

Humanitarian Bulletin

occupied Palestinian territory

JUNE 2019



OCHA

IN THIS ISSUE

[Threat of demolitions in East Jerusalem... 3](#)

[Some 320,000 West Bank ID holders permitted into East Jerusalem for Ramadan Friday prayers..... 9](#)

[Improvements to Gaza electricity supply . 13](#)



© Photo by OCHA

Qalandiya checkpoint Friday 17 May.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 70 apartments at risk of demolition in Sur Bahir neighborhood of East Jerusalem.
- Relaxed measures during Ramadan allow West Bank ID holders to access East Jerusalem.
- Health facilities in Gaza benefit from improved power supply

OVERVIEW

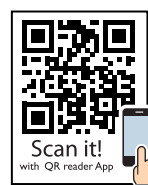
The informal ceasefire understanding which concluded the escalation of hostilities in early May is still largely holding. June witnessed some easing of restrictions – the extension of the fishing zone, allocation of more business permits, disbursement of some of the Qatari-funded aid – which go some way to alleviating the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

However, there is still no resolution of the financial crisis for the Palestinian Authority (PA), with the PA announcing that it would pay its employees only 60 per cent of their June salaries. This follows the PA's refusal, since February, to accept the monthly tax revenues collected on its behalf by Israel, as long as Israel deducts the amount it calculates that the PA pays to the families of "martyrs and prisoners". In his most recent briefing to the Security Council, the UN Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, warned that "the fiscal crisis and related austerity measures are severely impacting the Palestinian economy with the outlook for the private sector remaining very bleak."¹

Last month's Bulletin featured an article on the threat of mass demolitions in Wadi Yasul in East Jerusalem, where about 500 people face displacement following the exhaustion of almost all domestic legal remedies. The first item in this month's Bulletin concerns the risk of multiple demolitions in Sur Bahir, another Palestinian neighbourhood in East Jerusalem.

Most of Sur Bahir is located within the annexed East Jerusalem municipal area, but the community also has land in Area A, B and C, as designated under the Oslo Accords. The Barrier has also been constructed through Sur Bahir, in contravention of the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, which established that the sections of the Barrier which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violate Israel's obligations under international law.

The route of the Barrier in Sur Bahir leaves parts of Area A, B and C on the 'Jerusalem' side. In 2011, the Israeli authorities issued a military order which



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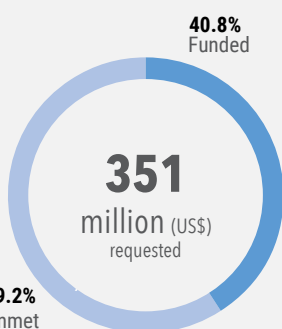
JUNE FIGURES

Palestinians killed (direct conflict)	2
Palestinians injured (direct conflict)	931
Israelis killed (direct conflict)	0
Israelis injured (direct conflict)	4
Structures demolished in the West Bank	70
People displaced in the West Bank	106

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2019

351 million (US\$)
Requested

40.8% funded



designates a buffer zone of 100-300 metres on either side of the Barrier in Sur Bahir, where construction is prohibited due to security concerns. The buffer zone includes more than 200 buildings, including nearly 100 built after the 2011 military order, in the context of heavy restrictions on the ability of Palestinians to obtain construction permit in East Jerusalem.

On 11 June 2019, the Israeli High Court dismissed a 2017 petition filed by Sur Bahir residents seeking to annul the military order, and/or that the demolition of their structures not be implemented. On 18 June, Israeli forces sent residents a “Notice of Intent to Demolish” which will expire on 18 July, and affects ten inhabited or under-construction buildings, comprising some 70 apartments. If executed, the demolitions will displace three households, comprising 17 people, including nine children, and otherwise affect an estimated 350 people. Demolitions, the threat thereof, and restrictive planning policies are among the key elements of the coercive environment present in many parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, that is generating a risk of forcible transfer for many Palestinians.

The second Bulletin article concerns access to East Jerusalem during the Muslim month of Ramadan, which concluded on 4 June. While the majority of Palestinians from the remainder of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip require permits from the Israeli authorities to access East Jerusalem, these requirements are relaxed during Ramadan for Friday prayers. As was the case in previous years OCHA, with humanitarian partners, monitored access into the city, to identify protection risks and mitigation measures for vulnerable groups, as part of OCHA’s analysis of broader access trends.

320,000 West Bank ID holders entered East Jerusalem for the four Friday prayers.

This year, as part of the relaxation measures, the Israeli authorities allowed West Bank female ID holders of all ages, and males aged under 16 and above 40, to enter East Jerusalem without a permit on Fridays. This allowed some 320,000 West Bank ID holders to enter East Jerusalem for the four Friday prayers. Compared to previous years, this year recorded general improvements in access, partly due to the installation of speed gates at Qalandiya and Gilo checkpoints in early 2019 for people holding magnetic ID cards. However, no special Ramadan permits were issued this year for the residents of Gaza.

The final Bulletin article concerns improvements in the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip. For the past decade, Gaza has suffered from a chronic electricity deficit which has had a severe impact on health, water and sanitation services and undermined already fragile living conditions. In October 2018, the Government of Qatar provided US\$60 million in funding which has increased electricity supply to 14-15 hours in a 24-hour period and reduced expenditure on fuel by households and businesses. In May 2019, Qatar pledged \$180 million in additional funding, which includes support for electricity services and which will allow the UN to facilitate provision of fuel for the Gaza Power Plant until the end of 2019.

