



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

Humanitarian Update – December 2004

Overview

Ad Hoc Liaison Committee Meeting

Donor contributions to the oPt: UNRWA receives \$90 million, PA receives \$20 million from the US, EC provides €7 million, OPEC supports West Bank organisations, USAID supports Palestinian legal sector

Humanitarian reports: OCHA/UNSCO *The Changing Face of Bethlehem*, World Health Organization *Israeli-Palestinian Health Magazine*, PCBS *Second Quarter report on Palestinian socio-economic conditions*

Events in December affecting the humanitarian situation: 45 house demolitions in East Jerusalem, Jayyous farmland deteriorating, Khan Younis operations, Gaza divided, Israel opens checkpoint, UN personnel return to Gaza Strip

Humanitarian monitoring issues

Overview

- The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) chaired by Norway and the European Union met in Oslo on 8 December. The AHLC demonstrated the strong support of the international community for the Palestinian leadership in transition. *Please see below, Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for Assistance to the Palestinians*
- On 23 December, thousands of voters throughout the West Bank voted in the municipality elections. These elections were the first local elections in nearly three decades, and local voting in additional cities, towns and villages is expected in 2005.
- Terje Roed-Larsen, currently the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, was named the Special Envoy for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559, which calls on foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon. His new post is effective 3 January 2005.

Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for assistance to the Palestinians

The United Nations, the international donor community and high-level participants from the PA and the government of Israel concluded at the end of the AHLC meeting in Oslo that an opportunity now exists for renewed engagement toward a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, further steps must be taken by both Israelis and Palestinians to improve the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and Israel.

Israel must, to the greatest possible extent, lift the closures in the Palestinian territory to increase freedom of movement and ease the humanitarian situation for the Palestinians. Palestinians must redouble reform efforts, specifically in the judicial and security areas – which could help attract investors back to the Palestinian economy.

These measures would help bring the Palestinian economy out of its present stagnation, the World Bank noted. Such transition is crucial: Palestinians are heavily dependent on external assistance, and the PA and donors must consider how to ensure that humanitarian assistance does not become a structural feature of the Palestinian economy.

Furthermore, only significant efforts by both parties can justify a major increase in donor levels; in addition to money, the right environment is paramount to a successful economy.

And “while economic growth and prosperity do not of themselves guarantee peace, it is clear that steep economic decline helps foster an environment in which violent doctrines can resonate,” said

Nigel Roberts, World Bank country director for West Bank and Gaza. *For more information, please see: [*<http://web.worldbank.org/>*]*

A World Bank report released 2 December, which was endorsed by the AHLC, noted, “While money, and in particular donor money, has an important role to play in reviving the economy, it is not the determining factor. The last four years exemplify how little donor assistance can achieve in the absence of a positive policy environment – while donor disbursements doubled to almost US \$1 billion per annum, real personal incomes fell by almost 40 percent in the same period.” *To read the full report “Stagnation or Revival? Israeli Disengagement and Palestinian Economic Prospects,” please see: [*<http://web.worldbank.org/>*]*

Donor contributions to the oPt

UNRWA receives \$90 million

Eighteen donor countries pledged approximately US \$90 million for the 2005 budget of UNRWA, during the 6 December meeting of the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee for Voluntary Contributions.

Peter Hansen, commissioner-general of UNRWA, stressed that the agency could not maintain the quality of education, welfare and development assistance given to Palestinian refugees without more contributions. The agency's US \$339 million budget for 2005 was nominally 2.7% higher over the previous year, yet lower in real terms, with 66% allocated for education programmes, 22% for health care and the remaining 12% for relief and social services. *For more information, please see: [*<http://www.un.org/unrwa/>*]*

Also regarding the agency, on 16 December UNRWA handed over keys to new homes to most of the 435 families whose houses were destroyed during an Israeli incursion into the West Bank town of Jenin in 2002. The rebuilding was made possible by a US \$27 million donation from the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates. *For more information, please see: [*<http://www.un.org/News/>*]*

Palestinian Authority receives \$20 million in US aid

The US Government has transferred \$20 million in cash to the interim Palestinian leadership, underlining US confidence in the PA's reform program. The Palestinian Ministry of Finance received the funds 28 December.

