

# Humanitarian Bulletin

## occupied Palestinian territory

JULY 2019



OCHA

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Buildings in Sur Bahir demolished on 22 July 2019 next to the security road along the Barrier.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Nine residential buildings in East Jerusalem demolished due to proximity to the Barrier, displacing four families and affecting many more.
- Following a court ruling, a Palestinian family in East Jerusalem evicted from home, which was handed over to Israeli settlers; nearly 200 families face similar eviction threats.
- Ceasefire understanding in Gaza holds, alongside continuing impediments to the movement of local humanitarian staff.
- 90,000 children participated in UNRWA/ UNICEF summer camps in Gaza, which provided recreational activities and psychosocial assistance in a safe environment.

### OVERVIEW

Last month's Bulletin featured an article highlighting the risk of multiple demolitions in Sur Bahir, a Palestinian neighbourhood mainly located within the annexed municipal area of East Jerusalem. On 22 July, in a major operation, the Israeli authorities deployed hundreds of security forces into the community to carry out the demolitions, destroying ten structures, including nine residential buildings, of which three were inhabited. This resulted in the displacement of four families, including 14 children, and property losses sustained by dozens of others, who had purchased apartments in the buildings. The demolitions followed a ruling by the Israeli High Court of Justice on 11 June, which authorized the demolitions based on a military order prohibiting building in a security buffer zone in the proximity of the Barrier. As was highlighted in this month's [briefing](#) to the Security Council, "Israel's policy of destroying Palestinian property is not compatible with its obligations under international humanitarian law and contributes to the risk of forcible transfer facing many Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem."

In recent months, articles in the Bulletin have also raised concerns regarding the risk of mass demolitions in the Wadi Yasul quarter of Silwan neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, where over [550 people face displacement](#), and the record [number of demolitions, including self-demolitions](#), which were carried out in East Jerusalem in April 2019. By end July 2019, some 126 structures had been demolished in East Jerusalem, displacing 203 people, compared to the figures of 107 and 93 respectively, for the equivalent period in 2018.

The first item in this month's Bulletin relates to another ongoing East Jerusalem concern – the humanitarian impact resulting from Israeli settler organizations' takeover of properties within Palestinian neighbourhoods and the forcible eviction of their Palestinian residents. Silwan has been a particular focus of such activity; in the latest development on 10 July, the Israeli authorities evicted a mother and her four adult children from their home in Silwan, following a 25-year-long legal battle ending in a Supreme Court ruling for the organization. Settlers have already moved into the vacated apartment, while the family faces psychosocial, shelter

### JULY FIGURES

|                                        |     |
|----------------------------------------|-----|
| Palestinians killed (direct conflict)  | 2   |
| Palestinians injured (direct conflict) | 957 |
| Israelis killed (direct conflict)      | 0   |
| Israelis injured (direct conflict)     | 11  |
| Structures demolished in the West Bank | 66  |
| People displaced in the West Bank      | 52  |

### HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2019

**351 million** (US\$)  
Requested

**42.8% funded**

42.8%  
Funded

**351**  
million (US\$)  
requested

57.2%  
Unmet  
requirement



and livelihood deprivation. An estimated 199 Palestinian households currently have eviction cases filed against them, the majority initiated by settler organizations, placing approximately 900 other Palestinians at risk of displacement.

In Gaza, the ceasefire understanding brokered in early May continues to hold. There has been a significant reduction in casualties from the 'Great March of Return' (GMR) demonstrations, with the 23-year-old Palestinian killed on 26 July the first fatality recorded in the protests since 10 May. The relative quiet has led to some improvements on the ground, including renewing the shipment of fuel to the Gaza Power Plant and an easing of fishing restrictions. The Israeli authorities returned additional 35 fishing boats in July, which had been confiscated by the Israeli navy in the context of enforcing access restrictions. Preparatory construction has begun on a new field hospital, which will be operated by a USA-based NGO and provide a wide range of medical services. Finally, Israel has also eased some of the preconditions for business people in Gaza to apply for permits to exit Gaza via the Erez Crossing, with June recording the highest number of Palestinian exits from Gaza since August 2015: according to media reports some of the business permits are being employed by day labourers from Gaza to enter Israel to work.

