



## State of the Gaza Strip's border crossings 01 – 31 January 2013

This report documents the impact of the ongoing Israeli-imposed closure on Palestinian civilians, which affects their economic and social conditions. The report addresses the state of commercial crossings and crossings assigned to the movement of persons. It refutes Israel's claims that it has eased the closure of the Gaza Strip, which it has imposed for six consecutive years. The following are the most significant developments relevant to Gaza's border crossings during the reporting period (01 – 31 January 2013):

- Israel continues to repeat its claims of having eased the closure of the Gaza Strip. Most notably. However, such claims are false and aim to institutionalize the closure and create an international atmosphere to accept to the essence of this policy.
- Over two months following the cease-fire agreement, PCHR's data of the reporting period confirm that closure is ongoing and the state of the crossings remained as it was before conducting the latest Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip. There is no change in the quantity and nature of the goods allowed for importation, however, the exportation of Gaza Strip's products to the West Bank and abroad continued to be banned, excluding a limited quantities of agricultural products.
- The Karm Abu Salem crossing, which is the sole commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, was closed for 10 days (32.2% of the time period) during the reporting period.
- Israel's forces have continued to impose a complete ban on exports to markets in the West Bank, Israel and other countries, excluding limited amounts of agricultural products. In an exceptional case, during the reporting period, Israeli forces allowed the exportation of 27 truckloads (strawberry, flowers, tomatoes, garlic leaves, mint, pepper and basil) to Europe. It should be noted that 150 truckloads constituted the daily average before the total closure of the Gaza Strip in 2007.
- Israel's forces continue to impose restrictions on the import of basic supplies and raw materials. The total number of truckloads allowed into the Gaza Strip during the reporting period was 4,990, an average of 161 truckloads. This amounts to 28.2% of the daily average (570 truckloads) that was allowed to enter prior to the complete closure of the Gaza Strip.
- Israel's forces have continued to impose a complete ban on construction materials entering Gaza for use by the private sector. They allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials for use by international organizations in Gaza: 79,770 tons of construction aggregates; 4,833 tons of cement; and 1,410 tons of construction steel for international projects. These imports were permitted in the context of the so-called 'easing' of the closure, which was declared by Israel's forces 2.5 years ago.
- The Gaza Strip has been suffering due to the continuous cooking gas crisis because of the limited quantities of cooking gas allowed by the Israeli forces and the frequent closure of Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing. During the reporting period, the Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 10 days, during which 3,386 tons were only allowed into Gaza; an average of 109.2 tons daily. According to the General Department of Petroleum (GDP) in Gaza, the quantity allowed into Gaza constitutes 54.6% of the daily needs of the Gaza Strip's population (200 tons).



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- During the reporting period, Israel's forces completely closed the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing for 5 days, preventing the departure of patients with permission to travel to hospitals in Israel and/or Jerusalem and the West Bank for medical treatment. They partially opened the crossing during the remaining days. 738 patients were allowed to travel via the Beit Hanoun crossing. Israel's forces prevented the travel of 61 patients, including 2 patients who were denied access for security reasons, 17 who were ordered to choose different companions, 12 others who were obliged to wait for alternative appointments and 30 patients whose applications are still under consideration and are awaiting an Israeli reply following their security interviews.
- The Beit Hanoun crossing was closed to business people for 8 days. During the days it was open, 2,308 traders were allowed to travel via the crossing, a daily average of less than 75 traders, which constitutes 50% of the average daily number of traders allowed to travel via the crossing prior to June 2007 (150 traders). In the same period, Israel's forces allowed 59 journalists, 82 diplomats and 397 workers of international organizations to enter the Gaza Strip. The procedures for entry to the Gaza Strip are complicated, resulting in prolonged waiting periods, sometimes up to several days.
- During the reporting period, Israel's forces allowed 194 family members to visit their sons in the Israeli jails. The families were subjected to arbitrary practices, obstacles and immoral and degrading treatment, such as unnecessary strip searches. They also suffered from the provocative Israeli measures and the continuous threats to cancel their visitations rights in the future if they did not respond to the Israeli orders.
- The Israeli forces continued to breach the agreement that was reached on 14 May 2012 following the prisoners' hunger strike to allow the prisoners' families to visit their imprisoned sons twice a month for 45 minutes each.
- The number of family visits to prisoners in the Israeli jails during the reporting period is limited compared to the number agreed on according to the agreement. According to the agreement, every prisoner can be visited twice a month. As there are 450 prisoners in the Israeli jails, the number of visits should reach 900 monthly. However, the Israeli forces allowed only 131 visits. This is also applicable to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their sons; the number of these members mounted to 194, whereas, the number should include 1,800 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month.
- The Israeli forces continued to control the number of persons to visit their sons in the Israeli prisons. Only one or two of the father, mother or a wife are allowed to visitation. If any of them is not able to do the visit (for being sick, elderly person, dead), the Israeli forces do not replace that person/s. As a result, the prisoner is denied the right to family visitation. Moreover, children of prisoners are not allowed to see their fathers in the Israeli jails, in addition, the prisoners' families are not allowed to enter personal belongings, including food and clothes, to their sons.
- During the reporting period, 22,559 persons were able to travel via Rafah crossing. An additional 20,776 persons entered the Gaza Strip and 1,309 persons were denied travel by the Egyptian authorities according to the Border and Crossings Commission.

