



## Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

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## Humanitarian Monitoring Report – September 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) and 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](http://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 a total of at least 54 access incidents (compared to 31 in August 2004) in which the provision of first aid and/or medical evacuations were delayed, obstructed and/or prevented by the IDF.

Furthermore, on 8 September the mayors of Beit Furik and Salem reported that in the previous five weeks, four Palestinians had died due to delays experienced en route to a hospital in Nablus while trying to cross Beit Furik checkpoint after 7pm. In three cases an ambulance was waiting on the other side of the checkpoint to transport the patient to hospital.

### Water

Infrastructure in the oPt continued to suffer from frequent Israeli military operations. Such operations destroy or badly damage basic public infrastructure including water networks. Palestinians face severe difficulties accessing safe water. Furthermore, Palestinian Authority resources are being diverted into repairing damages rather than maintaining the water and sanitation network. Contamination of water supplies has increased as a consequence of degraded infrastructure. The use of tankered water and the inability of the MoH to monitor water quality have also increased.

### Obstructions of movement for international humanitarian organisations

In September, international relief agencies filed at least 53 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.

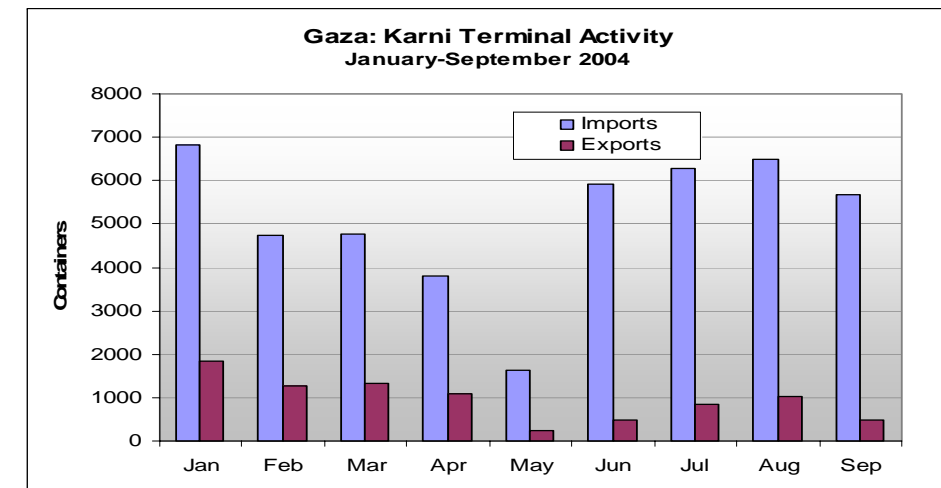
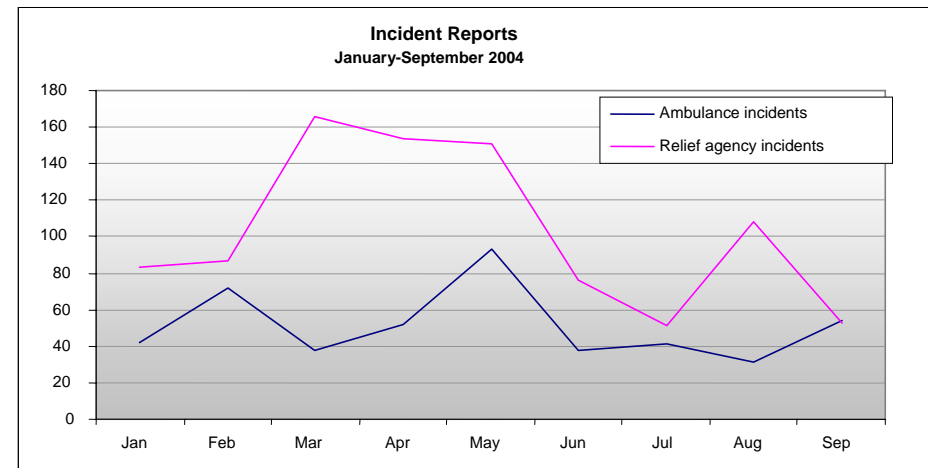
International staff members working for UN agencies are subject to new movement restrictions when crossing Erez, between the Gaza Strip and Israel. Since 22 September, UN international staff, with the exception of diplomatic passports holders, has not been permitted to cross Erez in vehicles. The IDF has advised UN staff that they can cross by foot. However, this contravenes UN security rules. The IDF has prohibited UN staff from entering or leaving Gaza, a total of 60 days in 2004 (January through September).

