



**State of the Gaza Strip's border crossings
01 August – 31 August 2015**

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. Thus, this report exposes the real conditions of the Gaza Strip's population and the Israeli closure imposed on all Gaza's crossings for 9 years. It refutes Israel's claims that it has eased the closure of the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the report highlights that the continuing Israeli measures which are aimed to institutionalize of the closure and make the illegal restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and goods acceptable at the international level although they violate the international law, including the international humanitarian and human rights laws. The report shows that the Israeli closure is main obstacle for any development or reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip and the main cause of the humanitarian crisis and deterioration on the economic and social levels. The following are the most significant developments relevant to Gaza's border crossings during the reporting period 01 August – 31 August 2015:

Movement of commodities

During the reporting period, no remarkable change was witnessed on the movement of goods. An almost complete ban continued on the exportation of goods to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, including industrial and agricultural goods. Restrictions were also imposed on the entry of a number of basic goods, especially materials needed for Gaza reconstruction, infrastructure projects and materials for manufacturing and production. However, Israeli forces allowed the entry of certain types of goods, the majority of which were foodstuffs and consumables, under complicated procedures, including the frequent closure of the only commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom); the crossing was closed for 9 days (29%). As a result:

- During the reporting period, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 12,912 truckloads, an average of 416 truckloads daily. The number of truckloads allowed to be entered constitutes 72.9% of the number of truckloads which used to be entered into the Gaza Strip before the closure (570 truckloads daily). It should be noted that the Gaza Strip needs have increased over the past 9 years due to the population growth.
- The Gaza Strip witnessed a significant rise in prices of all construction materials and lack of some of them in the markets due to restrictions imposed on their entry on the one hand and the failure of the UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism on the other hand.
- 11 months have passed since the UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism entered into force and it has become obvious that the mechanism failed to fulfil the minimum level of the basic needs of Gaza reconstruction. During the reporting period, Israeli forces allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials. They allowed the entry of 44,220 tons of cement; 99,400 tons of aggregates; and 5,340 tons of construction steel. These quantities do not respectively exceed 52.6%, 142% and 9.5% of Gaza's monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 2.9%, 3.3% and 1% of needs for Gaza reconstruction.



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- Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 9 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 5,599 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 180.6 tons. This amount represents 51.6% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons according to General Petroleum Corporation in Gaza (EGPC).
- Israeli forces continued to impose an almost complete ban on the Gaza Strip's exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, but exceptionally allowed the exportation of 96 truckloads; 80 truckloads of agricultural products (tomatoes, cucumbers, hot peppers, sweet peppers, garlic, eggplants, squash and mint), 3 truckloads of furniture, 4 truckloads of stationary, 5 truckloads of fish, 3 truckloads of clothes, and 1 truckload of straw-mats.

Movement of persons

During the reporting period, Israeli forces imposed restrictions on the movement of Gaza population at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, the only crossing for the movement of persons to the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and/or Israel. As a result, 1.8 million people were denied their right to travel to hospitals, universities, holy places and family visitation in the West Bank. Besides, they were prevented from travelling abroad. However, Israeli forces allowed limited categories to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing: 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 on the Jordanian border. These categories travel through the crossing under very complicated procedures. PCHR documented the following in this regard:

- During the reporting period, Israel closed Beit Hanoun crossing for patients for 8 days. However, during the days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 1,346 patients permitted to get some medical treatment at the Israeli hospitals or at hospitals in the West Bank, and 1,370 persons accompanying them. Israeli forces obstructed the travel of dozens of other patients under different pretexts such as prevention due to security reasons, changing the companions, being forced to wait for a new appointment or awaiting an Israeli reply following security interviews.
- In August, Israeli authorities allowed 270 family members of prisoners divided into 5 groups to visit 155 of their relatives in Israeli prisons. The number of visits during the reporting period (August) was limited compared to the number allowed under the agreement reached between the detainees and Israeli forces in May 2012. According to the agreement, each prisoner has the right to two family visits a month. With 380 prisoners in Israeli prisons, the number of visits should reach 760 monthly. However, the Israeli forces only allowed 155 visits in August. The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 270, in August whereas, the number should include 1,480 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month.
- Israeli authorities continued to use Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing as a trap for the Gaza Strip residents in order to blackmail and arrest them. During the reporting period, they arrested 3 traders while passing through the crossing.
- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 27 days as a result of the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai.



