



**State of the Gaza Strip's border crossings  
01 June – 31 July 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 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 aim to the institutionalization of the closure and making the illegal restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and goods acceptable on 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 the 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 June – 31 July 2015:

**Movement of goods**

During the reporting period, no remarkable change was witnessed on the movement of goods. An almost complete ban continued to be imposed on the exportation of goods to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, including industrial and agricultural products. 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 difficult conditions, including the frequent closure of the only commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom). The crossing was closed for 19 days (31%). As a result:

- During the reporting period, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 16,925 truckloads, an average of 277 truckloads daily. The number of truckloads allowed to be entered constitutes 48% 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's needs increased in the 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.
- Ten 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 authorities allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials. They allowed in 45,185 tons of cement; 90,630 tons of aggregates; and 5,160 tons of construction steel. These quantities do not respectively exceed 62.8%, 64.7% and 4.6% of Gaza's monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 1.5%, 1.7% and 0.5% of needs for Gaza reconstruction.



# المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

## PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

- Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 19 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 10,115 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 165.8 tons. This amount represents 47.3% 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 exportation of 186 truckloads; 155 truckloads of agricultural products (tomatoes, cucumbers, hot peppers, sweet peppers, garlic, eggplants, squash and mints), 12 truckloads of furniture, 9 truckloads stationary, 5 truckloads of fish and 5 truckloads of clothes.

### Movement of persons

During the reporting period, Israeli forces have 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 persons were denied their right to travel to hospitals, universities and holy places and to 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 9 days. However, during the days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 2,946 patients permitted to get some medical treatment at the Israeli hospitals or at hospitals in the West Bank and 2,840 persons accompanying patients. 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 June, Israeli authorities allowed 249 family members of prisoners divided into 5 groups to visit 190 of their relatives in Israeli prisons, while in July, they allowed 167 family members of prisoners divided into 3 groups to visit 94 of their relatives in Israeli prisons. The number of visits during the reporting period (June and July) is limited compared to the number allowed under the agreement reached between the detainees and Israeli forces in May 2012. The same agreement 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).
- 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 a patient while passing through the crossing.
- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 51 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 10 days for the return of people stuck 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



# المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

## PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Hanoun crossing. During the days the crossing point was open, 4,968 Palestinians travelled abroad, 1,444 returned to Gaza and 238 ones were returned by Egyptian authorities to Gaza.

- 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 yet.

### 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.<sup>1</sup>

### Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing

During the reporting period, Israel closed Karm Abu Salem, which is the sole commercial crossing, for 19 days (31% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel allowed the entry of 16,925 truckloads, an average of 277 truckloads daily, representing 48.5% 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>2</sup>

### The numbers of truckloads allowed into the Gaza Strip since the beginning of 2015 compared to their 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%

<sup>1</sup>The 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.