#### **Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing**

During the reporting period, Israel's forces closed Karm Abu Salem, which is the sole commercial crossing, for 10 days (32.2% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel's



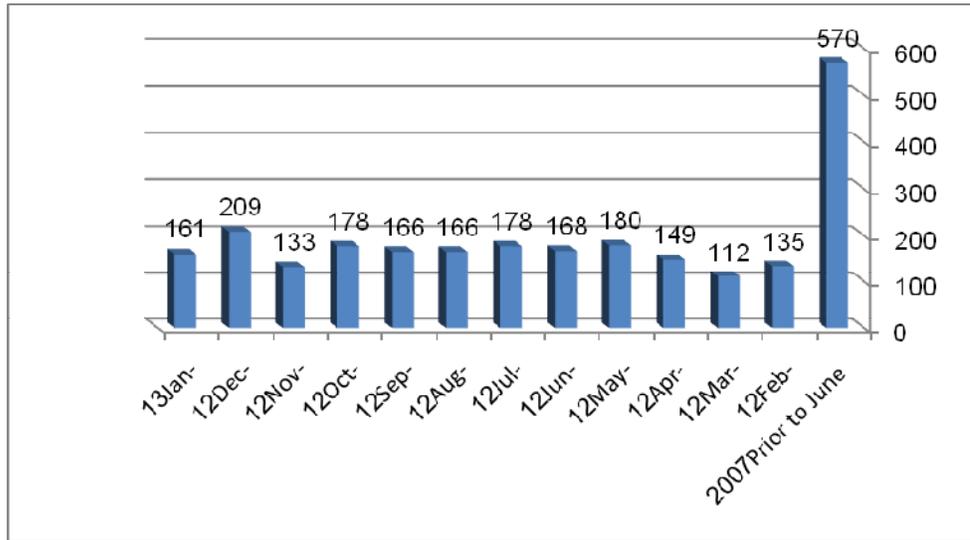
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forces allowed the entry of 4,990 truckloads, an average of 161 truckloads daily, representing 28.2% of the number of truckloads that was allowed into the Gaza Strip before the total closure was imposed in June 2007 (570 truckloads daily).<sup>1</sup>

### The number of truckloads allowed into Gaza in the past 12 months and percentage of needs met

Description	Daily average of truckloads	Percentage of needs met
Prior to June 2007	570	100%
February 2012	135	23.7%
March 2012	112	19.7%
April 2012	149	26.1%
May 2012	180	31.6%
June 2012	168	33.3%
July 2012	178	31.1%
August 2012	166	29.1%
September 2012	166	29.1%
October 2012	178	31.2%
November 2012	133	23.3%
December 2012	209	36.7%
January 2013	161	28.2%



<sup>1</sup> Source: The Palestinian Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.



