



Special Focus: Emerging humanitarian risks

UN agencies¹ recently undertook an analysis of the humanitarian situation in the oPt. This update reports their findings.

1. IMMEDIATE TRENDS

Since the Palestinian elections in particular, there has been a sharp deterioration in humanitarian situation due to Israel's tightening of security procedures.

- The **Karni crossing** between Israel and the Gaza Strip – the main crossing for commercial and humanitarian supplies in and out of Gaza – **closed for 21 days** between 15 January and 5 February resulting in an **estimated loss of \$10.5 million**.²
- The IDF stated that it closed Karni crossing because of security threats and concerns over the spread of avian flu.
- On 26 February, it was announced that all Gaza Strip flour mills would close as wheat grain stocks are depleted following the closure of Karni crossing.
- The price of sugar has increased by 25% since the closure of the Karni crossing. Current stocks are sufficient for four days.³
- **Palestinian casualties have increased** throughout the oPt in the month after the elections compared to the month before (at least 34 deaths compared with 15) while Israeli casualties remained the same (1 death prior and 1 death after).
- From 19 – 23 February, the IDF has made **four incursions** into three locations in Nablus city (Balata refugee camp, the Old City and Kafr Qalil). Eight Palestinians were killed (including three children – aged 17 years) and 32 were injured.
- In the past 4 weeks approximately six Qassam rockets / day have been fired into Israel. Israel has shelled the northern and eastern areas of Gaza with 20-23 artillery shells / day.
- In February, the number of Palestinian children in Israeli detention was 360, representing a 13% increase from January. The average throughout 2005 was 300.
- The number of **structures demolished** increased sharply since the elections – **48 were demolished** since 25 January for lacking building permits.
- There has been a **25% increase in the number of physical obstacles** (471 obstacles) blocking Palestinian movement in the West Bank – these include earthmounds, checkpoints, roadblocks, which the IDF states are imposed to protect Israel's citizens – it compares with 376 in August 2005.
- There has been an **acceleration of Israel's plan to separate Palestinian and Israeli road systems** within the West Bank. Palestinian traffic is being diverted from the Israeli restricted West Bank roads through a combination of physical obstacles, movement permits and road barriers. A series of tunnels and bridges separate

Palestinians onto alternative roads to traverse Israeli-controlled Area C and Israeli restricted roads.

- These new obstacles have had a negative impact, restricting access to land, markets, services and social relations.

2. RISK OF FUTURE COLLAPSE

The humanitarian impact of cutting donor funds and VAT payments to the PA will result in a deficit that will immediately reduce the PA's capacity to provide services, pay salaries and ensure security.

The PA has three major sources of funding. In 2005 these included:

- i) Clearance revenues transferred from Israel - estimated at \$65m / month;
- ii) Budget support from the international community - estimated at \$34m / month;
- iii) Domestic revenues - estimated at \$35m / month.

i. The deterioration of basic services if PA salaries stop

The PA employs approximately 152,000 Palestinians. Of these at least 11,000 work in the health sector, 39,000 in education and 73,000 are employed as security personnel.

Non-payment of these salaries could mean:

Education and health professionals may start exacting a fee for their services. This informal privatization could exclude vulnerable groups from access to essential services and encourage an informal economy where the service quality would not be controlled.

School routines could breakdown, including reduced hours. Classroom size would increase, teacher morale would decline, education quality would deteriorate and pupil drop-out could increase.

It is not possible to transfer the responsibility of the public health system to UN or NGOs. The Ministry of Health (MoH) is the main agency responsible for provision, coordination and stewardship of the health. It provides a whole range of health services (preventive, curative, educational and rehabilitative) to the population. For instance, the national immunization programme requires the MoH primary healthcare services.

Approximately half of the MoH's budget is covered by international aid. Cutting this funding will hamper service delivery and prevention activities including immunization and mother and child care. On 7 February, due to severe stock shortage, the MOH launched an appeal for a monthly amount of \$4.5m to cover its running costs for drugs, supplies and disposables and diagnostic materials.

Regular maintenance of electricity and water networks would deteriorate. Water quality would further decline. Bacteria infections – already a problem in hospitals – could increase due to lack of proper water treatment. The breakdown of refuse collection and sewage disposal systems would risk spreading disease.

ii. Rising Impoverishment

Already-high poverty levels of 64% are set to climb further if PA salaries are withheld. The halting of payment of civil servant salaries would lead to their impoverishment.

