



State of the Gaza Strip's border crossings 01 – 31May2015

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 8 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 following are the most significant developments relevant to Gaza's border crossings during the reporting period 01 – 31May 2015:

Movement of goods

During the reporting period, no remarkable change was witnessed on the movement of goods. An almost complete ban continued on the exportation of commodities to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, including industrial and agricultural goods. Restrictions were also imposed on the entry of a number of basic commodities, 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 foodstuff and consumables, under difficult circumstances, including the frequent closure of the only commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom). The crossing was closed for 11 days (35.4%) due to Jewish holidays or security reasons. As a result:

- During the reporting period, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 7,540 truckloads, an average of 243 truckloads daily. The number of truckloads allowed to be entered constitutes 42.6% of the number of truckloads which used to be entered into the Gaza Strip before the closure (570 truckloads daily).
- 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.
- Eight months have passed since the UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism entered into force and it became obvious that the mechanism failed to fulfil the minimum level of the basic needs of Gaza reconstruction. In May, Israeli forces allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials. They allowed 34,910 tons of cement (25,680 tons for Gaza reconstruction and 9,230 tons for international organizations); 68,270 tons of aggregates (40,560 tons for Gaza reconstruction and 27,710 tons for international organizations); and 3,780 tons of construction steel (2,730 tons for Gaza reconstruction and 1,050 for international organizations) according to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza. These quantities do not respectively exceed 41.5%, 97.5% and 6.7% of Gaza's monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 2.3%, 2.2% and 0.7% of needs for Gaza reconstruction.



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- Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 11 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 5,314 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 171.4 tons. This amount represents 48.9% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons in winter 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 108 truckloads; 90 truckloads of agricultural products (tomatoes, cucumbers, hot peppers, sweet peppers, garlic, eggplants, squash and mints), 9 truckloads of furniture, 6 truckloads of fish and 3 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, 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 1,370 patients permitted to get some medical treatment at the Israeli hospitals or at hospitals in the West Bank and 1,378 patient companions. 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.
- During the reporting period, 9,544 traders were allowed to travel via the crossing. In the same period, Israel allowed the entry of 2,447 persons for personal needs, 809 workers of international organizations into the Gaza Strip, 47 travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing, 1,026 of elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa mosque.
- Israeli authorities allowed 236 family members of prisoners to visit their relatives in Israeli prisons out of 1,760 family members allowed under the agreement reached between the detainees and Israeli forces in May 2012. The number of visits during the reporting period was limited (133) compared to the number allowed under the same agreement, which 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 in May as they arrested a woman and man while passing via the crossing.
- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 31 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 3 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.

- The closure of Rafah International Crossing Point obstructed the travel of thousands of civilians as the number of Palestinians who are in need of traveling according to the Palestinian Border and Crossings Commission reach around 90,000 persons, 50,000 of whom are registered at the Ministry of Interior, including 3500 medical refrains.
- The closure of Rafah International Crossing Point has negatively affected the Gaza Strip's population. The number of Palestinians registered at the Ministry of Interior to travel via Rafah crossing reached over 40,000, including hundreds of patients, students and holders of residencies in other countries.

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 11 days (35.4% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel allowed the entry of 7,540 truckloads, an average of 243 truckloads daily, representing 42.6% 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.

² According to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.

