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Humanitarian Monitoring Report – August 2004

The Humanitarian Monitoring Report is produced monthly by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It draws on information from the Access, Closure and Information System (ACIS), among other data sources that humanitarian agencies have submitted to OCHA. The report is provided to the Task Force on Project Implementation (TFPI) as a basis for discussions with the government of Israel. It is available on the website (www.reliefweb.int/hic-opt).

Context

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Ms Catherine Bertini as his Personal Humanitarian Envoy to address the humanitarian needs arising from the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict since September 2000. Ms Bertini was requested to assess the nature and scale of the humanitarian needs, and to clarify the respective responsibilities of all actors with regard to humanitarian needs.

This report monitors the humanitarian commitments made by the government of Israel to Ms Bertini during a mission to the region from 12 to 19 August 2002. It concluded that there were serious humanitarian problems linked to the ongoing conflict and, specifically, to the measures implemented by the government of Israel to safeguard its citizens from Palestinian attacks.

These security measures, including curfews, closures and roadblocks, led to a crisis of access and mobility, instigating a drastic decline in the Palestinian economy. A large part of the Palestinian population has difficulty accessing basic services such as health and education. Humanitarian service providers such as UN agencies, NGOs, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) ambulances, have experienced problems providing assistance and services to beneficiaries.

Commitments

Health

- Ambulances will wait no more than 30 minutes at checkpoints.
- Mechanisms will be set in place to ensure patients seeking critical medical services (child delivery, dialysis, chemotherapy) can pass all checkpoints quickly.

Water

- Problems relating to water deliveries in Palestinian towns and villages will be addressed to ensure that daily provision of adequate volume can be supplied by Palestinian water tankers.

Facilitation of International Humanitarian Organisations

- The government of Israel will fully facilitate the activities of international organisations, with particular reference to UNRWA.
- The government of Israel agreed to review and strengthen the liaison arrangements between international agencies and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Additional Commitments

On previous occasions, the government of Israel has made the following commitments, which were confirmed to the mission:

- The fishing zone for Palestinian boats off the Gaza coast will be extended to 12 nautical miles
- Olive farmers will be allowed access to their fields.
- Increased shipments will be enabled at Karni crossing in the Gaza Strip.
- The number of permits for Palestinian workers in Israel will be increased.

The Bertini Commitments represent a minimum and specific set of humanitarian standards agreed to by the government of Israel. The Bertini Commitments are not a substitute for compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention. The maximum waiting period of 30 minutes for an ambulance at a checkpoint, for example, while an improvement on the situation in August 2002, falls short of the intent of provisions of IHL.

Executive Summary

Health

Palestinian and UNRWA ambulance operators reported at least 31 humanitarian access incidents (compared to 41 in July 2004) in which the provision of first aid and/or medical evacuations was delayed, obstructed and/or prevented by the IDF. PRCS reports that delays, denials of access and arbitrary searches had a negative impact on the sick and wounded in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), including the areas of Ramallah, Nablus, Tubas and Gaza.

Water

Water and Sanitation, Hygiene (WaSH) Monitoring Project reports that closure has had the main direct effect on the WaSH situation in the West Bank as well as in the Gaza Strip. In August for two days, Gaza Strip was divided into three parts: northern, middle and the southern part. The three parts were completely closed and residents of one part were unable to reach the other two parts. Maintenance teams trying to reach the needed areas were prohibited from reaching their destinations.

Facilitation of International Humanitarian Organisations

In August 2004, international relief agencies filed at least 108 incident reports in which the delivery of aid and/or the movement of personnel were obstructed by the IDF or Israeli Border Police. Most incidents reported included delays and disrespect by the IDF of international humanitarian organisations' mandates, privileges and immunities.

The IDF, which had established a cordon around Beit Hanoun on 28 June 2004, withdrew from northern Gaza on 5 August 2004. UNRWA operations were severely disrupted contributing to a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation of the affected areas, the agency reported.

