



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

This report documents the impact of the ongoing Israel-imposed siege on Palestinian civilians, which affects their economic and social conditions. This report also reveals the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and shortages of most commodities due to the decrease of imports to the Gaza Strip through the tunnels on the Palestinian-Egyptian borders. Thus, this report reveals again the real conditions of the Gaza population and the Israeli closure imposed on all Gaza's crossings for 7 years. It refutes Israel's claims that it has eased the closure of the Gaza Strip. The following are the most significant developments relevant to Gaza's border crossings during the reporting period 01 – 31 August 2013:

- During the reporting period, the Gaza strip witnessed a lack of most commodities, fuel types and construction materials. Statistics documented by the Palestinian Centre for Human rights (PCHR) show that the materials allowed by Israel to be entered via Israeli crossings do not meet the minimum needs of the Gaza Strip. In August, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 5,185 truckloads, an average of 167 truckloads daily. The number of truckloads allowed to be entered constitutes 29.3% of the number of truckloads, which used to be entered into the Gaza Strip before the closure (570 truckloads daily).
- PCHR's statistics indicate that most of the materials entered were consumables, while many types of raw materials have been still banned. The Gaza Strip population has depended on the goods coming via the tunnels on the Palestinian-Egyptian border in order to fill their basic needs over the past years. Imposing restrictions on imports to the Gaza Strip via tunnels revealed the Israel's fake claims that it has eased the closure of the Gaza Strip.
- In August, most types of fuel ran out. The cooking gas crisis has continued in all gas station, and piles of empty gas cylinders are currently being left at gas stations waiting to be refilled due to the limited quantities allowed by Israel into the Gaza Strip. During the reporting period, the amount of gas allowed into Gaza reached 3,274 tonnes only, an average of 105.6 tonnes per day. This amount represents 52.8% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 200 tonnes.
- The importation of diesel and benzene via tunnels stopped, due to which, quantities available in gas stations in the Gaza Strip ran out and resulted in closing most of these stations. Limited gas stations remained open depending on the limited quantities entered via the tunnels and quantities allowed by Israel via Karm Abu Salem crossing. In July, Israel allowed the entry of 153,430 liters of diesel and 1,488,876 liters of benzene. These quantities are considered very limited compared to the Gaza Strip's needs, which reached 350,000 liters of diesel and 120,000 liters of benzene per day before the Israeli decision in November 2007 to decrease the quantities of fuel allowed into the Gaza Strip.
- The Gaza Strip witnessed a significant rise in prices of all construction materials and lack of some of them in the markets due to being banned to be entered via tunnels. According to PCHR's statistics, the amount of cement and construction steel allowed to enter in August are very limited and does not meet the actual needs of the Gaza Strip, as only 1,510 tonnes of cement, 260 tonnes of construction steel and 41,780 construction aggregate were allowed in, and these quantities do not exceed 1.8%, 0.4% and 59.6% respectively of the monthly needs



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of the Gaza Strip. Due to the ban on the entry of construction materials, the people of Gaza have depended over the past years in their construction projects on construction materials entered from Egypt via tunnels. Moreover, not allowing construction materials to be entered via tunnels has resulted in stopping construction projects, including residential buildings, established in the Gaza Strip.