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Exceptionally, the crossing point was opened for only 4 days for the return of people stuck abroad to the Strip. 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. During the days the crossing point was open, 2,618 Palestinians travelled abroad, 3,466 returned to Gaza and 138 ones were prevented by Egyptian authorities from traveling.

- The closure of Rafah International Crossing Point obstructed the travel of thousands of civilians as the number of Palestinians who are in need for traveling according to the Palestinian Border and Crossings Commission and registered at the Ministry of Interior reach around 16,000 persons. This is in addition to those wishing to travel and are not registered at the Ministry.

Commercial crossings

Commercial crossings were established to provide the Gaza Strip with manufactured or raw materials and to export the products of the Gaza Strip to Israel, the West Bank or abroad. The closure of al-Mentar (Karni) crossing, the demolition of its facilities in early January 2012 and using Karm Abu Salem instead created more obstacles for the limited movement of imports and exports. In addition, the expenses of transportation increased causing a rise in the prices of imports. It was also an extra financial burden for the Gaza exporters because of the location of the crossing in the far southeast of the Gaza Strip.¹

Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing

During the reporting period, Israel closed Karm Abu Salem, which is the sole commercial crossing, for 9 days (29% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel allowed the entry of 12,912 truckloads, an average of 416 truckloads daily, representing 72.9% of the number of truckloads that was allowed into the Gaza Strip before the total closure was imposed in June 2007 (570 truckloads daily).²

¹The Israeli authorities have tightened the closure over the Gaza Strip to make Karm Abu Salem crossing the main and only crossing in the Gaza Strip in spite of its low operational capacity. Moreover, the Israeli authorities closed Sofa crossing, which was designated to the entry of construction materials in November 2008 and transferred the limited quantities of construction materials to be entered into Gaza also via Karm Abu Salem crossing. On 04 January 2010, the Israeli authorities closed Nahal Oz crossing, which was designated for the entry of fuel into Gaza, and transferred that fuel to be entered via Karm Abu Salem crossing as well. On 02 March 2011, the Israeli authorities closed al-Muntar (Karni) crossing, which was the largest and best equipped commercial crossing. 75% of the Gaza Strip supplies used to enter via Karni crossing that had the capacity of around 400 truckloads daily.

²According to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.

