Humanitarian Bulletin
occupied Palestinian territory

APRIL 2017

OCHA


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Pharmacist using emergency light, Gaza 27 April 2017.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Unless additional funds are provided, fuel reserves for the 186 most critical health, water and sanitation facilities in the Gaza Strip will be exhausted in June.
- Aerial spraying of herbicides along Gaza's perimeter fence compounds the impact of access restrictions and regular incursions on agricultural livelihoods.
- Construction of a bypass road on Palestinian land in Qaliqliya area is expected to impact on the agricultural and commercial livelihoods of one village.
- Concern over the tightening of the permit and gate regime restricting farmers' access to agricultural land behind the Barrier, in the northern West Bank.

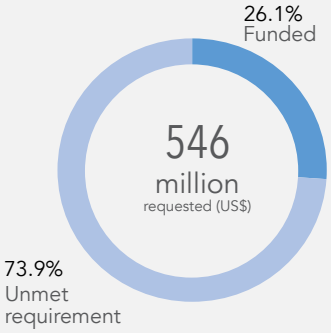
APRIL FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	3
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	150
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	1
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	12
Structures demolished in the West Bank	29
People displaced in the West Bank	71

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017

546 million
requested (US$)

26.1% funded



Overview

The humanitarian vulnerability of Gaza's population has been exacerbated by recent developments, which deepened the internal Palestinian divide, ongoing since the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in 2007. In March 2017, Hamas established a parallel institution to run local ministries in Gaza, a step seen as a direct challenge to the Palestinian government in Ramallah. In April, the Palestinian government reduced payments to thousands of public employees in the Gaza Strip. Subsequently, the failure to resolve a longstanding dispute between the two Palestinian authorities on issues related to tax exemption for fuel and revenue collection from electricity consumers, resulted in Gaza's sole power plant (GPP) being forced to shut down completely. Compounded by a halt in the electricity supply from Egypt due to malfunctioning lines, this has triggered electricity blackouts of 20-22 hours a day.

This Humanitarian Bulletin details the impact of the current electricity crisis on health, water and sanitation services, against the backdrop of the continued Israeli blockade. Despite these difficulties, the main service providers have maintained a minimum level of operations thanks to emergency fuel provided by humanitarian agencies for backup generators. However, unless the GPP resumes operations, or additional funding for emergency fuel is provided, the fuel reserves at most facilities will be exhausted by the end of June. This will have severe consequences, including a halt to 40 surgical operation theatres, 11 obstetric operation theatres, five haemodialysis centers and hospital emergency departments assisting almost 4,000 patients daily. It will also reduce the water supply for most of the population to once every four days. The situation may deteriorate even further if, as media reports indicate, the Palestinian government stops covering the cost of the electricity purchased from Israel, now the sole source of electricity in Gaza.

This Bulletin also highlights reports by Palestinian farmers in Gaza about Israeli practices that undermine their agricultural livelihoods in Access Restricted Areas (ARA) near the perimeter fence with Israel. These practices include aerial spraying with chemicals that kill or inhibit the germination of newly

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planted seeds, regular warning or direct fire at farmers approaching the area and the leveling of land on the Gaza side of the fence. In early May there was a positive development when Israel temporarily extended the permitted fishing zone along part of Gaza's coast from six to nine nautical miles for the current sardine season.

Policies that affect agricultural livelihoods are also an ongoing concern in the West Bank, as described in two sections of this Bulletin. One section focuses on further restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on access by farmers to their agricultural land isolated by the Barrier. In recent months there has been a tightening of the requirement from Palestinian farmers to own a minimum amount of land to be eligible for an access permit, as well as restrictions on the operation of agricultural gates in the Barrier.

April ended amid concerns over the deepening energy crisis in Gaza and rising tension in the West Bank due to a hunger strike started on 17 April by more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners to protest against their conditions of detention.

Agricultural livelihoods are also affected by the confiscation of Palestinian land to build bypass roads serving primarily Israeli settlers. This Bulletin features the case of An Nabi Elyas village, east of Qalqiliya, where the ongoing construction of a bypass road on its land has resulted in the expropriation of farming land and is also expected to affect the village's commercial activities. In a positive development, this month the Israeli authorities pre-approved an outline plan for this village in Area C that would protect existing homes and businesses from the risk of demolition and would allow for additional development.

April ended amid concerns over the deepening energy crisis in Gaza and rising tension in the West Bank due to a hunger strike started on 17 April by more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails to protest against their conditions of detention. Their demands include an end to solitary confinement and administrative detention (detention without charge or trial), an increase in the frequency and length of family visits, and improved medical care. Widespread protests across the West Bank in solidarity with the prisoners' strike ended in clashes with Israeli forces and increased Palestinian injuries.



Patients undergoing kidney dialysis at Ash Shifa hospital in Gaza, 27April 2017

Gaza plunges into darkness: Severe deterioration in the energy situation

On 17 April, Gaza's sole power plant (GPP) was forced to shut down completely after exhausting its fuel reserves and being unable to replenish them due to a shortage of funds. The shutdown occurred in the context of an ongoing dispute between the Palestinian authorities in Gaza and Ramallah on tax exemption for fuel and revenue collection from electricity consumers.