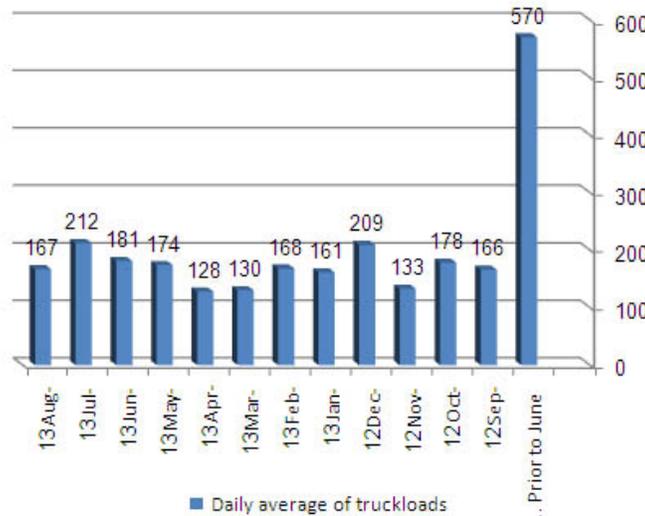
- Israeli authorities continued to impose an almost-complete ban on the exportation of the Gaza Strip's products to the West Bank, Israel and the outside world. In a limited exception, they allowed the exportation of 3 truckloads in August while the Gaza Strip's exports used to reach 150 truckloads per day before the complete closure was imposed on the Gaza Strip.
- During the reporting period, Israel completely closed the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing for 11 days, preventing the travel of patients to hospitals in Israel and/or Jerusalem and the West Bank for medical treatment. Israel partially opened the crossing during the remaining days. 931 patients out of 1,023 patients who submitted urgent applications for medical treatment were allowed to travel via the Beit Hanoun crossing. Israel obstructed the travel of 92 patients; 3 of whom were prevented due to security reasons, 9 of them were asked to change the companions and 2 others were forced to wait for a new appointment while the rest 78 patients are awaiting an Israeli reply following their security interviews.
- The Beit Hanoun crossing was closed to business people for 11 days. During the reporting period, 1,830 traders were allowed to travel via the crossing, a daily average of less than 59 traders, which constitutes 39.3% of the number of traders allowed to travel via the crossing daily prior to June 2007 (150 traders). In the same period, Israel allowed 17 journalists, 48 diplomats, and 392 workers of international organisations to enter the Gaza Strip. The procedures for entering the Gaza Strip are complicated, resulting in prolonged waiting periods, sometimes up to several days.
- Israeli authorities allowed 306 persons of the prisoners' families to visit 158 of their relatives in the Israeli jails. The number of family visits is very limited compared to the number of visits allowed under the agreement reached between the detainees and Israeli forces in May 2012 as it allowed 2 visits, each of which include 2 persons, for each detainee per month. This means 1,760 persons of the detainees' families are allowed to visit 440 detainees twice per month (around 880 visits per month).
- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 14 days due to the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai. This unveiled the reality of the situation in the Gaza Strip under the policy of collective punishment and the Israeli closure imposed over all border crossings, especially Beit Hanoun crossing that has been closed for 7 years.
- The closure of Rafah International Crossing Point and reducing its work hours to 4 daily negatively affected the Gaza Strip's population. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians got stuck in Egypt. Egyptian authorities detained dozens of Palestinians in the so-called "expulsion room" in Cairo Airport waiting for the crossing to be opened. In the Gaza Strip, thousands of Palestinians, including hundreds of patients, students and holders of residencies in other countries, were denied travelling abroad. When the crossing point was partially opened, 6,063 Palestinians travelled abroad via Rafah International Crossing Point, 6,181 returned to the Gaza Strip and 113 were returned to the Gaza Strip by Egyptian authorities.

### Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing

During the reporting period, Israel closed Karm Abu Salem, which is the sole commercial crossing, for 11 days (35.4% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel allowed the entry of 5,185 truckloads, an average of 167 truckloads daily, representing 29.3% of the number of truckloads that was allowed into the Gaza Strip before the total closure was imposed in June 2007 (570 truckloads daily).

#### Number of truckloads allowed into the Gaza Strip over the past 12 months and percentage of needs met

Description	Daily average of truckloads	Percentage of needs met
Prior to June 2007	570	100%
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%
February 2013	168	29.4%
March 2013	130	19.7%
April 2013	128	22.4%
May 2013	174	30.5%
June 2013	181	31.7%
July 2013	212	37.2%
August 2013	167	29.3%





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The above data confirms that the Karm Abu Salem crossing does not meet the Gaza Strip's 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 average imports are low and do not meet the needs of Gaza's population, and 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.