The data above confirms that the Karm Abu Salem crossing does not meet the Gaza Strip's basic needs. The population's needs were previously met through the use of four commercial crossings. The data also refutes Israel's claims that the closure has been eased and that the number of truckloads allowed into Gaza has doubled. The level of imports is low and does not meet the needs of Gaza's population; moreover, most imports are consumables. The entry of various types of raw materials continues to be prohibited, with the exception of very limited types that are imported under complicated procedures.

The Israeli forces continued to ban the exportation of the Gaza Strip's products to the West Bank, Israel and abroad. During the reporting period, they allowed the exportation of 27 truckloads of agricultural products to Europe: 48 tons of strawberries (14 truckloads), 640,000 carnation flowers (8 truckloads), 27.2 tons of tomatoes (4 truckloads), 1 ton of long garlic leaves, 1 ton of mint, 1 ton of pepper and 400 kilograms of basil (1 truckload).

The closure of al-Mentar crossing on 02 March 2011,<sup>2</sup> and the destruction of its facilities, is a further obstacle to the movement of goods in and out of the Gaza Strip. The location of the Karm Abu Salem crossing in the extreme southeast of the Gaza Strip has resulted in increased transportation costs, leading to an increase in the price of imports and extra financial burdens for exporters and importers. Mr Jihad Salim, Secretary of the Association of Road Transport in the Gaza Strip, reported that the cost of transporting a goods container from the Port of Ashdod to the Gaza Strip (a distance of 70 kilometers) is 10,400 NIS, while the cost of transporting the same container from China to the Port of Ashdod is 6,600 NIS (a distance is 9,000 kilometers).

### • Entry of vehicles into the Gaza Strip

Israel's forces have been imposing restrictions on the entry of vehicles to the Gaza Strip, although they increased the number of vehicles allowed into the Gaza Strip to 80 weekly. In January, Israel's forces allowed the entry of only 312 vehicles. As a result, vehicle prices have risen, compared to prices in the West Bank. Moreover, the Israeli forces exceptionally allowed the entry of 12 buses to the Gaza Strip for the first time since the closure was imposed.

### • Fuel

During the reporting period, Israel's forces banned the entry of cooking gas supplied to the Gaza Strip for 10 days and allowed the entry of limited quantities for 21 days. The quantity allowed into the Gaza Strip was approximately 3,386 tons; an average of 109.2 tons daily. According to GDP in Gaza, the quantities allowed into Gaza constituted approximately 54.6% of the actual daily needs of the Gaza Strip, which is 200 tons daily.

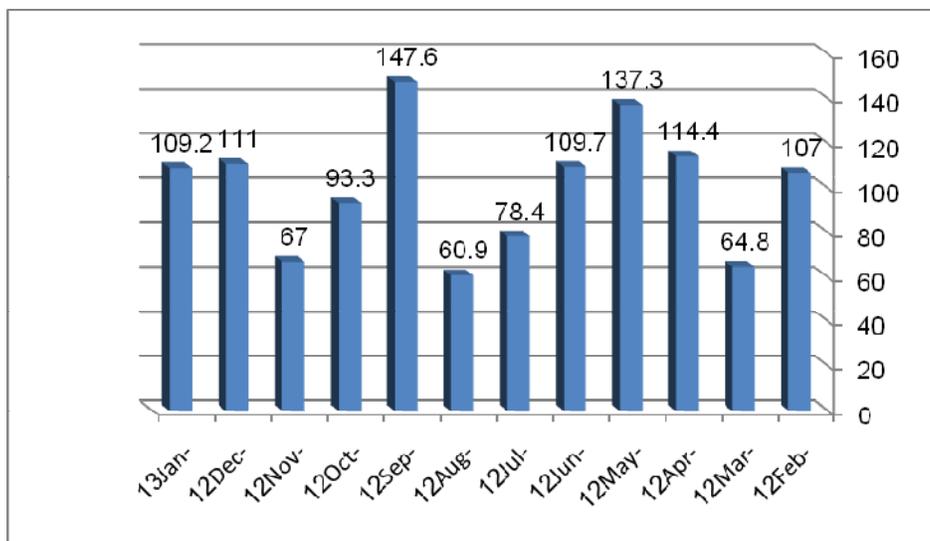
<sup>2</sup> Al-Mentar crossing was established in 1995. According to the Crossings Agreement of November 2005, the operational capacity of this crossing allows the daily export of 400 truckloads of vegetables, fruits and commercial and industrial products, as well as the daily import of 600 truckloads of goods for the Gazan population. The crossing is located inside the main industrial zone of the Gaza Strip, which was destroyed by Israel's forces during their offensive on the Gaza Strip between December 2008 and January 2009. This location facilitated the movement of imports and exports. Al-Mentar crossing was, before its closure on 02 March 2011, the major commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip. Al-Mentar crossing had an operational capacity amounting to 400 truckloads daily, so 75% of the Gaza Strip's needs used to be imported via this crossing.

