



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

Humanitarian Update – October 2004

Israeli incursions leave many Palestinians dead - Humanitarian operation - Gaza, worsening situation – Safety net for Palestinian fishermen - Olive harvest – Access for Palestinians during Ramadan - Contributions to the oPt – School bag distribution - Humanitarian monitoring briefs

Overview

October 2004 was the deadliest month for Palestinians since the Israeli operation “Defensive Shield” in April 2002. At least 114 Palestinians were killed during operation “Days of Penitence”, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH). Five Israelis were killed during the same period. An additional 17 Palestinians were killed in Khan Younis during a two-day Israeli operation that began on 24 October.

In both operations, Israeli forces were trying to stop Palestinian shelling attacks on nearby Israeli towns that caused Israeli casualties. *Please see below: Israeli incursions in Gaza leave many Palestinians dead.*

In October, the IDF also moved into various areas throughout the West Bank causing a number of civilian casualties, including a 12-year-old boy who was killed in Jenin refugee camp, 30 October. Two other boys were wounded.

Distressed by casualties, a spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, “The Secretary-General renews his calls on the government of Israel to take effective measures to avoid any harm to Palestinian civilians, and to have special care for the protection of the children.” *For more on this and Annan’s statement, please see: [http://www.un.org/News/]*

On 26 October, the Israeli Knesset approved the government’s planned withdrawal of settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip. Under the plan, Israel will retain control of Gaza’s borders, coastline and airspace, and the right to conduct operations in the Gaza Strip for security purposes. Four West Bank settlements are also to be evacuated under the same plan.

Israeli incursions in Gaza leave many Palestinians dead

During operation “Days of Penitence”, at least 114 Palestinians were killed and 431 injured, according to the Palestinian MoH. A quarter of those killed (29) were aged 18 years and younger. Among the dead, a grade-five student from an UNRWA school in Khan Younis. She died of injuries from an IDF gunshot wound received while sitting at her desk. The 9-year-old child is the second child in recent weeks to die after being shot while sitting at a desk in an UNRWA school. Two Israeli children were killed in Sderot by homemade rockets fired by Palestinian militants on 29 September.

Operation “Days of Penitence” began on 28 September and lasted 18 days. The stated aim was to push Palestinian missiles out of range of Israeli towns in the western Negev, and in particular Sderot, several kilometres east of the Gaza Strip.

The North Gaza Governorate was continuing damage assessment. However, as of 27 October it had calculated that 141 houses had been destroyed while another 500 sustained damage that was repairable. Ten workshops and eight factories were also destroyed. Approximately 1,200 dunums

(120 hectares) of land planted with citrus and olive trees, and with vegetables were levelled. During the IDF operation, a further 20 water wells and 25 animal pens were destroyed.

On 24 October, in a separate invasion, the IDF moved into the western side of Khan Younis camp, focusing its operations in the Al Batan As Samin neighbourhood near to the Namsawi (Austrian) housing project. During the two-day operation, at least 17 Palestinians were killed including an 11-year-old child, and more than 60 Palestinians were injured. At least two Israeli soldiers were reported injured. UNRWA reports that 33 homes were destroyed affecting 63 families and 305 persons. Between 30 and 40 dunums (3 and 4 hectares) of land were levelled.

The IDF stated that it launched the operation in response to a large number of homemade rockets that were fired into the nearby Gush Katif settlement block. This escalation in mortar attacks by Palestinian militants followed the Israeli killing of a senior Hamas leader, Adnan al-Ghoul, on 21 October in Gaza City.

Humanitarian operation in Gaza

In a humanitarian operation, 339 UNRWA containers filled with basic food supplies, including flour and milk powder for children, entered the Gaza Strip through the Sufa crossing. The operation, which began on 12 October, was a joint initiative of the IDF and the District Liaison Office in Gaza with UNRWA, based on humanitarian needs and in advance of the month of Ramadan.

During the humanitarian operation, which lasted until 21 October, the IDF coordinated passage in order to ensure that the transfer of food containers from the Palestinian side of the Sufa crossing to the UNRWA main storage facilities in Rafah occurred. *For more information, please see:* [<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/>]

Gaza, worsening humanitarian situation

Since the beginning of 2004, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has sharply deteriorated. Intensified movement restrictions on the Palestinian civilian population and the escalation in the conflict are the primary causes.

Between January and through September 2004, 453 Palestinians have been killed as a result of the violence and fighting in Gaza. During the reporting period January through September, an average of 45 Palestinians were killed each month in Gaza - up from 34 a month in 2003.

During the past four years, 24,547 Gazans have been made homeless by Israeli demolitions. Furthermore, extensive land levelling by the IDF has increased food insecurity in Gaza. More than 50% of Beit Hanoun's agricultural land has been destroyed during the last four years, representing a major loss of resources and income to the principal citrus and olive producing areas in the northern Gaza Strip. In July 2004 alone, the IDF cleared 2,890 dunums (289 hectares) of land in Beit Hanoun during the Israeli operation "Forward Shield".