The funds will be used to meet budget priorities identified by the Ministry of Finance, including the costs of electricity, water, sewage and other utility services.

Since 1993, Palestinians have received more than \$1.3 billion in US economic assistance via United States Agency for International Development (USAID) projects - more than from any other donor country. Most of the funds go for major infrastructure development projects from the building of road and water systems to the construction of schools and clinics.

This is the second time the US Government has provided direct budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. *For more information, please see: [*<http://www.usaid.gov/>*]*

EC provides €7 million in humanitarian aid

In December, the European Commission allocated a further €7 million in humanitarian aid for people made vulnerable by the Middle East crisis. The aid is intended to provide access to food, clean water and sanitation for the poorest Palestinians living in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

The aid package includes food aid for 12,000 Bedouin families in the Gaza Strip. Wells and irrigation systems will be rehabilitated for the benefit of 5,000 farmers whose assets were destroyed during military operations. In areas affected by the West Bank Barrier, rehabilitated water tanks and sewage treatment systems will serve 8,000 people. *For more information, please see:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/index_en.htm]

OPEC supports civil society organisations in the West Bank

On 14 December, the OPEC Fund for International Development approved a grant of approximately US \$1.3 million to support the activities and services of 13 civil society organisations in the West Bank. The aim is to assist the poorest and hardest hit communities by addressing shortages and helping to meet some of their most urgent needs. *For more information, please see:* [<http://www.opecfund.org/>]

Bolstering the Palestinian legal sector

USAID announced the launch of a US \$4 million project aimed at strengthening judicial and legal reform and bolstering public trust in the Palestinian legal system.

With offices in Ramallah and Gaza City, the three-year project, Supporting Rule of Law Reform, will work with law faculties, civil society organisations, and professional groups across the West Bank and Gaza. The US consulting firm Chemonics International is implementing the project. *For more information, please see* [<http://www.usaid.gov/>]

Recent published reports relevant to the humanitarian situation

The Changing Face of Bethlehem

The spiritual, cultural and economic lifelines of Bethlehem traditionally tied to Jerusalem, located just a few kilometres away, are being undermined by Israeli closures, settlements and the Barrier according to a joint report by OCHA and the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Peace Process in the Middle East (UNSCO) published 21 December. There are 84 physical obstacles – dirt mounds, checkpoints etc. – surrounding urban Bethlehem.

Bethlehem's economy has been devastated in the last four years by the loss of tourists and pilgrims. Before the current Intifada, the people of Bethlehem had a much lower rate of dependency on Israel for work than most other urban centres in the West Bank as they were able to rely on tourism. Today with the tourism sector decimated, most residents can barely make a living. Seventy-two of the 80 businesses in the area have closed or relocated to the city centre since 2002. *For more information or to read the full report, please see:* "Cost of Conflict: The Changing Face of Bethlehem" at [<http://www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt/>]

Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) website said that there would be an easing of restrictions for the Palestinian population in light of the Christmas season: Christians are authorised to travel from the Gaza Strip to Bethlehem, between 24 December and 19 January. Christians from the Gaza Strip will be allowed, with proper permits, to enter Israel in order to visit relatives and attend religious ceremonies. *For more information, please see:* [www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/homepage]

New public health magazine addresses health situation in the oPt

Israeli and Palestinian health professionals - supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) - have joined together to co-author Bridges, an Israeli-Palestinian Public Health Magazine. The bimonthly magazine aims to improve the health situation for people in West Bank and Gaza Strip. *To read the magazine, please see:* [<http://www.healthinforum.net/files/who/bridges.pdf>]

PCBS Second Quarter 2004 Report on Palestinian socio-economic conditions

Palestinian society still suffers from several problems including a high unemployment rate and high levels of poverty; difficulty in accessing places of education and health centres; destruction of buildings and infrastructure; and losses in the Palestinian economy, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Second Quarter (PCBS) report on Palestinian socio-economic conditions.

According to the report, unemployment rate in the second quarter 2004 was 28.6% as compared to 10% in the third quarter 2000. Furthermore, the percentage of poor households is increasing amounting to 58.1% in the second quarter 2004.