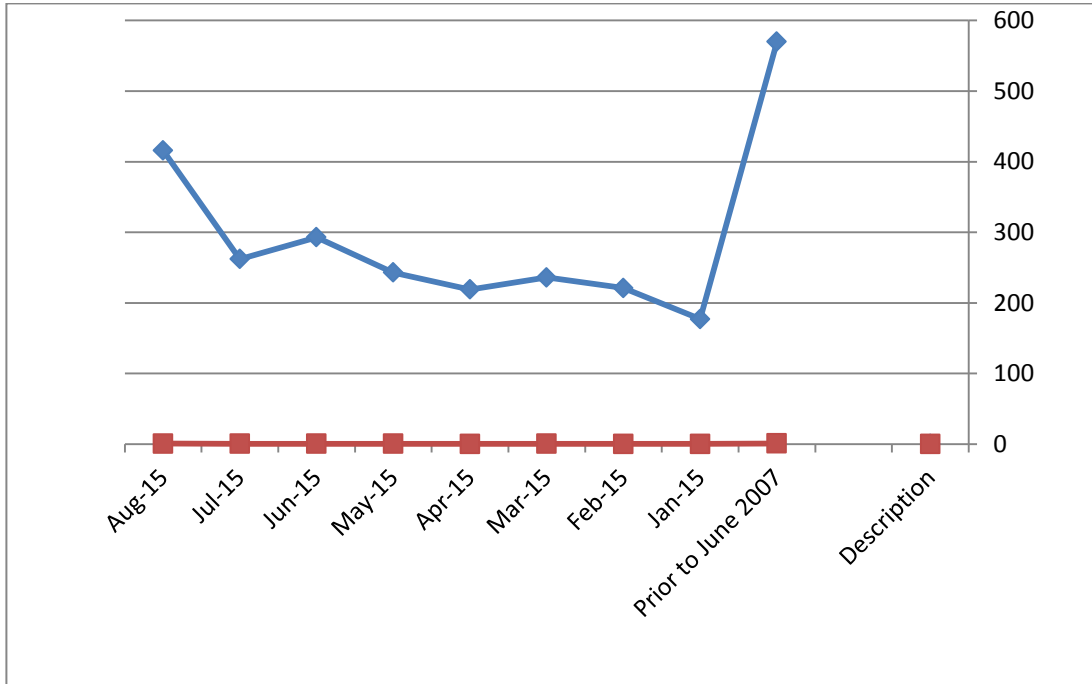


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The Number of truckloads allowed into the Gaza Strip Since the beginning of 2015 and comparing it to its number prior to June 2007 and percentage of needs met

Description	Daily average of truckloads	Percentage of needs met
Prior to June 2007	570	100%
January 2015	177	31%
February 2015	221	38.7%
March 2015	236	41.4%
April 2015	219	38.4%
May 2015	243	42.6%
June 2015	293	51.4%
July 2015	262	45.9%
August 2015	416	72.9%



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 average imports are low and do not meet the needs of Gaza's population.



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• Exports

Israeli forces continued to impose a ban on the Gaza Strip exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad with exception of limited quantities. During the reporting period (August), 96 truckloads were allowed for exportation, including 80 truckloads of agricultural products (tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet and hot peppers, garlic, eggplants, squash and mints), 3 truckloads of furniture, 4 truckloads of stationary, 5 truckloads of fish, 3 truckloads of clothes, and 1 truckload of straw-mats.

