



PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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CLOSURE UPDATE NO.33
A Report by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights on the
Closure Imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip

Complete Economic and Social Suffocation

This is the 33rd special update in a series published by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights on the total closure imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation authorities have continued to adopt a policy of collective punishment against Palestinian civilians through imposing a total siege on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which isolates the West Bank from the Gaza Strip and isolates Jerusalem from other Palestinian territories. No changes have occurred with regard to Israeli restrictions imposed on free movement between Palestinian cities. Israel continues to reinforce its presence on the main roads and the entrances of Palestinian cities, isolating areas under the control of the Palestinian National Authority from one another as well as from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Israeli closure policy has had disastrous consequences for Palestinians economic and social rights, right to freedom of movement, right to freedom of worship and right to freedom of education. It has also severely affected the health situation through restrictions on the provision of medical services.

1. Further Deterioration of the Palestinian Economy

Under Israel's current total siege on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Palestinian economy has experienced severe deterioration. It is clear that the demolition and destruction of Palestinian industrial and agricultural facilities have not been driven by security concerns, but rather have been based on a systematic policy whose aim is to severely damage the Palestinian economy.

According to the Palestinian Minister of Finance, losses to the Palestinian economy totalled approximately US\$ 2.5 billion. This constitutes more than 50% of the GNP, estimated at approximately US\$ 4.916 for the year 2000. The Palestinian economy will continue to deteriorate so long as the Israel's total siege on the Occupied Palestinian Territories continues.

It is important to note that the payment January 2001 salaries to the Palestinian National Authority's employees was delayed until February 12, 2001, as a result of the economic



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crisis. The Palestinian National Authority's account has been severely affected by decreased revenue and Israeli obstruction of tax revenue transfer to the PNA. Simultaneously, expenditures have increased under emergent financial burdens resulting from the social crisis.

The crisis has affected all sectors of the Palestinian economy, including industry, agriculture, trade, and the labor force.

1) Further Deterioration of the Industrial Sector

Since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada, Israel has targeted the Palestinian industrial sector. Israel has continued to obstruct the exportation of Palestinian industrial products and the importation of industrial raw materials. Consequently, many Palestinian factories have been working at their lowest production capacity levels. Furthermore, the factories face difficulties in transporting and distributing the products in local markets as a result of the Israeli separation and isolation of Palestinian cities and villages.

Israeli forces have also continued to attack Palestinian industrial facilities. They have destroyed many Palestinian factories, causing large financial losses. Additionally, owners suffered indirect losses, such as: work stoppage resulting from inability of hundreds to work, the loss of highly trained laborers, and the loss of a particularly vital name, project, or facility. Consequently, the Palestinian Minister of Industry estimates that the state of siege has resulted in total losses to the Palestinian industrial sector of more than US\$ 800 million.

The Israeli occupation forces destroyed more than 25 Palestinian factories in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹ Following are some factories that were destroyed recently by the Israeli occupation forces:²

- On Tuesday, January 30, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces demolished Al-Safadi concrete factory and Sabra gas station as well as all their equipment.
- On Wednesday, January 31, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces destroyed a tin factory owned by Mohammed Fuad Ibrahim El-Samneh. Losses were estimated at approximately US\$ 2 million.
- On Saturday, February 3, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces demolished a factory of concrete moulds, owned by Ossama Hassan El-Khodari. On the same day, they also damaged a factory of electrical tools, owned by Wassim Othman El-Khozendar.

¹ See previous Closure Updates and Weekly Reports by PCHR.

² Source: testimonies by owners of factories to PCHR.



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- The Israeli occupation forces destroyed a gas factory, which was the sole source of Oxygen, Stalin, Carbon Dioxide and other gases necessary for the treatment of patients. Losses were estimated at approximately US\$ 250,000.
- A factory of foodstuffs and a factory of potato chips near Kfar Darom settlement near Deir El-Balah completely burnt as a result of shelling by the Israeli occupation forces. Losses were estimated at more than US\$ 25,000.
- The Israeli occupation forces destroyed a copper factory in Al-Mentar area, owned by Samir Sae'id Farawana.