**Table compares the quantities of gas allowed in during the reporting period to the actual needs of the Gaza Strip**

Month	Daily average/tons	Percentage of daily average compared to the actual needs
January 2013	109.2	54.6%
December 2012	111	55.5%
November 2012	67	33.5%
October 2012	93.3	49.2%
September 2012	147.6	73.1%
August 2012	60.9	34.4%
July 2012	78.4	39.2%
June 2012	109.7	48.8%
May 2012	137.3	68.6%
April 2012	114.4	57.2%
March 2012	64.8	32.4%
February 2012	107	53.4%
Actual needs	200	100%

Source: GDP in Gaza.

**Amounts of gas allowed into the Gaza Strip during the past year**



During the reporting period, Israel's forces allowed the entry of 1,159,080 liters of industrial fuel, but did not allow the entry of benzene and diesel. It should be noted that, before reducing the fuel supplies, Israel permitted the delivery of 350,000 liters of diesel and 120,000 liters of benzene to the Gaza Strip daily. The Gaza Strip now depends on fuel smuggled through tunnels at the Gaza-Egypt border.



• **Construction Materials**

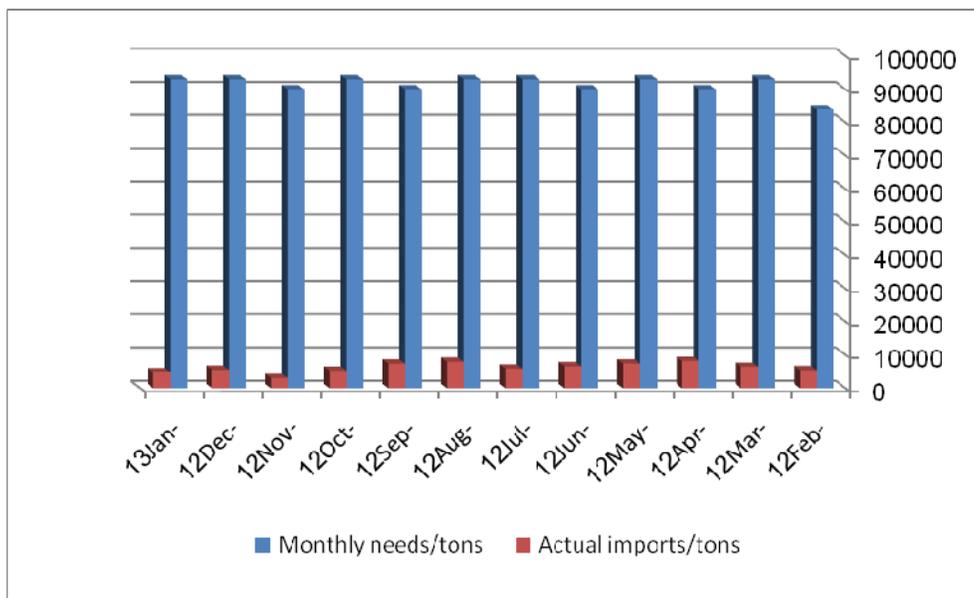
Israel's forces have been imposing a complete ban on the entry of construction materials into the Gaza Strip for over 6 years. However, they have agreed to allow the entry of limited quantities for international organizations. According to sources in the Ministry of National Economy, Israel's forces allowed the entry of approximately 79,770 tons of construction aggregates, 4,833 tons of cement and 1,410 tons of construction steel for international organizations, in the context of the alleged easing of the closure declared in June 2010. They also allowed the entry of limited quantities of tar, construction materials, plumbing tools, ceramics and marbles.