• Imports

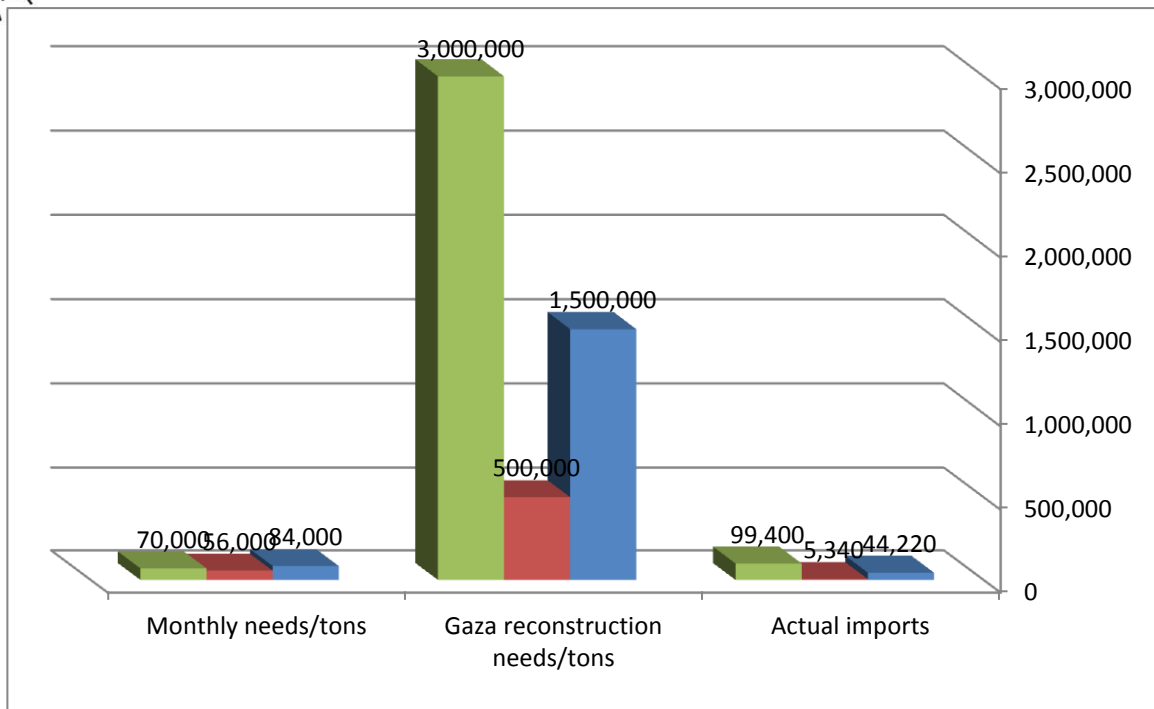
- Construction Materials

During the reporting period, construction materials allowed into the Gaza Strip were limited and do not meet the minimal level of the Gaza Strip actual needs. Israel allowed 44,220 tons of cement; 99,400 tons of aggregates; and 5,340 tons of construction steel according to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza. These quantities do not respectively exceed 52.6%, 142% and 9.5% of Gaza monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 2.9%, 3.3% and 1% of needs for Gaza reconstruction. The majority of these quantities were entered for international organizations or Palestinian companies under strict monitoring mechanism under which Gaza reconstruction can be impossible. This data proves that UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has failed to fulfil the minimum level of Gaza reconstruction needs 11 months after this Mechanism entered into force.

Table comparing the quantities of construction materials allowed into the Gaza Strip in June 2015, the actual needs and the Gaza Reconstruction Needs

Description	Actual imports	Gaza reconstruction needs/tons	Percentage	Monthly needs/tons	Percentage
Cement	44,220	1,500,000	2.9%	84,000	52,6%
Steel	5,340	500,000	1%	56,000	9.5%
Aggregate	99,400	3,000,000	3.3%	70,000	142%

Source: Ministry of National Economy in the Gaza Strip.