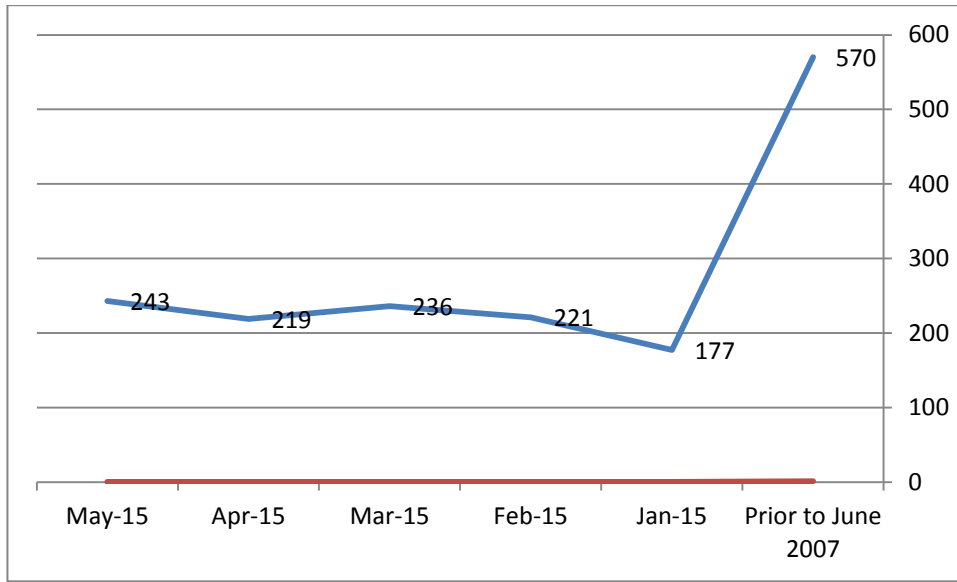


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The numbers of truckloads allowed into the Gaza Strip since the beginning of 2015 and compared to their number prior to June 2007 and percentage of needs met

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%



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 exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad with exception of limited quantities. During the reporting period, 108 truckloads were allowed for exportation, including 90 truckloads of agricultural products (tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet and hot peppers, garlic, eggplants, squash and mints), 9 truckloads of furniture, 6 truckloads of fish and three truckloads of clothes.



