Humanitarian Bulletin
occupied Palestinian territory

SEPTEMBER 2017

OCHA

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gaza energy crisis further undermines the access of over 49,000 people with disabilities to critical life-saving services and devices.
- The rate of approval of patients' applications for exit permits via Israel declined to an average of 53 per cent so far in 2017, compounded by delays in the financial approval for such referrals by the Ramallah-based Ministry of Health.
- Access of some 18,000 Palestinians in the H2 area of Hebron to services and livelihoods is further restricted due to a new fence and gate installed by the Israeli authorities.
- Nine educational-related structures seized on the eve of the new school year on grounds of lack of building permits, in three Area C communities, already affected by a coercive environment.

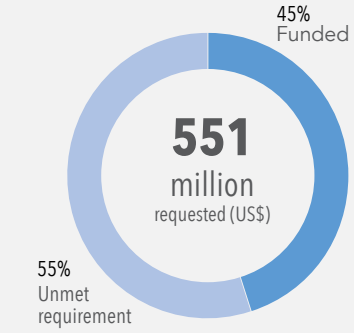
SEPTEMBER FIGURES

Palestinian killed (direct conflict)	2
Palestinian injured (direct conflict)	118
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	3
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	5
Structures demolished in the West Bank	27
People displaced in the West Bank	29

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017

551 million
requested (US$)

45% funded




© Photo by Shadia Sliman

Caravans to be used as a primary school, requisitioned by the Israeli authorities in Jubbet ad Dhib (Bethlehem), August 2017.

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Overview

Driven by ongoing electricity outages of 18-20 hours a day, an unresolved salary crisis in the public sector, and a blockade restricting the movement of people and goods, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip remains extremely precarious. This is reflected not only in the decline in the availability and quality of basic services, but also in the level of economic activity: according to the latest statistics, the unemployment rate in Gaza in the second quarter of 2017 (April-June) was 44 per cent, up from 41 per cent in the previous quarter.

This Humanitarian Bulletin highlights the disproportionate impact of the crisis on some 49,000 people with disabilities in Gaza, including over 1,100 injured during the 2014 hostilities. Of these, some 5,100 people with chronic respiratory problems are exposed to multiple health complications stemming from interruptions to electric oxygen devices and vaporizers. Institutions treating people with disabilities have also reduced their hours of operation to accommodate the reduced electricity supply and scarcity of fuel to run backup generators. Those with mobility impairments living in apartment buildings face serious challenges moving to and from their homes. Most families are no longer able to cover additional expenses such as replacement of assistive devices, purchase of special hygiene items, or transportation to rehabilitation institutions for their disabled relatives.

The impact of the crisis on the wider population has been compounded by a further decline in access to and from Gaza since the beginning of 2017, as detailed in another article. Of particular concern are delays by the Ramallah-based Ministry of Health in providing financial approval for patients to be treated outside Gaza. Approval of exit permits for these patients by the Israeli authorities has also declined to an average of 53 per cent so far in 2017, marking the fifth consecutive year of decline from an average of 93 per cent in 2012.

On a positive note, developments in late September and early October may pave the way for a resolution of internal Palestinian divisions. In the

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wake of an Egyptian initiative, Hamas dissolved the Administrative Committee formed earlier this year to run Gaza and agreed to hand back most governmental powers to the Palestinian Government of National Consensus. If successfully implemented, these measures could have a positive impact on living conditions in Gaza and reverse the sense of hopelessness currently experienced across the population.

Despite differences in circumstances and the number of people affected, Palestinians in some areas of the West Bank also face serious constraints to their access to shelter, services and livelihoods, placing some of them at risk of forcible transfer.

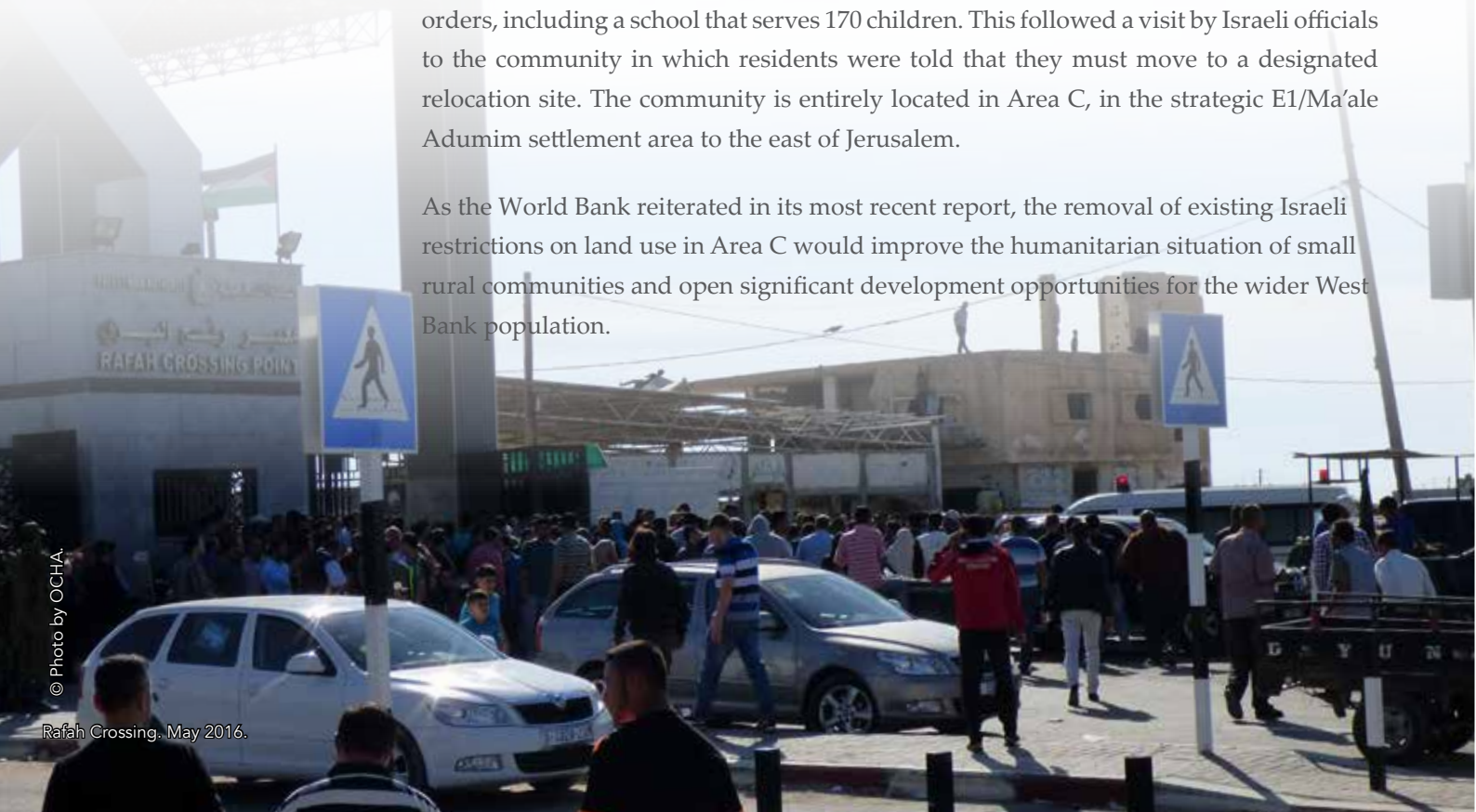
This is the case for approximately 12,000 Palestinians living in neighbourhoods adjacent to the settlement compounds in Hebron city. This Bulletin focuses on the impact of a barrier and gate installed recently by the Israeli authorities around two of these neighbourhoods, As Salaymeh and Gheith, where up to 1,800 people have been further isolated from the rest of the city. Additionally, the Israeli authorities announced the establishment of a separate municipal entity to administer the settlements in the city, a measure which may have a negative impact on the 2,000 Palestinians living in the targeted area.