The report states, “Economic deterioration in the Palestinian society can be referred to Israeli measures imposed upon the Palestinian people where many Palestinian laborers lost their jobs in the Israeli labor market or enjoyed fewer privileges. On the other hand, both the Palestinian private and public sectors could not fill in the gap or even preserve employment of main labor especially in the private sector.”

In addition, Israel has displaced about 2,173 households including 11,461 persons from Palestinian cities, villages and towns affected by the Barrier (figures through March 2004). The Jerusalem Governorate had the highest share of displacement measures, where 1,150 households (5,920 persons) were displaced, according to the PCBS Second Quarter 2004 Report.

To read the full report, please see: [<http://www.pcbs.org>]

Events affecting the humanitarian situation in December

45 apartments and 27 Bedouin structures demolished in East Jerusalem

In the beginning of December, Israeli authorities destroyed more than 45 residential apartment units, home to more than 250 East Jerusalem Palestinian residents. A further 27 Bedouin structures were also destroyed, according to the Jerusalem Center for Social & Economic Rights (JCSER). Since the beginning of 2004, the centre notes that more than 115 Palestinian residential buildings including more than 170 residential units have been destroyed.

Palestinians in East Jerusalem face many obstacles to obtain building permits from the Jerusalem municipality. It is estimated that some one-third of the buildings in East Jerusalem (some 10,000 houses) were built without permits and are thus illegal under Israeli law, and that four out of every five houses built every year are illegal, according to the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (based on JSCER, Chronic Racial Discrimination in East Jerusalem, 2003.) *Housing conditions are monitored weekly by the OCHA oPt office, please see Humanitarian Briefing Notes at: [<http://www.ochaopt.org/>]*

Jayyous farmland deteriorating

Jayyous is a farming community in Qalqiliya Governate that is at risk of being completely cut off from its land. At least 70% of the villagers' farmland and all their irrigated land are located beyond the Barrier, and further land levelling and tree uprooting are threatening the community's ability to support itself. The Jayyous area comprises the best agricultural land belonging to the Palestinians.

On 21 December, Israel completed the uprooting of olive trees located beyond the Barrier near Jayyous. An estimated total of 300 to 350 olive trees have been uprooted, according to activist groups present on the ground.

Furthermore, Jayyous villagers must apply to Israel for permits to access their farmlands and access is also restricted by time limits imposed on Barrier gates through which villagers must pass to reach their lands. Due to these restrictions, farmland is deteriorating.

The situation in Jayyous is not unique but representative of what is happening elsewhere in the West Bank.

26 Palestinians killed 67 homes demolished in IDF operations in Khan Younis

Eleven Palestinians were killed in a two-day IDF military operation in Khan Younis that ended 19 December. At least 52 others were injured, including 25 children.

Forty-four Palestinian houses were demolished; 308 people were made homeless.

According to the IDF, the aim of the operation was to minimise the firing of mortar shells and Qassam rockets at Israeli communities in Gush Katif, the western Negev and IDF posts in the area. In one week in December, the IDF reported that Palestinian militants fired more than 50 mortar shells and Qassam rockets, killing one and wounding 18 civilians and IDF soldiers. *For more information, please see: [www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/homepage]*

Another IDF incursion in the area occurred on 22 December that left five Palestinians dead and 20 injured, including eight children. Ten houses were demolished; 50 people were made homeless. In a further incursion in the Amal neighbourhood and western area of Khan Younis refugee camp between 30 and 31 December, 10 Palestinians were killed and 27 injured. Thirteen homes were destroyed and seven partially destroyed affecting 38 families and leaving 255 people homeless.

This operation came in response to the continued firing of homemade rockets by Palestinian militants. The IDF stated that the army would not leave Khan Younis before "significantly weakening the ability to launch projectiles".

Israel divides Gaza into three sections

Following an attack on an Israeli army post where five IDF soldiers were killed and six injured on 12 December, Israeli troops divided the Gaza Strip into three separate zones, and closed all border crossings. They also closed all border crossings of the Gaza Strip. Rafah Terminal remains closed. *For more information, please see: [http://www.mfa.gov.il]*

Israel opens Shave Shomeron Checkpoint

The IDF announced that the Shave Shomeron checkpoint was removed 4 December. (The physical structure is still intact, but only occasionally manned.) The checkpoint had been erected as a double-check measure affecting vehicles and pedestrians leaving Nablus City through Beit Iba checkpoint or Huwwara checkpoint, and to control the movement between the governorates of Nablus and Jenin. The direct effect of the removal of the checkpoint is the "free" passage of vehicles from Jenin Governorate through Road 60 to Zaatara (Tappuah) checkpoint and/or to the checkpoints at the entrances of Nablus City.