• Imports

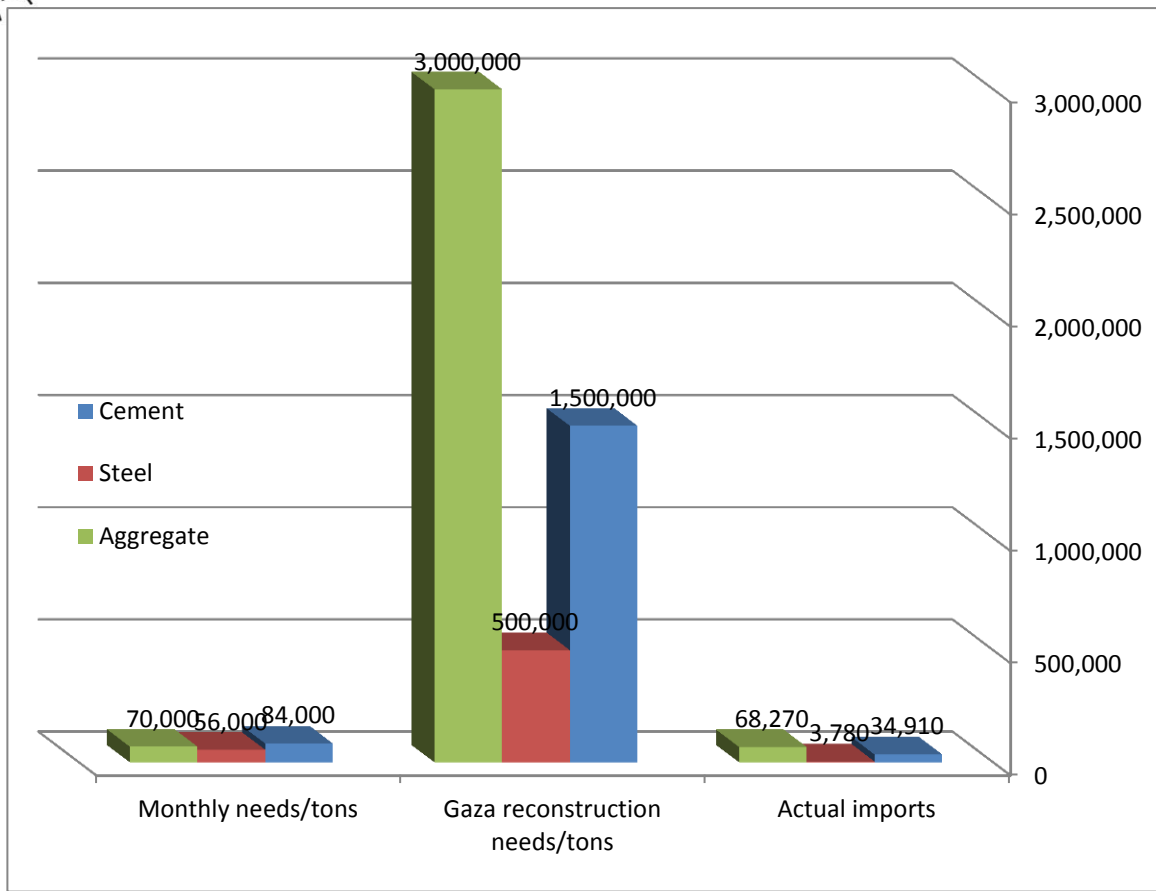
- Construction Materials

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 34,910 tons of cement (25,680 tons for Gaza reconstruction and 9,230 tons for international organizations); 68,270 tons of aggregates (40,560 tons for Gaza reconstruction and 27,710 tons for international organizations); and 3,780 tons of construction steel (2,730 tons for Gaza reconstruction and 1,050 for international organizations) according to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza. These quantities do not respectively exceed 41.5%, 97.5% and 6.7% of Gaza monthly needs in normal conditions and do not respectively exceed 2.3%, 2.2% and 0.7% 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 8 months after this Mechanism entered into force.

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

Description	Actual imports	Gaza reconstruction needs/tons	Percentage	Monthly needs/tons	Percentage
Cement	34,910	1,500,000	2.3%	84,000	41.5%
Steel	3,780	500,000	0.7%	56,000	6.7%
Aggregate	68,270	3,000,000	2.2%	70,000	97.5%

Source: Ministry of National Economy in the Gaza Strip.



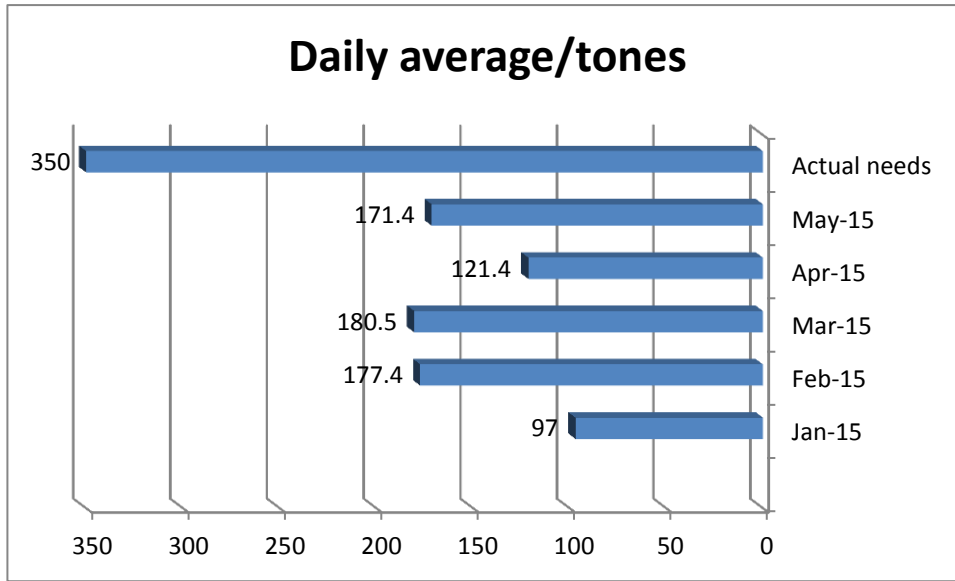
- **Fuel**

During the reporting period, Israel prevented the entry of cooking gas into the Gaza Strip for 11 days; for the remaining days, Israel allowed the entry of limited quantities. The amount of gas allowed in was 5,314 tons, an average of 171.4 tons per day. According to the EGPC, this amount represents 48.9% 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%
Actual needs	350	100%

Source: EGPC.