*The relative quiet in the Gaza Strip has led to some improvements on the ground, including renewing the shipment of fuel to the Gaza Power Plant and an easing of fishing restrictions.*

However, as the second article in this month's Bulletin illustrates, since early 2018 there has been a deterioration in restrictions on humanitarian national staff leaving Gaza, due to permit application procedures, crossing regulations for vehicles, and the nature of the items that national personnel are allowed to carry out of Gaza. Hamas has also reinstated its presence and tightened restrictions near the Erez Crossing between Gaza and Israel. Combined, these measures have increased uncertainty, delays and logistical impediments for humanitarian organizations and have impaired operations and degraded the quality of services provided.

The final item in this month's Bulletin concerns the completion of an UNRWA and UNICEF project that provided 90,000 children throughout Gaza during the summer with recreational activities, psychosocial assistance, and referrals to more specialized mental health services, where needed. Children, who constitute nearly half of the two million people living in Gaza, have been affected by the deterioration in the living conditions, as well as due to their participation in the mass demonstrations at the fence and the related exposure to violence. An article in the Bulletin in April 2019 concerned the increase in poverty and [child labour in Gaza](#), with two per cent of children aged between 10 and 17 employed on a full-time or part-time basis in 2018. Overall, there is a widespread lack of safe play areas, as well as recreational opportunities and leisure activities for most of the children in Gaza during summertime.

## PALESTINIAN FAMILY EVICTED FROM SILWAN NEIGHBOURHOOD IN EAST JERUSALEM

### Settler organization increasing presence in Palestinian neighbourhoods

It is estimated that 199 Palestinian households currently have eviction cases filed against them, the majority initiated by settler organizations, placing 877 people, including 391 children, at risk of displacement.<sup>1</sup> Evictions can have a grave physical, social, economic and emotional impact on the affected families.

On 10 July, the Israeli authorities evicted Ilham Hussein Siyam and her four adult children from their home in the Wadi al Hilweh neighbourhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem, ending a 25-year-long legal battle. The eviction, in which settlers took part by removing the family's furniture,<sup>2</sup> followed the Jerusalem District Court ruling of 12 June 2019 in favour of Elad settler organization's ownership of the majority of the Siyam family home, including the vacated apartment, a store and a nearby courtyard. The family's appeal against the eviction was immediately rejected at the Israeli High Court on 8 July 2019.

Settlers have already moved into the evicted apartment, while Ilham's family have moved in with other family members to live in what remains of the family property. According to the family, they now need to pay NIS 72,000 in legal-related costs to the Elad organization and NIS 50,000 to the District Court. In addition, according to Ilham Siyam, Elad organization has now demanded that the family pay them NIS 400,000 in retroactive rent, against which the family submitted an objection and await a final ruling. During the eviction, Jawad Siyam, who is one of the heirs and a Silwan community leader, was arrested and later banned from entering Silwan, including his home, for three days.

*It is estimated that 199 Palestinian households currently have eviction cases filed against them, the majority initiated by settler organizations, placing 877 people, including 391 children, at risk of displacement.*