**Table comparing the quantities of cement entered into Gaza and actual needs in the past year**

Month	Monthly needs/tons	Actual imports/tons	Percentage
February 2012	84000	5451	4.48%
March 2012	93000	6524	7.01%
April 2012	90000	8232	9.14%
May 2012	93000	7470	8.03%
June 2012	90000	6652	7.39%
July 2012	93000	5936	6.38%
August 2012	93000	7999	8.60%
September 2012	90000	7435	8.26%
October 2012	93000	5305	5.70%
November 2012	90000	3061	3.48%
December 2012	93000	5554	5.97%
January 2013	93000	4833	5.19%

Source: Ministry of National Economy – Gaza.

### Comparison between the Gaza Strip's actual needs of cement and the actual quantities allowed in



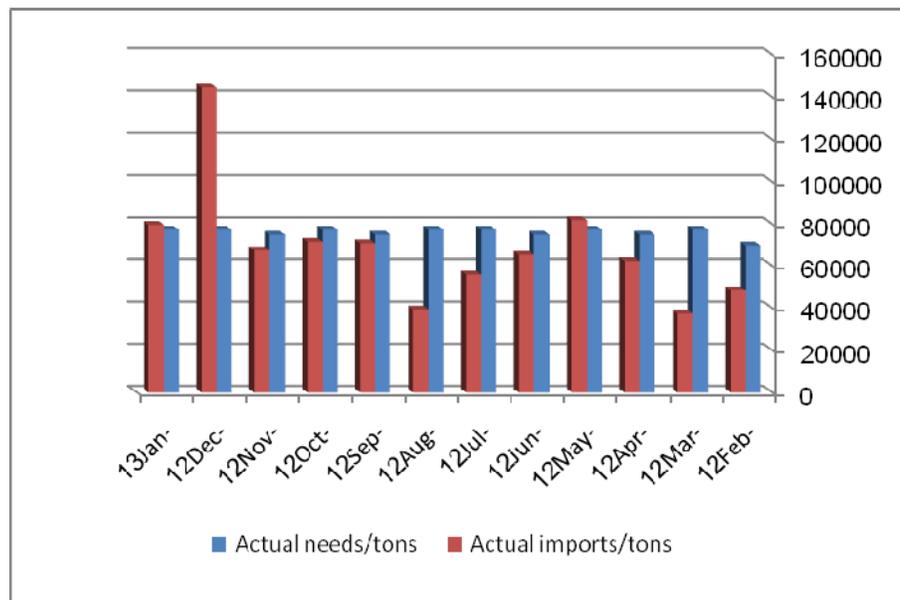
The above data indicates that the quantity of cement allowed into Gaza for international organizations is very limited (4,833 tons) and does not exceed 5.19% of the Gaza Strip's actual monthly needs before the imposition of the closure and the ban on the construction materials, which amounts to 93,000 tons.

### Table comparing the quantities of construction aggregates allowed into Gaza and actual needs in the past year

Month	Actual needs/tons	Actual imports/tons	Percentage
February 2012	70000	48465	69.23%
March 2012	77500	37380	48.23%
April 2012	75000	62310	83.08%
May 2012	77500	81926	105.71%
June 2012	75000	65530	87.37%
July 2012	77500	55790	71.98%
August 2012	77500	39540	51.01%
September 2012	75000	71035	94.71%
October 2012	77500	71730	92.55%
November 2012	75000	67650	90.08%
December 2012	77500	145033	187.1%
January 2013	77500	79770	102.9%

Source: Ministry of National Economy – Gaza.