In addition, several health facilities have been directly connected to the main power supply or provided with solar panels, reducing their reliance on emergency generators. However, the improved electricity supply still only meets less than half of Gaza’s power demands, leaving electricity cuts that continue to impede the functioning of health facilities and hospitals, jeopardizing essential services. This final item also highlights the efforts of local authorities and the Health Cluster partners to mitigate the impacts of ongoing cuts.

THREAT OF DEMOLITIONS IN EAST JERUSALEM

Houses to be demolished in Sur Bahir because of proximity to the Barrier

Sur Bahir (pop. 24,000) is a Palestinian neighbourhood in the south east of Jerusalem. Most of Sur Bahir is located within the unilaterally-annexed East Jerusalem municipal area, but the community reports that they own some 4,000 dunums of land in Area A and B and C, as designated under the Oslo Accords. Uniquely, the Barrier has been routed around Sur Bahir so that parts of Area A, B and C fall on the 'Jerusalem' side. The residents' local committee estimates that some 6,000 people, or a quarter of the population, currently live in these Oslo-defined areas. Despite this, these areas have not been incorporated within the municipal boundary, although they are now physically separated from the remainder of the West Bank. In practice, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is unable to access or deliver services to Area A and B in Sur Bahir, although they still issue building permits in these areas, as they have been authorized to do under the Oslo Accords.²

There has been significant construction in Area A, B and C in Sur Bahir since the construction of the Barrier in 2005. This is as a result of population growth, planning and zoning restrictions applied in the municipal area of Sur Bahir,³ and the difficulties which Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem experience in obtaining building permits from the Jerusalem municipality.⁴ Over the past 14 years, dozens of these structures have been issued with demolition orders by the Israeli authorities, mainly on the grounds of lacking building permits in Area C. However, these have also included structures in Area A and B that were granted the requisite construction permits by the Palestinian Authority.

Since 2009, the Israeli authorities have demolished, or forced owners to demolish, 69 structures in Sur Bahir, on the grounds of lack of building permits, of which 46 were inhabited or under-construction homes. This has resulted in the displacement of 30 households; in total, some 400 people have been displaced or otherwise affected by demolitions, half of whom were children under 18 years of age. The structures were generally located within the Israeli-defined East Jerusalem boundary, with the exception of three structures in Area A and two in Area C. Twenty of the total structures (all in East Jerusalem) have been demolished by their owners following the receipt of demolition orders.⁵

The Barrier has been routed around Sur Bahir so that parts of Area A, B and C fall on the 'Jerusalem' side.

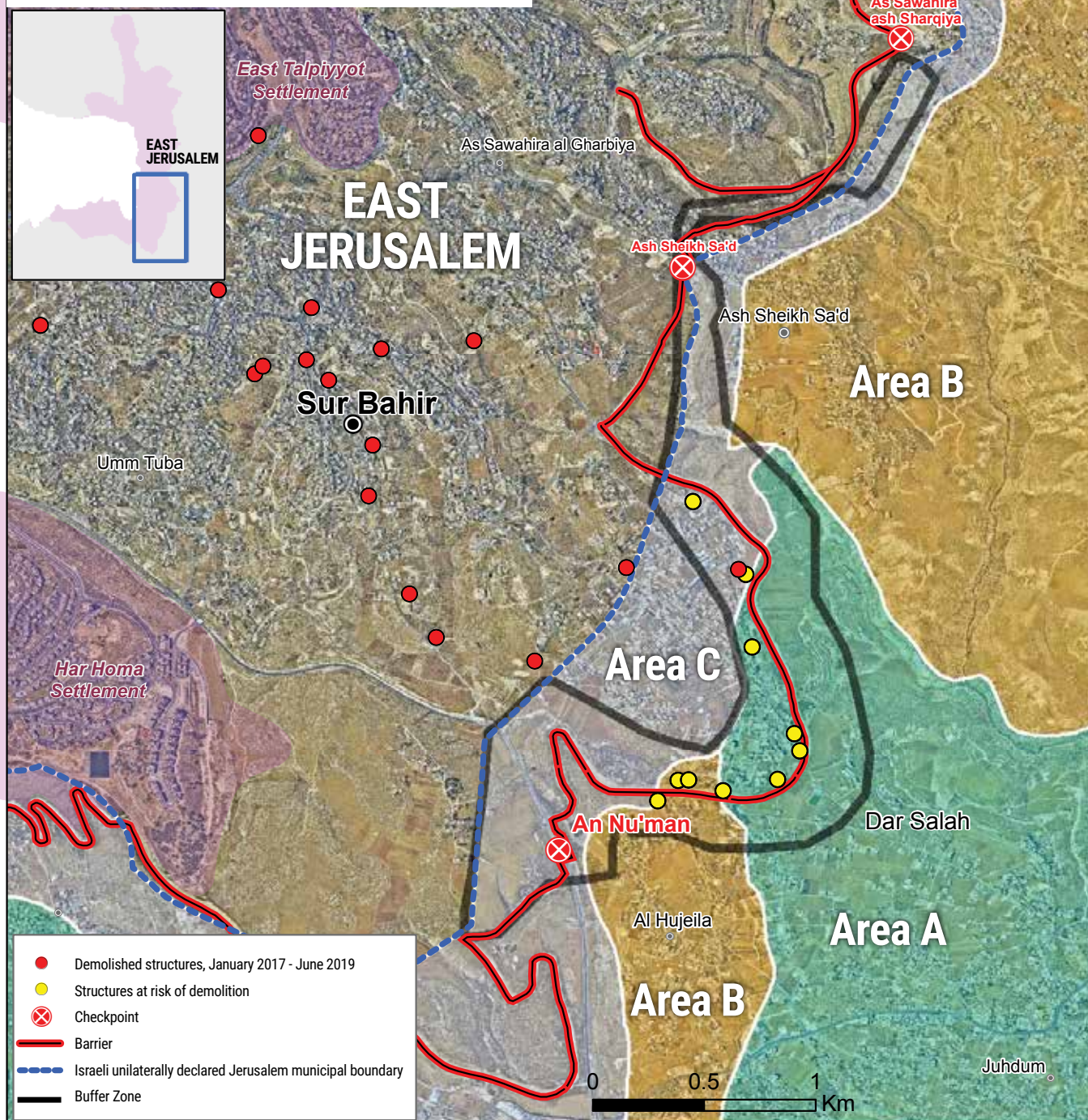
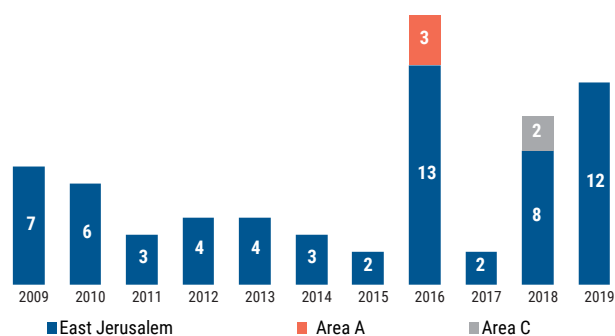