PA employees now make up 37% of all employed in Gaza and 14% of all employed in the West Bank. Their spending power in local shops and on services plays an increasingly important role in keeping the local economy afloat.

Dependence on PA salaries is greatest in some of the poorest governorates, including Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqiliya, Tubas, Salfit and the Gaza Strip.

An estimated 942,000 Palestinians (25% of the total Palestinian population) are dependant on PA wage-earner. This is a conservative estimation because as the population has grown poorer, the extended family has come to rely on a PA employee.

The private sector has limited capacity to absorb the new unemployed – having experienced a severe slump during the last five years of conflict. Consequently, the population would become more dependant on international assistance. At present, 1.4 million Palestinians (more than one-third of the population) receive food aid to meet part of their food needs.

A PA salary is now considered comparatively high in the oPt while before the intifada, it was considered one of lowest salaries. Its regularity means that the families of PA employees continue to have access to credit, and banks now often require that borrowers have a PA employee as a guarantor.

iii. Rising Instability

The non-payment of salaries to 73,000 security staff could risk a rise in criminality, kidnapping and protection rackets – private security firms protecting businesses. Kidnapping of international staff in the Gaza Strip has reduced UN staff from 76 to six currently and kept UN operations at a Phase IV security level – the highest level before full UN evacuation.

iv. The humanitarian imperative

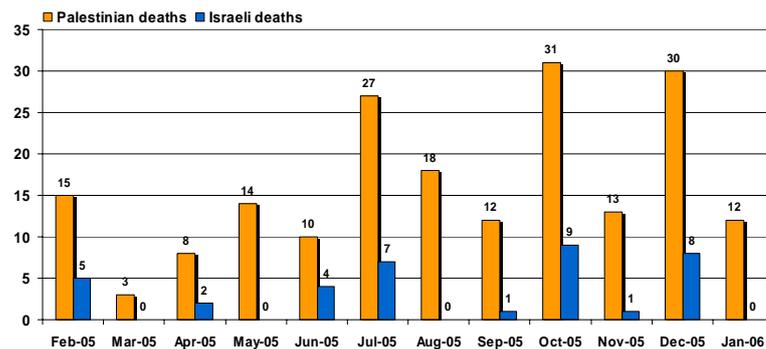
International humanitarian agencies do not have the capacity to take over the running of PA services, even if the security situation allowed.

Since Oslo (1993), donors have supported the establishment and development of the PA to provide services directly to its population. To cut the funding of PA salaries risks undermining the future of these institutions. Prior to Oslo, welfare services were administered through the Israeli military authorities – the 'Civil Administration'.

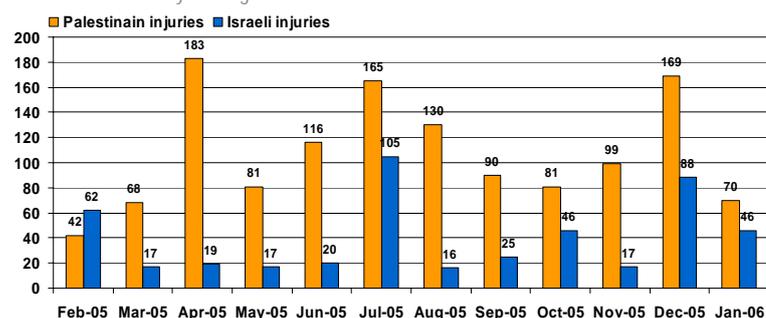
Israel remains responsible, as an occupying power for ensuring public order and the health and welfare of the Palestinian population.⁴ Humanitarian assistance from the international community does not relieve Israel of this responsibility.