### Comparison between the Gaza Strip's actual needs of construction aggregates and the actual quantities allowed in



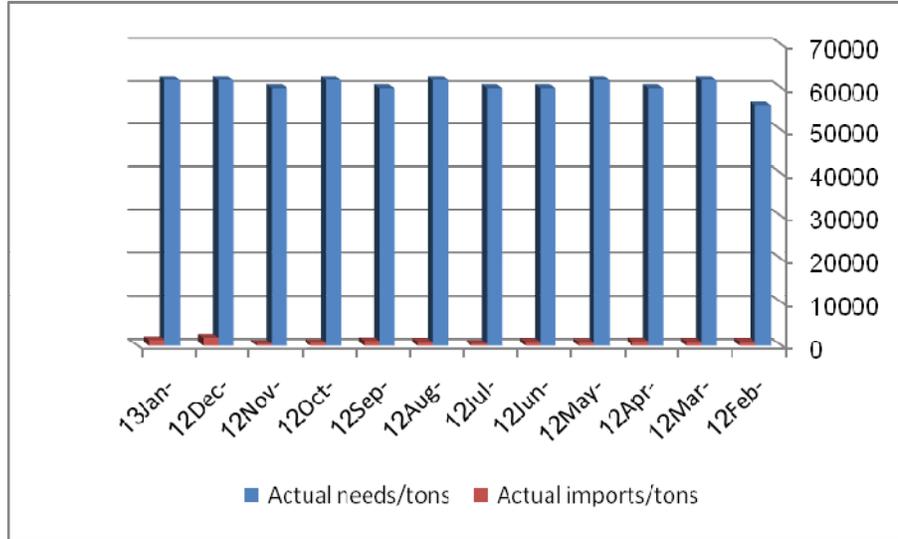
According to the above data, during the reporting period, the quantity of construction aggregates allowed into the Gaza Strip for international organizations was 79,770 tons.

### Table comparing the quantities of construction steel allowed into Gaza and actual needs in the past year

Month	Actual needs/tons	Actual imports/tons	Percentage
February 2012	56000	979	1.74%
March 2012	62000	941	1.51%
April 2012	60000	1088	1.81%
May 2012	62000	828	1.33%
June 2012	60000	920	1.53%
July 2012	60000	468	0.78%
August 2012	62000	873	1.40%
September 2012	60000	1159	1.93%
October 2012	62000	717	1.15%
November 2012	60000	514	0.85%
December 2012	62000	1981	3.19%
January 2013	62000	1410	2.27%

Source: Ministry of National Economy – Gaza.

**Comparison between the Gaza Strip's actual needs of construction steel and the actual quantities allowed in**



According to the above data, the quantity of construction steel allowed into Gaza for international organizations reached 1,410 tons during the reporting period, a quantity that does not exceed 2.27% of the actual needs of the Gaza Strip, which was 62,000 tons before the total closure and banning of the entry of construction materials.

**Crossings Designated to the Movement of Persons**

• **Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing**

Israel's forces have closed the Beit Hanoun crossing to the movement of Palestinian civilians, with the exception of limited categories: patients suffering from serious diseases; Arabs holding Israeli ID's; international journalists; workers of international humanitarian organizations; businesspeople; and persons travelling via al-Karama crossing. These categories travel through the crossing under very complicated procedures. According to the Civil Liaison Office in the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Israel's forces closed the crossing completely for 5 days during the reporting period.

According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, 799 applications were submitted by patients to be allowed to travel via the Beit Hanoun crossing during the reporting period. Israel's forces issued travel permits to 738 applications for patients to travel with their companions to receive necessary medical treatment. However, Israel's forces obstructed 61 patients from traveling, including 2 patients who were denied access to medical treatment for security reasons, 17 who were ordered to change their companions, 12 others who were obliged to wait for new appointments and 30 patients who have been waiting for Israel's reply after their security interviews as their applications are under consideration.



On the other hand, Israel's forces have continued to impose severe restrictions on international journalists, diplomats and workers of international humanitarian organizations in the Gaza Strip. During the reporting period, 59 international journalists, 82 diplomats and 397 workers of international humanitarian organizations were allowed to enter Gaza, often under complicated procedures, resulting in prolonged delays for many of those allowed to enter. During the reporting period, the crossing was completely closed to traders for 8 days, with 2,308 traders passing via the crossing during the days it was open, an average of approximately 75 traders daily. This is a sharp decline in comparison with the number of business people who were allowed to travel via the crossing prior to June 2007, when 150 traders used to be allowed to travel via the crossing daily.<sup>3</sup>

### Prisoners' Visitation

The Israeli forces continued to breach the agreement that was reached on 14 May 2012 following the prisoners' hunger strike to allow the prisoners' families to visit their imprisoned sons twice a month for 45 minutes each.