The removal of existing Israeli restrictions on land use in Area C would improve the humanitarian situation of small rural communities and open significant development opportunities for the wider West Bank population.

Palestinians living in rural communities entirely located in Area C are another vulnerable population affected by access restrictions. In August, on the eve of the new school year, the Israeli authorities requisitioned nine educational-related structures serving 170 children in three such communities on the grounds of lack of building permits. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the shortage of school infrastructure in Area C and constraints on access to schools outside these communities, has had a range of negative impacts that include the relocation of children away from their parents, and a rise in early dropout rates, especially by girls.

In September, Israeli officials informed the High Court of Justice of a plan to evacuate the Khan al Ahmar Bedouin community, where nearly all structures are under demolition orders, including a school that serves 170 children. This followed a visit by Israeli officials to the community in which residents were told that they must move to a designated relocation site. The community is entirely located in Area C, in the strategic E1/Ma'ale Adumim settlement area to the east of Jerusalem.

As the World Bank reiterated in its most recent report, the removal of existing Israeli restrictions on land use in Area C would improve the humanitarian situation of small rural communities and open significant development opportunities for the wider West Bank population.



© Photo by OCHA.

Rafah Crossing. May 2016.

GAZA: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY THE ENERGY AND SALARY CRISIS

This section was contributed by Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights.

People with disabilities (PwDs) and special needs have been disproportionately affected by the deterioration in living conditions in the Gaza Strip since March 2017. This situation is driven by a worsening energy crisis, which has resulted in outages of 18-20 hours a day, and an exacerbation of the salary crisis in the public sector, both of which are linked to an escalation in internal Palestinian divisions.[1] In the midst of this crisis, Gaza's unemployment rate reached 44 per cent in the second quarter of 2017 (April-June), up from 41.1 per cent in the previous quarter and 41.7 per cent in the same period of 2016.

The Palestinian Ministry of Social Development estimates that over 49,000 individuals in the Gaza Strip (or 2.4 per cent of the population) suffer from some type of disability, a third of them children. More than 1,100 of these people, including about 300 children, became disabled as a result of injuries incurred during the 2014 hostilities, including approximately 100 amputees. [2]

Both Israel, the occupying power, and the State of Palestine are parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Albeit to differing degrees, they are all responsible for the wellbeing of PwDs in Gaza. Due to a range of factors that include institutional and attitudinal barriers that hinder access to services and full inclusion in society, people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups in a society already in crisis. In the Gaza Strip, more than 90 per cent of people with disabilities are unemployed, rendering them and their families largely dependent on cash assistance provided by the PA Ministry of Social Development.[3]

People with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups in a society already in crisis. In the Gaza Strip, more than 90 per cent of people with disabilities are unemployed.

A recent UNICEF study indicated that 35.7 per cent of Palestinian children with disabilities in the Gaza Strip do not attend school[6] and only 44.5 per cent are enrolled in regular education. Households attribute this to lack of support, transportation difficulties, physical barriers, and stigma or discrimination against those with disabilities.

In addition to the general decline in the availability of basic services that affects the entire population,[4] the extended power outages generate heightened pressure on people with disabilities who rely on electrical devices. For example:

- At least 2,000 people with physical disabilities are at risk of bedsores or pressure ulcers due to the inability to inflate air mattresses;[5]
- 1,200 handicapped individuals face severe mobility constraints due to their inability to charge batteries for scooters and similar devices;
- An estimated 5,150 people with chronic respiratory problems are at risk of complications, including death, from the cessation of oxygen devices and vaporizers.



Electrical scooter out of order due to lack of electricity supply for its utilization. September, 2017.

Institutions providing physical and occupational therapy to people with disabilities have been forced to reduce and/or modify their hours of operation depending on the electricity supply schedule, and the availability of backup generators and the fuel required to run them. One institution reported that the number of people attending physiotherapy sessions has declined by half since March.

The general worsening in the economic situation has also reduced the ability of disabled families to cover additional expenses such as replacement of assistive devices, special hygiene items, and transportation to rehabilitation and educational institutions.

The Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children reported that 50 of the 300 children with hearing impairment enrolled in the current academic year face problems attending the institution because their families cannot cover the transportation costs. Due to funding shortages, the organization has been forced to cut the transportation services it previously provided for its students. To mitigate the impact, Atfaluna delivers some of its services in alternative locations closer to the homes of the children affected.

The general worsening in the economic situation has reduced the ability of disabled families to cover additional expenses such as replacement of assisting devices, special hygiene items, and transportation to rehabilitation and educational institutions.

TEN-YEAR-OLD MAHA, DISABLED SINCE 2014 SHELLING, RISKS COMPLICATIONS DUE TO ENERGY CRISIS

This case study was contributed by National Society for Rehabilitation, Gaza Strip

Ten-year-old Maha suffers from quadriplegia as a result of a shrapnel injury to her neck that damaged her spinal cord. Artillery shelling struck her home in Al-Shuja'eya neighbourhood, east of Gaza City, on 20 July 2014. Seven family members, including her mother and two other sisters, Heba (13 years old) and Samiya (3 years old), were killed in the incident.

Maha spent the first month after her injury in Shifa hospital and was then transferred to Turkey for further treatment. However, her mental health worsened and 10 months later she was sent back to Gaza, where she is cared for by her father, grandfather and aunt.

The electricity crisis has complicated Maha's daily life because the family has no alternative power supply. Recently the family acquired a battery-powered energy system (UPS) but this requires recharging and it can barely run the ventilation fans, lighting and TV for a maximum of four hours.

Apart from her inability to move her lower and upper limbs and difficulties with bladder elimination, Maha suffers from respiratory insufficiency and immune system paralysis, which puts her at a greater risk of lung infections. She also relies on a vaporizer and an air mattress. Recently, Maha developed bedsores and her family fears lung infections, which have already resulted in hospitalization twice in the past two years.

Maha receives two physiotherapy sessions per day at home after she returns from school. The family pays 60 ILS a day for a private therapist because home services provided by NGOs have been disrupted due to funding shortages.