### Additional commitments

The volume of trade increased between May and August, as measured by the total number of containers entering and leaving Gaza, but since September this trend has reversed. The quantity of both imports and exports of commercial traffic fell for the first time in four months. Additionally, the share of exports as a percentage of total trade declined by nearly half compared to August; while exports in August accounted for approximately 13% of terminal activity, the figure was 7.7% for September.

Significant periods of closure have occurred at Erez throughout the course of 2004 primarily in response to four suicide attacks that have taken place, as well as the most recent failed attempt. While such measures were taken by Israel on the grounds of its security, the effects on individual workers and the wider local economy are immense.

In addition, movement of Gaza fishermen remained subject to strict restrictions.



Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p><b>1. Health</b></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 &amp; Gaza: 54 incidents</i></p> <p>Palestinian and UNRWA ambulance operators reported a total of at least 54 access incidents (compared to 31 in August 2004) in which the provision of first aid and/or medical evacuations were delayed, obstructed and/or prevented by the IDF.</p> <p><i>Ambulance Access Denials</i> Of the 54 incidents reported, at least 11 included humanitarian access denials. Included in the reports is the incident below.</p> <p>25 September: A MoH ambulance, transporting an 11-year-old critically wounded boy, was denied access at Salah El Din Nezarim junction, even though prior coordination had been approved, by the IDF. The ambulance was en route to Erez crossing from a Gaza hospital. The boy was carried by the MoH team on a stretcher and was taken by another ambulance to Erez Terminal. Access was denied again.</p> <p><i>Ambulance Delays</i> There were 34 documented incidents of delays, in excess of the 30 minutes. In one incident on 10 September, a PRCS ambulance was delayed seven hours at Sheikh Zayid housing project, Gaza. Also included in the 34 incidents are the ones listed below.</p> <p>10 September: A Palestinian woman gave birth at Al Tuffah checkpoint in a PRCS ambulance in which she was transported after being delayed for one hour.</p> <p>23 September: A PRCS ambulance was delayed two times for six hours 50 minutes and again for two hours at Al Tuffah checkpoint in Khan Younis when it was transporting patients from Al Mawassi area to Naser hospital.</p> <p><i>Other Reports</i> In September, nine incidents were reported in which crews came under IDF attack (direct or indirect). The incidents include the following:</p> <p>10 September: After having coordinated with the IDF to enter the Nada Towers area, IDF soldiers fired warning shots and prevented a PRCS ambulance from attending to a woman who was in labour. The ambulance team was only allowed to access the building after seven hours.</p> <p>30 September: A PRCS ambulance was subjected to IDF gunfire while en route to transport injured persons from Jabalia to a local Palestinian hospital. One PRCS medic was injured and was transported to hospital.</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.</p> <p>On 8 September, the mayors of Beit Furik and Salem reported that in the previous five weeks, four Palestinians had died due to delays experienced en route to a hospital in Nablus while trying to cross the Beit Furik checkpoint after 7pm. In three cases an ambulance was waiting on the other side of the checkpoint to transport the patient to hospital. The three cases occurred between 4 and 7 September. The checkpoint is closed between 7am and 6pm and medical transfers generally need to be coordinated with the Nablus DCO.</p>