The electricity supply from Egypt, which normally accounts for 15 per cent of Gaza's supply, also came to a halt on 24 April due to technical malfunctioning. Gaza is currently supplied only with electricity purchased from Israel, resulting in electricity blackouts of 20 hours per day, up from 12-16 hours previously. This undermines the delivery of basic services and is detrimental to already vulnerable livelihoods and living conditions.

On 17 April, Gaza's sole power plant (GPP) was forced to shut down completely due to lack of fuel resulting in electricity blackouts of 20 hours per day.

Gaza has been affected by a chronic electricity deficit for over a decade. The situation deteriorated after June 2013 following the halt to the smuggling of cheaper Egyptian fuel, which was being used to operate the GPP. The subsequent increase in the cost of fuel[1] forced the GPP to operate only two of its four power-generating turbines. In 2015 and 2016, the GPP was forced to shut down completely on at least six occasions, for a total of over 46 days, due to a lack of financial resources to purchase fuel.

Electricity supplies purchased from Israel and Egypt have also been repeatedly disrupted. According to the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO), the Egyptian lines were completely down for an average of six days per month during 2016, while supply via Israeli lines was cut on at least one of the 10 lines for three to four days per month. Consequently, the electricity supply to Gaza since 2013 from all three sources has fluctuated constantly at between 20 to 50 per cent of the estimated demand.

Due to the shortages, GEDCO operates an electricity rationing system entailing rolling power cuts of 12 to 16 hours per day on average across Gaza. These power cuts increase immediately to up to 18-20 hours per day when the GPP shuts down or when there are disruptions in the electricity lines from Israel and Egypt.

To maintain a minimum level of continuity of critical services, providers rely heavily on back-up generators. As with the GPP, the operation of generators is constantly at risk due to funding shortages for fuel purchase, plus limited fuel storage capacity, recurrent malfunctioning due to overuse, and challenges in procuring spare parts and new generators due to import restrictions imposed by Israel.



The Gaza Power Plant, Gaza , January2017

Impact on health services

Fuel storage and generator capacity varies greatly between health facilities. For example, Shifa Hospital, which is the main hospital in the Gaza Strip, consumes around 650 litres per hour but has the capacity to store 135,000 litres of fuel. Five of the 14 Ministry of Health (MoH) hospitals in Gaza were provided with double electricity lines by GEDCO, and some critical departments such as intensive care, kidney dialysis and neonatal care units are supplied with solar-based energy sources that may sustain services for few hours. Nevertheless, dependency on generators is critical to hospitals.

Without fuel to run generators, 40 surgical operation theatres, 11 obstetric operation theatres, 5 haemodialysis centres and hospital emergency departments serving almost 4,000 patients daily will be forced to halt critical services.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), without fuel to run generators, 40 surgical operation theatres, 11 obstetric operation theatres, 5 haemodialysis centres and hospital emergency departments serving almost 4,000 patients daily will be forced to halt critical services. The situation will immediately be life threatening for 113 newborns currently in neonatal intensive care units, 100 patients in intensive care and 658 patients requiring bi-weekly haemodialysis, including 23 children. Refrigeration for blood and vaccine storage will also be at risk.

To cope with the crisis, hospitals are working at minimal capacity and postponing elective surgeries; discharging patients prematurely after surgery; cancelling and reducing sterilization and cleaning services; and increasing referrals of patients outside of Gaza, particularly for chronic illnesses.

Health equipment is degraded and damaged by the constant fluctuations in the electricity current. According to the WHO, 200 critical medical machines and equipment are currently out of order and awaiting repair in Gaza. These items are necessary for critical departments such as hemodialysis units and ICU. The lack of a proper maintenance system (sterilization services) also reduces the life span of the existing medical equipment.

Impact on water and sanitation services

The poor supply of electricity and fuel to operate water pumps and wells reduces the quantity and frequency of the water supply to households; current supply stands at four to eight hours every four or five days. This has increased people's reliance on private, uncontrolled water suppliers and lowered hygiene standards. In the Gaza municipality alone, 11 generators at the main water wells are currently out of order due to lack of spare parts to repair them. Spare parts for generators are often prohibited entry by Israel as they are included on the Israeli list of items classified as dual-use (civil-military).

A new seawater desalination plant, inaugurated in January 2017 in Khan Younis, was expected to provide its first phase of fresh water to 75,000 people in southern Gaza,[2] but it has been disrupted due to the lack of power supply and is only functioning on an ad hoc basis.



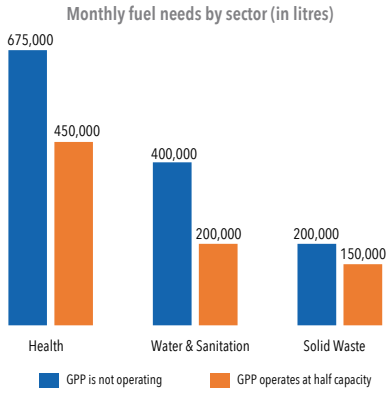
© Photo by OCHA.