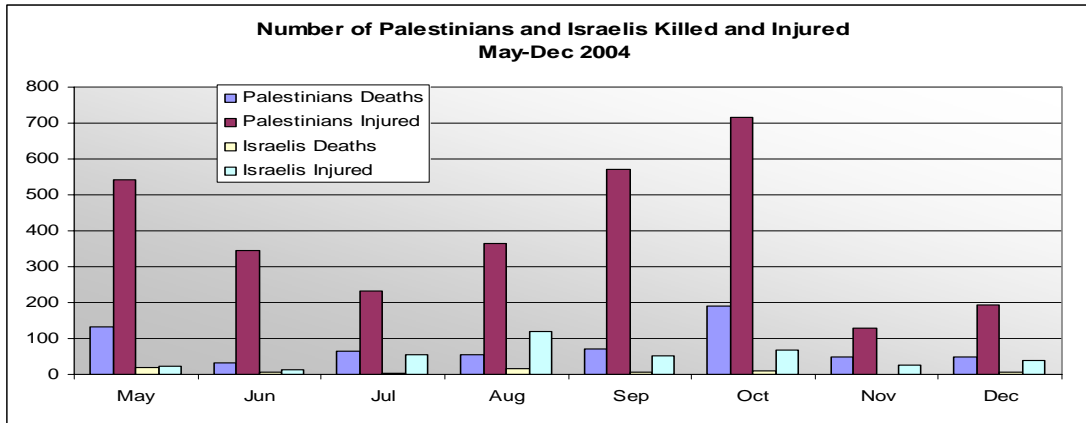
However, for Nablus City residents and for residents of the surrounded closed villages, the removal of Shave Shomeron checkpoint has a minimal effect. Residents cannot leave the city without going through at least one checkpoint. Nablus City has unique closure timing: the checkpoints around the city open at 6am and close at 5.30 pm, which means the city is "sealed" 52% of the time.

UN phases down Gaza Strip to Phase 3, UN personnel return

In other news, UNRWA staff returned to the Gaza Strip after a five-month absence due to deteriorating security in the territory. After consultation with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, UNRWA decided to send back the 39 UN international staff who had been relocated to Jerusalem and Amman.

Monthly snapshot of humanitarian monitoring issues

Casualties – Between 1 December and 28 December, 49 Palestinians were killed, and at least 192 were injured. Seven Israeli were killed and 39 were injured in the same period. There was also one death of an international reported, and two injuries.¹



Incidents involving ambulances/medical teams – There were nine incidents of an ambulance or medical team being denied access, and nine reported incidents of delays. In a further seven incidents shooting or damage to an ambulance was reported. In one incident on 28 December, included in the above, a PRCS ambulance was delayed for three hours at At Tuffah checkpoint in Khan Younis while transporting a pregnant woman who later gave birth in the ambulance.

Curfews – There were at least six incidents of curfew reported between 1 and 28 December, one in access of four days.

Demolitions/people displaced – At least 97 structures were demolished in the oPt, between 1 and 28 December most of which were living accommodations. However, included in the 97 were several multi-storey buildings, a gas station, several shops and at least five animal pens. In addition, a number of Bedouin structures were also destroyed. A further nine structures were partially destroyed and another 43 were damaged to a lesser extent.

Land levelling and requisitions – At least 144 dunums (14.4 hectares) of land were levelled and an additional 300 to 350 trees were uprooted. However, there were additional reports of land leveling, mostly for Barrier construction, where it was not possible to estimate the amount of land involved. In addition, requisition orders covering at least 792 dunums (79.2 hectares) of land were also issued. *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, Palestinian DCL, Village Council

For more information on humanitarian monitoring issues, go to OCHA Updates at:
[<http://www.ochaopt.org/>]

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.

An Arabic will be made available on the OCHA website: [<http://www.ochaopt.org/>]

¹ Chart reflects monthly reporting periods. For example, December figures reflect casualties between 1 December and 28 December.