2) Further Deterioration of the Agricultural Sector

The Palestinian agricultural sector has suffered large losses under the current internal and external siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to raze Palestinian agricultural lands and to destroy agricultural facilities, thus increasing the losses of Palestinian farmers.³ According to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, the total losses to the Palestinian agricultural sector are estimated at approximately US\$ 200 million.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to impose restrictions on agricultural exportation and to prohibit the transportation of citrus and strawberries through Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing. It important to note that prior these restrictions, citrus was exported to foreign countries by Palestinian truck convoys through Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing. Approximately 93 trucks transported citrus from Gaza to Al-Shouna area, approximately 60km away from the Jordanian capital Amman. The wage of each truck is estimated at 500 JD (approximately US\$ 715), and it is loaded with 1,000 boxes of citrus, at an average of 0.5 JD per box.

Instead of export through Beit Hanoun (Erez), the Israeli occupation forces allow the exportation of citrus through Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet, at rate of 3-4 trucks daily, each with a cargo of 60 tons. According to Director General of the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, the total amount of exported citrus has so far been 1,500 tons out of 50,000 tons ready for export. According to truck drivers, the wage of a truck has become 1,000 JD, and transportation takes place in three stages:

- A Palestinian truck transports citrus from a packaging factory in the Gaza Strip to Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet for 120 NIS (approximately US\$ 30).

³ For more information on land leveling see PCHR's report on February 22, 2001, and previous similar reports.



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- An Israeli truck transports citrus from Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet to the Jordanian border for 5,000 NIS (approximately US\$ 1,250).⁴
- A Jordanian truck receives citrus and transports it to Al-Shouna area near Amman in Jordan for 500 NIS (approximately US\$ 125).

As a result of these obstacles, the citrus industry has been profoundly affected this season. Under the system of exportation imposed currently imposed by Israel, it would take approximately two years total to export of the average annual amounts of citrus.

The strawberry industry has also suffered. Due to Israeli obstructions, Palestinian farmers have not been able to export more than 850 of an expected amount of 2000 tons, especially since the end of the season is very close. Strawberries have also been damaged by Israeli measures, particularly loading and unloading.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to obstruct the access of Palestinian farmers in Al-Mawasi (agricultural) area to their agricultural lands. PCHR's field officer in Rafah reported that the Israeli occupation forces had prevented the access of Palestinian farmers in Al-Mawasi area of Rafah to their agricultural land, and that these forces threatened to shoot whoever attempted to get close to Tal Al-Sultan roadblock. Consequently, Palestinian agricultural products, especially tomatoes and cucumbers, which require daily attention, have been severely damaged.

In addition, the policies of closure and isolation prevented Palestinian farmers from selling their tomatoes. Tomatoes are the most plentiful agricultural products in the Gaza Strip, exceeding the local demand.

3) A Limited Number of Palestinian Laborers in Israel and an Increase of Unemployment

No changes have occurred with regard to the condition of Gazan laborers who work in Israel. On Sunday, February 4, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces re-closed Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing. Therefore, Palestinian laborers who work in Israel were not able to reach their places of work. It is important to note that Israel has issued only 9,210 work permits under strict conditions for Gazan laborers to work in Israel. This is far less than the approximately 25,000 who used to work regularly in Israel before the current total siege.

On February 7, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces reopened Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing for Palestinian laborers. Consequently, approximately 4,000 Gazan laborers were able to go to their places of work in Israel. They had to undergo strict and

⁴ The cargo of a Palestinian truck is 1,000 boxes, whereas the cargo of an Israeli one is 600 boxes. This means an increase of costs, which Palestinian truck drivers and traders have to bear.



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provocative checking procedures. Furthermore, Israeli occupation forces arrested some Palestinian laborers after they interrogated them in especially designed rooms. On Sunday, February 12, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces arrested three Palestinian laborers from Beit Hanoun who used to work in an Israeli construction company. They are:

- 1) Jamal Mohammed El-Athamna, 37 years old;
- 2) Kamal Shehadeh Hamdan, 36 years old; and
- 3) Zaher Mohammed Shehadeh, 36 years old.

With regard to Erez industrial zone, many factories dismissed their Palestinian laborers. According to the Director General of Employment at the Palestinian Ministry of Labor, Mr. Sae'id Al-Modallal, only 2,000 Gazan laborers now work in Erez industrial zone, compared with the 5,000 who used to work there.