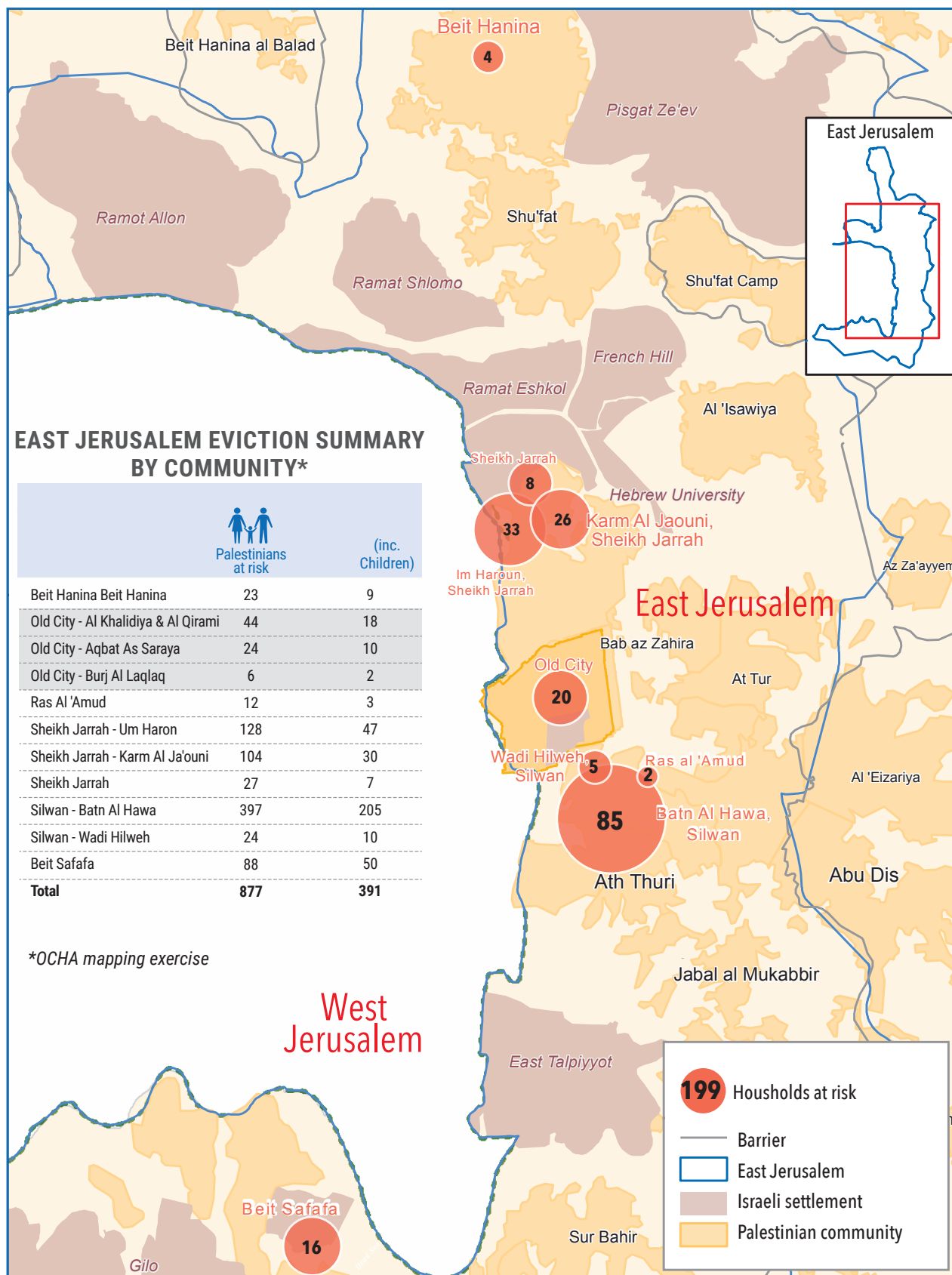
### Means of Expropriation

In recent decades, Israeli settler organizations, with the support of the Israeli authorities, have taken control of properties within Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and established settlement compounds. These settlements are concentrated in the Muslim and Christian quarters of the Old City, Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, At-Tur (Mount of



Members of the extended Siyam family watching the eviction of their relatives, 10 July 2019.

## EAST JERUSALEM: PALESTINIANS AT RISK OF EVICTION



Olives), Wadi Joz, Ras al-Amud and Jabal Mukabbir.<sup>3</sup> Settler activity in these areas has resulted in the forcible eviction and displacement of Palestinian residents, with negative humanitarian impact. Most of these cases were challenged unsuccessfully in Israeli courts.