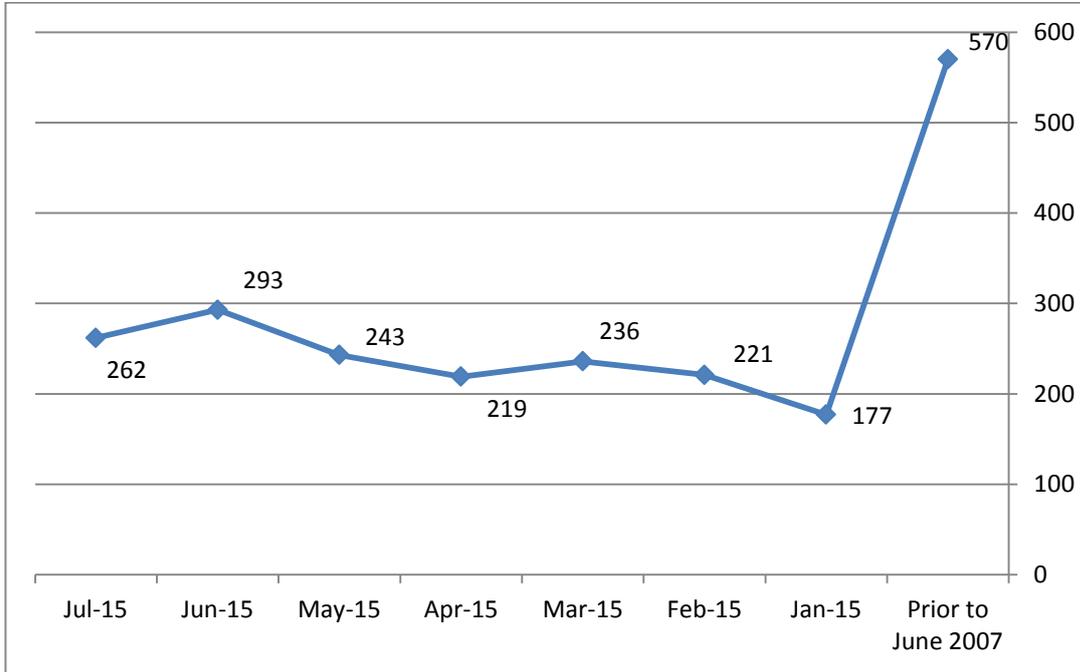
<sup>2</sup> According to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.



# المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

## PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

June 2015	293	51.4%
July 2015	262	45.9%



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.

### • Exports

Israeli forces continued to impose a ban on the Gaza Strip's exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad with exception of limited quantities. During the reporting period (June and July), 186 truckloads were allowed for exportation, including 155 truckloads of agricultural products (tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet and hot peppers, garlic, eggplants, squash and mints), 12 truckloads of furniture, 9 truckloads of stationary, 5 truckloads of fish and 5 truckloads of clothes.

### • 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 45,185 tons of cement; 90,630 tons of aggregates; and 5,160 tons of construction steel according to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza. These quantities do not respectively exceed 26.8%, 64.7% and 4.6% of Gaza's monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 1.5%, 1.7% and 0.5% 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



# المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

## PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

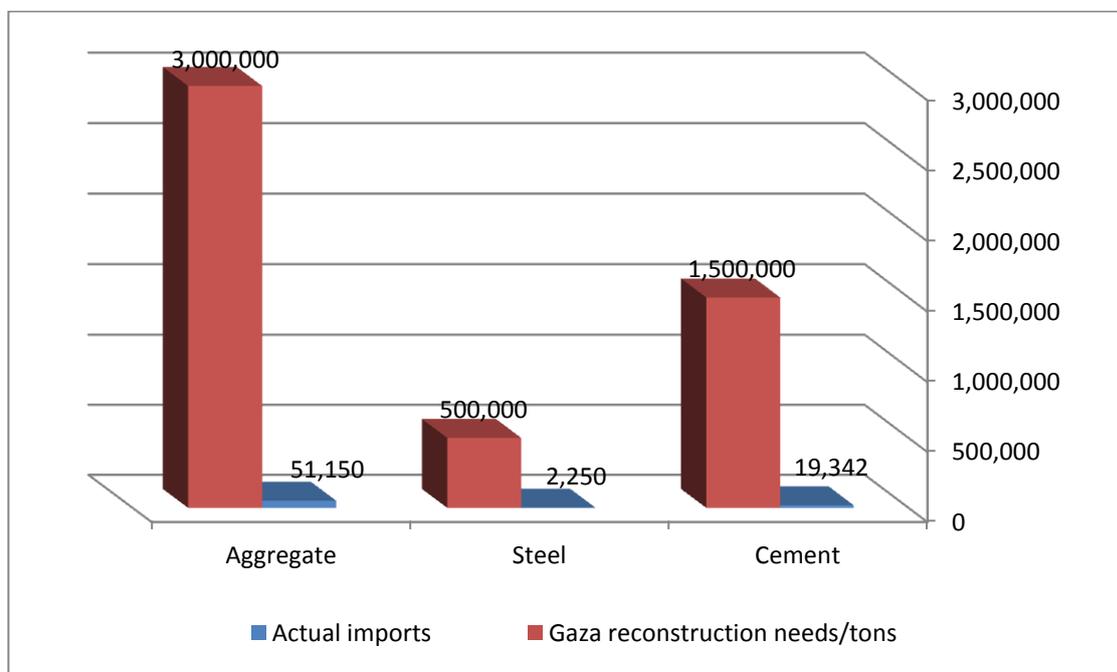
Mechanism has failed to fulfil the minimum level of Gaza's reconstruction needs 10 months after this Mechanism entered into force.