II. Monitoring Issues⁵

Casualties: Palestinian and Israeli Deaths



Source: OCHA Weekly Briefing Notes

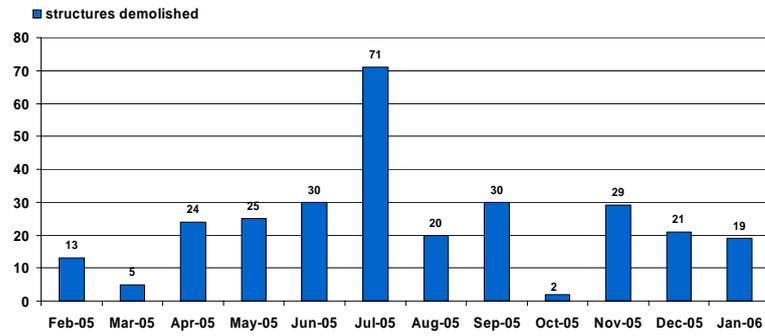


Source: OCHA Weekly Briefing Notes

In the period between 4 – 31 January 2006, 12 Palestinians including 2 children were killed and 70 were injured. One international and 46 Israelis were also injured in the same period including 28 Israelis in a Palestinian suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. The majority of Palestinian fatalities and injuries were reported during IDF search and arrest campaigns, clashes with Palestinian militants and confrontations with Palestinian stone throwers in the northern West Bank (particularly in Jenin and Nablus). Six Palestinians were also injured by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, two Palestinians were killed and three others injured near the border fence and another Palestinian killed and four injured in an IAF air strike (targeted killing).

Casualty figures in January 2006 are lower than those reported in the previous month (December 2005) and in general lower than monthly figures reported since July 2005.

Structure Demolished



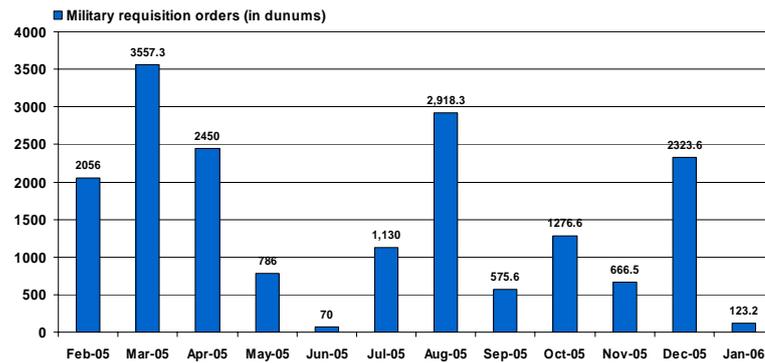
Source: OCHA Weekly Briefing Notes

Structures demolished

Between 4 – 31 January, 19 Palestinian structures were demolished by the Israeli military in the West Bank. Eighteen of these structures were demolished by the IDF and Jerusalem Municipality for reportedly being built without permits (Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jenin and Nablus governorates). Two structures were partially damaged by Israeli settlers in the H2 area of Hebron city during settler protests against eviction orders issued by the IDF.

The monthly figure reported in January 2006 is slightly lower than that reported in previous month (December 2005) but remains comparable to monthly demolition figures reported throughout 2005.

Land Requisition Orders



Source: OCHA Weekly Briefing Notes

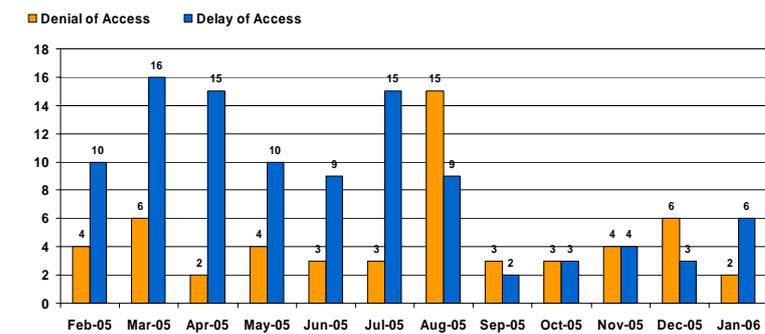
Land requisitions/levelling

In the period of 4 – 31 January, IDF military orders requisitioned 123.2 dunums (12.3 hectares) of West Bank land. Seventy-one dunums (7.1 hectares) of land was requisitioned for the construction of the Barrier in Jerusalem governorate (Biddu and Qatanna villages). The amount of land requisitioned by the IDF during January is the lowest reported since June 2005.