Untreated sewage flowing into the sea, Gaza 27 April 2017.

Wastewater plants also have shortened treatment cycles and 120 million litres of untreated sewage are discharged into the Mediterranean Sea every day. Additionally, there is a constant risk of the backflow of sewage onto streets if sewage pump stations fail. Fuel shortages to run vehicles have forced municipalities to significantly reduce refuse collection, which generates additional public health hazards.

Emergency fuel deliveries

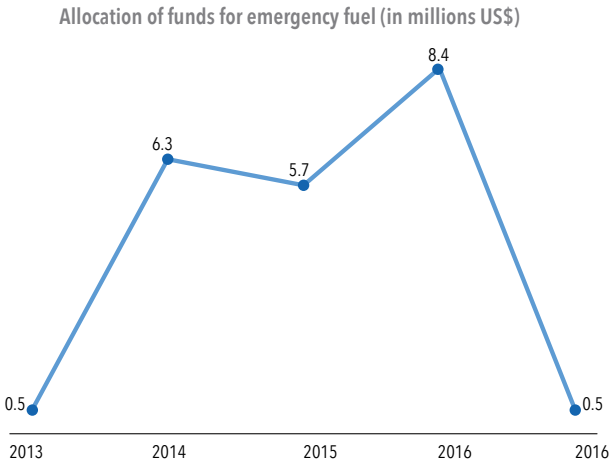
Since December 2013 emergency fuel supplies from the international community to the most vital health, WASH and municipal facilities have prevented the collapse of these services.[3] By April 2017, 186 critical facilities had been targeted: 32 in the health sector; 124 in the water and wastewater sector; and 30 in the solid waste management sector. OCHA has facilitated the prioritization exercise and discussions with the respective sectors, as well as coordinated on distribution. UNRWA takes responsibility for the purchase, delivery and distribution of the fuel.



Emergency fuel required to maintain a minimum level of critical service delivery in the three sectors is estimated at between 0.8 and 1.4 million litres per month depending on the level of operation of the GPP and the quantity of supply through the Israeli and Egyptian feeder lines. The cost ranges between US $500,000 and $850,000 a month.

Unless funding for emergency fuel is provided, the fuel reserves at most facilities will be exhausted in June.

Following the premature exhaustion of fuel reserves, and given the lack of new contributions, on 27 April 2017 the oPt Humanitarian Fund, managed by OCHA on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator, approved the allocation of $500,000 for the purchase of emergency fuel to maintain the delivery of essential services at hospitals and other emergency medical facilities. As a result, fuel reserves in all three sectors are expected to last for few weeks, assuming other power sources function at existing low levels.[4]



This section was contributed by the Food Security Sector (FSS)

Concerns over reports of aerial spraying of crops along Gaza's perimeter fence

Palestinian farmers in the Gaza Strip reported that in early April 2017, Israeli airplanes sprayed their farming land located along the perimeter fence with Israel with herbicides. The scope of land and farmers affected is yet to be assessed.

The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in Gaza indicated that Israeli aerial spraying has been a recurrent practice since 2014, targeting areas along the perimeter fence twice yearly: in December/January and April, affecting both winter and summer crops. According to the MoA, the active chemical used (Oxyfluorfen) kills or inhibits the germination of newly planted seeds.

Aerial spraying has been a recurrent practice since 2014, targeting areas along the perimeter fence twice yearly: in December/January and April, affecting both winter and summer crops.

The impact of this practice is reportedly significant: the MoA estimated that the January 2017 spraying, for example, affected over 2,900 dunums belonging to some 270 farmers, with an estimated loss of $1.3 million. Wheat crops, which are common in this area, accounted for nearly a third of the losses.

According to an Israeli media report in December 2015, the IDF spokesperson confirmed the existence of this practice and justified it by citing the need to "enable security operations".[5] However, in a response to a court petition by the Israeli NGO Gisha, based on the Freedom of Information Act, the Israeli Ministry of Defence denied the practice and said that "aerial spraying is conducted on Israeli soil only, along the security fence with Gaza."[6]



50 DUNUMS OF SPINACH DESTROYED THREE DAYS BEFORE HARVESTING – THE CASE OF NASSER SAMMOUR

"Ahead of the 2016 winter season, I leased 150 dunums from a landowner in the Al-Qarara area, some 700 meters from the fence, and planted them with 13 types of leafy and rain-fed crops. A third of the land, 50 dunums, I planted with spinach, which is in demand in winter. Everything went well. I managed to find a wholesaler who paid me $11,100 in advance for the produce. In January 2017, just three days before the harvest, an Israeli airplane sprayed the crops with herbicides and all the spinach crop was destroyed. I had already used the money I received from the wholesaler to cover the cost of inputs and for paying the landlord. I estimate my losses at $43,000. I have no money to pay the wholesaler back. I replanted the land again with other seasonal crops to recover some of the big losses I experienced. Luckily, this time I covered some of the crops with nylon, in advance of the April spraying, and minimized the damage," said Nasser.