Israel has continued to impose a near-total ban on exports to markets in the West Bank, Israel and other countries, excluding limited amounts of agricultural products. As an exception, during the reporting period, Israel allowed the exportation of 720 kilograms of mints, 720 kilograms of Garlic and 480 kilograms of palm leaves.

The closure of al-Mentar crossing on 02 March 2011, and the destruction of its facilities, is another 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 prices of imports and extra financial burdens for exporters and importers.

### • **Entry of Vehicles into the Gaza Strip**

Israel has continued to impose restrictions on the entry of vehicles into the Gaza Strip, although they increased the number vehicles allowed into the Gaza Strip to 80 weekly. In August, Israel allowed the entry of only 208 vehicles. As a result, vehicle prices have been rising, compared with prices in the West Bank. Moreover, the decreased number of cars entered to the Gaza Strip is due to the complicated Israeli procedures and the repeated closures of the Karm Abu Salem crossing.

### • **Fuel**

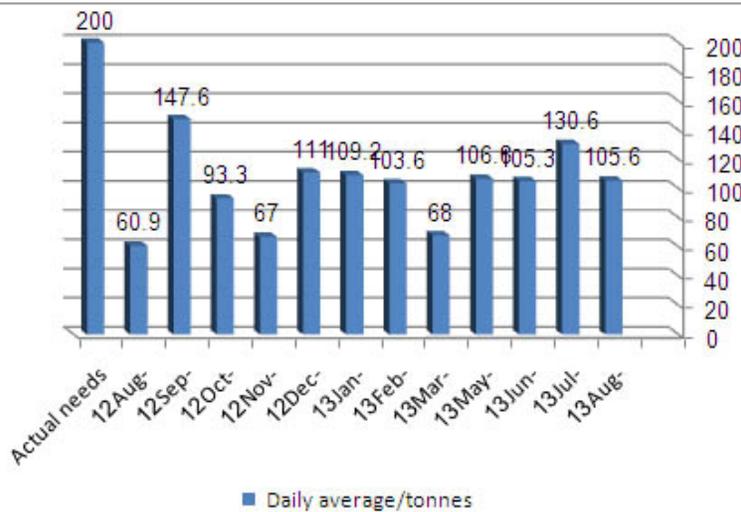
During the reporting period, the Gaza Strip's cooking gas crisis continued for the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive month as the whole quantities of gas ran out of the Gaza stations, whose number is 22. Israel prevented the entry of cooking gas into the Gaza Strip for 8 days; for the remaining days, Israel allowed the entry of limited quantities. The amount of gas allowed in was 3,274 tonnes, an average of 105.6 tonnes per day. According to the General Petroleum Corporation in Gaza (EGPC), this amount represents 52.8% of the daily needs of the people, which is 200 tonnes.

Mr. Mohammed al-'Abadlah, Member of the Petrol Station Association in the Gaza Strip, said that the gas crisis prevailing in Gaza is attributed to the repeated closures of Karm Abu Salem crossing and the daily amount of gas allowed in is around 100 tonnes, which does not meet the actual needs of the people of Gaza.

Quantities of gas allowed in during the reporting period compared with the actual needs of the population of the Gaza Strip

Month	Daily average/tonnes	Percentage of needs met
August 2013	105,6	52.8%
July 2013	130,6	65.3%
June 2013	105,3	52.6%
May 2013	106,8	53%
March 2013	68	34%
February 2013	103,6	51.8%
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%
Actual needs	200	100%

Source: EGPC in Gaza.



In the same context and during the reporting period, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 153,430 liters of diesel and 1,488,876 liters of benzene. It should be mentioned that these are very limited quantities compared to the needs of Gaza people, which reached 350,000 liters of diesel and 120,000 liters of benzene per day before the Israeli decision in November 2007 to decrease the amounts of benzene and diesel, which was consequently smuggled via tunnels on the Palestinian- Egyptian border.