Furthermore, hundreds of laborers lost their work places in Gazan factories and workshops, since the Israeli occupation forces destroyed such factories and workshops. Additionally, thousands of laborers lost their work places in other sectors, such as agriculture, construction and transportation, because of the cessation of operations due to the current total siege.

On Wednesday, February 14, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces re-closed all border crossings after a number of Israeli soldiers were killed inside Israel. Consequently, Palestinian laborers have been denied access to their work places in Israel.

According to a World Bank report, lost job opportunities in Israel and restrictions on free movement have caused an increase in unemployment from 11%, approximately 70,000 persons, in the first three quarters of the year 2000 to 38%, approximately 250,000 persons. According to the same report, Palestinian personal income was expected to reach US\$ 2,000 in 2000, but decreased 16%, averaging approximately US\$ 1,680 per annum.

Furthermore, the Palestinian population living under poverty in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip increased 50%. The number of the poor has increased from 650,000 persons (21%) to 1 million (32%).

4) Further Deterioration of the Palestinian Construction Sector

The Palestinian construction sector has been completely paralysed by the five-month total siege of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Since all border crossing have been closed, construction materials, such as cement, iron bars, aggregate and base course, have not been imported. Consequently, cement, brick and flagstone factories have



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ceased operation. As a result, thousands of Palestinian laborers working in these factories have been dismissed.

Furthermore, Palestinian National Authority infrastructure projects, such as Gaza Harbor, an electricity generating station, road paving, housing projects and sewage systems, have been completely halted.

In addition, the Palestinian contracting sector have suffered large losses estimated at approximately US\$ 100 million, since 80% of projects have completely stopped. According to a Palestinian official source, investment in the Palestinian contracting and construction sector is estimated at approximately US\$ 200 million, and the percentage of the current work in such sector in the Gaza Strip is approximately 5-10%.

5) Further Deterioration of Tourism and Investment

The Palestinian tourism and investment sector has been directly affected under the current siege imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the fifth consecutive month. This sector has been completely paralysed under the current total siege. Foreign tourism, hotel reservations and tourist nights have been lost. Many laborers in the Palestinian tourism have lost their work places. Additionally, internal tourism has completely stopped.⁵

The investment sector has suffered large losses under the current total siege imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Industry, losses due to missed opportunities are estimated at more than US\$ 350 million. The losses can be summarized as follows:⁶

- Many foreign companies working in the field of investment, in industry, agriculture, infrastructure and services, left the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These investment losses are estimated at approximately US\$ 49.5 million.
- Final-stages of investment were cancelled. Losses are estimated at approximately US\$ 55.8 million.
- The expansion of Palestinian industrial zones have been interrupted or delayed. Losses are estimated at US\$ 176 million.
- The Palestinian National Authority spent approximately US\$ 34.5 million on public relations and the promotion of Palestine globally, but this was undermined by Israeli propaganda.

⁵ For more information, see PCHR's previous *Closure Update*.

⁶ Source: a report on the Palestinian economy by the Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.



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- The PNA also spent approximately US\$ 52 million to develop infrastructure networks that meet the needs of industrial zones.

It is worth mentioning that approximately expected 66,000 jobs from investment projects were lost when the projects were cancelled.

5) A Marine Military Siege on the Gaza Strip

On Thursday, February 15, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces imposed a sea siege on the Gaza Strip. Under the siege, Palestinian fishermen have not been able to enter the sea. This is a blatant violation of the Palestinian-Israeli Accords, which states in Article 11 of the annexed protocol on the redeployment of the Israeli forces and security arrangements, that Palestinian fishermen have the right to sail in Area “L,” which extends up to 20 miles inside the sea. This siege affects the 3,860 fisherman, each with a daily income of approximately US\$ 12.5 for each.

Furthermore, a number of Palestinian families from Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City who work in fish skinning lost their jobs. Approximately 4,000 professionals who working in fishing industry, with an average daily income of US\$ 12.5 each, lost their jobs. Additionally, approximately 1,500 professionals who manufacture nets and boats, each with an average daily income of US\$ 8, also lost their work places.

2. Further Deterioration of Normal Societal Functions

Under the current siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, basic societal functions have deteriorated, as the strip has been divided into isolated areas. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces have closed all crossings and outlets from and into the Gaza Strip. They have also continued to close Salah El-Din Street (the main road between the north and south of the Gaza Strip) – near Al-Shuhada’ (Netzarim) junction and near Al-Matahen junction leading to Gush Qatif settlement block – and the western road between Rafah and Khan Yunis. Furthermore, roadblocks, tanks and armored vehicles of the Israeli occupation forces are still positioned on these roads and on branch roads.