"Maha's situation is much harder and painful for me than the loss of my family during the war... I cannot bear to see her unable to use her limbs. It is a pain that will continue for years to come."



© Photo by OHCHR

10-year-old Maha, disabled due to injuries incurred in the 2014 hostilities, and her father while they explain how lack of electricity has worsened her situation. September, 2017

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

LOCKED IN: MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE TO AND FROM GAZA BACK TO PRE-2014 CONFLICT LEVELS

The volume of people allowed to move in and out of Gaza has declined further since the beginning of 2017 in comparison with the previous two years, particularly via the Israeli-controlled crossing (Erez). Movement via Rafah, the Egyptian controlled crossing, also remains at extremely low levels. This has exacerbated the isolation of Gaza from the remainder of the oPt and the outside world, further limiting access to medical treatment unavailable in Gaza, to higher education, to family and social life, and to employment and economic opportunities. The tightening of restrictions in recent months has also obstructed the movement of national staff employed by the UN and international NGOs and impeded humanitarian operations.

The Erez Crossing

In September 2017, some 6,000 departures were registered via the Erez Crossing. This is 17 per cent below the monthly average since the beginning of the year, and 55-60 per cent below that of 2016 and 2015 averages.[7] Following the 2014 hostilities, the movement of people via the Erez crossing gradually increased, reaching a peak in mid-2016, after which this trend reversed.

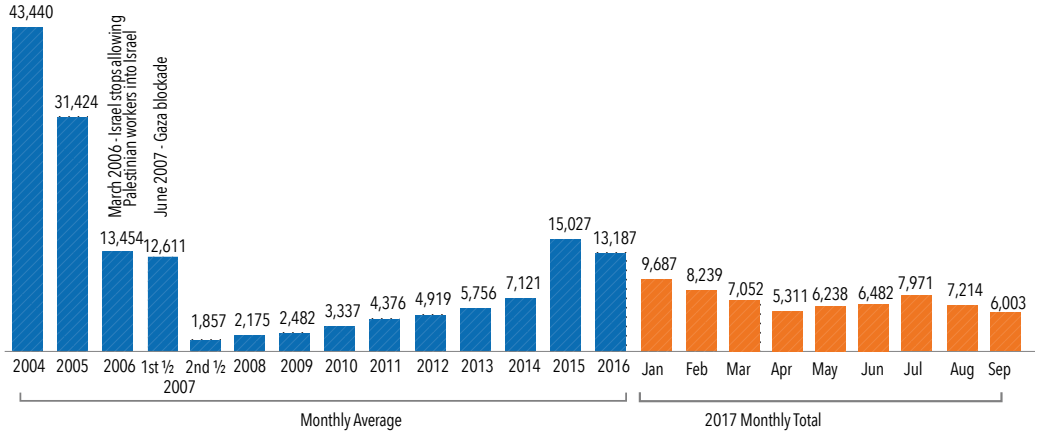


Erez crossing between Gaza and Israel and remaining oPt. September 2017.

Low level of movement via Erez and Rafah has exacerbated the isolation of Gaza from the remainder of the oPt and the outside world, further limiting access to medical treatment unavailable in Gaza, to higher education, to family and social life, and to employment and economic opportunities.

The Erez crossing is vitally important as it controls the movement of people between Gaza and the West Bank, and also entry to the Israeli labour market. Under a policy implemented since the beginning of the second Intifada in September 2000, citing security considerations, and tightened after June 2007 following the takeover of Gaza by Hamas, only people

EREZ: CROSSINGS INTO ISRAEL



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

belonging to certain Israeli-defined categories are eligible for an exit permit, subject to a security check.

In recent years, these categories have included patients referred for medical treatment outside Gaza and their companions; traders; staff of international organizations; and exceptional humanitarian cases. The majority of Gaza's population are ineligible for an exit permit, irrespective of the individual security risk, as assessed by the Israeli authorities, the movement of that person may entail.

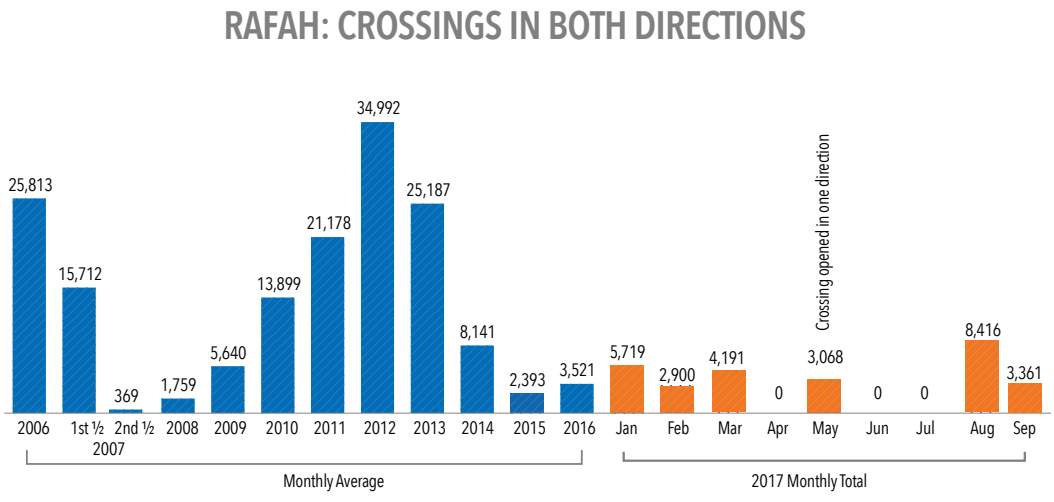
Although comprehensive data on permit applications and responses are unavailable, given that the 'eligible categories' have remained unchanged, the decline in movement since mid-2016 can be attributed to a tightening of the security criteria applied to eligible applicants.

The Rafah Crossing

The majority of Gaza's population are ineligible for an exit permit, irrespective of the individual security risk, as assessed by the Israeli authorities, the movement of that person may entail.

During September, the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt was opened for five days to allow 3,361 pilgrims to return to Gaza. During August the crossing was opened for a total of seven days, for exits only, including one day for the exit of a Hamas delegation, and the other six for pilgrims heading to Mecca and a minimum number of others.[8]

The monthly average of crossings so far in 2017 is slightly below that for 2016, and a fraction of the equivalent figure for the 2012 peak. Between mid-2010 and mid-2014, the Rafah crossing operated fairly regularly and became an alternative to the highly restrictive Erez crossing. Following an attack against Egyptian forces in September 2014, the crossing was officially shut down and has opened only erratically since. As with Erez, only certain categories, including patients, students and foreign visa holders, can register on a waiting list administered by the Hamas authorities pending the crossing being reopened; at present, over 20,000 people are registered.