© Photo FSS focal points in Qarara

Nasser Sammour with his affected spinach, January 2017

The Access Restricted Area (ARA)

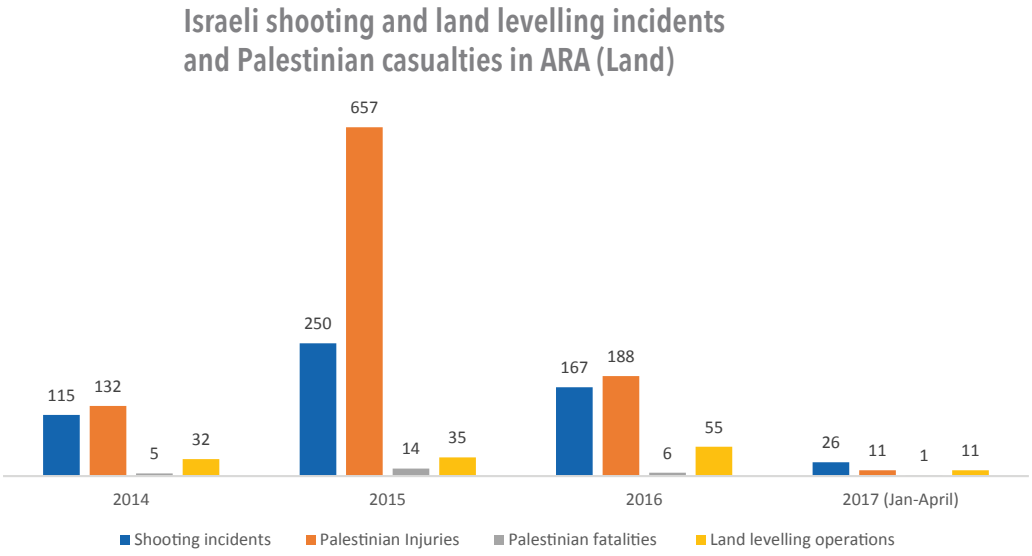
Since September 2000, Israel has tightened restrictions on Palestinian access to land inside Gaza located near the perimeter fence with Israel (hereafter: ARA), citing the need to address a range of security threats.

While the boundaries of the ARA have fluctuated over time, the Israeli authorities have refrained from officially announcing or demarcating them, thereby increasing uncertainty and risk among civilians working in or approaching the area. Palestinians living or working near the border areas consider areas within 300 metres of the fence as a "no-go" area, although some farmers cultivate land as close as 100 metres to the fence. Work or presence within several hundred metres beyond this distance and up to 1,000 metres from the fence is considered risky. A number of farmers cultivating land in the ARA are supported by international organizations, which coordinate their access to this area with the Israeli military; this has reduced the level of risk to farmers and generated additional income sources.

The access restrictions are enforced regularly by the Israeli military through the shooting of warning and, occasionally, direct fire (live ammunition) at Palestinians entering the restricted areas, in addition to carrying out land leveling operations. The spraying described above is another factor discouraging a Palestinian presence along the ARA.

In the first four months of 2017, OCHA and OHCHR documented 26 shooting incidents and 11 land leveling operations, which resulted in one Palestinian fatality and 11 injuries, representing a significant decline from the monthly average of the same figures in 2016 and 2015. The vast majority of Palestinian deaths and injuries the ARA in recent years occurred in the context of protests and clashes with Israeli forces deployed next to the fence.

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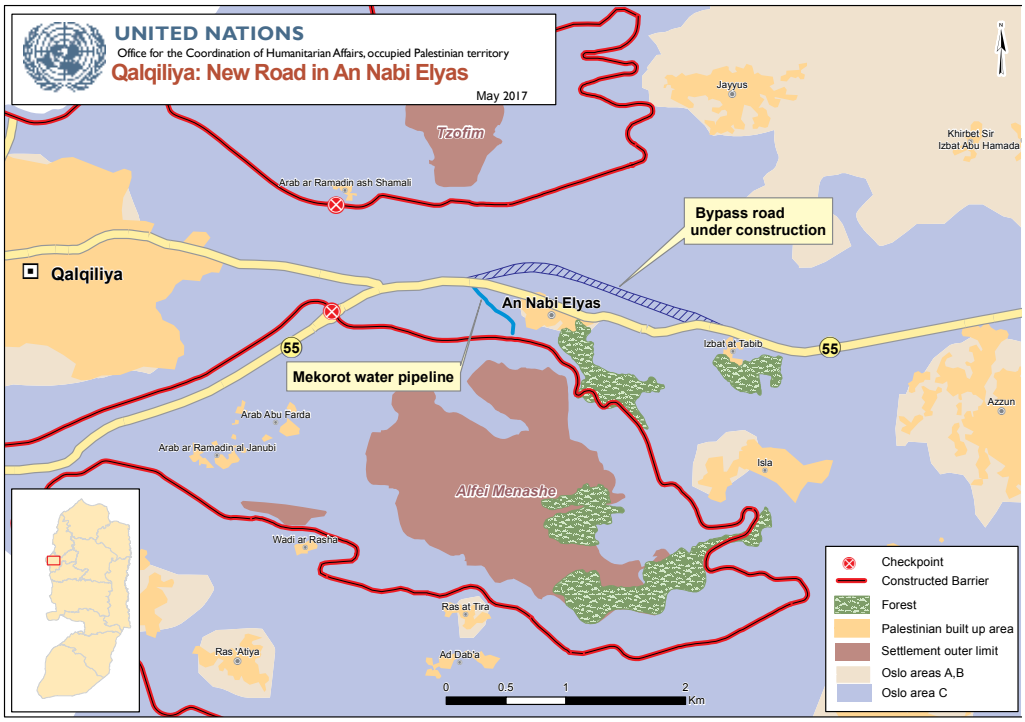
New bypass road in Qalqiliya area raises humanitarian concerns