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The decreased fuel, which is smuggled via tunnels and needed to run the power plant, resulted in aggravation of the electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip. In a press statement, Ahmed Abu al-Omarein, Director of the Information Center in the Gaza Energy Authority, emphasized that running the power plant depends on the fuel available via tunnels. In light of the decreased fuel due to tightening restrictions imposed on the work of tunnels, the power plant's operation has been decreased and resulted in increasing hours of power outages in the Gaza Strip; 8 hours off and 8 hours on, with the continuation of a complete power outage at night due to double lack of electricity.<sup>1</sup>

### • Construction Materials

Israel has 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 organisations. On 31 December 2012, Israel allowed the entry of construction materials for the private sector, but on the ground they are still imposing a ban on importing cement and construction steel and only allowing the entry of construction aggregate for the private sector. According to sources in the Ministry of National Economy, Israel allowed the entry of approximately 1,510 tonnes of cement, 260 tonnes of construction steel and 41,780 tonnes of construction aggregate. These limited quantities do not exceed 1.8%, 0.4% and 59.6% respectively of the monthly needs of the Gaza Strip's population. They allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials for use by international organizations in Gaza, and limited quantities were entered for the private sector. They also allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials, plumbing tools, ceramics and marbles. They also allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials, plumbing tools, ceramics and marbles.

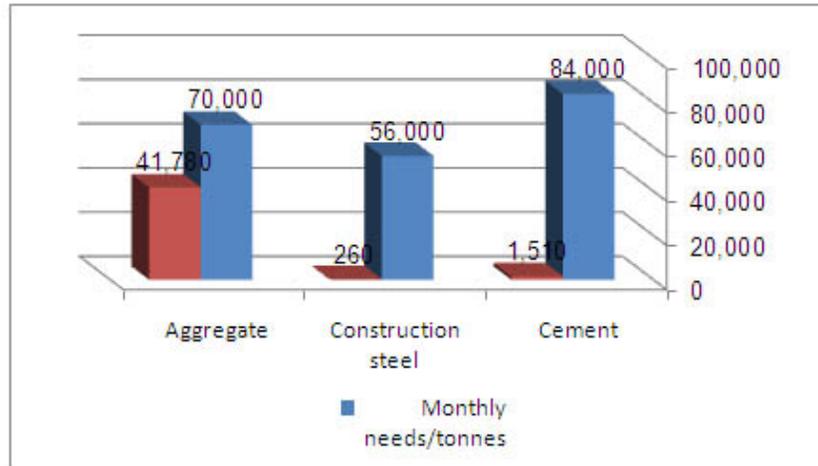
In addition, for three years, the Gaza Strip's population has depended on the construction materials smuggled through tunnels at the Gaza-Egypt border. However, as construction materials have stopped to be smuggled since June, construction works in most projects have become limited and projects related to the construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure have completely stopped.

### Quantities of construction materials entered into the Gaza Strip compared with actual needs in August

Description	Cement	Construction steel	Aggregate
Monthly needs/tonnes	84,000	56,000	70,000
Actual imports/tonnes	1,510	260	41,780
Percentage	1.8%	0.4%	59.6%

Source: Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.

<sup>1</sup> Press statements of Ahmed Abu a-Omarein, Director of the Information Center in the Gaza Energy Authority, 31 August 2013.



## Crossings Designated to the Movement of Persons

- **Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing**

Israel has closed the Beit Hanoun crossing to the movement of Palestinian civilians, with the exception of limited categories: patients suffering from serious illnesses; Arabs holding Israeli IDs; international journalists; workers of international humanitarian organizations; business people; and persons traveling 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 closed the crossing completely for 11 days during the reporting period.

According to the same sources, 1,023 applications were submitted by patients requesting permission to travel via the Beit Hanoun crossing during the reporting period. They permitted applications of 931 patients to travel for medical treatment. Israel obstructed the travel of 92 patients; 3 of whom were prevented due to security reasons, 9 of them were asked to change the companions and 2 others were forced to wait for a new appointment while the rest 78 patients are awaiting an Israeli reply following their security interviews.