The Israeli forces continued to control the number of persons to visit their sons in the Israeli prisons. Only one or two of the father, mother or a wife are allowed to visitation. If any are not able to do the visit (for being sick, elderly person, dead), the Israeli forces do not replace that person/s. As a result, the prisoner is denied the right to family visitation. Moreover, children of prisoners are not allowed to see their fathers in the Israeli jails, in addition, the prisoners' families are not allowed to enter personal belongings, including food and clothes, to their sons.

During the reporting period, the Israeli forces allowed 194 members of prisoners' families to visit 131 prisoners in the Israeli jails as follows:

#### Family visitations to prisoners in the Israeli jails in January 2013

Day	07 January 2013	14 January 2013	21 January 2013	28 January 2013	Total
Number of visitors	62	50	24	58	194
Number of visited prisoners	41	36	19	35	131

The above table shows that the number of visitors is limited compared to the number of visits allowed under the prisoners' deal. According to the agreement, each prisoner has the right to family visitation twice a month. As there are 450 prisoners in the Israeli jails, the number of visits reaches 900 monthly. However, the Israeli forces allowed only 131 visits. This is also applicable to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their sons; the number of these members mounted to 194, whereas, the number should include 1,800 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month.

<sup>3</sup> Source: The Civil Affairs Department – Gaza.



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The families were subjected to arbitrary practices, obstacles and immoral and degrading treatment. They also suffered from the Israeli provocative measures and the continuous threats to cancel their visitations in the future if they did not respond to the Israeli orders.

It should be noted that the denial of family visits, imposed since 06 June 2007, is a violation of international humanitarian law, particularly article 116 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which stipulates that: “Every internee shall be allowed to receive visitors, especially near relatives, at regular intervals and as frequently as possible. As far as is possible, internees shall be permitted to visit their homes in urgent cases, particularly in cases of death or serious illness of relatives.”

### • Rafah International Crossing Point

The Crossing witnessed significant progress in December. During the reporting period, 22,559 persons were allowed to travel outside the Gaza Strip, 20,776 others entered the Gaza Strip and 1,309 persons were denied traveling by the Egyptian authorities. Palestinian males between 18 and 40 continue to be denied travel via the Rafah Crossing as they were not included in the improvements declared by the Egyptian authorities in late May 2011.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Improvements included increasing the hours of operation, with the crossing now open from 09:00 to 17:00 daily, and exempting the following categories from applying in advance for entry visas: women of all ages; Palestinian males aged below 18 and above 40; patients who have medical transfers; students studying in Egypt or abroad; and persons holding residency permits in foreign countries. See PCHR's press release on 26 May 2011.



### Recommendations:

PCHR calls upon the international community, particularly the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to:

1. Exert effective pressure on Israel to compel it to open all of Gaza's crossings, both those used for commercial purposes and those used for civilian movement, to allow the civilian population of the Gaza Strip to reconstruct civilian property destroyed during Israel's latest offensive on Gaza and to enable them to enjoy their fundamental civil and political rights, as well as their economic, social and cultural rights.
2. Promptly and urgently intervene to ensure respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in order to put an end to the deterioration of living conditions across the Gaza Strip.
3. Compel Israel to stop measures of collective punishment against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, including the tightening of the closure of Gaza's border crossings.
4. Remind the State of Israel, the Occupying Power, of its obligations towards the civilians of the Gaza Strip, under Article 55 of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates that: "To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles if the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate. The Occupying Power may not requisition foodstuffs, articles or medical supplies available in the occupied territory, and then only if the requirements of the civilian population have been taken into account." The High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention must fulfill their obligation under Article 1 of the Convention by ensuring the implementation of the convention's provisions by the State of Israel, in order to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.
5. Call on the Egyptian authorities to take more measures to facilitate movement at the Rafah International Crossing Point, in particular increasing the number of travelers and work hours and to find a solution for the thousands of Palestinians wishing to travel via the crossing, predominantly in summer as the number of travelers doubles.
6. Calls upon the Egyptian authorities to take more measures to allow the categories that are denied the right to travel via Rafa International Crossing Point, particularly Palestinian males between 18 and 40, to travel freely, in addition to increase the work hours gradually to be 24 hours a day in the future.