Palestinian houses have been transferred to settler organizations by various means. In some cases, settlers have pursued court cases to evict the Palestinian residents, on the grounds that the land or buildings were owned by Jewish individuals or associations in East Jerusalem prior to 1948.<sup>4</sup>

In other cases, the Absentee Property Law of 1950 is applied: this law, which was devised to formalize the expropriation of the land and property of Palestinians who were expelled or fled during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, has been applied, albeit inconsistently, to East Jerusalem since 1967.<sup>5</sup> In the case of the Siyam family, the deceased owner, Ilham's grandmother, bequeathed the property to eight family members, and the Custodian of Absentee Property took control of two of these shares on the basis that the two heirs live abroad, and are 'absentees'. Ilham is the daughter of one of these 'absentee' heirs. In 2018, the Custodian auctioned its quarter share of the home and Elad won the bid for over NIS 2 million.

Settler organizations have also had some success in purchasing land and property directly from the Palestinian owners, due to the economically depressed situation in many of the affected neighbourhoods. In the Siyam case, Elad managed to buy the shares of property from four of the heirs: together with their purchase from the Custodian, they have succeeded in having a majority share in the property and the District Court ruled in their favour.

### Impact of evictions

Evictions have grave physical, social, economic and emotional impact on the Palestinian families concerned. In addition to depriving the family of a home – its main asset and source of physical and economic security – evictions frequently result in disruption in livelihoods, increased poverty and a reduced standard of living.<sup>6</sup> The high legal fees families incur when defending a case in court further strains already meagre financial resources. The impact on children can be particularly devastating, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and diminished academic achievement.

The establishment of settlement compounds in the heart of Palestinian areas also generates a coercive environment on the daily lives of Palestinians residing in the vicinity of these compounds, and creates pressure on them to leave. The main elements of this environment include increased friction; restrictions on movement and access, particularly during Jewish holidays; and a reduction on privacy due to the presence of private security guards and accompanying surveillance cameras.<sup>7</sup>

*The establishment of settlement compounds in the heart of Palestinian areas generates a coercive environment on the daily lives of Palestinians residing in the vicinity of these compounds.*

### East Jerusalem in international law

The unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem to Israel following the 1967 war is not recognized by the international community. The UN has resolved that "it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations."<sup>8</sup> Settlements are also illegal under international law.