The construction of a new 2.5 km-long road on Palestinian land is currently underway by the Israeli authorities; it will bypass a section of Road 55 running through An Nabi Elyas village (Qalqiliya). Construction has already had an impact on livelihoods and the property rights of the village residents (approx. 1,500), and the negative impact is expected to increase once the road is complete. At least two additional bypass roads are reportedly planned by the Israeli authorities along Road 60: one road is next to Huwwara village (Nablus) and the other is next to Al Arrub Refugee Camp (Hebron).

Construction has already had an impact on livelihoods and the property rights of An Nabi Elyas residents (approx. 1,500), and the negative impact is expected to increase once the road is complete.

Road 55 connects the cities of Nablus and Qaliqiliya, and also connects the settlements of Qedumim, Ma'ale Shomron and Qarnei Shomron with Israel. According to the Israeli authorities, the large volume of traffic on Road 55, which passes through the built-up area of An Nabi Elyas village, generated a range of safety concerns and triggered the need for a bypass. An Israeli media report indicated that although the original plan for this road was approved over 20 years ago, the decision to implement it came in a 2015 agreement between the Israeli Prime Minister and an Israeli settler body (the Yesha Council).[7]

In December 2015 the Israeli authorities issued a confiscation order targeting 104 dunums of land for the planned road. The landowners joined with An Nabi Eliyas village council in a petition to the Israeli Supreme Court. This petition was rejected in November 2016 after the court found that the decision to build the road was based on "objective and professional safety considerations," and that those considerations outweighed the damage caused to the petitioners.[8] In January 2017 Israeli bulldozers began uprooting trees and leveling land.



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Agricultural livelihoods

According to Palestinian sources, the land bulldozed exceeded 150 dunums in size, far above the 104 dunums cited in the confiscation order. This was apparently to secure the sides of the road; these were not included in the order. As a result, over 1,500 olive trees and about 100 fruit trees were uprooted. Farmers with available land were allowed to replant the trees elsewhere, while others used the trees for wood. For some of the farmers, the land expropriated was their sole source of income and the event triggered significant hardship (see case study). The cumulative loss from olive oil production is estimated at $104,000 per year.

Under Israeli military law, the landowners are entitled to compensation. However, Palestinian sources indicated that no farmer has submitted a claim, either as a matter of principle or due to fear of negative repercussions from within Palestinian society.

The road construction also disrupted a 1000-dunum land reclamation project costing $170,000, and which was launched in 2014 by An Nabi Elyas village council in collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and several NGOs. As part of the work for the bypass road, sections of the 10,000 metres of water pipes and the electricity grid installed for the reclamation project were damaged. The Israeli authorities promised that the damage would be rectified but the precise date remains unknown.

Over 1,500 olive trees and about 100 fruit trees were uprooted, and a 1000-dunum land reclamation project costing $170,000 was disrupted.

Farmers have expressed concerns that once complete, the road will impede their access to cultivated land located to the north of it, despite the current construction by the Israeli authorities of an underpass which will connect this farming area to An Nabi Elyas village and mitigate the impact of access impediments.

Commercial livelihoods

The location of An Nabi Elyas along a major road serving Palestinians cities and Israeli settlements, and its proximity to Arab localities inside Israel, has led to the development of a dynamic commercial life, which became a major source of livelihood for its residents. There are currently some 100 commercial establishments, including a variety of shops, garages and restaurants. Village council officials have raised concerns that the diversion of traffic from the village will significantly reduce the volume of customers, undermine livelihoods and reduce municipal tax revenues, which support service provision.



© Photo By OCHA

An Nabi Elyas bypass road under construction, April 2017.

Urban development

In April 2017, the Israeli Civil Administration invited objections of an outline plan for An Nabi Elyas in Area C that would encompass some 360 dunums. This would protect existing homes and businesses in this area from demolition and would allow for additional development.