In late December 2005, OCHA recorded three military orders issued by the IDF requisitioning 232 dunums (23.2 hectares) of land along Roads 317, 60 and 325 in southern Hebron. According to the IDF the land will be used to erect a continuous concrete barrier to restrict Palestinian access onto these roads used predominately by Israeli settlers. The new barrier will run from the settlement of Karmel to that of Tene with gaps for gates to be used by Palestinians residents and local owners of land. It is estimated that this new barrier will affect access to approximately 80 square km of agricultural land and directly affect the movement of nearly 30 Palestinian communities.

Land levelling and construction of the Barrier continued in Qalqiliya, Salfit, Ramallah/Al Bireh, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron governorates in January 2006.

Ambulance Incidents



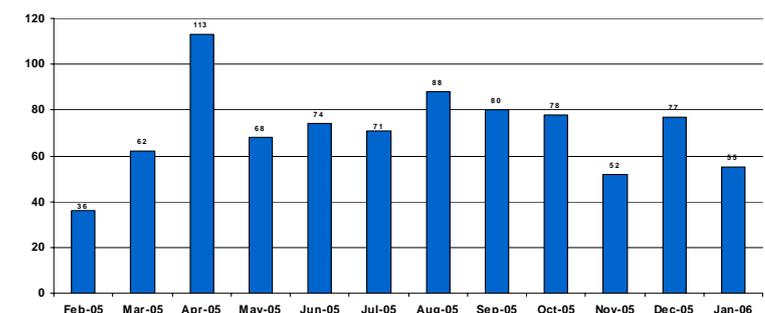
Source: PRCS

Ambulance incidents⁶

The number of reported incidents involving denials and delays (in excess of 30 minutes) at IDF checkpoints for Palestinian ambulance providers remained lower in January 2006. Two denials of access and six delays of access were reported by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in the West Bank.

Two of the reported incidents occurred in Nablus governorate and involved PRCS ambulances and crew being shot at while on route to transport a wounded Palestinian to hospital and while inside a house attempting to administer first aid and transport bodies after an IDF operation.

Humanitarian Access



Source: Access and Closure Information System (ACIS) and UNRWA monthly reports

Humanitarian access⁷

In January 2006, 55 access incidents were reported throughout the West Bank by international organisations. UNRWA filed 52 of the reports in which the delivery of aid and/or the movement of personnel were obstructed by the IDF or Israeli Border Police. Thirty-two of the all incidents filed occurred at entrances to Tulkarm and Qalqiliya.

On 19 January, an Israeli private company was contracted by the Israel Ministry of Defence to conduct searches and other such operations at the crossing. Since this time the security company has required additional searches of internationals' vehicles which

have not been agreed to by the UN. This matter is unresolved and has caused significant access problems for UN staff.⁸

Access for water transporters / tankers⁹

IDF closure measures and the Barrier in the West Bank continue to have a severe effect on water transport; closures can result in the inability of water tankers to reach their destination. According to a WaSH MP survey in 2005, 200 hundred Palestinian communities are not connected to water networks and in 11 other communities over half of the households are not connected to a network.

Access for Palestinian workers and traders from the Gaza Strip¹⁰

Erez crossing is the only access point for Gazan workers and traders with valid permits to enter Israel. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Labour, as of 13 December, 5,351 work permits were issued for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to work in Israel (all overnight stay permits were cancelled following a suicide bombing on 5 December in Netanya, Israel). Erez crossing closed on 16 December following Palestinian rocket attacks into Israel. With the exception of some traders crossing on 17 January, there was no movement of Palestinian labour into Israel until 22 January, reflected in the low average daily labour movement in January 2006 (less than half compared to December 2005).¹¹ Erez crossing was closed on 25 January at the request of the PA due to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections.