In June, Israel allowed 19,342 tons of cement; 51,150 tons of aggregates; and 2,250 tons of construction steel. These quantities do not respectively exceed 23%, 73% and 4% of Gaza monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 1.2%, 1.7% and 0.5% of needs for Gaza reconstruction.

**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	19,342	1,500,000	1.2%	84,000	23%
Steel	2,250	500,000	0.4%	56,000	4%
Aggregate	51,150	3,000,000	1.7%	70,000	73%

Source: Ministry of National Economy in the Gaza Strip.

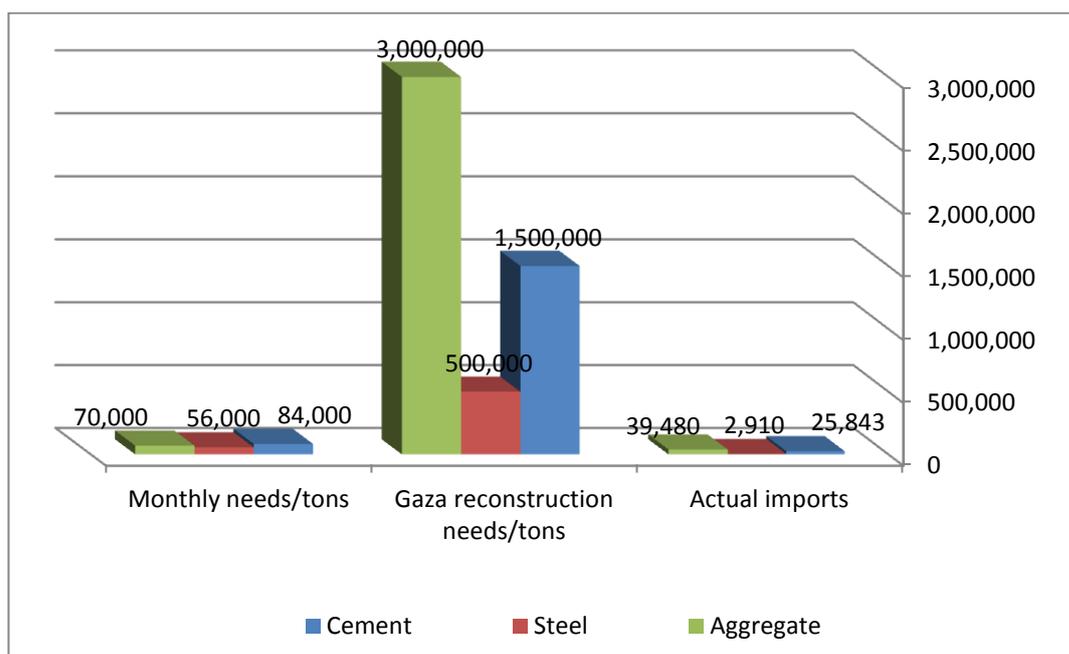


In July, Israel allowed 25,843 tons of cement; 39,480 tons of aggregates; and 2,910 tons of construction steel. These quantities do not respectively exceed 30.7%, 56.4% and 5.1% of Gaza

monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 1.7%, 1.3% and 0.5% of needs for Gaza reconstruction.