Sur Bahir: Risk of Demolitions

July 2019



STRUCTURES DEMOLISHED IN SUR BAHIR FOR LACKING BUILDING PERMITS, 2009 - JUNE 2019



The difficulty of constructing homes for Palestinian residents has been compounded since 2011 by the issuing of a military order by the Israeli authorities which designates a buffer zone of 100-300 metres on both sides of the Barrier in Sur Bahir where construction is prohibited. This includes Area A and B, even if the requisite permits have been issued by the PA. The reason given was security: the Barrier in the Sur Bahir area consists of fences, an electronic monitoring system, and a patrol road, rather than the 8-metre-high concrete slab wall which characterizes the Barrier around most of East Jerusalem. The buffer zone includes more than 200 buildings, of which about 100 were built after the 2011 military order, according to local sources. In its 2004 Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice established that the sections of the Barrier which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, violate Israel's obligations under international law. (See box: *15 years since the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion*).⁶

The International Court of Justice established that the sections of the Barrier which run inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violate Israel's obligations under international law.

Personal story: "It seems no one is listening to us."

Ismail Obeidi, a 42 year-old-father of six, owns one of the homes in Sur Bahir that is targeted for demolition by 18 July, (*structure 3 on map*).

"I got married in 1998 and lived in the Jabal Al Mukabbir neighbourhood of East Jerusalem until 2016. We lived on the third floor of my parents' house, but we never had a building permit. We were served with a demolition order, for which I've paid an estimated NIS 120,000 in fines.

Because of the fines and my growing family, I bought this piece of land here in 2014. I thought it would be easier to get a building permit in Area B and, indeed, I got a permit from the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government in February 2015.

I thought I was doing everything according to the law. I invested a lot of money in building and furnishing our house. Shortly after moving here in 2016, we received a demolition order from the army, ordering us to demolish the house for security reasons, since it's located close to the Wall. I hired a private lawyer and paid huge sums of money to challenge the order in court. We hired experts to propose alternative solutions that would prevent us from having our house demolished, including building a concrete wall to replace the current fence, which I offered to pay for myself. But we've exhausted all options and last month the High Court issued its final decision to demolish our house.

We've knocked on all doors, tried everything, in order to prevent the demolition. It seems no one is listening to us. They say, they want to demolish our house, for security reasons, but there are houses closer than ours which don't have demolition orders. The Wall here is poorly built, and can be crossed with ease.

I'm still in debt for about NIS 400,000 for the house and I owe the lawyer money too. Today is the fourth time the authorities visit our house in the past ten days. They are in a hurry and they intend to demolish. This is a tragic situation."



Hiba, daughter of Ismail

© Photo by OCHA

Personal Story: “We’ve grown old and want to live in peace and quiet.”

Ghaleb Abu Hadwan, a 63-year-old Jerusalem resident moved from Shu’fat refugee camp to build a house in Area A of Sur Bahir. His house is now at risk of demolition, (*structure 1 on map*).

“I built my house here in Sur Bahir in 2016. Our family has grown and we needed more space. I wanted to build a house for me and my three married sons, since our apartments in Shu’fat refugee camp are only 40m² each.

In 2017, one of the neighbours told me that Israeli forces hung a notice near my house. I couldn’t find it, but I contacted St. Yves Society to have a lawyer follow up. When our case reached the High Court in mid-2017, we were instructed not to make any changes to the building until there is a ruling. We complied. We wanted to build four apartments but had only completed two by that time. I didn’t even add a main gate, hoping that we would get a ruling in the end against demolition.



But the court ruled in favour of demolition. Our life is difficult and we are tired. I sometimes think that if we went to the Moon, we’d be told that construction is forbidden there. We’re grown old and want to live in peace and quiet. We’ve been going from one wave of displacement to another. We are refugees. My father and uncles grew up in Jaffa. I was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1956 and then we moved to Shu’fat refugee camp in 1966. If they demolish our home, we will have no choice but to go back to the camp. Rent is very high in East Jerusalem and we can’t afford it. I really hope our home won’t be demolished and call on everyone who can do so to help us.”