## INCREASED RESTRICTIONS ON THE MOVEMENT OF HUMANITARIAN STAFF IN AND OUT OF GAZA

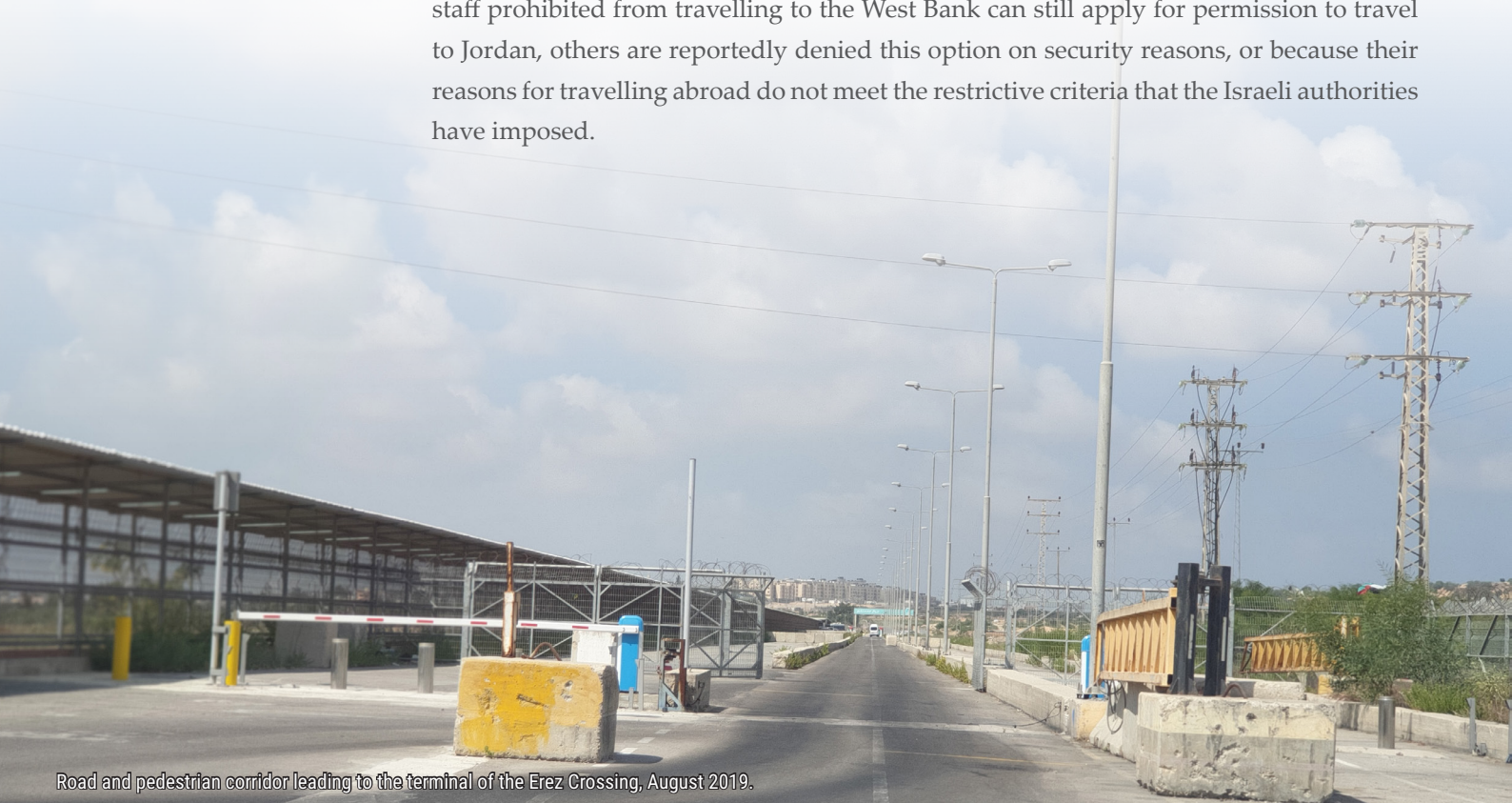
Since early 2018, citing security concerns, the Israeli authorities, and to a lesser extent Hamas, have imposed various measures which further tightened restrictions on the movement of humanitarian staff in and out of Gaza. Combined, these procedures have increased uncertainty, delays and logistic challenges. The UN continues to conduct negotiations with all relevant actors in Israel and Gaza to alleviate these restrictions.

### Denial of exit permits for national staff

The requirement to obtain Israeli-issued permits is a long-term challenge for the Gaza-based national staff of both international NGOs (INGO) and UN agencies. Since early 2018, there has been a continued increase in the number of such staff prohibited from re-applying for permits for a period of one year: this is a condition imposed on national staff following rejection of their initial permit application to access East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, citing security reasons. Approximately 40 UN national staff received such a ban in 2017, rising to 140 UN personnel and 73 INGO staff banned by the end of 2018. As of June 2019, 150 UN personnel, and 111 INGO personnel were prohibited from applying for permits for one-year. As a result, approximately, half of Gaza-based UN national personnel, excluding UNRWA, are effectively prevented from implementing any mission outside of Gaza for a year. Although some UNRWA staff have been also banned, the majority of its approximately 11,000 national employees in Gaza are education and health personnel, who are not required to leave the territory on a regular basis.