Additional Commitments

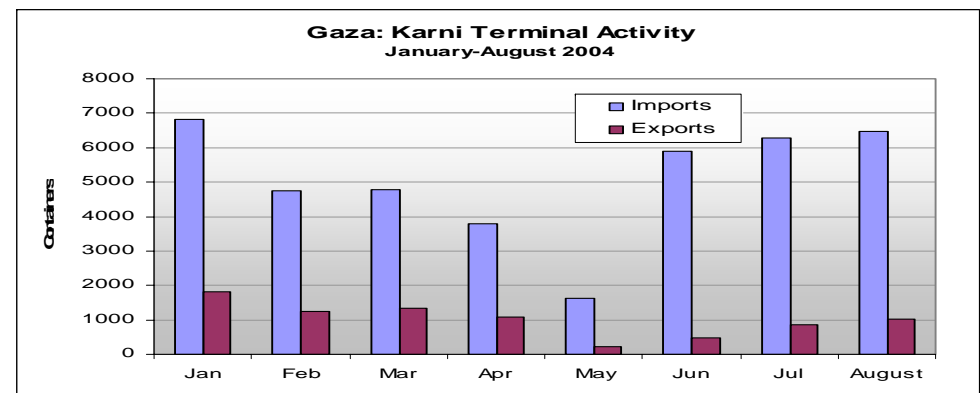
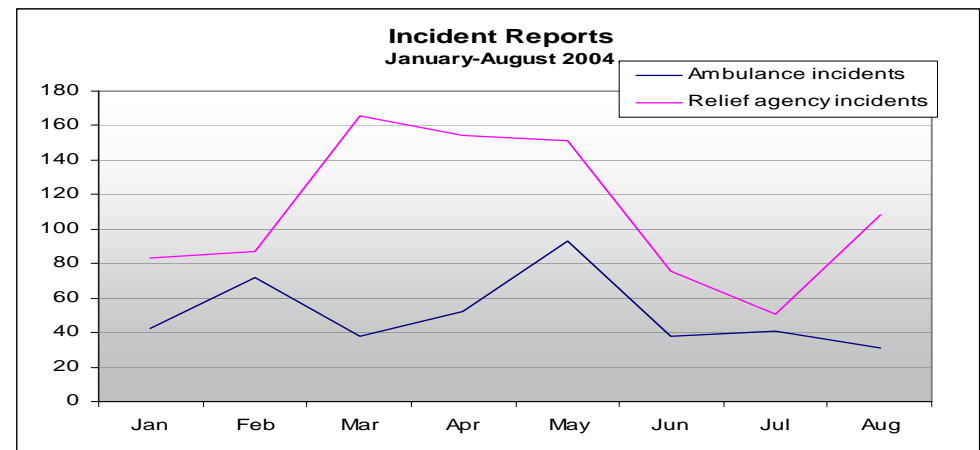
The number of containers entering Gaza from Israel, the West Bank and elsewhere, steadily increased in August with a total of 6,477 units compared to 6,290 in July. Exports are approaching the levels seen in April just before the introduction of new security measures. In August, 1,020 containers with commercial produce left the Gaza Strip. The 1,020 units fall short of the 1,073 that left Gaza in April, but the number is more than four times the figure of May when only 239 containers were exported. Exports in August accounted for approximately 13% of terminal activity which is nearly double the figure for June of 7.3% but still well short of the 20 to 22% range seen between January and April.

Furthermore, while the number of workers entering Israel and the industrial zone is starting to increase, the figures remain less than those at the end of 2003 and early 2004. Currently, an average of 1,731 workers are crossing into Israel daily and 355 into the industrial zone. This

represents a reduction of more than 88% in the total number of workers - and a huge loss of income to the local economy.

The restrictions imposed by the IDF since October 2003, that were originally intended to be for six months, remain in place 10 months later.

Fishermen are unable to drop nets over approximately 40% of the Gaza coastline. Where they are permitted to do so, they are unable to go beyond six nautical miles, which is half the distance of the Israeli government commitment.



Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p>1. Health</p> <p>Palestinian ambulances will wait no more than 30 minutes at any checkpoints</p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p> <p>Effective mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that Palestinians seeking critical medical services (child delivery, dialysis, chemo-therapy, etc) can quickly pass all checkpoints</p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p>	<p>Instructions issued to all checkpoint commanders concerning maximum time for ambulance delay at checkpoints</p> <p>Palestinian Ministry of Health, PRCS, UNRWA and hospitals no longer report ambulance delays at checkpoints</p> <p>Mechanisms established and Palestinian public informed.</p> <p>Explicit instructions issued to all checkpoint commanders</p> <p>No more reported instances of Palestinians in need of critical medical services being denied passage at checkpoints</p>	<p><i>West Bank & Gaza: 31 incidents</i></p> <p>Palestinian and UNRWA ambulance operators reported at least 31 humanitarian access incidents (compared to 41 in July 2004) in which the provision of first aid and/or medical evacuations was delayed, obstructed and/or prevented by the IDF.</p> <p><i>Ambulance Access Denials</i></p> <p>Of the 31 incidents reported, six included humanitarian access denials.</p> <p><i>Ambulance Delays</i></p> <p>There were 23 documented incidents of delays, in excess of 30 minutes.</p> <p><i>Other Reports</i></p> <p>In August, at least two incidents were reported in which crews came under IDF attack (firing at and/or physically abusing crews or medical equipment).</p>	<p>At the Rafah Terminal, ambulances must transfer patients through the “back-to-back” method, in which patients are transferred from the rear of one vehicle to the rear of another. Due to closures and other imposed restrictions at the Rafah Terminal, the number of patients crossing there has reduced significantly. Israeli authorities are still not allowing Palestinians, including patients, aged 16 to 35 to travel out of Gaza. Those with metal implants are also restricted.</p> <p>MoH reported only 50 patients out of 300 were permitted to pass for further treatment in Egypt through Rafah terminal since it reopened for travellers on 9 August.</p> <p>PRCS reported that delays, denial of access and arbitrary searches had a negative impact on the sick and wounded in the oPt, including the areas of Ramallah, Nablus, Tubas and Gaza.</p>
Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p>2. Water</p> <p>Problems related to water deliveries to Palestinian towns and villages will be addressed to ensure that daily water deliveries in proper quantities can be supplied by Palestinian water tankers.</p>	<p>Instructions issued to all checkpoints allowing for the easy transfer of water tankers through all checkpoints</p> <p>The IDF removes barriers that prevent the access by water tankers to villages that rely on tankered water</p>	<p><i>West Bank</i></p> <p>In Deir Sharafi (Nablus District) Israeli military vehicles closed the roads leading to the community during the first week of August 2004, according to WaSH. This caused the breakdown of the water pipes supplying water to the community, and caused a leak of more than 15 cubic meters of water.</p> <p>In Majdal Bani Fadil, (southeast of Nablus city) the main source of water for the water tankers is a filling point in the Magdolim settlement, about 5 kilometres away. When the main road to the community is closed, drivers take a 30-kilometre detour - as was reported in August.. This causes an increase in the price of transported water from NIS 8 to about NIS 14 per cubic meter.</p>	<p>WaSH reports that closure has the main direct effect on the WaSH situation in the West Bank as well as in the Gaza Strip. In August for two days, Gaza Strip was divided into three parts: northern, middle and the southern part. The three parts were completely closed and none of the residents of one part were able to reach the other two parts. Maintenance teams trying to reach the needed areas were prohibited from reaching their destinations.</p>

<p><i>Water continued</i></p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini Mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p>	<p>No reports on lack of water or delay/stoppage of water tankers at checkpoints</p>	<p>Jalqamus, Umm at Tut, Al Mughayyir, and 'Aqqaba communities (Jenin) have water networks. However in August, the limited quantity supplied to the area in addition to the state of the old pump / main water line carrying water from the Palestinian Water Authority well in Qabatya meant coverage was limited to 20% of the population.</p> <p>On 15 August, the Bani Zeid West Municipality reported that settlers from Halmish settlement closed the valve that regulates the supply of water from Mekorot, the Israeli water undertaking, to the Bani Zeid cluster of villages. Settlers prohibited the municipality maintenance team from opening the valve to supply water to the five communities. On 22 August, Mekorot opened the valve, but settlers closed it again. Mekorot also reduced the water supply to the villages, a condition that continued throughout August – a condition that occurs yearly during the dry summer months.</p> <p><i>Gaza</i></p> <p>Water networks in the Beit Hanoun area were damaged during IDF operations in late July/August 2004. The Municipality reported damages to the main supply lines, pipes and manholes at an estimated cost of US\$ 250,000. In addition, 17 privately-owned wells, which provided household and agricultural supplies, were destroyed. The municipal sewerage network was similarly damaged as were septic tanks and 100 garbage containers.</p>	
Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p>3. Facilitation of International Humanitarian Organisations</p> <p>Israel will fully facilitate the assistance activities of international organisations with particular reference to UNRWA</p>	<p>Free access for all international staff of international organisations throughout the West Bank and Gaza, and at international crossings, at all times</p> <p>Free access for all Palestinian staff of international organisations throughout the West Bank and Gaza at all</p>	<p>In August 2004 international relief agencies filed at least 108 incident reports¹ in which the delivery of aid and/or the movement of personnel was obstructed by the IDF or Israeli Border Police. Most incidents reported included delays and disrespect by the IDF of international humanitarian organisations' mandates, privileges and immunities.</p> <p><i>Access by UNRWA staff</i></p> <p>There were frequent reports of delays or refusal to permit UNRWA vehicles and staff to pass through IDF checkpoints. There was a marked increase in the number of access incidents reported in August. There were 105 access problems² at IDF and Border Police checkpoints (compared to 51 in July). There were 86 incidents</p>	<p>IDF forces which had established a cordon around Beit Hanoun on 28 June 2004 withdrew from northern Gaza on 5 August. UNRWA operations were severely disrupted contributing to a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation of the affected areas. The situation in Gaza calmed down after the redeployment of IDF soldiers. However, there were incidents reported of the closure of</p>