<i>(Health continued)</i>		<p>The following was also reported (not included in the nine reports above):</p> <p>1 September: The dialysis unit, general library and the main entrance of the general surgery department of the MoH Nasser and Mubarak hospitals, in Khan Younis, were damaged during an IDF operation in the nearby Namsawi housing project (Austrian village) area. Medical work in these two hospitals was severely interrupted for at least five hours during the IDF operation.</p> <p>29 September: The Israeli Army blocked the entrances to Muaskar Jabalia area and prevented movement in or out of the area. A PRCS ambulance, which was in the area, was denied access out of the area. The ambulance was allowed to pass on 1 October, after coordination efforts through the ICRC.</p>	
Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p><b>2. Water</b></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>(government of Israel to Bertini Mission, 12 to 19 August 2002)</p>	<p>Instructions issued to all checkpoints to facilitate the 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>No reports on lack of water or delay/stoppage of water tankers at checkpoints</p>	<p><i>West Bank</i></p> <p>WaSH reported delays in water tankers transporting water to Palestinian communities in the southeast of Yatta Hebron Governorate. Many families living in this area depend on livestock, which consume considerable amount of water, for living.</p> <p><i>Gaza</i></p> <p>An Israeli incursion on 6 September into Al Mughraqa, south Gaza Strip, damaged the water network, including about 600 meters of household connections.</p> <p>During Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip 7 to 11 September, water networks and supporting infrastructure were destroyed. For example, according to WaSH (as reported by the Deir Al Balah Municipality) during the Israeli incursion of the eastern part of Deir Al Balah city, the damage included: 500 metres of pipes in the water network; and destruction and damage of about 200 metres of the streets in different areas. The water supply to these areas was cut off; in addition there was wastewater discharge in the streets.</p> <p>WaSH also reported that two technicians were injured while attempting to conduct maintenance work for the Jabalia municipality during the Israeli incursion in the northern part of the Gaza Strip</p>	<p>In the West Bank, the construction of the Barrier has led to the isolation of villages from major cities, leaving many localities with no access to livelihoods, basic amenities and services. Barrier construction has also led to the destruction of basic infrastructure, including roads and water pipes.</p> <p>Infrastructure, including water networks, in the oPt continued to be damaged or destroyed during Israeli military operations. Palestinians face severe difficulties accessing safe water. Palestinian Authority resources are being diverted into repairing damages rather than maintaining the water and sanitation network. Contamination of water supplies has increased as a consequence of degraded infrastructure. The use of tankered water and the inability of the MoH to monitor water quality have also increased.</p>

Commitment	Benchmarks	Status	Remarks
<p><b>3. Facilitation of International Humanitarian Organisations</b></p> <p>Israel will fully facilitate the assistance activities of international organisations with particular reference to UNRWA</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, 12-19 August 2002)</p> <p>Israel will improve the situation at checkpoints, including the deployment of more experienced IDF personnel</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 times</p> <p>No delays/ stoppage of transport of development and humanitarian goods delivered by international organisations 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>In September, international relief agencies filed at least 53 reports<sup>1</sup> 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.</p> <p><i>Access by UNRWA staff</i> UNRWA, the largest humanitarian organisation operating in the oPt, reported 47 incidents<sup>2</sup> in which there were access problems at IDF checkpoints (compared to 105 in August). In these incidents 360 staff members were affected and UNRWA lost more than 623 working hours.</p> <p><i>Other reports</i> Other UN and international humanitarian NGO agencies filed six incident reports in which staff members were delayed, denied or assaulted.</p> <p>In addition, an EU delegation that attempted to enter Gaza on 26 September was denied passage in spite of being told prior to the visit that they would be allowed to cross. The delegation had to return to Jerusalem.</p> <p>International staff members working for UN agencies have been subject to new movement restrictions when travelling back and forth across Erez. Since 22 September, UN international staff, with the exception of diplomatic passports holders, has not been permitted to cross Erez in vehicles. The IDF has advised UN staff that they can cross by foot. However, this contravenes UN security rules.</p> <p>NGOs are not permitted to cross Erez in their own vehicles; they have to travel on foot. Since 26 September NGOs have not been permitted by the IDF to cross on foot. Because of this, staff from Medecins Sans Frontiers was unable to leave Gaza, while staff from Medecins du Monde was unable to enter Gaza.</p> <p>The coastal road to the south of Gaza city was blocked by the IDF on 27 September while Abu Houli junction was closed by the IDF on 29 September, thus dividing Gaza into three sections. Such restrictions prevent humanitarian organisations from providing assistance to populations in central and southern Gaza.</p>	<p>In September, the level of internal closure in Gaza was high compared with previous months. The restrictions on movement were mainly the result of two Israeli military operations in the northern part of the Gaza Strip. In addition, IDF special security arrangements during Jewish holidays led to the division of Gaza Strip for five days.</p> <p>The inability of UN international staff to cross Erez in vehicles meant that effectively they were not permitted to travel into Gaza. (UN Security regulations prohibit personnel from crossing through Erez on foot as it may expose them to danger.) The IDF has prohibited UN staff from entering or leaving Gaza, a total of 60 days in 2004 (January through September).</p> <p>UNRWA also reports that during September there were numerous reports of denial of passage and restrictions on movement of staff members throughout the West Bank, and from the West Bank to Jerusalem.</p>