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

Description	Actual imports	Gaza reconstruction needs/tons	Percentage	Monthly needs/tons	Percentage
Cement	25,843	1,500,000	1.7%	84,000	30.7%
Steel	2,910	500,000	0.5%	56,000	5.1%
Aggregate	39,480	3,000,000	1.3%	70,000	56.4%



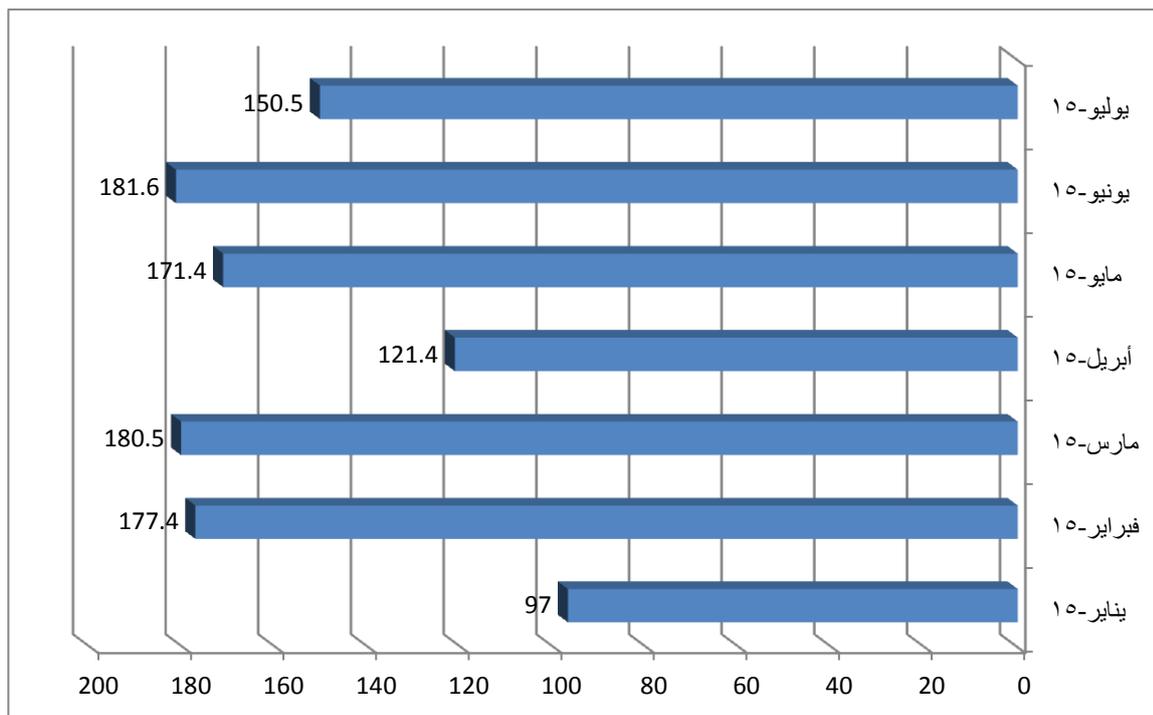
- Fuel**

During the reporting period, Israel prevented the entry of cooking gas into the Gaza Strip for 19 days; for the remaining days, Israel allowed the entry of limited quantities. The amount of gas allowed in was 10,115, an average of 165.8 tons per day. According to the EGPC, this amount represents 47.3% 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 20,984,000 liters of diesel, 8,333,000 liters of benzene and 12,992,000 liters of industrial fuel for Gaza Power Plant.

### Crossings Designated to the Movement of Persons

- **BeitHanoun (Erez) Crossing**



# المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

## PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Israel has closed the BeitHanoun crossing to the movement of Palestinian civilians, with the exception of limited categories: patients suffering from serious diseases; Arabs holding Israeli IDs; international journalists; workers of international humanitarian organizations; business people; and persons travelling via al-Karama crossing on the Jordanian border. 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 9 days (in addition to 8 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 9 days. During days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 2,946 patients (1,605 patients in June and 1,342 ones in July) and 2,840 companions (1,541 companions in June and 1,299 others in July). 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

Israeli authorities allowed in June 249 family members of prisoners divided into 5 groups to visit 190 of their relatives in Israeli prisons. In July, Israeli authorities allowed 167 family members of prisoners divided into 3 groups to visit 94 of their relatives in Israeli prisons.