MAHMOUD: GOT A SCHOLARSHIP BUT CANNOT ATTEND HIS UNIVERSITY

Mahmoud, 24 years of age, graduated from the School of Law at Al-Azhar University in 2015. He applied for a scholarship to study 'Conflict Management and Humanitarian Work' at the Al-Doha Institute for Higher Education in Qatar and was only one of only 20 students, and the only Palestinian, accepted from 3,500 students who applied from all over the world. The scholarship is for two years and covers all travel, accommodation, and tuition costs. It offers outstanding students the opportunity to work as instructors while studying and after graduation.

In August, at his third attempt, Mahmoud managed to register with the Ministry of Interior Traveler Registration Office in Gaza to exit Gaza, via Egypt, through the Rafah crossing. He also enlisted the support of the Qatari Committee for Reconstructing Gaza to coordinate with the Hamas authorities to coordinate his exit through that crossing.

Given that the Rafah crossing is unpredictable and usually closed, as an alternative, Mahmoud requested a 'non-objection letter' from the Jordanian Representative Office in Ramallah to travel via the King Hussein bridge; this was approved after two weeks. To go to Jordan Mahmoud needs an Israeli-issued permit to exit Gaza via the Erez crossing, although he knew that only a very small percentage of students succeed in obtaining such a permit. He applied anyway and kept checking with the Ministry but has received no response.

Obligatory introduction classes in Doha commenced on 17 September and Mahmoud had to obtain an exemption because of his inability to travel. Lectures began on 24 September with a grace period until 1 October. Although the Institute is sympathetic, Mahmoud will lose his scholarship if he is not present in Qatar by that date.

In a final attempt to obtain a permit to cross via Erez, Mahmoud is seeking the assistance of Gisha, an Israeli human rights organization. According to Gisha, a total of 362 students from Gaza who have won places at colleges and universities abroad have applied to leave Gaza via Erez since January 2017. Some 73 have been granted permission, seven have been refused, 50 were returned or placed under review, and 239 applications remain pending. The Palestinian Civil Affairs Committee in Gaza advises students to allow 50 business days for applications filed with them to be passed on to the Israeli authorities and a decision made, but even that amount of processing time is often inadequate because of processing delays.

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Referral of patients remains highly constrained

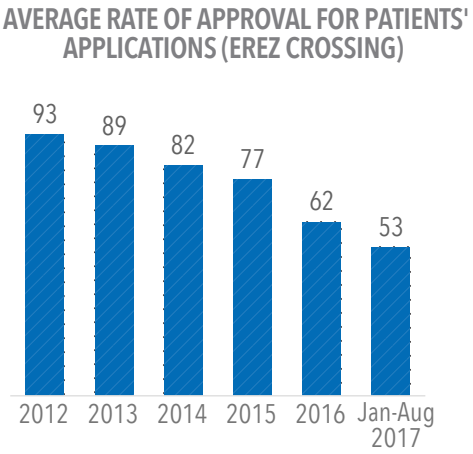
Patients referred for medical treatment at a hospital in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Israel or Jordan, are among the few eligible to apply for exit permits through the Erez crossing. In August, 1,883 permit applications were submitted, the lowest such figure since December 2016 due to the slow processing of requests for financial approval by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Ramallah.[9] The top three specialties that accounted for approximately half of applications were oncology, haematology and paediatrics.

Of the applications submitted, some 55 per cent were approved, three per cent rejected, and the rest were unanswered by the time of the hospital appointment, requiring the patient to make a new appointment and resubmit the permit application. The average approval rate so far in 2017 for this type of permit stands at 53 per cent, down from 93 per cent in 2012, and marking the fifth consecutive year of decline.

This section was contributed by World Health Organization (WHO)

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

This decline is occurring alongside a gradual increase in the absolute number of referrals and related permit applications to West Bank hospitals in the wake of stricter access constraints at the Rafah crossing. The increase in non-approved applications over recent years can be accounted for by an increase in the number of patient applications delayed, rather than denied. This suggests an increasingly constrained shortage of capacity in the resources allocated for the Israeli authorities to process this type of application.



According to new Israeli guidelines effective from May 2017, patients are required to submit non-urgent applications at least 20 working days prior to the date of their hospital appointment, doubling the period required previously.

The average approval rate so far in 2017 for patient permits stands at 53 per cent, down from 93 per cent in 2012, and marking the fifth consecutive year of decline.

During the few days the Rafah crossing opened in August, 22 patients and 20 companions were allowed to enter Egypt. This means that a total of 1,200 patients left Gaza via Rafah since the beginning of 2017; prior to July 2013, more than 4,000 Gaza residents crossed Rafah to Egypt each month for health-related reasons. No medical aid or medical delegates entered Gaza via Rafah during August.

Restrictions on humanitarian staff

The movement of humanitarian personnel to and from Gaza has also been subject to increased constraints that hampers the ability of staff to properly supervise and coordinate operations and training.

As for all other Palestinians, national staff employed by the UN or international NGOs must obtain a permit to exit Gaza via Erez. In August, half of the applications were approved and the rest had received no response by the scheduled travel date, with only one application rejected. This is in line with the permit delays recorded since the beginning of the year and represents an increase over figures for 2016.

In September 2017, the Israeli authorities informed agencies that the processing time for long-term permits will be 55 working days and 70 for travel abroad. This is a change from the 14 days required at the beginning of 2017, subsequently extended to 26 days before this last announcement. According to the Israeli authorities, this is part of a stricter vetting process by Israel's security services. The maximum validity for long term permits has been extended from six to nine months.

In July 2017, the Israeli authorities announced a series of additional restrictions on items that can be carried by people leaving via Erez, primarily electronic devices other than cellular phones, toiletries and food items, effective from August. This restriction prevents staff from carrying their laptops with them, and undermines work and dignity. The UN has objected to these measures and continues to seek their immediate termination.

FURTHER RESTRICTIONS ON PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT IN THE ISRAELI-CONTROLLED H2 AREA OF HEBRON CITY