Erez Crossing – average daily labour movement

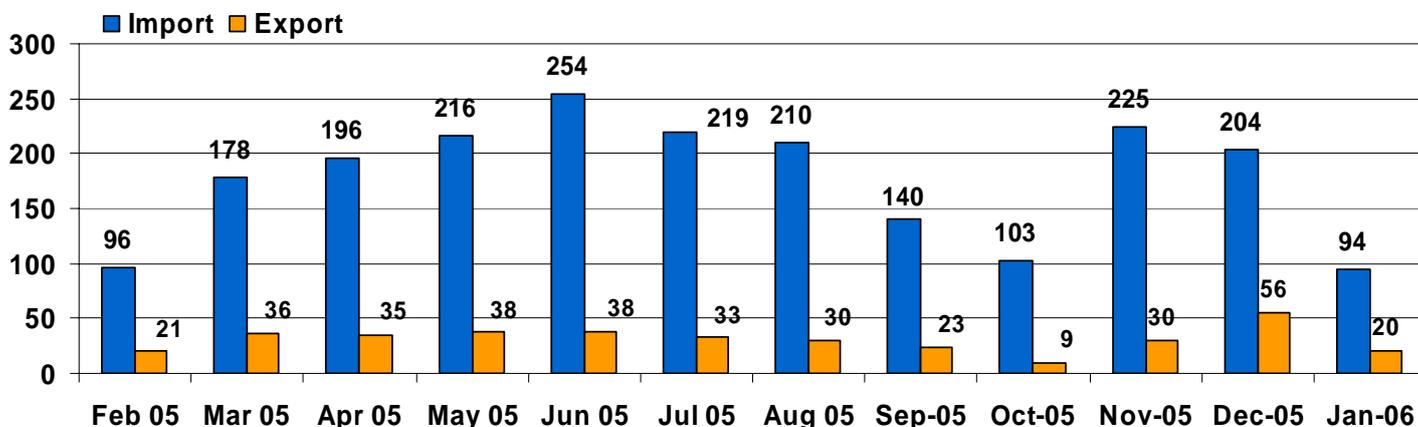
	Feb 05	Mar 05	Apr 05	May 05	Jun 05	Jul 05	Aug 05	Sep 05	Oct 05	Nov 05	Dec 05	Jan 06
Workers to Israel	390	1,451	3,200	2,067	3,588	1,767	281	128	0	1,200	1502	707
Traders to Israel	70	158	224	103	362	175	168	120	0	104	73	34

Source: Palestinian National Security Forces

Access for Gazan trade movement through Karni crossing¹²

Karni crossing is the principle point for transporting goods to/from the Gaza Strip. In January 2006, Karni crossing experienced significant closure. It was closed from 10 -13 January due to the Palestinian celebration of *Eid Al Adha* and from 15 January due to the IDF stated security concerns over a possible tunnel leading to the crossing. Consequently, the average daily number of truckloads of imported and exported goods fell in January 2006.¹³ Karni was not reopened until 5 February, resulting in three weeks of consecutive closure at a time when the agricultural season was reaching its peak in the Gaza Strip. For more information on the closure of Karni and its associated economic and humanitarian impacts see OCHA's *Gaza Strip Situation Report 31 January 2006* (available at www.ochaopt.org).

Karni Crossing – average daily truckloads (imports and exports)