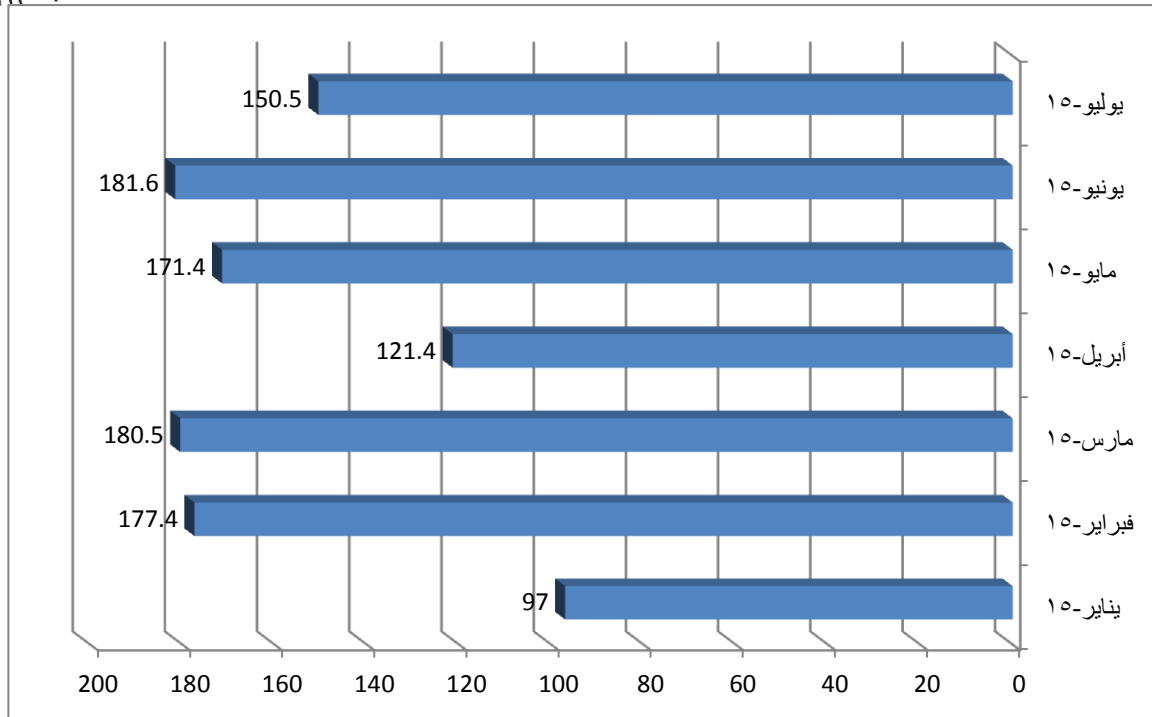
- **Fuel**

During the reporting period, Israel prevented the entry of cooking gas into the Gaza Strip for 9 days; for the remaining days, Israel allowed the entry of limited quantities. The amount of gas allowed in was 5,599, an average of 180.6 tons per day. According to the EGPC, this amount represents 51.6% of the daily needs of the people, which is 350 tons.

Quantities of gas allowed since the beginning of 2015 compared with the actual needs of the population of the Gaza Strip

Month	Daily average/tones	Percentage of needs met
January 2015	97	27.7%
February 2015	177.4	50.7%
March 2015	180.5	51.7%
April 2015	121.4	34.7%
May 2015	171.4	48.9%
June 2015	181.6	51.8%
July 2015	150.5	43%
Actual needs	350	100%

Source: EGPC.



During the reporting period, Israel allowed the entry of 13,344,000 liters of diesel, 4,854,000 liters of benzene and 8,903,000 liters of industrial fuel for Gaza Power Plant.

Crossings Designated to the Movement of Persons

- **Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing**

Israel has closed the BeitHanoun 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 travelling via al-Karama crossing. These categories are allowed to 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 8 days (in addition to 4 other days in which only urgent cases were allowed to travel via the crossing) during the reporting period.

Patients

Israel closed Beit Hanoun crossing for patients for 8 days. During days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 1,346 patients and 1,370 companions. Israeli forces obstructed the travel of dozens of other patients under various pretexts, including security reasons, changing the companions, waiting for a new appointment and awaiting an Israeli reply following security interviews.

Prisoners' Visits

In August, Israeli authorities allowed 270 family members of prisoners divided into 5 groups to visit 155 of their relatives in Israeli prisons.



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Family visits to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons in June and July 2015

Day	Number of visitors	Number of children	Number of visited prisoners	Prison
01 June 2015	60	13	36	Nafh aprison
08 June 2015	48	-	38	Eshel prison
15 June 2015	75	13	44	Nafha prison
22 June 2015	79	21	43	Rimon prison
30 June 2015	47	12	29	Nafha prison
06 July 2015	15	4	7	Eshel prison
13 July 2015	71	24	40	Nafha prison
20 July 2015	81	19	47	Rimon 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 two family visits a month. With 380 prisoners in Israeli prisons, the number of visits should reach 760 monthly. However, the Israeli forces only allowed 155 visits in August. The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 270, in August whereas, the number should include 1,480 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 visits in the future if they did not obey Israeli orders.

It should be noted that the Israeli authorities determine a visitor who is allowed to visit a prisoner, and those authorized visitors are limited to the prisoners' father, mother or wife and one or two of them only. Furthermore, in 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' names; thus, the prisoner loses the right to his visit. Moreover, Israeli authorities continue to deprive children from visiting their fathers in Israeli prisons. Prisoners' families are not allowed to bring with them personal items, including clothes and food.