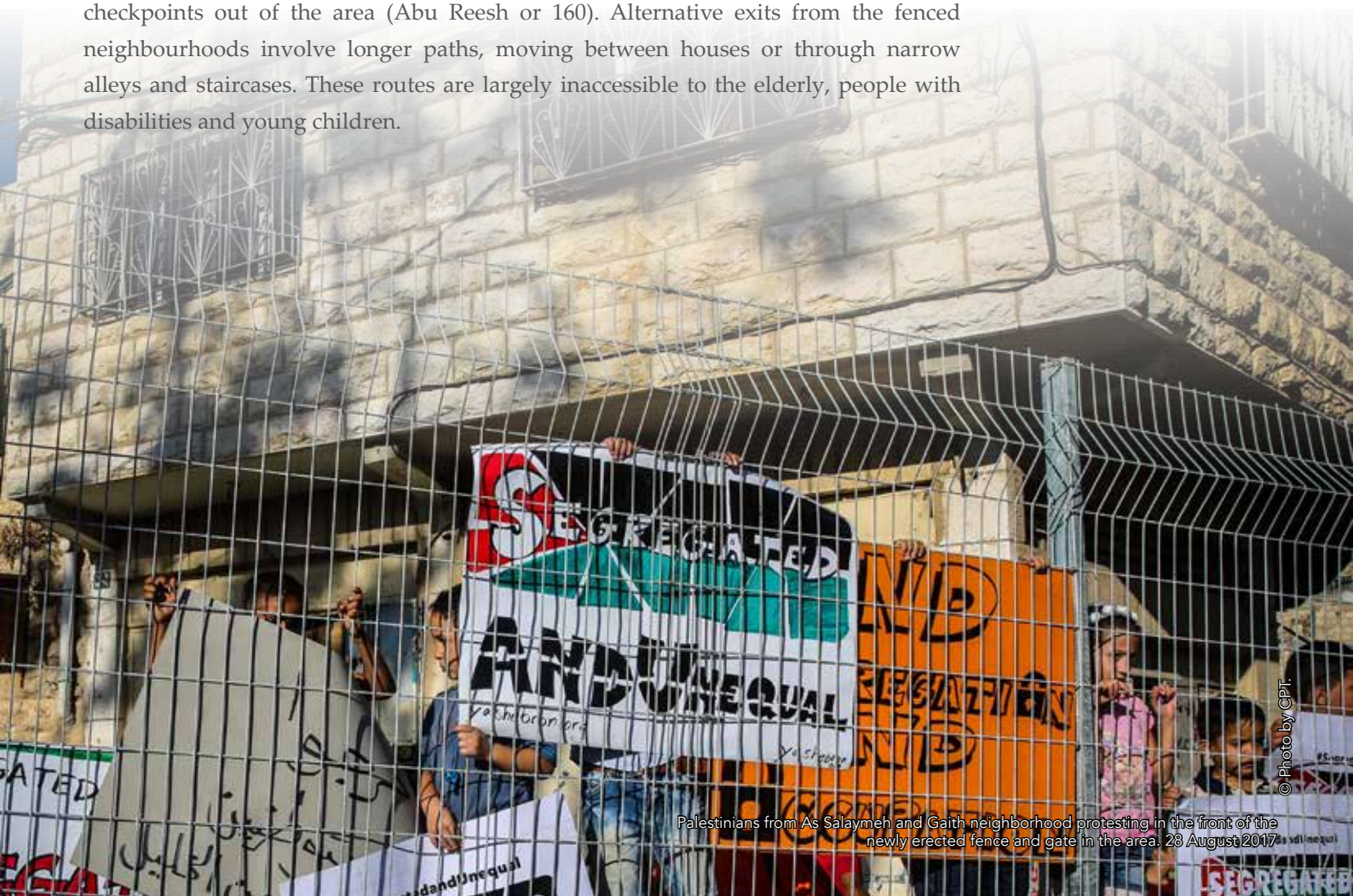
A new fence installed by the Israeli authorities around two Palestinian neighbourhoods in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron city (H2), As Salaymeh and Gheith, further separates up to 1,800 Palestinians from the rest of the city. This is in addition to the recent reinforcement (including the installment of turnstiles) of two pre-existing checkpoints controlling access to the area where the new fence was installed. These developments disrupt the livelihoods and family life of Palestinians living in the two neighbourhoods and limit access to basic services like health and education.

In May 2017, the Israeli authorities installed an approximately 50 meter-long and 1.5-meter-high metal bar fence on top of concrete slabs, with a gate, next to a metal fence initially installed in 2012 to surround As Salaymeh and Gheith. According to residents, Israeli Border Police manning the gate close it irregularly, without prior notice, leaving residents in a state of constant uncertainty. Israeli settlers are an additional source of friction and one resident reported people waiting at the gate being pepper sprayed by Israeli settlers driving by.

According to residents, Israeli Border Police manning the new gate close it irregularly, without prior notice, leaving residents in a state of constant uncertainty.

The additional section of the fence was reportedly installed in response to an incident on 4 May 2017, when a Palestinian reportedly attempted to stab Israeli soldiers near the adjacent "Bakery" checkpoint.

The fence and gate separate the residents from the main road connecting these neighbourhoods to the rest of the city and require additional walk to one of the nearby checkpoints out of the area (Abu Reesh or 160). Alternative exits from the fenced neighbourhoods involve longer paths, moving between houses or through narrow alleys and staircases. These routes are largely inaccessible to the elderly, people with disabilities and young children.



Palestinians from As Salaymeh and Gaith neighborhood protesting in the front of the newly erected fence and gate in the area. 28 August 2017

© Photo by CPT

The main street behind the fence (referred to by Israeli settlers as 'Prayers Road') is used by Israeli settlers from Kiryat Arba settlement to access the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of the Patriarchs on foot or by car; Palestinian vehicular movement along this street is prohibited.

Some 600 children enrolled in schools outside the restricted area regularly use alternative routes between houses and alleys. This can add 1.5 kilometers to their journey and exposes them to friction with Israeli settlers and soldiers.

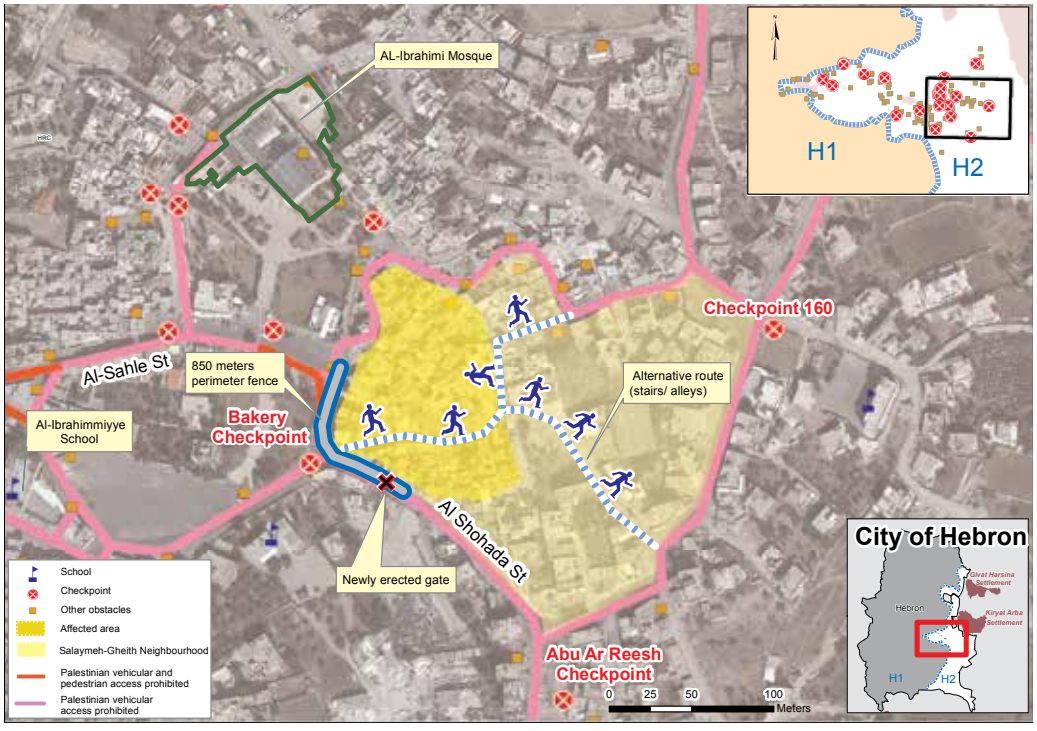
A student at the Ibrahimiyyeh Boys' School, 13-year-old Farhat al Rajabi, explained: "My journey to school has become more difficult. I hate the gate. A few weeks ago I was arrested by the police after kicking the gate with my foot when the soldiers refused to open it for me."