If they demolish our home, we will have no choice but to go back to the refugee camp.



Structures 1, 2, 3 & 4 at risk of demolition.

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On 11 June 2019, the Israeli High Court dismissed a petition that had been filed by residents of Sur Bahir in 2017. The appellants had requested that the military order prohibiting construction in the buffer zone be annulled, and/or that the demolition of their structures not be implemented.⁷ A week later on 18 June, Israeli forces sent residents a “Notice of Intent to Demolish” with a 30-day notice, which will expire on 18 July. Although structures have been demolished in the vicinity of the Barrier in East Jerusalem for lack of building permits, this is believed to be the first time that home demolitions will be carried out based on the 2011 military order on security grounds.

The ruling affects ten inhabited or under-construction buildings, comprising some 70 apartments, all but one of which are located on the ‘Jerusalem’ side of the Barrier. If executed, the demolitions would displace three households, comprising 17 people, including nine children, and would otherwise affect an estimated 350 people.⁸ Two of the three households at risk of displacement, comprising nine people, are Palestine refugees. Residents have reported that Israeli forces have visited the area on at least four occasions since the ruling, signalling that demolition of one or more of the targeted buildings is imminent. Additionally, residents fear a heightened risk of demolition of some 100 buildings that were built after the 2011 military order in the buffer zone in Sur Bahir.

This is believed to be the first time that home demolitions will be carried out based on the 2011 military order on security grounds.

Personal Story: “There are no lands left in Jerusalem for us to build or live on.”

Mohammed Abu Teir owns an under-construction building with 40 apartments that is now at risk of demolition in Area B of Sur Bahir, (structure 2 on map).

“I’m from Um Tuba in East Jerusalem. I first bought land in Sur Bahir in 2009. In 2010, I received a demolition order from the Israeli Civil Administration against a multi-storey building I’d built in Area A, so I hired a lawyer. We were first told that I’m not allowed as an Israeli citizen to be present in Area A. After we explained my status as a permanent resident of East Jerusalem, we were given a paper from Beit El which stated that they do not have jurisdiction over the area. So, I continued building. It now contains 36 inhabited apartments and is not threatened with demolition.



In 2011, as we were working on a nearby plot in Area B of Sur Bahir, we were told that the area has been declared a security buffer zone through a military order that expired on 31 December 2014. I stopped construction for three years. We never received a renewal of the order. So in 2015, I began construction but received a demolition order from the Israeli military commander. I hired a private lawyer. When the High Court ordered us to stop all work until there is a final ruling, I complied. That was two years ago. Now we have a final ruling for demolition. It’s shocking.

With other residents, I paid money to get an opinion from a former military officer who provides expert advice on security matters. We each paid him 15,000 NIS. We presented these findings to the court, including proposals to place cameras and build a metal fence like they have in Sinai. These proposals were all rejected and we don’t know why, as there are solutions to security concerns. We feel a huge sense of indignation. Land from Sur Bahir and Um Tuba was confiscated so that Har Homa settlement could be built. There are no lands left in Jerusalem for us to build or live on. We’re convinced that the sole aim of all these policies is to displace us and make us leave this country.”

15 years since the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion⁹

On 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, issued an Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The ICJ recognized that Israel faced 'numerous indiscriminate and deadly acts of violence against its civilian population [however], the measures taken are bound nonetheless to remain in conformity with applicable international law.'

The ICJ stated that the part of the Barrier which runs inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, together with the associated gate and permit regime, cannot be justified by military exigencies and thus violates 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; 'make reparations' for the 'requisition and destruction of homes, businesses and agricultural holdings' and 'to return the land, orchards, olive groves, and other immovable property seized.'

The ICJ also called on member states "not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem."

UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/15, of 20 July 2004, demanded that Israel comply with its legal obligations as stated in the ICJ advisory opinion.



SOME 320,000 WEST BANK ID HOLDERS PERMITTED INTO EAST JERUSALEM FOR RAMADAN FRIDAY PRAYERS

As in previous years, UNOCHA and humanitarian partners monitored the checkpoints controlling access into East Jerusalem and Hebron during the holy month of Ramadan (5 May- 4 June 2019) to identify assess ease of access for Friday prayers, identify potential protection risks and possible mitigation measures for the multitudes seeks to cross the checkpoints. Particular attention is given to the most vulnerable amongst those seeking access including children, pregnant women, the disabled, and the elderly. This monitoring also informs UNOCHA's analysis of broader access trends. On the four Fridays of Ramadan 2019, monitoring teams comprising staff members from UNOCHA, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and the United Nations' Office for Human Rights (OHCHR) observed access at permitted entry points into Jerusalem (Qalandiya, Gilo/Bethlehem and Zaytoun) and access into the Old City of Jerusalem. In addition, monitoring teams were stationed at the entrance of the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in the H2 area of Hebron.

Status of East Jerusalem

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".¹⁰ Since the early 1990s, Israel has imposed a closure on East Jerusalem, citing security concerns severely limiting the access for most Palestinians by requiring Palestinian residents of other parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to obtain access permits in order to access East Jerusalem.

On the four Fridays of Ramadan 2019, women of all ages, and men under 16 and above the age of 40 to crossed into East Jerusalem without permits.