The Israeli authorities require that permit applications for national staff to exit Gaza to travel to Israel and the West Bank are submitted 55 working days in advance of the date of travel, compared to 14 days in 2017. The official processing time for applications for a one-day permit to travel to Jordan, via Israel, is 70 working days. Although some national staff prohibited from travelling to the West Bank can still apply for permission to travel to Jordan, others are reportedly denied this option on security reasons, or because their reasons for travelling abroad do not meet the restrictive criteria that the Israeli authorities have imposed.

*Approximately, half of Gaza-based UN national personnel, excluding UNRWA, are effectively prevented from implementing any mission outside of Gaza for a year.*



Road and pedestrian corridor leading to the terminal of the Erez Crossing, August 2019.

The extended processing times since 2017, together with the increase in national staff prohibited from reapplying for one year, have resulted in planning and logistical challenges. These include senior national staff being unable to attend donor meetings in East Jerusalem or the rest of the West Bank, thereby undermining critical fundraising efforts. Senior personnel who manage programmes in both Gaza and the West Bank are unable to monitor West Bank programmes to ensure consistency in quality. Gaza-based personnel are unable to take part in training in the West Bank, impacting the organizations' ability to build capacity, including of staff providing direct health support in Gaza; the restrictions have also undermined efforts aimed at ensuring certain UN standards, as requested by donors and by the Israeli authorities. A long-term imposition of these measures risks a deterioration the quality of services provided by humanitarian agencies.

### Vehicle crossing procedures at Erez

The enhanced security measures introduced at the end of March 2018 by the Israeli authorities at the vehicle terminal of Erez crossing continue. These include searches of UN and diplomatic vehicles by opening all the doors for sniffer dog inspections, and the removal, scanning and search of UN property, which are measures incompatible with the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, to which Israel is a party without reservation. The Israeli authorities have agreed to exempt UN diplomatic pouches and some other UN property, including safety and vehicle equipment, from these search procedures, but vehicle searches and other violations continue. As a reason for these measures, the Israeli authorities have cited security concerns, including an increase in efforts to smuggle prohibited items, including weapons and dual-use equipment; in March 2018, a driver working for the French Consulate was detained at Erez and subsequently prosecuted on charges of an attempt to smuggle weapons under diplomatic cover.

Since December 2018, Israeli authorities have also limited those personnel who are eligible to drive vehicles through Erez to holders of valid cards issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They have also restricted the diplomatic personnel eligible able to pass through the vehicular crossing to those with diplomatic passports, excluding personnel with national passports and diplomatic visas.

### Restrictions on items national staff are allowed to bring from Gaza

Since August 2017, all Palestinian residents of Gaza, including UN and INGO national staff, have had additional restrictions imposed on the items that they are allowed to take with them through the Erez pedestrian terminal. These include a ban on reinforced luggage (luggage with wheels or a frame), toiletries, laptops and other electronic devices; while mobile phones are allowed, the chargers for such phones are also banned. The restrictions on laptops and electronic devices create particular challenges for senior staff engaged in finance, IT and programme monitoring activities in Gaza, necessitating the provision of alternative equipment at their destination.

*The access restrictions imposed by Israel have undermined efforts aimed at ensuring certain UN standards, as requested by donors and by the Israeli authorities.*

## Measures imposed by Hamas in Gaza

In the past year, Hamas in Gaza has re-enforced its presence near Erez, originally justified as a temporary security measure. In March 2018, Hamas reinstated the procedures and restrictions which had been suspended following the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation agreement, signed in Cairo in November 2017. Hamas currently requires national staff from international organizations to register upon entry and exit to Gaza; imposes restrictions on the use of INGO vehicles; and occasionally delays staff for questioning, especially those travelling abroad or working for INGOs. Hamas also blocked access to Erez for six days in November 2018, following a security incident. Humanitarian agencies have also been occasionally prevented by Hamas from accessing certain areas inside Gaza near the perimeter fence.