The core of An Nabi Elyas built-up area is designated as Area B (90 dunums), where the Palestinian Authority holds planning authority, but the margins of the village and the broader surrounding areas are defined as Area C, where the Israeli planning regime applies. Space available in the latter area for urban development has been reduced gradually over the years: in the south the village is blocked by the Barrier and the Alfie Menashe settlement; to the west there is an Israeli water infrastructure where construction is banned; and to the east there is a "registered forest", also preventing development. The new bypass road will bisect the space left to the north, between the village's built-up area and the Barrier surrounding Tzofim settlement.

On 1 April 2017, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) invited objections (a step prior to final endorsement) of an outline plan for An Nabi Elyas in Area C that would encompass some 360 dunums. This would protect existing homes and businesses in this area from demolition and would allow for additional development. This would be the sixth plan out of approximately 100 for Area C submitted by the Palestinian Authority to the ICA in the past six years which has been approved.



FARMER LOSES ALL HIS LAND TO THE BYPASS ROAD

Standing on a piece of leveled land, with no trace of olive trees or anything but a wide road under construction, Salah Majjad, a 45-year-old father of six from An Nabi Eliyas, tells the story of his loss:

"The four and half dunums of land I own, where I stand now, has been confiscated for the construction of the bypass road. The plot of land was my sole source of income. It had about one hundred olive trees, a few almond and fig trees, and vines. The type of olive trees I had was not large and this allowed us to make use of the land between the trees to grow other fodder crops for animals and chickens. We even grew lentils and chickpeas sometimes. My wife and I used to go to the land and tend it almost every day. The money we made from our produce was just about enough for the whole year.

Since the loss of my land, I have been working as a taxi driver. I have heart problems and cannot do hard manual work. I had to use my private car as a taxi, although this is not authorized and puts me at risk of receiving a fine if I am caught by the Palestinian police. To buy a registered taxi is very expensive and there is no way I can afford it," said Salah.

This report was prepared by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

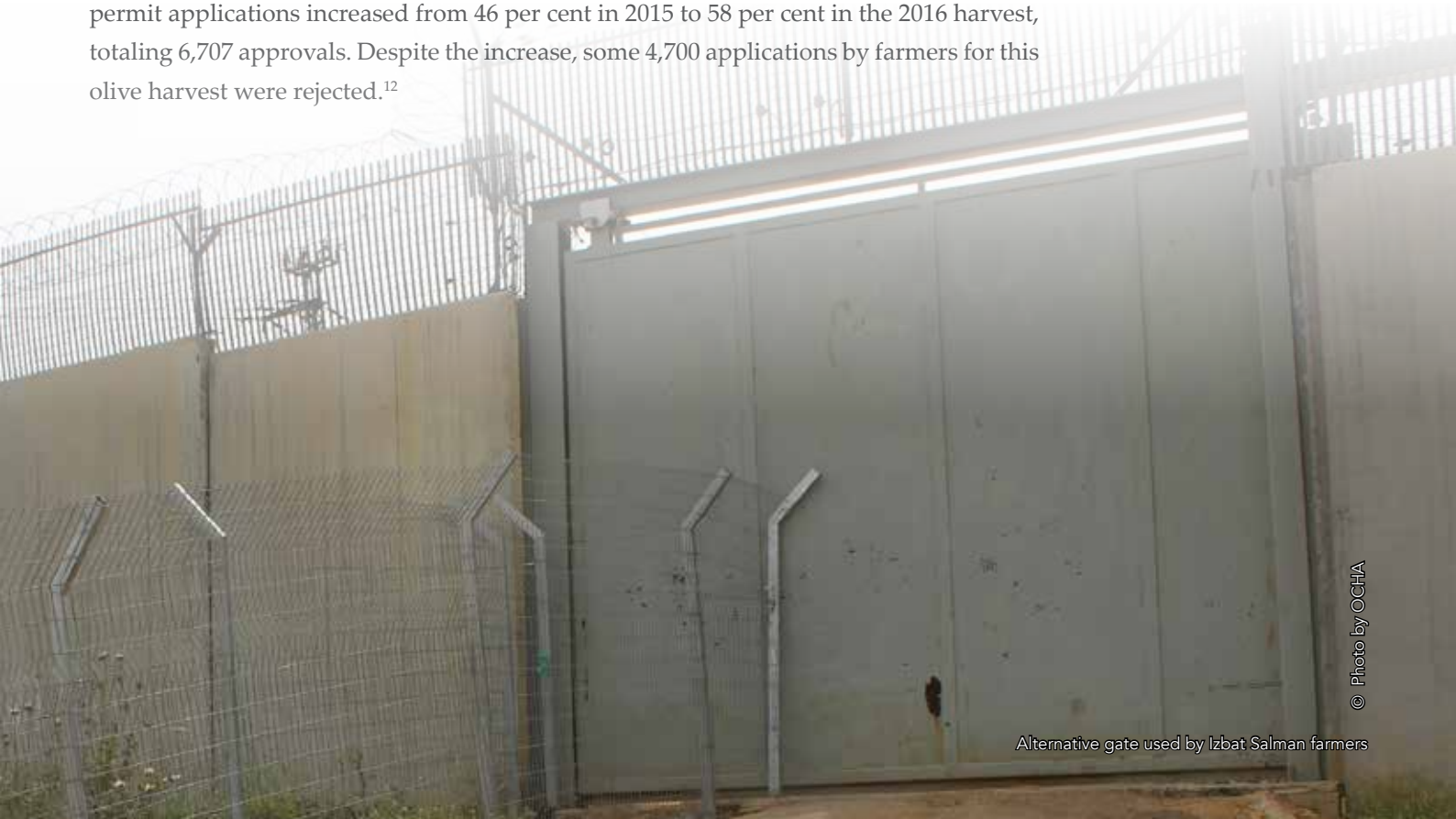
Increased restrictions on access to agricultural land behind the Barrier