During the reporting period, Israel allowed the entry of 10,961,000 liters of diesel, 4,195,000 liters of benzene and 5,544,000 liters of industrial fuel for Gaza Power Plant.

Crossings Designated to the Movement of Persons

- **BeitHanoun (Erez) Crossing**

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. 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 3 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 1,370 patients and 1,378 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**

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities allowed 236 family members of detainees to visit 133 of their relatives in Israeli prisons. The visitors were divided into 4 groups as follows:



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Family visits to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons in April 2015

Day	Number of visitors	Number of children	Number of visited prisoners	Prison
04 May 2015	80	24	45	Nafhaprison
11 May 2015	20	6	9	Eshelprison
18 May 2015	75	23	42	Nafha prison
25 May 2015	61	11	37	Ramon 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 133 visits. The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 236, 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 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 9,544 traders, 2,447 persons for personal needs, 908 workers of international organizations into the Gaza Strip, 1,026 of elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa mosque, 47 travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing and 357 Christians to attend celebrations in Bethlehem under some complicated security conditions. The procedures for entering the Gaza Strip are complicated, resulting in prolonged waiting periods, sometimes up to several days.

Continued use of Beit Hanoun crossing "Erez" to blackmail and arrest civilians of 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 May, two arrests of a man and woman while passing via the crossing.

At approximately 10:00 on Sunday, 17 May 2015, Israeli forces arrested Ahmed Mohammed Hamdan Lubbad (28) at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing while heading to Sweden with his wife Hanadi Eqbaisi (27) and his daughters Ritaj (6) and Wedad (4) in addition to five families



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comprised of 23 members. According to the field investigations and the father of Lubad, his son used to live in Damascus in Syria for 6 years and he is married to a Syrian woman. He went back to the Gaza Strip after 2012 following the current situation there and lived in the family house in al-Qasasib neighborhood in Jabalia. He applied for asylum for his family and five other families living in the Gaza Strip to the Representative Office of Sweden in Jordan 5 months ago. He received a call from the Sweden Office a week ago telling him that he and 26 others, including his wife and daughters obtained approval on their application. Therefore, the Sweden office coordinated with the ICRC, which coordinated with the Israeli authorities to get them out of the Gaza Strip on Sunday, 17 May 2015. On the aforementioned day, all of them headed to Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing and he was detained for 4 hours by the Israeli forces and then arrested while the rest were allowed to travel. They asked his wife to leave as well telling her that he would follow her.

On Tuesday, 26 May 2015, Israeli forces stationed at Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing in the northern Gaza Strip arrested Sanaa' Mohammed Hussein al-Hafi (43). Her husband said to a PCHR field worker that his wife left the Gaza Strip on 30 April 2015 to visit her family in Ramallah after obtaining a permit to stay there for 5 days. However and due to health conditions, she was not able to come back until 26 May 2015. Her husband stayed in touch with her till at approximately 01:30 on Wednesday as she told him that she was called by the Israeli intelligence at the crossing. He then lost contact with her. The Israeli authorities then told her family that she was arrested.

Rafah International Crossing Point

- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 31 days as a result of the situation in Egypt and the deteriorated conditions in north Sinai. Exceptionally, Rafah border was opened for only 3 days for the return for the trapped people into the Strip. 1629 managed to return to the Strip over three days. 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 40,000, including hundreds of patients, university students and holders of residencies in countries abroad, according to the Ministry of Interior in Gaza. The closure of Rafah International Crossing Point obstructed the travel of thousands of civilians as the number of Palestinians who are in need of traveling according to the Palestinian Border and Crossings Commission reach around 90,000 persons, 50,000 of whom are registered at the Ministry of Interior, including 3500 medical referrals.



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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.