*Hamas re-enforced its presence near Erez crossing, originally justified as a temporary security measure, and requires national staff to register upon entry and exit to Gaza.*

## The case of Save the Children

Save the Children is one of the international NGOs affected by increased restrictions on access into and out of Gaza. The organization's emergency response is currently reaching 123,500 people, including 90,510 children. This requires staff, including management, to access operations in all parts of the oPt for training and learning; to provide adequate oversight; to monitor and evaluate; and to ensure accountability towards beneficiaries. Currently, over half of Save the Children's staff in Gaza have received year-long security bans, including staff members who have been previously granted permits. The participation of Gaza staff in a meeting held in Jordan in April 2019, was prevented by the Israeli authorities, despite coordination being initially assured; Save the Children subsequently had to pay cancellation fees. Save the Children's Gaza staff have been unable to participate in annual country team retreats for the past three years. The increased restrictions have had psychological, financial and management consequences and have undermined the organization's ability to effectively provide assistance to children.

|  Save the Children Staff | Banned from Gaza entry/exit                                                         | With multi-entry Gaza Permit                                                                           | Working days to process entry to/exit from Gaza |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>24</b><br>West Bank<br>Palestinian ID                                                                    |                                                                                     | <br>6 months only | <b>30</b>                                       |
| <b>9</b><br>West Bank East<br>Jerusalem ID                                                                  |  | <br>3 months only | <b>14</b>                                       |
| <b>20</b><br>Gaza Palestinian ID                                                                            |  | <br>3 months only | <b>70</b>                                       |
| <b>2</b><br>International Staff                                                                             |                                                                                     |                   | <b>14</b>                                       |

## SUMMER CAMP ACTIVITIES IN GAZA: ADDRESSING CHILDREN'S NEEDS IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

UNRWA, in partnership with UNICEF and with the support of the European Union, has concluded the “Keeping Kids Active” (KKA) project in Gaza. Over five weeks, from 29 June to 1 August, KKA reached 90,000 children throughout Gaza, providing recreational activities, psychosocial assistance, and referrals to more specialized mental health services, where needed.

“I live in Jabalia camp, where there are no recreational spaces and the only place to play is the street, which is not safe”, said Adam Abu Jalhoum, a 10-year-old pupil. In the summer activities I had somewhere to go, get out of the house, find a safe space to play and learn with friends... I really liked the art sessions! I get excited when I colour different pottery with my friends. We had fun making colourful shapes and paintings on pottery!” explained Adam.

Across the Gaza Strip, more than eleven years of blockade, recurring escalations, mass casualties during the Great March of Return (GMR) demonstrations, and the longstanding Palestinian internal divide have all contributed to an unprecedented decline in the humanitarian situation. In an increasingly destabilized economy, the ability of families to earn a living has been progressively eroded, exacerbating their vulnerability.

Children, who constitute nearly half of the two million people living in Gaza, have been affected in multiple ways, including due to their participation in the GMR and the related exposure to violence. Since March 2018, a total of 44 Palestinian children have been killed

*Summer camp activities aim at alleviating distress among children and promote positive coping mechanisms , while keeping children away from potentially harmful activities.*



Adam Abu Jalhoum, 10 Years old, participating in an art session as part of the Keeping Kids Active project.

in Gaza (43 boys and one girl) and some 7,000 have been injured during demonstrations alone.<sup>9</sup> The large number of child casualties, including the high percentage of those injured by live ammunition, has raised concerns about excessive use of force by Israeli troops. The violence in Gaza has increased the already high levels of psychosocial distress, with over 50,000 people, half of them children, in need of mental health and psychosocial responses.<sup>10</sup>

The KKA project contributed towards children's physical and mental wellbeing, by providing equal opportunities for boys and girls, from grades 1 to 9, to participate in skill-oriented fun and supportive activities. The aim was to alleviate distress among the children and promote positive coping mechanisms in a safe environment, while keeping children away from potentially harmful activities.