The actions of the Israeli occupation forces have interrupted the educational process, decreased health services, and threatened the lives of Palestinian citizens. Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces have imposed tough restrictions on internal and external movement and have continued to carry out their oppressive policies against Palestinian citizens. The following are the impacts of the current siege on the social situation in the Gaza Strip:

1) Restrictions on Free Internal Movement

Although the Israeli occupation forces removed the siege imposed on Palestinian cities and villages, these forces remain positioned on the main roads, threatening the security



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and safety of Palestinian citizens. In addition, Israeli soldiers positioned at roadblocks have been reported to take provocative measures. According to an eyewitness, Israeli occupation soldiers forced a number of Palestinian citizens who were travelling from the south of the Gaza Strip to Gaza City, to take off their clothes and dance.

The Israeli occupation forces close main roads, whenever settlers' cars pass these roads. On Monday, January 29 and Saturday, February 3, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces closed Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junctions for several hours. Consequently, because there are no alternative roads, Palestinian citizens had to wait or go back. A number of Palestinian university students from the southern and middle areas of the Gaza Strip expressed their anger on such measures, and described their fears when they cross these junctions by calling them "Death Yards." The measures do not exclude any Palestinians, including medical staff.

On Tuesday, February 6, 2001, after Israeli elections, the Israeli occupation forces closed all border crossings, reopening them the following day.

On Saturday, February 10, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces closed Salah El-Din Street (the main road between the north and south of the Gaza Strip). Consequently, Palestinian citizens were not able to move between the north and south of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation forces also reinforced their presence in the Gaza Strip. Tanks and armored vehicles continued to be stationed on the main junctions on Salah El-Din Street.

On Sunday, February 11, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces prevented Palestinian laborers from returning to their homes in the southern area of the Gaza Strip. The laborers were therefore forced to spend the night in the middle area.

On February 12, 2001, Palestinian laborers from the southern area of the Gaza Strip were not able to go to their work in Israel due to roadblocks established by the Israeli occupation forces on the main roads. Although there was co-ordination between UNRWA and the Israeli occupation forces that guaranteed free movement for UNRWA employees so it could carry out humanitarian missions, the forces were not committed to it. On the same day, the Palestinian side and the Israeli occupation forces reached an agreement under which the forces reopened the main roads to enable the travel of Palestinian pilgrims through Gaza International Airport. However, the Israeli occupation forces continued to close the eastern road between Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction and Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet.

Restriction on external travel and movement are still imposed by the Israeli occupation forces. These forces have continued to close Rafah Border crossing and Gaza International Airport frequently, most recently on February 6, 2001. The two border crossings are still closed. Under these measures, many Palestinians are not able to travel abroad or return from having gone abroad. Measures taken by the Israeli occupation forces have not exempted the Palestinian Legislative Council's (PLC) members who



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must travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip to attend the sessions that are held in both locations. The PLC members from the Gaza Strip have not been able to travel to Ramallah to attend PLC's sessions. The same also applies to PLC members from the West Bank and Gaza Strip who cannot attend the Gaza sessions.

In a serious escalation, the Israeli occupation forces denied the entry of several Palestinian VIP's into the country. This includes: the Palestinian Minister of Local Government, Saeb Erekat; the Palestinian Minister of Culture, Yasser Abed-Rabbo; and the Official of the Palestinian Preventive Security Service in the Gaza Strip, Colonel Mohammed Dahlan. It is worth mentioning that the three were members of the Palestinian negotiating team with Israel. The Israeli occupation forces also obstructed the entry of the Palestinian Ministers of Finance and Industry for four hours.