Israel has also continued to impose severe restrictions on international journalists, diplomats and workers of international humanitarian organizations in the Gaza Strip. During the reporting period, 17 international journalists, 48 diplomats and 392 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 11 days, with 1,830 traders passing via the crossing during the days it was open, an average of approximately 59 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>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Authority of Civil Affairs in the Gaza Strip.



- **Prisoners' Visits**

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities allowed 306 family members of detainees to visit 158 of their relatives in the Israeli prisons, and they were divided into 5 groups as follows:

**Family visitations to prisoners in the Israeli jails in July 2013**

Day	Number of visitors	Number of children	Number of visited prisoners	Prison
05 August 2013	49	9	23	Eshel prison
12 August 2013	84	17	43	Nafha prison
19 August 2013	79	15	44	Ramon prison
26 August 2013	94	22	48	Nafha prison

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 440 prisoners in the Israeli jails, the number of visits reaches 880 monthly. However, the Israeli forces allowed only 158 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 306, whereas, the number should include 1,760 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month.

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 Israeli authorities determines the visitor who is allowed to visit the prisoner, and those authorized are limited to the prisoners' father, mother or wife and one or two of them only are allowed to visit. Furthermore, in the case either one is incapable of visiting (due to sickness, old age or death), the Israeli authorities do not allow the change of the visitors' name; thus, the prisoner loses the visitation right. In the same context, Israeli authorities continue to deprive children from visiting their fathers in Israeli jails, and prisoners' families are not allowed to bring with them personal items, including clothes and food.

- **Rafah International Crossing Point**

During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 14 days due to the Egyptian situation and the deteriorated conditions in north Sinai. This situation unveiled the suffering experienced by the Gaza Strip population due to the policy of collective punishment and closure imposed by Israel, especially the closure of all crossing borders, including Beit Hanoun crossing that has been closed for 7 years. Because of closing Rafah crossing point, about



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1.7 million Palestinians have been denied the right to freedom of movement and travel from and to the Gaza Strip.

According to PCHR's follow-up, hundreds of Palestinians, including dozens of patients, got stuck in Egypt waiting for the crossing to be opened. Moreover, there were hundreds of Palestinian families living abroad went to Egypt to enter the Gaza Strip via Rafah crossing and visit their relatives there and hundreds of students studying abroad who came to the Gaza Strip to spend holiday with their families.

The humanitarian crisis aggravated as the Egyptian authorities detained dozens of Palestinians for few days in the so-called "expulsion room" in the airport waiting for the crossing to be opened. The detained persons experienced inhumane conditions in that room. Furthermore, hundreds of Palestinian around the world were prevented from traveling to the Gaza Strip through Egypt because of closing Rafah International Crossing Point.

In the Gaza Strip, thousands of Palestinians, including hundreds of patients who are in a bad need for medical treatment abroad, suffered because they were prevented from travelling abroad. Besides, hundreds of workers holding residency permits in different countries abroad were prevented from leaving the Gaza Strip.

The days in which Rafah Crossing was open, Egypt partially opened it under a new mechanism that includes 4 work hours a day only. Moreover, the crossing would be closed on Fridays and official holidays. As a result, thousands of Palestinians were prevented from traveling abroad and the number of travelers significantly decreased. During the reporting period, 5,063 Palestinians traveled abroad, 6,181 returned to the Gaza Strip and 113 were returned to the Gaza Strip by the Egyptian authorities according to the Borders and Crossings Commission.



## 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:

- 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 the movement of civilians, 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;
- Promptly and urgently intervene to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and put an end to the deterioration of living conditions across the Gaza Strip;
- Compel Israel to put an end to measures of collective punishment against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, including the tightening of the closure of Gaza's border crossings;
- 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 fulfil 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; and
- Call on the Egyptian authorities to take more measures to facilitate movement at the Rafah International Crossing Point, in particular by increasing the number of travellers and opening hours, and to find a solution for the thousands of Palestinians wishing to travel via the crossing, particularly during the summer when the number of travelers doubles.