With the exception of men aged over 55 and women over 50, West Bank ID holders require a permit to access East Jerusalem throughout the year.¹¹ During the month of Ramadan, the Israeli authorities put in place special measures that have a positive impact on the right of Palestinians to freedom of movement, to freedom of worship and to family life, all of which are otherwise restricted throughout the rest of the year. In 2019 the Israeli authorities made significant investment in the checkpoint infrastructure, (estimated to be as high as NIS 300 million) which included additional measures specifically aimed to facilitate access for Palestinian residents to East Jerusalem. These investments included increased provision of humanitarian lanes at Qalandiya and Gilo Checkpoints to serve the most vulnerable and additional buses from the checkpoints to the Old City of Jerusalem. Together with the regulations applied to manage access to East Jerusalem on the four Fridays of Ramadan 2019, these measures enabled women of all ages, and men under 16 and above the age of 40 to cross without permits; men between 17 and 39 years of age needed to apply for permits.

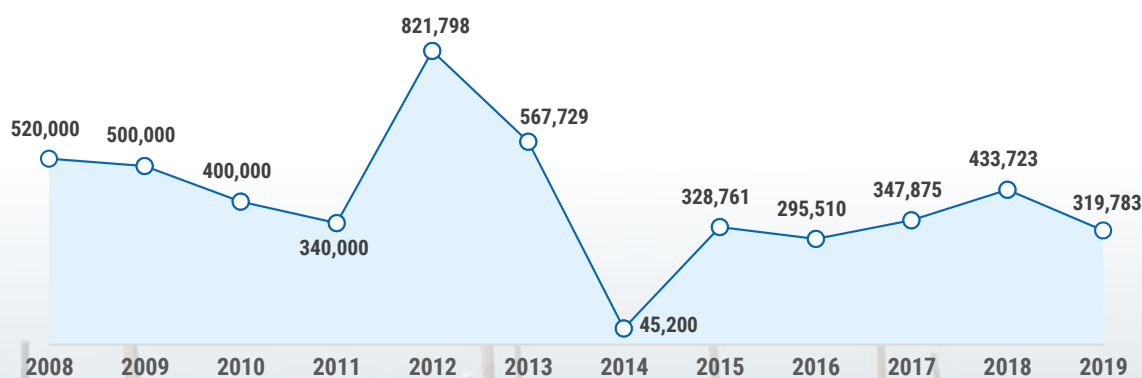
In addition, during Ramadan, West Bank ID holders were able to apply for family visitation permits to enter East Jerusalem and Israel on all days of Ramadan and the Eid al Fitr holiday, which marks the end of Ramadan, excluding entry on Fridays and Saturdays. In Ramadan 2018, family visitation permits for 100,000 people were allocated for Ramadan and Eid al Fitr. For 2019 an additional 50,000 family visitation permits were allocated for West Bank ID holders.¹² According to information received, no special Ramadan permits were issued this year for the residents of Gaza.

As shown in the graph, a total of 319,783 West Bank ID holders were permitted into East Jerusalem for Ramadan Friday prayers, with the majority of people passing on the last Friday and via Qalandiya checkpoint. Fewer people crossed into East Jerusalem in 2019 than in Ramadan 2018 as there were only four Fridays this Ramadan instead of five last year and Laylat al Qadr¹³ (Night of Destiny) coincided with the fourth Friday of Ramadan.

In comparison to previous years, this year recorded fewer incidents of disrupted access and casualties.

Overall, in comparison to previous years, this year recorded fewer incidents of disrupted access and casualties.¹⁴ Access to Jerusalem during the four Fridays of Ramadan 2019 showed general improvements in processing persons crossing through the three checkpoints. In large part this can be attributed to the installation of speed gates at Qalandiya and Gilo checkpoints by the Israeli authorities for people holding magnetic ID cards in early 2019.¹⁵

RAMADAN ACCESS FIGURES, 2008-2019



Qalandiya checkpoint Friday 31 May.

Access to Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron during Ramadan

Access and movement to the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque was generally steady over the four Fridays of Ramadan and was enhanced compared to previous years. Although, there were a record number of 18,000 persons in the first week, the second and the third week noted a steady decline, which can be attributed to a number of factors, including security restrictions and a heatwave. The two sections of the mosque were accessible based on the agreement detailed in the 1997 Hebron Protocol. Special arrangements included separate entry points for men and women. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) ambulances and emergency teams were allowed to reach the entrance of the mosque. Positively during each of the four Fridays, there were reduced checks and physical searches at the checkpoint leading to the mosque and access was generally eased.

The operation of humanitarian lanes

The allocation of humanitarian lanes at checkpoints greatly facilitates access for vulnerable people. As in previous years, the Israeli authorities introduced special arrangements to facilitate the crossing of people at the three designated checkpoints, including separate lanes for men and women and dedicated lanes for humanitarian cases. The authorities also installed latrines and created shaded areas for those waiting to pass through the checkpoints. In addition, volunteer paramedics were on site, and wheelchairs were available at Qalandiya and Gilo checkpoints where volunteer staff stood ready to assist vulnerable people.

Despite these positive developments, the journey from the remainder of the West Bank to East Jerusalem remained particularly challenging for vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with chronic illnesses or disabilities. These challenges included the lack of clear criteria on eligibility to use humanitarian lanes; the lack of visible signs indicating the availability of humanitarian lanes; and long walking distances leading to the checkpoints, and between the checkpoints and buses. Those permitted to use the humanitarian lanes were primarily men and women in wheelchairs, accompanied by volunteer paramedics. On the second and third Fridays at Qalandiya checkpoint use of the humanitarian lanes was extended to men over the age of 55. However, it was found that specific categories of vulnerable people, such as pregnant women, persons accompanying infants, the elderly and persons with chronic illnesses were generally not able to use the humanitarian lanes, an area for improvement in the future.