The Disaster of Al-Mawasi Area

The Al-Mawasi area has been the most affected area by the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. Residents of the area live under disastrous conditions under the strict siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the area

On Thursday, February 8, 2001, at approximately 22:00 local time, a bomb exploded near Tal-Al-Sultan roadblock at the entrance of Al-Mawasi area in Rafah. Consequently, on the following day, Israeli occupation forces positioned at the mentioned roadblock closed it, prohibiting movement between Rafah and its Al-Mawasi area. Furthermore, Palestinian farmers were denied access to their agricultural land, in order to cultivate their agricultural products. Consequently, the agricultural products have been damaged. It is worth mentioning that the Israeli occupation forces have continued to prevent Palestinian farmers from Al-Mawasi area from transporting their agricultural products through the mentioned roadblock by cars. The farmers have been forced to carry their products when crossing the roadblock and then take a car to transport them. Even this measure has been halted recently.

In the meanwhile, the Israeli occupation forces continued to perpetrate abuses against Palestinian civilians in Al-Mawasi area of Khan Yunis. On February 8, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces ordered 22 Palestinian families to evacuate their homes so that the homes could be demolished. This will pave the way for the annexing of the area to Gush Qatif settlement.

From February 12 – 20, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces imposed a strict siege on Al-Mawasi area in Khan Yunis, restricting the entry and exit of its 5,000 residents into and from the area.

2) Violation of the Right to Free Worship



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On Monday, February 12, 2001, the Palestinian side and the Israeli occupation forces agreed to reopen Rafah Border Crossing and Gaza International Airport and to extend work time to nine hours a day, to enable the travel of Palestinian pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, on the following day, the Israeli occupation forces re-closed Gaza International Airport, claiming it was necessary for security reasons. As a result, Palestinian pilgrims were not able to travel through the airport and approximately 500 pilgrims were forced to spend their night at the airport.

The Palestinian side and the Israeli occupation forces then reached an agreement under which Palestinian pilgrims were able to travel through Rafah Border Crossing to Al-Arish Airport in Egypt and from there to Saudi Arabia. It is worth mentioning that the total number of Palestinian pilgrims from the Gaza Strip this year is 8,000. Only 800 of them were able to travel through Gaza International Airport on February 12 and 13, 2001.

On the other hand, the Israeli occupation forces prevented the travel of pilgrim Zeinab Abdel-Rahaman El-Affifi under security claims. According to an official source of the Palestinian Civil Liaison, dozens of Palestinian pilgrims will not be able to travel to Saudi Arabia because the Israeli forces have prevented their travel, claiming it was necessary for security reasons.

Under the total siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the occupied Palestinian territories, Muslim and Christians from the Gaza Strip have been denied visits to holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem for worship. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to deny Palestinians from the West Bank and from inside the Green Line, to *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* (the Holy Sanctuary). The Israeli occupation forces have also continued to prevent Palestinian citizens from conducting Friday prayers in many Palestinian cities and villages, denying their right to worship freely.

3) Further Deterioration of the Medical Situation

The Palestinian health sector has deteriorated severely under the current siege imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In previous issues, it was noted that the number and natures of injuries as a result of the Al-Aqsa Intifada exceeded the capacities of the Palestinian Ministry of Health and other non-governmental medical institutions, despite the generous donations by some Arab and foreign countries. The current strict total siege and the roadblocks stationed between Palestinian cities made it difficult for the Palestinian Ministry of Health to provide medical services to Palestinian citizens. This caused a further deterioration in the health situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

According to the Palestinian Minister of Health, the 25,000 Palestinian laborers who used to work in Israel no longer pay the medical insurance fees to the Israeli government



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so the Israeli government no longer transfers these fees to the PA. In addition, and the Palestinian private sector is no longer able to pay medical insurance fees, which constitute 25% of the Ministry of Health budget. It is worth mentioning that the annual budget of the PNA is estimated at US\$ 108 million, US\$ 40 million of which comes from insurance fees and US\$ 68 million which comes from the Palestinian Ministry of Finance.

According to the Palestinian Director General of Medical Insurance Dr. Mohammed Abu Hashish, for the year 2000, there is a deficit in the medical insurance revenues estimated at approximately 32.162 million NIS (approximately US\$ 8 million).

According to an official source at the Palestinian Ministry of Health (PMOH), there is a shortage of particular medicines and medical equipment. The reserves of the PMOH were exhausted due to the high number of the wounded during Al-Aqsa Intifada.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to obstruct the work of on-duty ambulances. On Tuesday, February 5, 2001, Khadra Rajab Eshteiwi, 65, from Kufor Qaddoum village in Qalqilya, died after the Israeli occupation forces prevented her evacuation to hospital.