The new fence also impedes access to health facilities. The movement of ambulances in the restricted area needs to be coordinated through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), who, in turn, coordinates with the Israeli authorities. Families from the two neighbourhoods need to cross the newly erected gate before reaching the ambulance. In one emergency case involving a woman bitten by a rodent, the gate was closed and the husband carried his wife through the alleys and between houses (involving stairs) to get her to a hospital.

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The unpredictability of the closure discourages residents from leaving the area for social activities for fear of complications upon re-entering. This has exacerbated the sense of isolation, especially for women and children. Nuha al Rajabi, a 35-year-old mother of seven, explains:

AREA IN HEBRON CITY AFFECTED BY NEW ACCESS RESTRICTIONS



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

"My house oversees the Ibrahimi Mosque and its compound. On many occasions, my rooftop was occupied by an Israeli army observation tower. They would enter my house without permission and in big numbers, creating fear and anxiety for me and my children. They recently vandalized my satellite dish. I am always afraid to leave the house for fear that they will break in. My family who resides in Jabal Joher cannot come and visit me. I haven't seen my sick mother for two months since I visited her over Eid al Fitr for an hour. I couldn't attend my brother's wedding; I feel that I'm living in a cage."

BACKGROUND ON THE DIVISION OF HEBRON CITY

In January 1997, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron. In the agreement, Israel handed over control of 80 per cent of Hebron city (18 km² known as H1) to the Palestinian Authority, while keeping full control over the remaining 20 per cent (H2). H2 includes four Israeli settlement compounds, home to a few hundred Israeli settlers and a population of over 40,000 Palestinians.

About 30 per cent of the Palestinians living in the H2 area (approximately 12,000) reside in neighbourhoods adjacent to the settlement compounds and are affected by strict access restrictions.[10] The Israeli authorities have premised the imposition of these restrictions on the need to protect its Israeli settler population located in these areas from Palestinian violence.

Currently, there are over 100 physical obstacles, including 20 permanently staffed checkpoints and 14 partial checkpoints that separate the settlement area from the rest of the city. Several streets within this area are designated for the exclusive use of settlers and are restricted for Palestinian traffic. In some streets, Palestinian pedestrians are banned. The coercive environment generated by access restrictions, along with systematic harassment by Israeli settlers, has resulted in the forcible transfer of thousands of Palestinians and a deterioration in living conditions of those who remain. A recent survey indicates that a third of Palestinian homes in the restricted area (1,105 housing units) are currently abandoned. Over 500 commercial establishments have been shut down by military order, and at least 1,100 others have been closed by their owners because of closures and restricted access for customers and suppliers.[11]

"My journey to school has become more difficult. I hate the gate. A few weeks ago I was arrested by the police after kicking the gate with my foot when the soldiers refused to open it for me."

Farhat al Rajabi,13-year-old

Pre-existing checkpoints reinforced

The fortification in mid-2016 of the two checkpoints (160 and Abu Reesh) that control access to the area with turnstiles and metal detectors also hampers the entry of commodities into the As Salaymeh and Gheith neighbourhoods, and to other neighbourhoods in the settlement-affected area of the city. Other measures have been imposed at these checkpoints, such as prohibiting men under 40 from entering on Fridays: a measure which was first implemented in 2015 and has become systematic since May 2016.

Previously, Palestinians used to unload trucks at the checkpoint and reload them onto carriages pulled by donkeys. Now Palestinians who need to move goods must coordinate in advance with the Israeli authorities to allow Palestinian-plated vehicles to cross checkpoint 160, enter the restricted area, download outside the gate, then carry the items by hand in small packs across the gate.

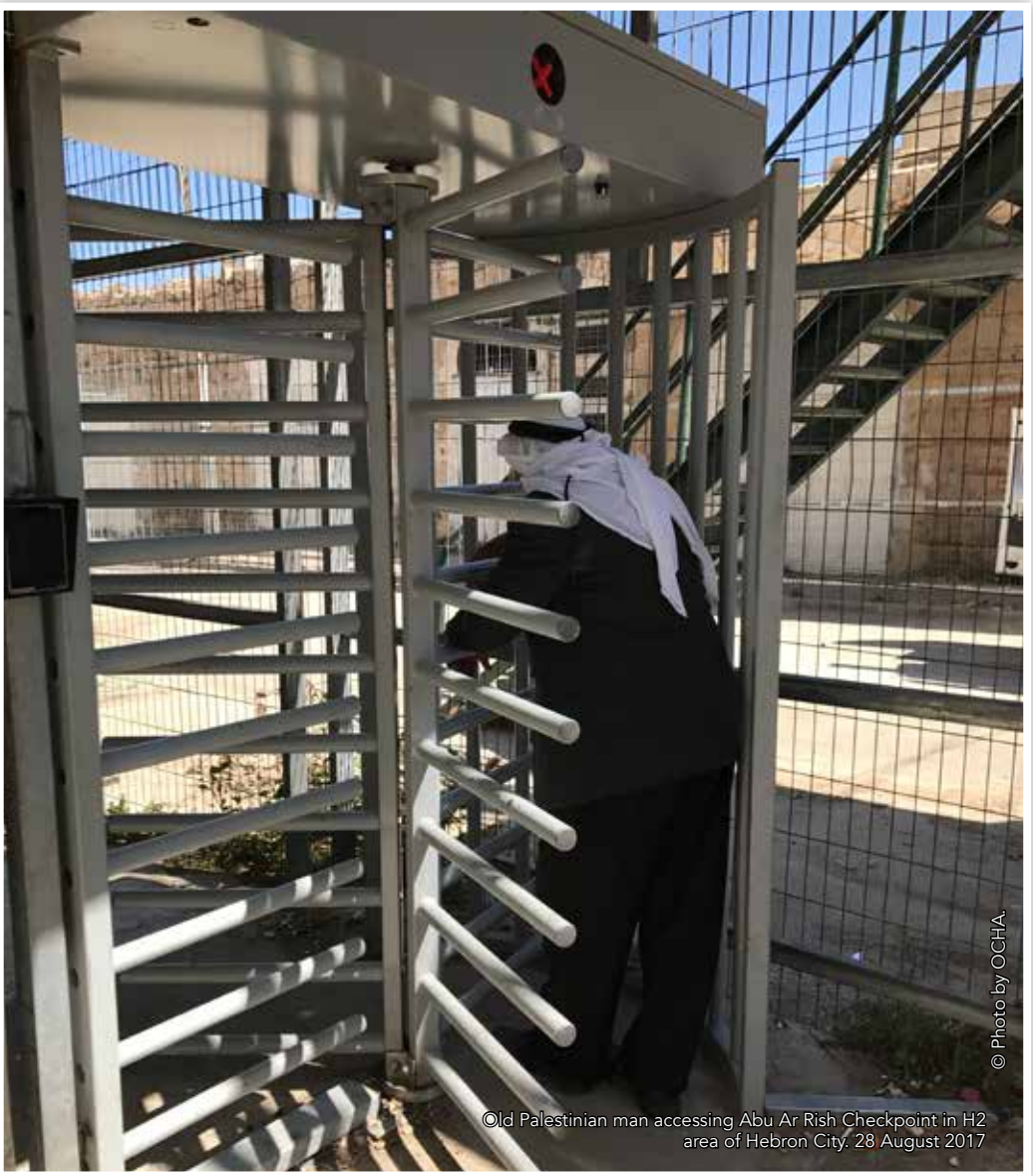
According to the Palestinian authorities, the coordination mechanism has allowed the entrance of construction material to renovate some houses in the area in Hebron Rehabilitation Committee projects. Nevertheless, the new arrangement is time-consuming, labor intensive, costlier and unreliable.