Those permitted to use the humanitarian lanes were primarily men and women in wheelchairs, accompanied by volunteer paramedics.



Sign for humanitarian lane: "humanitarian lane only for wheelchair users" Qalandiya checkpoint Friday 24 May.

Sustained access challenges

Despite access regulations allowing men over the age of 40 to cross checkpoints into East Jerusalem without permits during Fridays in Ramadan, several hundred men in this category (including elderly and men accompanying children) were reportedly denied access to East Jerusalem. This was particularly evident at Qalandiya and Gilo checkpoints on the last three Fridays. While no specific reason for the denial of access was provided it is understood that it was related to security concerns.

Personal Story: “Praying in Al Aqsa during Ramadan holds a big importance to us.”

Mahmoud Hassan Sheikh Ali is a 55-year-old refugee from Tulkarm refugee camp in the north of the West Bank. He came to pray in Al Aqsa Mosque with his 54-year-old wife Khairiya Hasan on Friday 24 May. This was their third successful access to Jerusalem this year through Qalandiya checkpoint.

Mahmoud explained: “I haven’t been crossing for Ramadan Friday prayers for about ten years; I have a chronic lung condition. The journey from Tulkarm was very difficult. Taking public transportation was not an option for me since I have a respiratory problem. This year I purchased a small car, which I parked as close as possible to the West Bank side of Qalandiya checkpoint.”



“I wish my sons could come to pray with us as well.”

Men under the age of 55 usually need a permit to cross into Jerusalem but during Ramadan the Israeli authorities allow men over the age of 40 to cross for Friday prayers. Mahmoud explains: “We have relatives here in Jerusalem. Sometimes there were family weddings that I could not attend as I only turned 55 recently. My wife usually goes to visit our relatives, or our relatives visit us, but I couldn’t cross so I haven’t been to Jerusalem for many years. Now during Ramadan, we can both cross and we are very happy about that. Praying in Al Aqsa Mosque holds a big importance to us as it is the most sacred site and one prayer during Ramadan is worth a lot. We are also going to cross next week as Friday will fall on Laylat al Qadr.”

Mahmoud and Khairiya started their journey from Tulkarm at 9 a.m. “This week access was generally easier than the previous weeks and we got through quickly. I passed through the humanitarian lane since I am over 50 and it was very easy. My wife entered in previous years because it is much easier for females. However, it is not a trip for the ill and elderly. There are long distances to be walked on foot. This is particularly difficult for older and weak people. The humanitarian lane is good but the buses should be closer to the checkpoint. At least some buses should be assigned for the elderly and weak.”

Mahmoud and Khairiya have five sons and one daughter. However praying as a family remains a challenge. Their daughter aged 33 is married and can cross to East Jerusalem every Friday during the month of Ramadan, while the five sons need permits. Mahmoud explains further: “My oldest son is 32 and has a work permit. My youngest son is 17 and needs a permit, while my other three sons got visitation permits during Ramadan and Eid al Fitr, excluding Fridays and Saturdays, so they cannot cross for prayers. I wish my sons could come to pray with us as well.”

IMPROVEMENTS TO GAZA ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

New gridlines and sustainable power solutions enhance hospital services

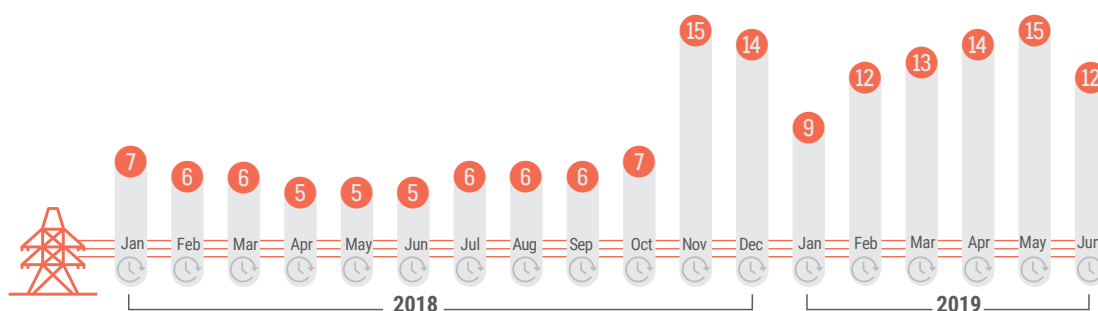
For the past decade, the Gaza Strip has suffered from a chronic electricity deficit that has undermined already fragile living conditions. The situation deteriorated further after April 2017 due to disputes between the de facto authorities in Gaza and the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority (PA), which has been ongoing since the takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007. 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 the PA reducing payments for electricity in Gaza. Compounded by a halt in the electricity supply from Egypt due to malfunctioning and inability to repair the feeder lines, this triggered electricity blackouts of 20-22 hours a day.¹⁶ The power shortages had a severe impact on essential services such as health, water and sanitation services, and undermined Gaza's fragile economy, particularly the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. During this period, the UN coordinated the delivery of donor-funded emergency fuel for generators to ensure the operation of some 250 critical health and WASH facilities.

Additional fuel for the GPP has been available since October 2018 following the provision of US\$60 million in funding from the Government of Qatar. This has enabled an electricity supply of 14-15 hours in a 24-hour period versus less than seven hours previously, as indicated in the graph below. The boost in the electricity supply has led to a general improvement in otherwise deteriorated living conditions in Gaza. Expenditure on fuel by households and businesses to operate back-up generators has been reduced and the delivery of basic services, water and sanitation has improved. It has also reduced the need for emergency fuel supplies provided by the UN to avert the collapse of basic services.