In addition, malnutrition rates have increased and education standards have slumped – 42% of students in Gaza are reported to have recorded lower school achievement.

For more information, please see Gaza on the Edge at: [<http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>]

Safety net for Palestinian fishermen in jeopardy due to IDF restrictions

Many Gazans have traditionally depended on the sea for their livelihood. Of the estimated 1.3 million people living in the Gaza Strip, some 40,000 live off fishing, according to the World Food Programme (WFP).

Restrictions on Palestinian fishermen during the past four years have left many destitute. No fishing has been permitted from approximately 40% of the Gaza coast since October 2003. In the remaining

coastal areas, fishermen are limited to a maximum range of 6 nautical miles - frequently no fishing is permitted at all. Under the Oslo Accords, Gaza fishermen are entitled to fish as far as 20 nautical miles from the coast.

According to WFP, from 2001 to 2003 fishermen in the two large fishing communities, Rafah and Khan Younis, were denied permission to fish for 600 days on security grounds. As a result of these restrictions, most of the fishermen have seen their incomes drop by 70%.

Over-fishing has occurred in areas where fishing is permitted, resulting in a decline in quantity and quality of fish caught. Additionally, the number of fishermen in the Gaza Strip has mushroomed following the ban on Palestinians working in Israel. Those who returned to Gaza hoping to find work in the industry instead found themselves unemployed.

To help the fishermen cope, WFP along with its implementing partner, DANIDA, started Food-for-Work and Food-for-Training projects to support some 1,470 fishermen households, or 8,820 people who have been most affected by the ongoing conflict. *For more information, please see:* [<http://www.wfp.org>]

In related news, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) donated more than \$3 million to WFP in response to an emergency appeal for support to Palestinians affected by the current conflict.

Olive Harvest

The olive is in peak season for harvest from the middle of October to the beginning of November. Forty-five percent of Palestinian agricultural land is planted with olive trees and many local Palestinian communities in the West Bank depend on the olive harvest to survive. This year, a peak-season harvest year, the olive crop was plentiful - there were an estimated 10 million olive trees in the oPt that needed to be picked - and thousands of workers were needed to pick them.

For years, the olive harvest has been conducted by farmers and their extended families. However, due to security measures that Israel has implemented to protect its citizens many Palestinians have been denied access to their lands, particularly lands adjacent to Israeli settlements and settler bypass roads. Many more Palestinians have been blocked by internal closures and the Barrier, or lacked the necessary permits enabling them to travel to their olive groves. For example, from 7 October to 12 October, it was reported that the IDF refused to let Palestinians, including holders of olive harvest permits, of Tura al Gharbiya (Jenin) pass through Um al Rihan gate (a gate that is normally closed to Palestinians, but was supposed to be open during the harvest to those who had permits) to their olive groves west of the Barrier.

Furthermore, restrictions pose an obstacle for farmers to reach the olive presses and markets to sell their oil. For example, on 15 October, the Israeli Border Police imposed a curfew on Beit 'Ur at Tahta and closed the oil press from about 10pm until the next morning, thus disrupting the work during the olive harvest. During the harvest, the oil presses operate 24 hours a day.

In 2003, a non-peak year harvest, there was a surplus of 10,000 metric tons of olive oil, worth approximately US \$35 million, that went unsold due to the closures and movement restrictions to markets.

Physical violence against Palestinians participating in the olive harvest has also been reported.

The Israeli army is obligated under international law to protect Palestinian civilians and allow them, to the fullest extent possible, regular access to their land and markets. In August 2002, the Israeli government reaffirmed to the UN Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy Ms Catherine

Bertini its commitment to allow farmers access to their lands during olive harvest. Furthermore, recently the Israeli army announced that on specific dates it would maintain a presence in olive groves where Palestinian farmers and their families have faced violence in the past by Israeli settlers. *For more information, please see Olive Harvest at: [<http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>]*

Access during Ramadan

Thousands of Palestinian Muslims from the oPt marked the first day of the holy month of Ramadan on 15 October amid tight Israeli security restrictions. Movement of Palestinian worshippers was restricted in several areas including at the main entrance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. Palestinian men younger than 60 years of age were prevented from praying at the site as well as women younger than 40 years of age. (This restriction did not apply to Palestinians with Jerusalem IDs.)

Palestinian movement from the West Bank through checkpoints was also at times problematic – and there are additional security checks along the way to Jerusalem.

Contributions to UNRWA's programmes in the West Bank and Gaza

Saudi Arabia contributed US \$6 million to support UNRWA programmes in the oPt. The contribution will be used to fund the Palestine Refugees Registration Record Project and other education, health and housing projects in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Earlier this year, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia paid to UNRWA US \$ 1.8 million for the agency's regular budget for 2004.

UNRWA also received almost US \$40,000, donated by the Syrian people to help hundreds of Palestinian families whose homes have been demolished or severely damaged in the recent spate of violence and incursions in Jabalia camp, Gaza.