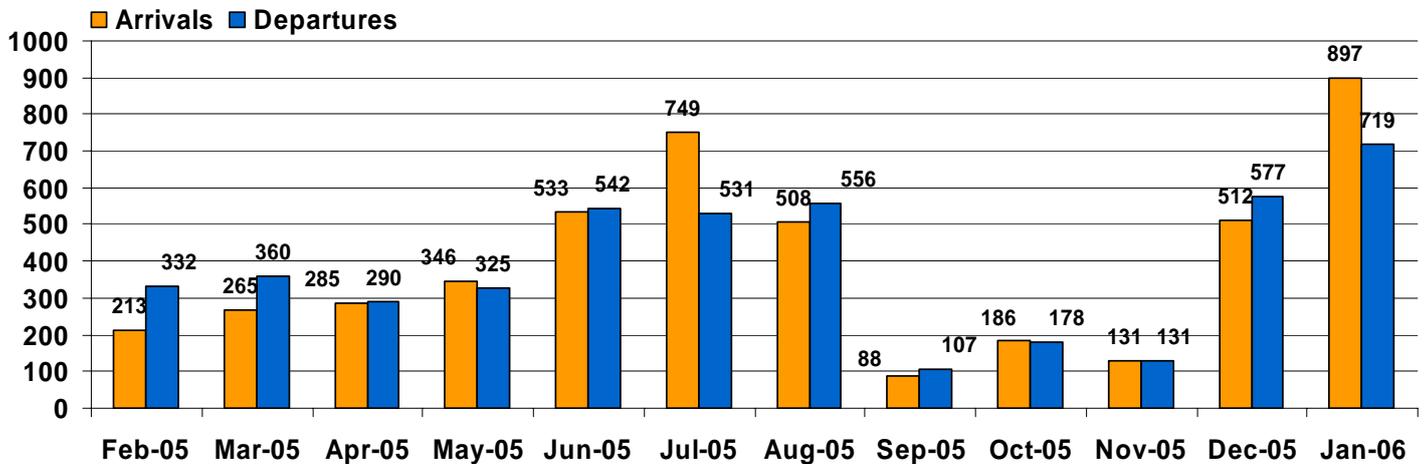


Source: Palestinian Ministry of National Economy

Palestinians' access internationally from the Gaza Strip

Rafah passenger crossing is the point of access for Gazans travelling overseas and is located on the Egyptian border. Since 18 December, Rafah has operated daily from 8am to 4pm. Between 13-17 January 2006 these hours were extended to up to 20 hours a day in order to facilitate the Muslim pilgrims' return from Mecca. The influx of people arriving from the Hajj and the increased opening hours led to a daily average of arrivals and departures again increasing in January 2006.

Rafah Passenger Crossing - average daily arrivals and departures



Source: Palestinian Passport and Border Police

Access for Gaza fisher folk¹⁴

Since January 2005, the Israeli authorities have restricted Palestinian fishing up to 10 nautical miles from the Gaza Strip coastline compared to 6 nautical miles previously (under the Oslo Accords, Gaza Strip fisherman are entitled to fish 20 nautical miles from the coast). Palestinian fishing is prohibited one nautical mile north of the border with Egypt and one and half nautical miles south of the border with Israel. In addition, during the reporting period (January 2006) Palestinian fishing boats from Rafah wharf were prohibited to fish on 22 January after Israeli naval gunboats opened fire towards them.

III. New humanitarian reports

OCHA report: Nablus after Five Years on Conflict. The report released as part of OCHA's Cost of Conflict Series highlights the humanitarian situation in Nablus since the start of the second *Intifada* in terms of casualties, home demolitions and the socio-economic impact of closures, curfews and incursions. The report discusses the humanitarian situation in Nablus in 2005 where there has been some lifting of movement restrictions throughout the governorate. However, the report concludes that internal closures continue to pose serious impediments to socio-economic activity and recent easing of movement restrictions are insufficient to stimulate recovery in Nablus. See [<http://www.ochaopt.org>].

Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights periodic report. Professor John Dugard in his capacity as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories since 1967 released his latest report. The report highlighted the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and the 15 November Agreement (despite not being fully implemented) as positive developments in the oPt in 2005. However, Professor Dugard pointed to the continued construction of the Barrier in the West Bank and the permit regime to enter the closed areas (areas between the Barrier and the 1949 Armistice Line or 'Green Line'). Dugard also noted the continuing settlement expansion and settler violence in the West Bank, Israeli efforts to change the character of East Jerusalem and its policies in the Jordan Valley. See [<http://www.ohchr.org>].

WHO and Physicians For Human Rights: Breast Cancer in the Gaza Strip. This joint report documents the story of Fatma Bargouth, a Palestinian woman with breast cancer living in the Gaza Strip who passed away in 2004. Fatma's story is illustrative of the plight of hundreds of other Palestinians cancer sufferers who face daily difficulties in order to fight against their illness including the lack of appropriate quality of care, expertise and equipment and the impact of closures and permits system on the referral system. See [<http://www.phr.org.il> and www.healthinform.org].

International Crisis Group report: Enter Hamas - The Challenges of Political Integration. ICG released a report and made recommendations prior to the PLC elections about the new challenges faced by Hamas participating in the PLC elections. Citing as "remote as ever a renewed peace process" the report opined that the international community's best remaining option is to "maximise the Islamist movement's incentives to move in a political direction through a policy of gradual, conditional engagement". See [<http://www.crisisgroup.org>].