The summer camps operated in more than 50 locations, including UNRWA schools and Local Staff Union Clubs (LSUCs), covering all areas of the Gaza Strip. Transportation was provided to children who live in distant locations to promote equal access to the activities. In every location, a team of animators and mental health counsellors provided a wide range of activities, including art, sport, popular games, free-drawing and life-skill sessions. A team of approximately 260 counsellors deployed across the locations where the summer camps took place were also responsible for referring children in need of specific psychosocial interventions to appropriate service providers.

According to Ahmad Thabet, a supervisor in UNRWA's Community Mental Health Programme, "summer camp is important because it offers a structured opportunity for children to grow.... It allows kids to become independent and self-confident, while socializing and making new friends, and even learning new skills".

The project developed from the positive experiences of UNRWA over the last decade in arranging summer activities for children in the Agency's schools, in cooperation with civil society partners. It also built on the lessons learned and the positive community response to the UNRWA-UNICEF *Keep Kids Cool* (KKC) after-school activities implemented in the first and second semesters of the 2018-19 school year.

## UNRWA's financial crisis

In 2018, UNRWA faced the greatest financial predicament in its history, following the abrupt end to funding by the United States. This crisis has undermined the Agency's ability to meet the increased demand for services to Palestine refugees, including by limiting the number of children that can be offered summer activities, as well as the scope of such activities.

In 2019, UNRWA requires a total of \$1.2 billion for its operations in the region, including human development and humanitarian aid service delivery. During the annual international Pledging Conference held on 25 June in New York, UN member states pledged more than \$110 million in support of UNRWA. Despite this, the Agency continues to face significant challenges to meet its financial requirements through the end of the year.

*The financial crisis facing UNRWA has undermined the Agency's ability to meet the increased demand for services, including by limiting the number of children that can be offered summer activities, as well as the scope of such activities.*

## ENDNOTES

1. OCHA, "Imminent Eviction of Palestinian Family in East Jerusalem," *Humanitarian Bulletin*, January 2019, URL: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/imminent-eviction-palestinian-family-east-jerusalem>.
2. Wadi Hilweh Information Center, "Elad settlement association seize the property of Siam family," 10 July 2019, <http://www.silwanic.net/index.php/article/news/77672>.
3. On 22 January 2019, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Jamie McGoldrick, together with other UN officials and NGO partners, visited the Sabbagh family in Sheikh Jarrah and called for a halt to the eviction of the family, which has been initiated by a settler organization. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/un-officials-and-ngo-partners-call-halt-plans-displace-palestine-refugees-sheikh-jarrah>
4. Under Israeli law, Israelis may pursue claims to land and property allegedly owned by Jews in East Jerusalem prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. However, it denies Palestinians the right to reclaim land and property in what is now Israel.
5. In 1967, Israeli Attorney General Meir Shamgar decided against applying the law in East Jerusalem, although it was used sporadically in the 1980s to expropriate properties in Silwan and the Muslim Quarter of the Old City from Palestinian owners. The rules were subsequently relaxed, see Nir Hasson, "Israel's AG: Absentee Properties in East Jerusalem Can Be Confiscated," 5 June 2013, URL: <https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-absentee-homes-can-be-seized-ag-rules-1.5273746>.
6. See also: Norwegian Refugee Council, *The Economic Impact of Displacement*, April 2015. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/the-economic-impact-of-displacement/>
7. For an analysis of the impact of settler takeover on the Batn al Hawa area of Silwan, see *Humanitarian Impact of settlements in Palestinian Neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem: the Coercive Environment*, OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, June 2018.  
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-impact-settlements-palestinian-neighbourhoods-east-jerusalem-coercive>
8. 10. UNSCR 2334 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2334\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2334(2016))
9. As of 31 May 2019. See: [OCHA Snapshot](#).
10. 2019 [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#), p. 7.