The livelihoods of families have been complicated. Na'el al Fakhouri (a father of six) stated that following the installation of the gate, his inability to bring in fodder for his cattle or necessary veterinary services was detrimental to his business.

"Before 2015 my main source of income was animal breeding: mainly sheep and goats. I used to bring in the fodder through checkpoint 160 on carriages pulled by donkeys. Now, after the fortification of the checkpoint and sealing off my house and neighbourhood with the gate, I no longer can bring in fodder or veterinary services. The number of animals has dropped from 120 to just 18. I started working as labourer in a local clay factory and my monthly income has dropped from 3000 NIS to 800 NIS."

"Before 2015 my main source of income was animal breeding... I used to bring in the fodder through checkpoint 160 on carriages pulled by donkeys. Now, after the fortification of the checkpoint and sealing off my house and neighbourhood with the gate, I no longer can bring in fodder or veterinary services.

Na'el al Fakhouri, a father of six



Old Palestinian man accessing Abu Ar Rish Checkpoint in H2 area of Hebron City. 28 August 2017

© Photo by OCHA

DEMOLITION AND SEIZURE OF SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE IN PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES IN AREA C EXACERBATES RISK OF FORCIBLE TRANSFER

The targeting of key service infrastructure in already vulnerable communities in Area C in recent months has exacerbated the coercive environment and places residents at risk of forcible transfer. In August, on the eve of the new school year, the Israeli authorities requisitioned nine educational-related structures serving 170 children in three such communities.

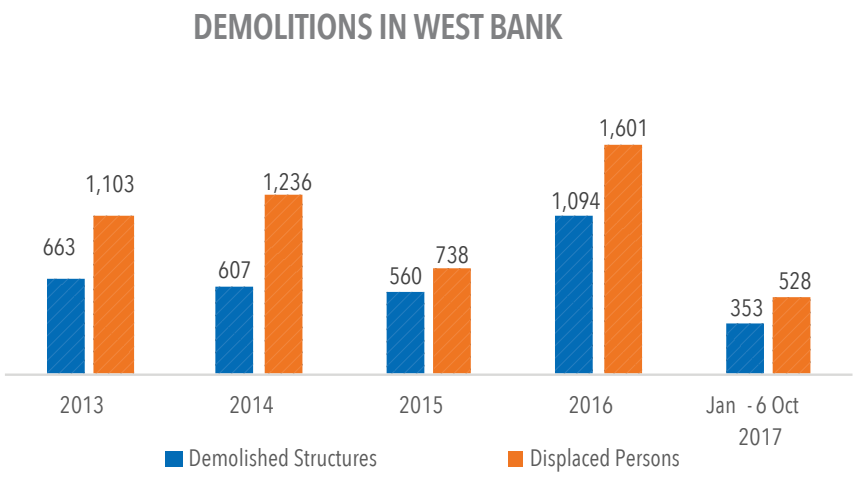
There has been an overall decline in the number of demolitions and seizures since the beginning of 2017 compared with the record peaks in 2016 and levels have returned to those documented in Area C previous years. In East Jerusalem, demolitions have continued at nearly the same rates recorded in 2016, which were the highest figures since 2000.

During August and September 2017, the Israeli authorities demolished and/or seized a total of 63 Palestinian-owned structures, displacing 88 people and otherwise affecting over 1,200. Of these, 40 structures were in Area C and 18 in East Jerusalem, all on grounds of lack of Israeli-issued permits which are nearly impossible to obtain. The remaining five structures were located in Deir Abu Masha'al, Kobar and Silwad villages, in Area B of Ramallah governorate, and were the family homes of the perpetrators/suspected perpetrators of attacks carried out in 2017 against Israeli forces and settlers.

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The educational-related structures seized in August included six caravans for use as classrooms in Jubbet ad Dhib in Bethlehem governorate (see case study), plus a new kindergarten and two solar panel systems in the Jabal al Baba and Abu Nuwar communities in Jerusalem governorate.

The latter two communities are among the 46 Palestinian Bedouin communities in the central West Bank believed to be at heightened risk of forcible transfer due to a "relocation" plan advanced by the Israeli authorities. In August 2017, OCHA published the findings of an assessment of these communities to map vulnerabilities and quantify sectoral needs (see Bedouin communities box).



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

THE CASE OF JUBBET AD DHIB

Jubbet Ad Dhib, approximately 160 people, in eastern Bethlehem governorate is a typical Area C community. Some of its residents reported that the community has existed in this location since at least 1929.

Employment in Israel and Israeli settlements, mostly in construction, is the main source of employment for most men in the community. Intensive settlement expansion, accompanied by intimidation and restrictions on access to land, have undermined herding and farming activities which were traditionally the main source of livelihood.