Based on the Qatari funding, the GPP was expected to maintain operations at this increased level up to April 2019. However, in May 2019, the Government of Qatar pledged \$180 million of additional funding to provide "urgent humanitarian relief support for the UN programmes in Palestine and support for electricity services",¹⁷ which will allow the UN to provide fuel for the GPP until the end of 2019.¹⁸

Additional fuel for the Gaza Power Plant has been available since October 2018 following the provision of US\$60 million in funding from the Government of Qatar.

**AVAILABILITY OF ELECTRICITY PER MONTH
(AVERAGE HOURS PER DAY) 2019-2018**



Despite the extra fuel supply since the end of 2018, electricity supplied through the Israeli line and the GPP combined met less than half of Gaza's power demands in the first six months of 2019.¹⁹ In addition, fuel deliveries can be susceptible to the security situation in Gaza and essential services remain at risk. The most recent example occurred on 25 June, when incendiary balloons launched from Gaza caused 13 fires in southern Israel, following which, the Israeli authorities suspended fuel deliveries to the GPP from 25 to 29 June.²⁰



*This article was contributed
by the World Health
Organization*

Efforts to provide sustainable power to Gaza hospitals

Power interruptions impede the functioning of health facilities and hospitals, jeopardize essential services, including intensive care and haemodialysis services, affect operating theatres and also pharmaceutical and vaccine storage. In February 2019, the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO), in agreement with the Ministry of Health, provided additional electricity from the main grid through extra electricity lines to nine of the 14 public hospitals in Gaza. Power availability in the nine hospitals increased significantly from an average of 13 hours per day in the first three months of 2019 to 22 hours per day in April and May.

Improvements to the electricity supply are crucial for sustaining critical lifesaving services but the health sector in Gaza remains highly dependent on fuel to run back-up generators during power cuts. To reduce reliance on donated fuel and build the resilience of the health sector, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other Health Cluster partners have been working to provide the main public hospitals with alternative energy sources.

"Interruptions in energy supply have created an enormous challenge for the health sector in Gaza, putting the lives of the most vulnerable patients at risk. The solar electrification of Nasser hospital is an important step towards ensuring a more sustainable power supply to health facilities", said Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, head of the WHO office for the occupied Palestinian territory. "We are grateful to the Government of Japan for funding this initiative that also contributes to building a more resilient health system and environmental sustainability in Gaza."



On 17 June 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) and implementing partners inaugurated a new solar power plant at Nasser hospital, one of the key hospitals in Gaza that serves an estimated 27,000 patients per month. Funded by the Government of Japan, the 250 KWp solar plant provides 420 MWh of clean energy annually and is expected to save around 166,000 litres of fuel. The project implementation was coordinated with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Bank that also committed to supporting the Nasser hospital solar electrification. These joint efforts will cover around 17 per cent of the hospital's power needs.

The energy generated by the solar panels will significantly reduce reliance on emergency generators and donated fuel. It will also build the resilience of the health system to withstand future shocks. Thanks to this intervention, some 19,000 patients per month now have access to lifesaving and life-sustaining health services, including an estimated 12,300 women attending the emergency department, 136 patients in need of haemodialysis and more than 158 newborn intensive care unit. However, to ensure the full energy resilience of hospitals and the broader health sector, a comprehensive approach to ensuring sustainable energy supplies is required and further investment in upgrading the electricity supply infrastructure in Gaza.²¹

On 17 June 2019, WHO inaugurated a new solar power plant at Nasser hospital that serves an estimated 27,000 patients per month.

Solar energy for four health laboratories

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Japan, in partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Health, Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), inaugurated the solar energy system project in May 2019. The project targeted healthcare laboratories in four hospitals: Beit Hanoun hospital in the north, al-Helal al-Imarati hospital in Rafah, al-Najjar hospital in Khan Yunis and Shuhada al-Aqsa hospital in the central Gaza area.

This project is worth \$500,000 and will provide more than 470,000 Palestinians in Gaza with improved access to healthcare services by providing 85 KWp of sustainable electricity supply for four laboratories; this represents a 50% saving in energy consumption. Additionally, 540 old fluorescent lamps were replaced with new LED ones.²²



Dialysis unit in Nasser Hospital, Gaza.

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Child was admitted to the hospital and we had to use the lights on our mobile phones to carry out CPR and save his life.

Personal Story: “The significance of this project is that it reduces our dependence on fuel and decreases CO² emissions.”

Dr Mohammed Zaqout is head of the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis, the largest medical complex in the Gaza Strip. Operational from 1960, it includes the first orthopaedic department in Gaza and the biggest laboratory in the oPt. In addition to being an educational institution with a computerized system for patients, it supports other hospitals by providing them with services such as dialysis and catering.



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“Power cuts have been a huge problem for us. The medical equipment was always breaking down and we have only one engineer whose role is purely preventive. We could barely afford new devices and these eventually broke down because of the electricity issue. We also experienced shortages of fuel for the back-up generators and UPS batteries. On one occasion a child was admitted to the hospital after falling from a building. The power was cut and the generator didn’t work so we had to use the lights on our mobile phones to carry out CPR and save his life.

“Fortunately, there has been a significant improvement in the electricity supply in the past few months and we now have 20 hours of electricity from the grid. The medical staff report that equipment breaks down less than before and they feel less pressure from disruption of their work, being obliged to postpone surgeries and the overall negative impact on the quality of their care.”