### 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	Nafha prison
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 440 prisoners in Israeli prisons, the number of visits should reach 880 monthly. However, the Israeli forces only allowed 190 visits in June and 94 visits in July. The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 249, in June and 167 in July whereas, the number should include 1,760 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month.



## المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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 respond to 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' name; 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 20,834 traders, 6,115 persons for personal needs, 1,573 of international organizations into the Gaza Strip, 3,081 of elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque and 296 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 continue 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. In this context, PCHR documented during the reporting period the arrest of a patient and denying the Deputy Director of the Journalists' Syndicate from travelling although he obtained a travel permit.

According to PCHR's documentation, at approximately 10:30 on Thursday, 09 July 2015, Israeli forces stationed at Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing, north of Gaza Strip, arrested a patient, Ibrahim Adel Shehada al-Sha'er (21), from al-Salam neighborhood in Rafah in the south of Gaza Strip, when he was on his way to the West Bank to receive medical treatment for a tumor in the throat at the Ahli Hospital in Hebron. The patient's father, Adel Shehada al-Sha'ier, who accompanied his son, stated to a PCHR fieldworker that at approximately 10:30, on the abovementioned day, his son Ibrahim was transferred by Israeli security members to Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing for security interview. He waited in the travelers hall until 17:00. After that, Israeli forces allowed him to cross towards Israel. When the patient's father asked about his son, the security officers told him that he would come soon. At approximately 19:00, Israeli security officers came to the patient's father and told him that he must leave the crossing back to Gaza Strip, and his son would return to Gaza in 4 hours. After that, he left the crossing, but his son did not return. He is still detained. The patient's father added that his son received a medical transfer from External Medical Treatment Department in the Palestinian Ministry of Health, and approval from the Israeli occupation authorities to travel through the crossing, which was received by the Palestinian liaison.

In a separate incident, on Sunday, 21 June 2015, Israeli forces prevented Dr. Tahseen Abdel-Hamid Mohammed al-Astal (34), Deputy Head of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate and



## المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Managing Editor at Al-Hayat Al-Jadida newspaper published in Ramallah, from traveling to the West Bank through Beit Hanoun crossing, north of the Gaza Strip, although he was informed earlier that his permit was issued. Al-Astal, from Khan Younis, said to a PCHR fieldworker that he along with 6 other members of the Journalists Syndicate applied through the civil liaison to get permits to the West Bank to participate in a conference in Bethlehem to discuss issues related to the Journalists Syndicate in the head office in Ramallah. On 20 June 2015, he and 4 other members were informed that they got permits while the other 2 ones were rejected because they were below 35. The allowed ones were asked to head to Beit Hanoun crossing on the following morning. He added that on Sunday morning, 21 June 2015, they arrived to Beit Hanoun crossing. When they reached gate no. (5), where the Palestinian liaison office is located, the 4 other members were allowed to pass while al-Astal was denied traveling although he obtained a permit earlier under alleged security reasons. He also said that he called the civil liaison again and he was told that Israeli forces retreated in regards to his permit although he traveled via the same crossing a few months ago.

### Rafah International Crossing Point

- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 51 days as a result of the situation in Egypt and the deteriorated conditions in north Sinai. Exceptionally, the crossing point was opened for only 10 days for the return of people stuck abroad to the Strip. This situation combined with the ongoing policy of collective punishment and closure imposed by Israel exposed the real suffering experienced by the Gaza population. In the Gaza Strip, thousands of Palestinians, including hundreds of patients who are in urgent and serious need of medical treatment abroad, suffer because they are prevented from travelling abroad. Besides, hundreds of workers holding residency permits in different countries abroad were prevented from leaving the Gaza Strip. 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 residencies in countries abroad, according to the Ministry of Interior in Gaza. During the reporting period, 4,968 Palestinians travelled abroad, 1,444 returned to Gaza and 238 others were returned by the Egyptian authorities.



## 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.