In recent months, increased restrictions have been reported in the northern West Bank which are affecting the access of farmers to their agricultural land isolated by the Barrier. These restrictions relate to a minimum area of land and land ownership documents required before Palestinian landowners can apply for permits to cross the Barrier. Although these restrictions have been included in previous 'Standing Orders' published by the Israeli authorities, which detail the regulations governing access to areas behind the Barrier, the concern is that stricter application of regulations will further restrict Palestinian access to agricultural land and livelihoods in Barrier-affected areas.[9]

In the northern West Bank, the land between the Barrier and the Green Line, the "Seam Zone," was declared closed by military order in October 2003. All non-resident Palestinians above the age of 12 who need to enter this area, including for agricultural purposes, are required to obtain a special permit.[10] To apply or renew a permit, the applicant must satisfy the security considerations necessary for all Israeli-issued permits. Many farmers are rejected on those grounds, without further explanation.

The new/increased access restrictions to land behind the Barrier relate to a minimum area of land and land ownership documents required before Palestinian landowners can apply for permits to cross the Barrier.

Applicants must also prove a connection to the land in the closed area by submitting valid ownership or land taxation documents. Some applicants are rejected on the grounds of 'no connection to the land' or 'not having enough land.' In the West Bank, the majority of land is not formally registered and ownership has been passed over generations by traditional methods which do not require formal inheritance documentation, but still constitutes a major source of income for succeeding generations. OCHA monitors the rate of permit applications, particularly during the annual olive harvest when, according to the Israeli authorities, "recognizing the uniqueness and significance of the olive harvest season, agricultural employment permits beyond the set quota can be requested for members of the farmer's family."[11] In the northern West Bank, the approval rate for permit applications increased from 46 per cent in 2015 to 58 per cent in the 2016 harvest, totaling 6,707 approvals. Despite the increase, some 4,700 applications by farmers for this olive harvest were rejected.[12]



© Photo by OCHA

Alternative gate used by Izbat Salman farmers

Recent regulations on permits

In February 2017, a number of Palestinian District Civil Liaison Office (DCL) offices in the northern West Bank (Jenin, Qalqiliya, Tulkarm and Salfit) reported that they had been informed by their Israeli counterparts that registered owners with less than 330m2 of land are ineligible for a permit. The new regulations were not communicated officially but in conversations between the Israeli DCL and their Palestinian counterparts. If rigorously applied, the full impact of the measure on the already restricted pool of permit holders will only become apparent gradually as existing permits expire: it is estimated that some 55 per cent of current permits will expire in the four northern West Bank governorates during the course of 2017. In protest at the new regulations, the Palestinian DCL offices are refusing to accept applications for new or renewed permits, and are redirecting them to the Israeli DCL offices, who in turn are refusing to accept the applications.

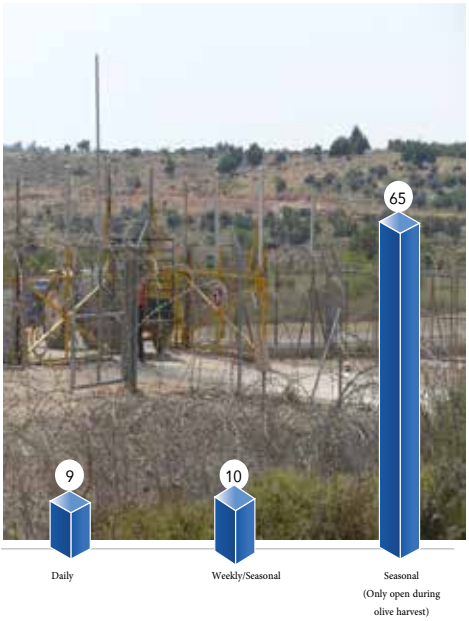
In addition to restricted or erratic opening hours, gates can also be closed indefinitely. The Beit Amin gate in Qalqiliya, which opened daily to serve between 100-200 farmers, has been closed since January 2017.