On February 11, 2001, According to the Director of the Palestinian Civil Liaison at Rafah Border Crossing, Ziad Awaja, the Israeli occupation forces prevented the entry of the body of Oleian Mohammed Bekhit, 53, into Gaza for 14 hours. He died during treatment in Egypt. On the same day, Ahmed Awni Zourob, 18, from Khan Yunis died on the Egyptian side of Rafah Border Crossing, while waiting with his family all day to be allowed to enter the Gaza Strip. His body was transferred to Al-Arish hospital in Egypt in preparation for his transfer to Gaza.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to attack Palestinian ambulances and medical personnel. On February 13, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces fired an artillery shell on an ambulance of the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Khan Yunis, which penetrated front glass and its shrapnel dispersed inside the ambulance, wounding its driver Fayez Mohammed Nabhan, 52. On the same day, an ambulance driver, Ibrahim Suleiman Abu Setteh, 48, was wounded by shrapnel in the knee, while attempting to evacuate one of the wounded near Al-Tuffah roadblock in Khan Yunis. The Israeli occupation forces also opened fire on an ambulance of the Palestine Red Crescent Society in Khan Yunis, wounding:

- 1) Jihad Abdel-Karim Abu Attaya, 44, with a live bullet in the chest;
- 2) Jihad Mansour Salim, 33, with shrapnel in the neck; and
- 3) Khader Yousef Fayyadh, 40, with shrapnel in the right leg.



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It is worth mentioning that the Israeli occupation forces wilfully opened fire on Palestinian ambulances while on duty. This affects the ability of Palestinian medical personnel and threatens their lives.

5) Denying the Entry of Palestinian Newspapers and Attacking Journalists

From February 15 – 20, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces prevented the entry of Palestinian local newspapers into the Gaza Strip, thus tightening the siege on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These newspapers are published in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Since no official newspaper is issued in the Gaza Strip, more than 1 million Palestinians were deprived of reading the newspapers.

Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada on September 29, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces have also continued to attack journalists. On February 13, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces opened fire on a number of on-duty journalists, wounding the following:

- Ahmed Jadallah Hassan Jadallah, a 30-year-old Reuters photographer;
- Shams El-Din Abdel-Rahman Oudetallah, a 31-years-old Reuters photographer;
- and
- Abed-Rabbo Abdel-Rahman Oudetallah, a 27-year-old Palestine Television cameraman.

On February 14, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces fired at Mouaffaq El-Khatib, a 26-year-old Palestine Television cameraman of Palestine Television.

4) Continued Deprivation of Prisoner Visitation Rights

As a consequence of the total siege imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails have been deprived of family visitations. In addition, lawyers have not been able to visit prisoners to follow up their cases. This negatively affects prisoners' psychological condition, and compounds the already inhumane conditions of detention. On January 28, 2001, the ICRC declared that it concluded an agreement with the Israeli occupation forces to allow family visitation for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, under the following conditions:

- Five persons, three adults and two children are allowed to visit their relative prisoners. This can be fathers, mothers, children under 16, sisters, grandfathers or grandmothers.
- Other members of the family are not allowed to visit prisoners.
- Visitors have to go to ICRC's offices in advance to get permits and dates of visits.

6) Preventing the entry of Petrol



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In a significant escalation of the siege, the Israeli occupation forces prevented the entry of petrol into the Gaza Strip from February 15 to 20, 2001, causing a petrol shortage in the Gaza Strip. According to the Director General of the Palestinian Petrol Company Hashem El-Khozendar, the amount of gas reserves available for domestic purposes was 1,800 tons. This meets the needs of Palestinian citizens in the Gaza Strip for only three winter days and seven summer days. Concerning gas for other uses, the reserves were sufficient for only ten days.

As a result of this measure, approximately 2,000 laborers in this field may lose their jobs and the transportation sector will cease operation.

Furthermore, many factories and workshops will stop operation. In addition, hospitals and ambulances will lack the petrol to carry out their humanitarian missions.

Conclusion

The Israeli occupation forces have continued to impose a total siege on the occupied Palestinian territories. Under the siege, the suffering of the Palestinian people continues unabated. The Gaza Strip has been transformed into three isolated collective jails. All aspects of life and living conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories have deteriorated. The economic, social, and cultural rights of the people also continue to be violated.

