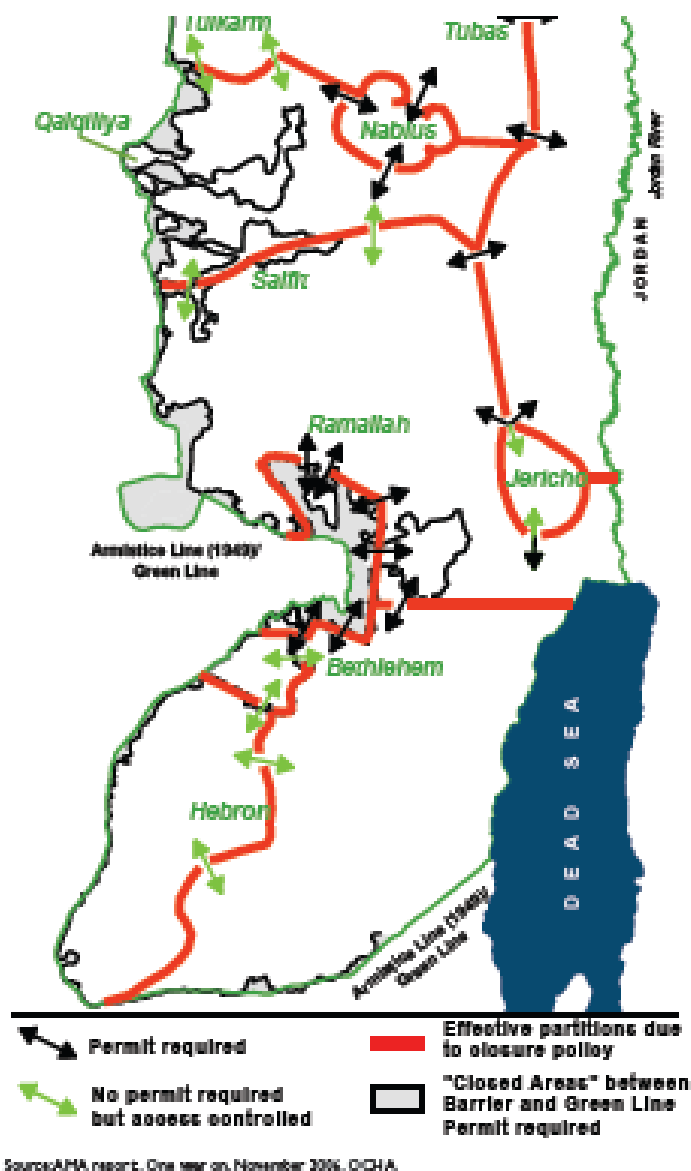


Emergency Situation in Nablus

Nablus - March 29 2007

Reports in the media indicate this week that Nablus is once again experiencing another incursion into the area with several fatalities. Since February 28, 2007, the city of Nablus has been the scene of repeated incursions.



In response to calls for assistance to the city, Caritas Jerusalem has undertaken a distribution of humanitarian aid packages of food to 200 residents of Nablus' Old City.

In cooperation with the Nablus Emergency Committee and the Mayor's office represented by Mrs. Abeer Kasbary, Fr. Yousef Saadeh, Fr. George Awad and Fr. Jalil Awad represented Caritas Jerusalem in Nablus to supervise the distribution of urgent humanitarian assistance for very poor and vulnerable families.

Nablus – A city under siege

Much of the attention recently has focused on Gaza, but, day by day military actions, incursions, checkpoints,

segregation of populations to even smaller areas continues. One particularly hard case in point is Nablus.



Caritas Jerusalem provided the food aid to very needy families in Nablus. (Photo: Caritas Jerusalem)

movement restrictions in that area are very closely monitored by the Israeli army. The map on the previous page illustrates this very well. Note that the black arrows around Nablus show that permits are required for people to leave Nablus. Every segment of the population are affected by this tight closure policy including sick people, breadwinners seeking employment and students. In addition, the community has taken an economic hit and is facing almost depression like conditions.

Young men are facing particularly difficult times in the current situation. According to UN OCHA: “Between 7 and 20 February, for example, age and residence restrictions were re-imposed at checkpoints throughout Nablus, Tulkarm and Jenin governorates. Palestinian men between the ages of 16 and 35 years were not able to cross major checkpoints to travel south.”¹

A victim (photo right) of the recent military incursion in Nablus and his devastated relatives. (Photo: Nablus Municipality)



Operation “Hot Winter” in Nablus

At the end of February, a new military incursion into Nablus began. This event was characterized as “the largest military incursion in three years in Nablus City.”² Through our contacts with the Higher Emergency Committee in Nablus, a picture emerged of what took place at the end of February in that troubled town.

¹ http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/oPt_Humanitarian_Monitor_Feb_07.pdf

² http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/OCHA_Nablus_situation_report_feb_07.pdf



Religious leaders representing Caritas Jerusalem accepting a thank you plaque from the Governor of Nablus (Photo: Caritas Jerusalem)

Two people were killed and some 25 persons were injured seriously with many of those still in hospital. Over 100 persons received minor injuries for which they were treated and released from medical care. Many scores of people were arrested and two schools in the region were commandeered to act as temporary jails while the large number of people were arrested awaiting processing.

The following is a summary of the events and actions that took place in Nablus at the end of February.

- Numerous private homes were seriously damaged
- Over 750,000 Euros of damage were catalogued as having been inflicted on public agencies in Nablus such as the electricity company, health ministry, individual medical clinics, etc.
- On 2/28, the Al Quds Bank in Nablus was entered by the Israeli army – its doors were destroyed
- The Ministry of Economics estimated that the siege on Nablus costs the city 1 million USD due to the curfew
- 150 shops and supermarkets in Nablus suffered an average loss of \$1,000 USD each just due to the destruction of their doors
- In total, the economic damage to the city from this recent operation was estimated at \$8.95 million USD.
- During the curfew, all schools were closed. This affected some 18,000 students, 318 teachers and 71 schools in total.
- All medical facilities at this time were also closed – medical clinics and hospitals were only operating on skeleton staffs.



A recipient of the humanitarian aid package in Nablus (Photo: Caritas Jerusalem)

Sadly, the situation in Nablus is at its worst now, but this is just one area in the West Bank which is increasingly divided into segregated areas with extreme difficulties in moving between the areas. The social, economic, psychological impacts of this whole situation are leading many into increased desperation, hopeless, lack of trust in public officials and feelings of isolation.



An official acknowledgement of thanks from the Mayor's office in Nablus to Caritas Jerusalem for our role in providing humanitarian aid to the people in Nablus (Photo: Caritas Jerusalem)

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