¹ These figures apply only to the humanitarian aid organisations that reported incidents at checkpoints to OCHA.

² These figures apply only to reported incidents involving UNRWA staff travelling in humanitarian agency vehicles, which is only a small fraction of UNRWA staff in the West Bank. Most staff members use their private or public transportation to report to duty.

<p><i>Facilitation of International Humanitarian Organisations continued</i></p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p> <p>Israel agrees to review and strengthen the liaison arrangements between international agencies and the IDF to facilitate assistance activities</p> <p>(government of Israel to Bertini mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p> <p>Israel will improve the situation at checkpoints, including the deployment of more experienced IDF personnel</p>	<p>times</p> <p>No delays/ stoppage of international organisations' transport of development and humanitarian goods at any point (that is, at international borders, borders between Israel and the West Bank or Gaza, within the West Bank or Gaza) at any time</p> <p>Palestinian drivers (with either Jerusalem or West Bank ID) allowed to drive humanitarian vehicles for international organisations, in particular UNRWA, WFP and ICRC</p> <p>Procedures will be established that provide direct access by international organisations to operational and command structures within the IDF</p>	<p>in which vehicles were delayed, affecting 243 staff members, and 19 incidents in which access was refused, affecting 42 staff members; in total 285 staff members. Examples of the above are listed here:</p> <p>26 August: at least 350 UNRWA staff members were unable to return to their homes due to a closure of the Abu Houli checkpoint.</p> <p>31 August: Israeli authorities closed the Erez Terminal and did not allow Palestinians and international workers to cross into Israel.</p> <p>Humanitarian NGOs reported three access incidents in which staff were delayed, denied access of assaulted.</p>	<p>Abu Houli/ Gush Qatif checkpoint on 26 and 27 August and a complete closure of the Erez checkpoint on 31 August 2004. The usual restrictions on entry to Al Mawasi and Seafa/Dugit area remained in place.</p> <p>UN staff members continued to report incidents where IDF soldiers at checkpoints refused to cooperate with the District Coordination Liaison Office (DCL), and/or accept the validity of UN ID cards, insisting instead that staff show national passports or other ID cards.</p>
Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p>4. Additional Commitments</p> <p>The fishing zone for Palestinian fishing boats off the Gaza coast will be extended to 12 nautical miles</p>	<p>Extension of fishing zone fully implemented.</p> <p>No arrests of fishermen or confiscation of fishing boats within the 12 nautical mile zone</p>	<p>Restrictions remain over a large stretch of the Gaza coastline. Boats are permitted up to travel 6 nautical miles from the coast, and to an area between Deir El Balah in central Gaza up to Dugit settlement in northern Gaza.</p> <p>Since 19 October 2003, no fishing has been permitted from either Khan Younis wharf or Rafah wharf, both located inside Al Mawasi. While a small number of boats periodically leave the Rafah wharf without Israeli authorisation, fishing limits rarely exceed 400 metres.</p> <p>Due to these restrictions, most of the registered³ fishermen from the Al Mawasi area, 473 from Khan Younis and 310 from Rafah, have relocated their boats and nets to the Deir El Balah wharf to avoid the closed area.</p>	<p>The restrictions imposed by the IDF since October 2003, that were originally intended to be for six months, remain in place 10 months later.</p> <p>Fishermen are unable to drop nets over approximately 40% of the Gaza coastline. Where they are permitted to do so, they are unable to go beyond six nautical miles, which is half the distance of the Israeli government commitment.</p>