THE CASE OF AHMAD

Ahmad (pseudonym), a farmer from Izbat Salman in the Qalqiliya area, is 43-year-old father of three. The most fertile area of his 200 dunums of land, about 40 dunums, was destroyed during the construction of the Barrier in 2013, including lemon trees and greenhouses. Between 2003 and 2010, he was repeatedly refused a permit on security grounds, despite having never been arrested. Thereafter, a permit was granted for land registered within his father's land for varying periods of six months to one year. In 2015 he bought a new plot of land comprising 45 dunums behind the Barrier. Although the new plot is registered in his name, he is unable to apply for permits for family members or additional workers due to the current situation of non-cooperation in the Palestinian and Israeli DCLs.

Closure of key agricultural gate in Qalqiliya area

For those granted permits, entry to the area between the Barrier and the Green Line is through a gate designated on the permit. During the 2016 olive harvest, there were 84 gates along the completed sections of the Barrier, of which only nine open daily; 10 open some days during the week and during the olive harvest; and 65 only open during the olive harvest, prohibiting year-round access. The limited allocation of permits, together with the restricted number and opening times of the Barrier gates, have severely curtailed agricultural practices and undermined rural livelihoods throughout the West Bank.[13]



In addition to restricted or erratic opening hours, gates can also be closed indefinitely. The Beit Amin gate (1447) in Qalqiliya, which opened daily to serve between 100-200 farmers, has been closed since January 2017. Famers are being re-directed to another gate, normally reserved for military purposes, some 5.5 kilometres away, adding considerably to the length of time farmers require to reach their land.

This report was prepared by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

THE CASE OF BASIM

Basim (pseudonym), a farmer from Beit Amin, grows 25 dunums of *za'atar* (thyme), a herb widely used in Palestinian cuisine, on his land behind the Barrier. The crop is his main source of income with each three-month harvest worth $ 9,700. The closure of the Beit Amin gate has forced him to hire a taxi to take him to the alternative military gate and he then has to walk several kilometres along the Barrier patrol road to reach his land. B can now access his land less frequently and estimates that he has lost approximately half of his income since the new gate arrangements were introduced.

THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE ADVISORY OPINION

In 2002, the Government of Israel approved construction of a Barrier with the stated purpose of preventing violent attacks by Palestinians in Israel. However, 85 per cent of the route does not follow the internationally recognized 1949 Armistice (Green Line), instead deviating inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The inclusion of Israeli settlements behind the Barrier, citing security concerns, was the single most important factor behind the deviation of the route from the Green Line.

In 2004, the ICJ, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The ICJ stated that the sections of the Barrier route which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violated Israel's obligations under international law. The ICJ called on Israel to cease construction of the Barrier 'including in and around East Jerusalem'; dismantle the sections already completed; and 'repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto.'[14]

In 2004, the ICJ stated that the sections of the Barrier route which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violated Israel's obligations under international law.

Endnotes

1. Since 2013, fuel for the GPP has been purchased exclusively from Israel. The GPP needs approximately $12.5 million per month to procure sufficient fuel to operate at half capacity.

2. For further information on this facility, see OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin, February 2017.

3. The initial emergency fuel deliveries started in November 2013 and consisted of around 200,000 litres per month, but gradually increased to an average of 365,000 litres in early 2014, and reached almost 1.5 million litres in August 2014 during the escalation of conflict. In 2015 it declined to an average of 480,000 litres due to the lack of long-term solutions. Demand for emergency fuel grew again and 700,000 litres per month were distributed by the end of 2016.

4. If the GPP resumes operations at even partial capacity, emergency fuel purchased with HF funding may take several weeks longer to become exhausted.

5. Michael Schaeffer and Omer-Man, 'IDF admits spraying herbicides inside the Gaza Strip,' +972, 28 December, 2015.

6. See: http://gisha.org/UserFiles/File/LegalDocuments/Herbicides/answer.13.11.16.pdf [Hebrew]

7. Shabetai Bendet, 'By pass road and land confiscation: agreement between Netaniyahu and the settlers implemented,' Walla news, 5 January 2016 (in Hebrew).

8. HCJ 1960/16, An Nabi Elyas Village Council and others vs IDF Commander in Judea and Samaria and others, para. 22.

9. The most recent version of the Standing Orders, the fifth, was published in March 2017, in Hebrew only.

10. In January 2009, the closed area designation was extended to all or part of areas between the Barrier and the Green Line in the Salfit, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron districts, plus to various areas between the Barrier and the Israeli-defined municipal boundary of Jerusalem. A petition dating back to the introduction of the permit regime in 2003 and challenging the legality of the Barrier permit regime under international and domestic law was rejected by the Israeli High Court of Justice in April 2011.

11. Unofficial translation from fifth Standing Order.

12. See: 'The 2016 olive harvest,' OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, December 2016.

13. Data collected by OCHA over the last three years in the northern West Bank show that the yield of olive trees in the area between the Barrier and the Green Line has reduced by approximately 65 per cent in comparison with equivalent trees in areas which can be accessed all year round.

14. ICJ, Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004, para. 141. The full text of the ICJ opinion can be found at:

http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=4&k=5a&case=131&code=mwp&p3=4