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<i>(Facilitation of International Humanitarian Organisations continued)</i>	Procedures will be established that provide direct access by international organisations to operational and command structures within the IDF		
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<p><b>4. Additional Commitments</b></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 to travel up to 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 the authorisation of the Israelis, fishing limits rarely exceed 400 metres.</p>	<p>Gaza fishermen are consistently denied the right to fish up to the 12 nautical mile limit, as was agreed by the Israeli government. Under the Oslo Accords, Gaza fishermen are entitled to fish as far as 20 nautical miles from the coast</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>Karni Terminal was closed on four working days in September. This was primarily due to a number of Jewish holidays.</p> <p>While the volume of trade had been increasing since May, as measured by the total number of containers entering and leaving Gaza, this trend reversed in September. This was particularly the case for exports.</p> <p>The number of containers entering Gaza from Israel and elsewhere in decreased in September compared to June, July and August. In September 5,661 containers were brought into Gaza - in June, July and August, respectively, 5,909; 6,290; and 6,477 containers entered.</p> <p>The quantity of exports for September was down compared to exports for July and August, and only slightly above the June figure. In September, the total number of containers leaving Gaza was 475 units compared to 859 and 1,020 for July and August respectively.</p> <p>UNRWA and WFP continue to face restrictions that affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Following the suicide attack in Ashdod port in March that killed 10 Israelis, new security procedures were introduced that have restricted the number of containers crossing Karni. In recent months, a backlog of containers at Ashdod is estimated to have cost UNRWA approximately US \$1million. While at the same time, an insufficient numbers of empty containers were able to leave Gaza. An emergency food distribution that was scheduled for June did not take place until 19 September, and with limited amounts of flour.</p>	<p>The quantity of both imports and exports of commercial traffic fell for the first time in four months. Additionally, the share of exports as a percentage of total trade declined by nearly half compared to August.</p> <p>While the average number of containers entering Gaza each month between June and August was 6,225, the September figure of 5661 units was closer the first quarter average of 5,446.</p> <p>September exports show a marked reduction in both absolute and relative terms. While exports in August accounted for approximately 13% of terminal activity, the figure was 7.7% for September.</p>

HUMANITARIAN MONITORING REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2004

<p><i>(Additional Commitments continued)</i></p>			<p>Such a continuing imbalance between imports and exports represents a net outflow of income from the Gaza Strip and is not conducive to long-term economic development.</p>
<p>Increase in the number of work permits for workers in Israel</p>	<p>Quantifiable increase in the number of work permits issued for workers in the West Bank and Gaza to work inside Israel</p>	<p>Erez Terminal and industrial zone remained closed throughout September following the discovery of an explosive device on a Palestinian worker trying to cross into Israel on 31 August. Later in the day, simultaneous suicide bombings on two buses in Be'er Sheva killed 16 Israelis.</p>	<p>Significant periods of closure have occurred at Erez throughout the course of 2004 primarily in response to four suicide attacks that have taken place, as well as the most recent failed attempt.</p> <p>Measures taken by Israel on the grounds of providing security have an enormous impact on individual Palestinian workers and the wider local economy.</p>