Within a radius of three kilometres from Jubbet Ad Dhib, there are two official settlements: Teqo'a and Noqedim. These have expanded into six nearby sites where unauthorized settlement outposts have been established without permits or formal approval by the Israeli authorities (Teqo'a B, C and D, Ma'ale Rehav'am, Kfar Eldad and Sde Bar). In recent years the authorities have either "legalized" these settlements by retroactively approving a planning scheme or are in the process of so doing.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

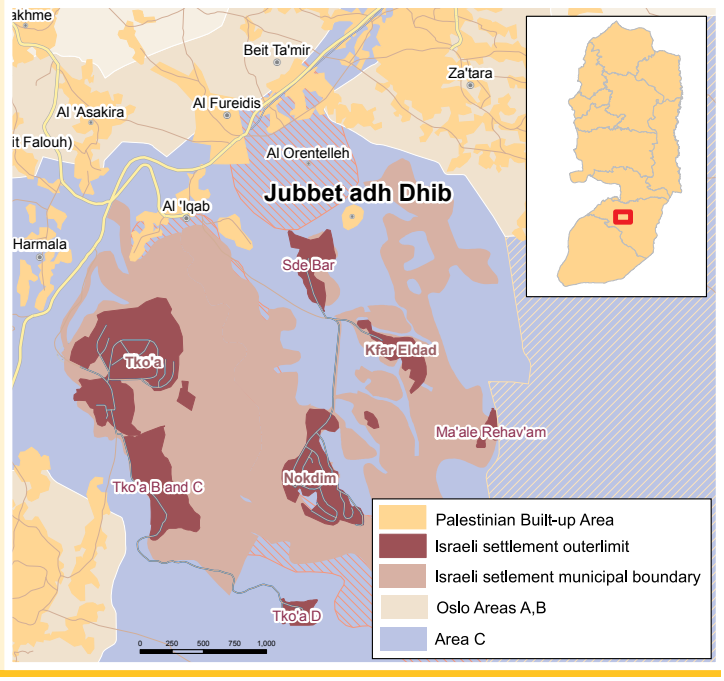
In late September, the Israeli authorities returned the requisitioned solar panels and equipment to the community, and the system was subsequently reconnected. This followed a demand made by the Netherlands, as well as a petition against the requisition filed with the Israeli High Court of Justice by the village council and the implementing NGO.

By contrast, the Israeli authorities have refrained from issuing a planning scheme for Jubbet Ad Dhib, making it impossible for its residents to obtain building permits for their homes, livelihoods or service infrastructure. This has inhibited development and placed structures at risk of demolition or requisition. A draft outline plan for the community prepared by the PA Ministry of Local Government and submitted to the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) in August 2012, is still pending approval.

While the community is connected to the water network operated by the Israeli Water Company -Mekorot, several requests submitted to the ICA since the 1980s to connect to the electricity grid were rejected on grounds that the community lacks a planning scheme. As a result, residents rely on a shared generator provided by the PA that supplies them with only 2-3 hours of electricity a day at a cost of 150 NIS per month per family. The inability to build in the village, combined with restrictions on access to land and services, have pushed the young couples in the village to leave over the past years according to the village council.[12]

To address this situation, in November 2016, an Israeli-Palestinian NGO, in partnership with the local Women's Charitable Organization and with funding from the Netherlands, installed an off-grid solar panel system to provide electricity to 31 households, a mobile clinic, a mosque, a kindergarten and 5 workshops. On 28 June 2017, without any order or prior warning, Israeli forces raided the community and seized all 96 solar panels and related equipment, causing significant damage to some of the items.

Jubbet Ad Dhib also lacked a primary school. This required some 60 children to attend a school in the nearby town of Beit Ta'amar. In August 2017, an international NGO installed six caravans to serve as classrooms for a new school to be run by the PA Ministry of Education. A few days later, also without prior warning, Israeli forces dismantled and seized the caravans. Between 8 and 10 September, the residents of Jubbet Ad Dhib, and the villages of Beit Ta'mar and Za'tara, with PA support, built a concrete structure to replace the caravans, where the 60 children from Jubbet Ad Dhib and other children from the surrounding communities have enrolled and started the new school year.



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All but one of the educational-related structures referred to, plus another six structures, had been funded by international donors as humanitarian assistance. This brings the number of donor-funded structures demolished or seized since the beginning of 2017 to 95, constituting 29 per cent of all structures targeted during this period (roughly the same as in 2016).

According to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education, there are at least 50 Palestinian schools in Area C with demolition or stop-work orders pending by the Israeli authorities. A comprehensive Vulnerability Profiling Project (VPP) carried out in 2013 by humanitarian partners found that 36 per cent of the residential areas in Area C (189 of 532) lacked a primary school within the community; in 31 of these cases it was reported that children had to cross military checkpoints to reach school, and in 29 communities they faced settler harassment in their way to school.[13]

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the shortage of school infrastructure in Area C communities, along with constraints to access to schools outside these communities, has had a range of negative impacts. These include an increase in early dropout rates, especially for girls, and moving children to live with host families closer to their schools.

BEDOUIN COMMUNITIES AT RISK OF FORCIBLE TRANSFER: A VULNERABILITY PROFILE

In May 2017, OCHA carried out a profiling survey of the 46 Palestinian Bedouin/herding communities in the central West Bank considered to be at high risk of forcible transfer. The survey, based on key informant interviews, found that there are over 8,100 people currently living in these communities who are affected to various degrees by a range of vulnerabilities. Over 70% of residents are Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA and about 80% are women and children. In terms of access to services:

- 20 communities lack any arrangement or public transportation system for their children to reach school, located up to six km from their homes;
- 18 communities are not served by mobile health clinics, and more than half are up to nine km away from the closest primary healthcare facility;
- 19 communities depend on tankering as a main water source, of which 10 communities pay more than 20 NIS per cubic meter, over four times the price of piped water;
- 25 communities rely on solar panels as the only or main source of electricity. These are at risk of requisition without prior warning. Half of the communities still rely on gas, kerosene and/or batteries as their first or second main source of electricity.

Thirty-six of the communities have witnessed demolitions over the past nine years and 57 per cent of households reported having at least one demolition or stop-work order pending against their homes or livelihood structures.

The entire OCHA data set is available in a fully searchable online dashboard, divided into several thematic sections.[14]

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ENDNOTES

1. OCHA Fact Sheet: The Humanitarian Impact of the internal divide on the Gaza Strip, June 2017, Available at https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/gaza_fact_sheet_june_2017_english_final.pdf
2. Physicians for Human Rights Report: Amputees: The challenges faced by Gaza Strip amputees seeking medical treatment. Available at: http://www.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Amputees-report-eng.pdf
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5. PNGO Rehabilitation Sector
6. According to UNICEF, in the West Bank 39.8% of children with disabilities do not attend school. UNICEF study, Every Child Counts: understanding teh needs and perspectives of children with disabilities. Available at, https://www.unicef.org/oPt/Every_child_counts_understanding_the_needs_and_perspectives_of_children_with_disabilities_in_the_State(1).pdf
7. The number of 'exits' is significantly higher than the actual number of people as some permit holders make more than one crossing during the time their permit is valid.
8. During September, goods also entered via Rafah, including over 16 million litres of diesel fuel for the Gaza Power Plant.
9. Apparently as part of the ongoing dispute between the Ramallah government and the de facto authorities in Gaza.
10. Figures based on a 2015 survey conducted by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee
11. Report of the UN Secretary-General, Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, A/HRC/34/38, para. 28, 16 March 2017.
12. OCHA Special Focus, Displacement and insecurity in Area C of the West Bank, Aug 2011.
13. Available at: https://www.ochaopt.org/page/46-bedouin-communities-risk-forcible-transfer-central-west-bank-vulnerability-profile