortars into Jewish settlements and as far as Ashkelon on 28 August. Following the mortar fire on Ashqalon, the IDF levelled 50 acres of trees and agricultural land in Gaza. The continued violence has met with calls for revenge and the spiral of violence seems inevitably heading towards a further escalation.

Extra-judicial killing and international humanitarian law

International humanitarian law does not permit premeditated killings of persons suspected of hostile activities against the military occupying power. Instead, the 4th Geneva Convention lays out extensive mechanisms for the occupying power to arrest, detain, try persons suspected of hostile acts and even impose a death penalty in specific cases following a fair trial. The use of missiles in civilian areas to carry out the killings, resulting in civilian casualties is also inconsistent with international humanitarian standards which dictate that the occupying power must respect the lives of the residents of the occupied territories.

"Israel's freely acknowledged practice of selected assassinations or targeted killings of Palestinian activists cannot be reconciled with provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention...They also violate... the prohibition on execution of civilians without trial and a fair judicial process. There is no basis for killing protected persons on the basis of suspicion that they have engaged or will engaged in terroristic activities."

Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, UN document A/56/440. 4 Oct 2001.

Gaza restrictions on movement and employment:

After the bus attack in Jerusalem and until the end of the month, no Palestinian workers were permitted to enter Israel from Gaza via Erez. Prior to this, over 11,000 workers had resumed work in Israel. In addition, Netzarim junction was closed.

While closures had been re-imposed in certain parts of the Strip, in other areas movement remained open. Palestinian workers were allowed to enter Erez industrial estate on a daily basis since the bus attack. In addition, Karni crossing remained open for commercial traffic until 28 August. Rafah passenger terminal remained open to the border with Egypt, and no age restrictions were re-imposed.

Two IDF roadblocks reinstated:

Two key roadblocks in the Ramallah area (consisting of earth mounds and/or concrete blocks) – Surda and Ein Arik, were reinstated on 20 August 2003. They had been previously removed on 27 July as part of Israel's implementation of its obligations under the Road Map. With the reimposition of these roadblocks, no vehicular access is possible, including for ambulances. Access and mobility for over 100,000 Palestinians in Ramallah and the 40 outlying villages is severely restricted as a result of these roadblocks.

Statistics Box: 16 August - 31 August 2003

		Notes
Number of Palestinian Deaths	19	
Number of Palestinian Injuries	169	
Number of Israeli Deaths	23	
Number of Israeli Injuries	138	
Ambulance incidents		
Delay 1hr to 3 hrs	14	
Denial of access	10	The patient died
Physical Abuse on medical crew	5	

Curfew:

Curfew was maintained in Jenin city and Camp, Nablus old City and Hebron city.

Sources:

Palestinian Casualties: PRCS, OCHA field offices

Israeli Casualties: UNRWA sitrep, IDF site, Israeli MoFA site, OCHA field offices.

Ambulances: PRCS