For more information, please see: [<http://www.un.org/unrwa/>]

In addition, an official from Ireland announced a further programme of funding which will amount to over €10 million in assistance to the oPt over a three year period (2005-2007). *For more information, please see: [<http://www.irlgov.ie/>]*

UNICEF starts distribution of 40,000 school bags in Gaza Strip

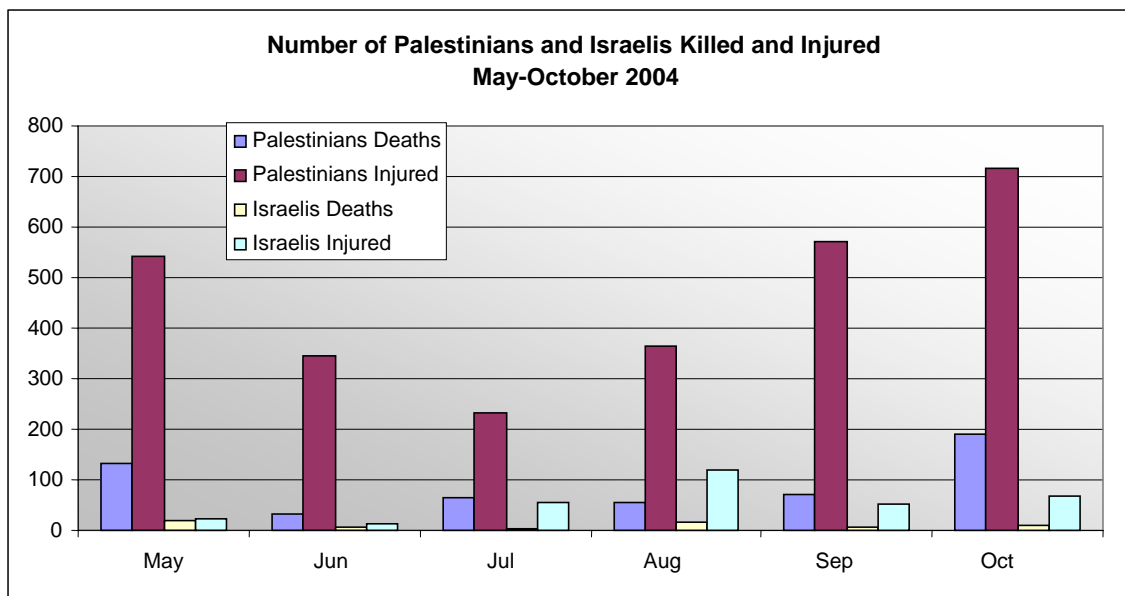
On 19 October, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) began distribution of more than 40,000 school bags to children, starting with schools damaged by the recent IDF military incursions in northern Gaza.

The school bag distribution was timed to coincide with the resumption of classes at the end of a two week disruption - and with the cessation of military activity in northern Gaza. *For more information, please see: [<http://www.unicef.org>]*

Monthly Snapshot of Humanitarian Monitoring Issues

Casualties – Between 29 September and 2 November, 190 Palestinians were killed, and at least 716 were injured. Ten Israelis were killed and 67 injured in the same period. In addition, one international was reported killed and six were injured.

Incidents involving ambulances/medical teams – There were six incidents of ambulances or medical teams being denied access, and 22 incidents of delays. In nine cases, shooting or damage to an ambulance was reported.



Curfews – There were at least 24 incidents of curfew reported between 29 September and 2 November, ranging in duration from two-and-a-half hours to five days. The average duration of curfew was approximately 19 hours and 30 minutes.

Demolitions/people displaced – Demolition assessments are still ongoing in Gaza, the most accurate figures received by OCHA are those noted above: at least 237 structures were destroyed, most of which were houses, and at least a further 500 were damaged *Please see: Israeli incursions in Gaza leave many Palestinians dead*. In the West Bank, at least 11 structures were reported demolished, the majority of which were houses. In addition, four houses were partially destroyed.

Land reports –Land levelling assessments are still ongoing in Gaza, the most accurate figures received by OCHA are those noted above: at least 1,230 dunums (123 hectares) of land were levelled. *Please see: Israeli incursions in Gaza leave many Palestinians dead*. In the West Bank, at least 8 dunums (0.8 hectares) of land were levelled, the majority of which was agricultural land. In addition, at least 71 trees were uprooted or destroyed. Land levelling for the Barrier has continued in Hebron district and requisition orders have been issued for land belonging to Rantis village in Ramallah district, as part of new Barrier construction between the village and Deir Ballut in Salfit district. It is unclear how much land is involved. *For more details, please see Humanitarian Briefing Notes at: [http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/]*

Sources: OCHA, FCU, PRCS, UNRWA, IDF, MoFA, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, PCHR

For more information on humanitarian monitoring issues, go to OCHA Updates at: [http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/]

This update will be produced regularly by OCHA oPt to capture the main events and trends of humanitarian developments in the territory. OCHA invites UN agencies, international organisations, NGOs and donors to submit contributions for future issues.

Arabic and Hebrew versions will be made available on the OCHA website: [http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/]