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Press Release: Gross Domestic Product (Fourth Quarter 2005). PCBS reported that in the fourth quarter 2005, GDP declined by 0.2% compared to the previous quarter (third quarter 2005). According to PCBS this decline in the fourth quarter 2005 is due to a decline in the main economic activities (including tourism, manufacturing and mining). The value of GDP per capita is USD 1,268.2 in 2005 (an overall increase of 1.7% compared to 2004). See [<http://www.pcbs.org>].

IV. Humanitarian assistance to the oPt

The Palestinian Ministry of Planning and the UN launch a new approach to assistance in the West Bank and Gaza.

'Building Human Security' is a holistic approach to delivering United Nations assistance launched in the oPt with support from the Government of Japan. This is a critical step in the UN's efforts to move towards a stronger "joining up" of UN actions to support Palestinians. It seeks to balance out the UN's humanitarian and longer term investments in the current "transitional" period, and to support the plans and priorities of the PA.

Palestinian Legislative Council elections. PLC elections were held throughout the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem on 25 January 2005. The elections were observed as being free, fair and secure by international observer missions. According to official results released by the Central Elections Commission (CEC) the "Change and Reform" list of Hamas won a majority of 74 seats and the Fatah list 45 seats. Thirteen remaining seats went to smaller parties and independents. The Quartet released a statement on 30 January 2006 stating that it is the view of the Quartet "that all members of a future Palestinian Government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map". The Quartet also expressed its concern over the fiscal situation of the PA and urged measures to facilitate the work of a caretaker Government to stabilize public finances.

¹ These agencies include UNICEF, OCHA, the World Food Program and the World Health Organization.

² OCHA situation report January 2006 see on www.ochaopt.org

³ According to the PA Ministry of Supply and Ministry of National Economy as of 18 February.

⁴ Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land., 18 October 1907, Section III, Article 43; Geneva Convention IV, Articles 50, 55, 56, 59,60.

⁵ OCHA monitors a number of indicators related to the protection of civilians in our Weekly Briefing Notes. OCHA is also tasked with monitoring the specific commitments given by the Government of Israel to Ms Caroline Bertini in August 2002 in her capacity as Personal Humanitarian Envoy of the UN Secretary-General. Ms Bertini's mission was in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the oPt and was to assess the nature and scale of the humanitarian needs and to clarify the respective responsibilities of those actors involved. The Government of Israel made and/or confirmed a number of humanitarian commitments to Ms Bertini during her mission. Since this time OCHA has produced monthly reports monitoring the Government of Israel's actions in relation these commitments. The monitoring of the Bertini Commitments is now included in the Monitoring Section of the Humanitarian Update.

⁶ Government of Israel Bertini Commitment (2002): (1) Palestinian ambulances will wait no more than 30 minutes at any checkpoints; and (2) Effective mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that Palestinians seeking critical medical services (child delivery, dialysis, chemotherapy etc) can quickly pass all checkpoints.

⁷ Government of Israel Bertini Commitment (2002) - Facilitation of International Organisations: (1) Israel will fully facilitate the assistance activities of international organisations with particular reference to UNRWA; (2) Israel agrees to review and strengthen the liaison arrangements between international agencies and the IDF to facilitate assistance activities; and (3) Israel will improve the situation at checkpoints, including the deployment of more experienced IDF personnel.

⁸ For more information of access to Gaza through all crossing points, including Erez crossing, please see OCHA *Gaza Access report* (January 2006).

⁹ Government of Israel Bertini Commitment (2002): Problems related to water deliveries to Palestinian towns and villages will be addressed to ensure that daily water deliveries in proper quantities can be supplied by Palestinian water tankers.

¹⁰ Government of Israel Bertini Commitment (2002) (confirmed during the Bertini mission): Increase in the number of work permits for Palestinian workers in Israel from the Gaza Strip.

¹¹ The average daily Palestinian labour movement through Erez crossing is calculated excluding weekends i.e. Fridays and Saturdays.

¹² Government of Israel Bertini Commitment (2002) (confirmed during the Bertini mission): Increase in the shipments at Karni crossing in the Gaza Strip.

¹³ The average daily number of truckloads of import/exported goods through Karni crossing is calculated excluding Saturdays.

¹⁴ Government of Israel Bertini Commitment (2002) (confirmed during the Bertini mission): The fishing zone for Palestinian fishing boats of the Gaza Strip will be extended to 12 nautical miles.