International law prohibits the policy of collective punishment adopted by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people. This policy also contradicts internationally accepted human rights standards and international humanitarian law.

PCHR calls for lifting the total siege imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territories and putting an end to the policy of starvation adopted by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people.

PCHR calls upon international organizations and agencies to exert pressure on the Israeli occupation government to release 3 million Palestinians whom it has taken hostage. The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is the most disastrous since the Palestinian territories were first occupied by the Israel on June 5, 1967. PCHR calls for:

- (a) Pressing Israel to lift the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, and to stop its aggression against the Palestinian people and their property.
- (b) Providing immediate medical and humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people, whose living conditions increasingly deteriorated under the siege.



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- (c) Activating mechanisms of immediate intervention by the UN and its agencies, and ICRC, to ensure the access of medical and food assistance to the occupied Palestinian territories under the siege.
- (d) Obligating Israel to respect international conventions and to comply with the UN Resolutions, especially 242 and 338, which call for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories in 1967.
- (e) Taking effective steps by the EU, under Article 2 of the Euro-Israel Association Agreement, which provides that Israel must respect human rights.

“End”



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Annex (1)

The closures of crossings since Al-Aqsa Intifada began

The Crossing	Closure	Partial Reopening
Al-Mentar (Karni)	Closed on September 29, 2000 Re-closed on October 8, 2000 Re-closed on November 14, 2000 Re-closed on January 1, 2001 Re-closed in the morning of January 14, 2001 Re-closed on January 15, 2001	Reopened on October 2, 2000 Reopened on October 10, 2000 Reopened on November 19, 2000 Partially reopened January 7, 2001 Partially reopened in the evening of January 14, 2001 Partially reopened on January 17, 2001
Sofa	October 8, 2000 Re-closed on January 18, 2001 Re-closed on February 15, 2001	Reopened on January 17, 2001 Reopened for laborers only on February 12, 2001
Erez	October 8, 2000 Re-closed on January 1, 2001 Re-closed on February 4, 2001 Re-closed on February 15, 2001	Partially reopened on December 14, 2000, allowing the entry of a limited number of Palestinian laborers Partially reopened on January 22, 2001 Partially reopened for laborers on February 7, 2001



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Rafah Border Crossing	<p>Closed on October 8, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on October 12, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on October 16, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on November 8, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on December 11, 2000, from 10:00 to 12:00 local time</p> <p>Re-closed on December 18, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on December 30, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on January 14, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on January 24, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on January 31, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on February 5, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on February 15, 2001</p>	<p>Reopened on October 10, 2000, with reduced staff</p> <p>Reopened on October 15, 2000</p> <p>Reopened on October 19, 2000</p> <p>Partially reopened on November 20, 2000, and was re-closed on the same day</p> <p>Partially reopened on December 4, 2000</p> <p>Reopened on December 19, 2000</p> <p>Reopened on January 11, 2001</p> <p>Reopened on January 17, 2001</p> <p>Reopened on January 25, 2001</p> <p>Reopened on February 1, 2001</p> <p>Partially reopened for pilgrims on February 13, 2001</p> <p>Partially reopened for returnees</p>
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<p>Gaza International Airport</p>	<p>Closed on October 8, 2000 Re-closed on October 29, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on November 8, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on January 1, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on January 15, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on January 31, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on February 5, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on February 14, 2001</p>	<p>Reopened on October 15, 2000 Reopened on November 6, 2000 Partially reopened on December 1, 2000 Partially reopened on January 12, 2001 Partially reopened on January 18, 2001 Reopened on February 1, 2001 Partially reopened for pilgrims on February 13, 2001</p>
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PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

“1) All people have the right of self determination. By virtue of this right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

“2) All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.”

Article 1, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1996)

“No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.”

Article 17, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

“1) Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.

“2) Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.”

Article 12, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

“No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited. Pillage is prohibited. Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited.”

Article 33, the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949)

“Each High Contracting Party shall allow the free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores and objects necessary for religious worship intended only for civilians of another High Contracting Party, even if the latter is its adversary. It shall likewise permit the free passage of all consignments of essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases.”

Article 23, the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949)

“1) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of every one to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.”

Article 6, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

“1) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

“2) The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include: ...

d- the creation of conditions which could assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness.”



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Article 12, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

“1) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Article 13, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)



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