• Other categories

During the reporting period, Israel allowed the entry of 9,422 traders, 3,479 persons for personal needs, 655 workers of international organizations into the Gaza Strip, 1,081 of elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa mosque and 70 travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing under some complicated security conditions. The procedures for entering the Gaza Strip are complicated, resulting in prolonged waiting periods, sometimes up to several days.

Israeli forces continued to use Beit Hanoun crossing to blackmail and arrest Palestinian from the Gaza Strip

Israeli authorities continued to use Beit Hanoun Crossing "Erez" as a trap for the civilians of Gaza Strip and as a mean of blackmailing and arresting them. PCHR documented during the reporting period the arrest of traders while passing the crossing.



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According to PCHR's documentation, at approximately 08:00 on Sunday, 02 August 2015, Israeli forces stationed at Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing in the northern Gaza Strip arrested Ziyad Mohammed Sa'id al-Katanani (42) from al-Shija'iyah neighborhood, an owner of 'Emad al-Katanani and Brothers General Trading Company. The aforementioned civilian was on his way to the Israel to buy construction materials noting that this was his first time to travel via Erez crossing.

On Monday, 31 August 2015, Israeli forces arrested a 36-year-old Palestinian civilian, Tamer Ahmed Mohammed al-Bureim, from Bani Suhaila, east of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip. Ahmed works as a trader. Israeli intelligence had summoned him for meeting in Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing in northern Gaza Strip. The detainee's family told a PCHR fieldworker that on Monday morning, Tamer al-Bureim, who is a father of 5 children, living in Bani Suhaila village, east of Khan Younis, and working as a construction materials trader, went to Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing after he was summoned by the Israeli intelligence at the crossing. Tamer has a permit which allows him to travel. Israeli forces arrested the aforementioned civilian so he lost contact with his family. At approximately 20:30, Tamer's father received a phone call from a person who introduced himself as an Israeli officer and told the detainee's father that his son Tamer was under arrest for 24 hours. Later, the detainee's family inquired at the Palestinian liaison about the detention of their son.

On the same day, Israeli forces arrested Kamal Salman Mohammed Barkah (50), from Bani Suhaila village, east of Khan Younis, while he was crossing Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing. Kamal's son, Ibrahim Baraka (20) said to a PCHR fieldworker, that his father who has 10 children, works as cars' spare parts trader and lives in Bani Suhaila village, headed to Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing traveling to Israel for trading. Kamal Barkah has a permit which allows him to travel. Israeli forces arrested the aforementioned civilian so he lost contact with his family. At approximately 19:00, Kamal's son, Ibrahim, received a phone call from the Israeli police in Ashkelon prison informing him that his father was under arrest for 48 hour.

Rafah International Crossing Point

- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 27 days as a result of the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai. Exceptionally, the crossing point was opened for only 4 days for the return of the trapped people outside into the Strip. 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. During the days it was open, 2,618 Palestinians travelled abroad, 3,466 returned to Gaza and 138 ones were returned by Egyptian authorities to Gaza. This situation combined with the ongoing policy of collective punishment and closure imposed by Israel exposed the real suffering experienced by the Gaza population. The number of Palestinians, who registered for traveling via the crossing and are waiting for their turn to travel, was over 16,000, including hundreds of patients, university students and holders of residence visas in countries abroad, according to the Ministry of Interior in Gaza.



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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 to 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;
- Cancel the UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, as it failed to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, especially owners of houses and property that were completely destroyed, who have not received any compensations or construction materials to rebuild their destroyed houses and property;
- 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; 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 travelers 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 travellers doubles.
- Reminds that the Israeli-imposed closure on the Gaza Strip is one of the gravest violations and collective punishments committed by Israeli forces against Palestinians in the Israeli occupation history. This inhumane and illegal closure constitutes a man-made disaster and is a part of an ongoing war crime against the Palestinian civilians.