Despite the efficiency of the project, not all the medical equipment can function on the solar system. According to Sobhi Qishta, head of the engineering and maintenance unit in the hospital: “Our overall power needs are around 1800 Ampere and we used to have up to 20 hours of power cuts. The new solar power plant provides around 350 Ampere. The importance of this project is that it reduces our dependence on fuel, decreases CO² emissions, and also the cost of oil and maintenance for the generator.”



Nasser Hospital, Gaza.

ENDNOTES

1. <https://unsco.unmissions.org/security-council-briefing-situation-middle-east-reporting-unscr-2334-delivered-un-special-2>
2. Residents who build in Area A and B must obtain construction permits from the PA through Dar Salah Village Council, which is located in Bethlehem governorate on the West Bank side of the Barrier.
3. The area designated for Palestinian construction in Sur Bahir, like the rest of East Jerusalem, is very limited, particularly after East Talpiot and Har Homa settlements were built on Sur Bahir lands and wide areas were designated as “green”, where no construction is allowed. In addition, the construction density allowed in the municipal areas of Sur Bahir that are designated for construction is low and generally less than half of the building percentage permitted in Har Homa settlement that was built on Sur Bahir lands. See: UN-HABITAT, 2015. *Right to Develop*, <https://unhabitat.org/books/right-to-develop-planning-palestinian-communities-in-east-jerusalem/>, pp.12-13; and IPCC, 2007, *Jerusalem on the Map*, http://www.ipcc-jerusalem.org/attachment/14/IPCC_JOM%20III.pdf, pp. 38 and 40.
4. According to residents of Sur Bahir, an apartment in Areas A or B costs between \$70,000-100,000 compared to \$300,000 – 350,000 for an equivalent unit in the municipal area of Sur Bahir.
5. On the phenomenon of ‘self demolitions’ see, OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin, April 2019, *Record number of demolitions, including self-demolitions, in East Jerusalem in April 2019*. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/record-number-demolitions-including-self-demolitions-east-jerusalem-april-2019>
6. Overall, there are about 2,500 dunums of Sur Bahir lands located in Area A and B on the ‘West Bank’ side of the Barrier, which contain numerous olive groves. However, farmers are prevented from accessing this land, due to the lack of agricultural gates. They are also prohibited from bringing harvested crops into Jerusalem via barrier checkpoints, except for small amounts permitted for household consumption. One family living on the ‘West Bank’ side of the Barrier has been provided with a gate and key to travel between their house and the part of Sur Bahir on the ‘Jerusalem’ side. The Barrier also impedes garbage collection and sewage systems, leading to reported sewage overflows.
7. The court stated: “Continued construction without a permit in close proximity to the security barrier limits the operational freedom of movement near the fence and increases friction with the local population. Such construction may also serve as a hiding place for terrorists or persons residing illegally within a non-involved civilian population, and enable terrorists to smuggle weapons or even enter into Israel from that area.” Nir Hasson, *High Court Allows Demolition of 13 East Jerusalem Buildings Under Palestinian Control*, Ha’aretz, 17 June 2019.
8. The original demolition orders concerned a total of 15 buildings but the ruling cancelled the orders affecting two of the buildings. The remaining 13 orders included three foundations, whose owners intended to carry out construction, and ten buildings. According to the ruling, of the ten buildings to be demolished, six will be completely and four partially demolished.
9. 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: <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/131/131-20040709-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>
10. UNSCR 2334 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2334\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2334(2016))
11. As of 15 March 2015.
12. According to COGAT, these measures included permits for residents of Arab countries to visit relatives in the West Bank; flight permits through Ben Gurion airport for these visitors; and the extension of the crossing hours of various crossings and gates. See http://www.cogat.mod.gov.il/en/Our_Activities/Pages/Ramadan-civil-measures-220419.aspx
13. Laylat al Qadr falls on the 27th of Ramadan and is considered by Muslims as the holiest night of the year.
14. With the exception of the third Friday at Qalandiya checkpoint when 70 Palestinians, including 45 females and 30 children, were injured as a result of severe tear gas inhalation. OCHA *Protection of Civilians Report*, 21 May – 3 June 2019 <https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/21-May-3-june-2019>
15. COGAT account 21 February 2019 and 11 April <https://twitter.com/cogatonline/status/1116346076842405888>; <https://twitter.com/cogatonline/status/1098631848350138373>
16. In previous years, GPP operation was also undermined by the halt in the smuggling of Egyptian-subsidized fuel through tunnels after 2013; limited collection of payments from consumers; the destruction of fuel storage tanks by an Israeli airstrike in July 2014; and restrictions on imports of spare parts and equipment under the Israeli blockade.
17. HH the Amir Directs Allocation of 480 Million USD in Support of Palestinian People, 7 May 2019 <https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/statements/hh-the-amir-directs-allocation-of-480-million-usd-in-support-of-palestinian-people>
18. Nickolay Mladenov Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, 22 May 2019 : <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/nickolay-mladenov-special-coordinator-middle-east-peace-19>
19. OCHA database: <https://www.ochaopt.org/page/gaza-strip-electricity-supply>
20. *Israel Blocks Fuel Deliveries to Gaza Power Plant*, 25 June 2019 <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-blocks-fuel-transfers-to-gaza-power-plant-over-incendiary-balloons-1.7408073>
21. See report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee 30 April 2019: https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unsco_ahlc_report_april_2019.pdf
22. *With Funds from the Government of Japan - UNDP Inaugurates Renewable Energy for All Project in Gaza*, 30 May 2019: <http://www.ps.undp.org/content/papp/en/home/presscenter/articles/2019/renewable-energy-for-all-project-in-gaza.html>