³ Registered refers to fishermen registered with Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture

<p><i>Additional Commitments Continued</i></p> <p>An increase in shipments at Karni crossing, Gaza strip</p>	<p>Quantifiable increase in humanitarian aid shipments permitted through the crossing</p>	<p>The increase in monthly imports and exports (measured by the number of containers moving in and out of Gaza via Karni Terminal) that began in May, continued through August. Trade declined significantly in April and May due to new security measures that were introduced at Karni following the suicide attack at Ashdod port in March that killed 10 Israelis.</p> <p>Karni was open daily in August; between 1 June and 31 August, the terminal was open every working day with the exception of two days in July. In May, there was a full closure between 11 and 30 May.</p> <p>The number of containers entering Gaza from Israel, the West Bank and elsewhere, steadily increased in August with a total of 6,477 units compared to 6,290 in July and 5,909 for June and 1,626 in May.</p> <p>Gaza exports are increasing and approaching the levels seen in April just before the introduction of new Israeli security measures. In August, 1,020 containers with commercial produce left the Gaza Strip, compared to 859 in July and 469 in June. The 1,020 units fall short of the 1,073 that left Gaza in April, but is more than four times the figure of May when only 239 containers were exported.</p> <p>UNRWA and the World Food Programme continue to face severe restrictions on the import of relief supplies through Karni. In spite of the installation of a container x-ray machine on 23 August, the number of containers crossing the terminal daily is not sufficient to recover the accumulated backlog. UNRWA reports that the forced delays at Ashdod port have an impact on supplies. For example, all incoming flour now has to be sifted due to initial caking.</p>	<p>The volume of trade has increased over the last three months.</p> <p>Imports in particular have steadily increased with an average of 6,225 containers entering monthly between June and August. The figure for January to March was 5,446 per month representing a monthly rise of 779 units.</p> <p>Exports are rising from the May low point, both in terms of actual quantity, as well as total share of trade. Exports in August accounted for approximately 13% of terminal activity – imports and exports - which is nearly double the figure for June of 7.3% but still well short of the 20% to 22% range seen between January and April.</p> <p>Exports, as a proportion of total trade, need to continue to rise if there is to be any potential for economic regeneration of the local economy.</p>
<p>Increase in the number of work permits for workers in Israel</p>	<p>Quantifiable increase in the number of work permits being made available for workers in the West Bank and Gaza to work inside Israel</p>	<p>Erez Terminal and industrial zone were open for almost all of August, with the exception of 31 August following the discovery of an explosive device on a Palestinian worker trying to cross into Israel. The industrial zone was also closed on 20 August.</p> <p>This is the third month that Palestinian workers were allowed to access their work place following a 43-day closure between 18 April and 30 May. The terminal and industrial zone remained open in spite of the IDF military operation in Beit Hanoun that lasted throughout July and into the first week of August.</p> <p>The number of workers entering Israel in August, which remains relatively low compared to earlier in the year, was double the figure for July. In August a total of 51,942 workers passed across Erez compared to 25,623 in July. The maximum number of workers crossing on any one day was 4,131 on 29 August compared to</p>	<p>While the number of workers entering Israel and the industrial zone is starting to increase, the figures remain less than those at the end of 2003 and early 2004.</p> <p>In the last weeks of 2003, up to 12,000 workers were crossing daily into Israel and 3,500 into the industrial zone. Currently, an average of 1,731 workers are crossing into Israel daily and 355 into the industrial zone. This represents a reduction of more than 88% in the total number of workers -</p>

		<p>the previous month's high of 1,544 on 28 August.</p> <p>Palestinian workers entering Israel must be older than 35 years of age, married and have a minimum of three children.</p> <p>The number of workers entering the industrial zone in August was marginally more than in July. In August, a total of 10,639 workers entered the industrial zone compared to 10,310 in July.</p> <p>Palestinian workers entering the industrial zone must be older than 30 years of age, married and have a minimum of three children.</p>	<p>and a huge loss of income to the local economy.</p>
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