

Published on December 25, 2000

CLOSURE UPDATE NO.30

**A Report by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights on the Closure
Imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip**

“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.”

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)

This is the 30th 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, documenting the impacts of such closure. Under the total siege imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities, living conditions of Palestinian civilians deteriorate. In addition, the Israeli occupation authorities violate both individual and collective economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights of Palestinian civilians. These authorities never pay attention to daily suffering of these civilians. PCHR continues to survey the impacts of the continued total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip.

1. Continued Restrictions on Commercial Transactions

The Israeli occupation Authorities have continued to close all commercial crossings, except for (Karni) Outlet. Sofa Crossing, through which construction raw materials are entered into the Gaza Strip has been closed since October 8, 2000, and commercial transactions between the Gaza Strip and Egypt through Rafah Border Crossing have stopped.

Although the Israeli occupation authorities partially reopened Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet on October 8, 2000, they have continued to restrict and obstruct commercial transactions through the Outlet. In addition, they have continued to prevent the movement of Palestinian traders and businessmen from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank and Israel.

Palestinian official sources stated that the number of trucks passing through Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet was 150 trucks daily, loaded with imported goods from Israel or from foreign countries through Israel. Before imposing the current siege the number of these trucks was more than 350 daily. Imported goods include clothes, fruits, flour, cement, drinks, containers, some foodstuffs and some raw materials.

Now, only 12 trucks loaded with industrialized goods exported from the Gaza Strip cross the Outlet daily towards the West Bank and Israel. About 40-50 of such trucks used to cross the Outlet before imposing the current siege. Also, only 40-50 trucks loaded with agricultural products exported from the Gaza Strip cross the Outlet daily towards the West Bank and Israel, even though their number was about 100 before imposing the current siege.

It is worth mentioning that the Israeli occupation authorities reopened Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet under strict procedures and tough restrictions, which include security checking that was in the past limited to electronic checking, through which goods were passed on an electronic belt. But now, a manual checking is added to the electronic checking. Consequently, the passage of Palestinian trucks through the Outlet take much more time which obstructs the processes of import and export and increases the costs of loaded goods. These procedures also decrease the number of trucks passing through the Outlet; their number has become 20 after it was 50 in the past. This results in more losses to owners of goods due to delaying the time of loading for another day. It is worth mentioning that the costs of transporting goods have increased from 1,500 NIS (about US\$375) per truck before imposing the current

siege to 3,000-3,500 NIS (about US\$750-875) now. The increase of the costs of transportation is attributed to preventing the passage of Palestinian trucks and resorting to Israeli trucks instead. In addition, fees paid at the Outlet have increased from 250 NIS (about US\$62.5) to 270 NIS (about US\$67.5) for a truck, and from 350 NIS (about US\$87.5) to 400 NIS (about US\$100) for a lorry. This has put a heavier burden on Palestinian traders and has increased the prices of goods.

2. A Limited Number of Palestinian Laborers Allowed to Reach Their Work Places in Israel

Last week, the Israeli occupation authorities issued new work permits for a limited number of Palestinian laborers to work in the Israeli territories. Director General of Employment at the Palestinian Ministry of Labor stated that his ministry received 5,600 work permits up to December 18, 2000, about 23% of work permits that were offered to Gazan laborers before imposing the current siege whose number was 24,000. The Israeli occupation forces insisted that Palestinian laborers who could work in Israel must be over 37. The number of work permits was limited, and the number of Palestinian laborers who crossed Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing on Sunday, December 17, 2000 was 1,223. On the following day, December 18, 2000, the number of Gazan laborers who could reach their work places in Israel was only 750. On Thursday, December 21, about 2,130 Gazan laborers could reach their work places in Israel, but on Sunday, December 24, 2000, the number decreased to about 1,200.

Arbitrary measures taken by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian laborers, including degrading treatment and humiliating checking procedures, and the threats posed by these forces on the lives of Palestinian laborers force a number of these laborers to give up their work although they are deadly in need for work. Palestinian laborers from the Gaza Strip who cross Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing to go to their work places in Israel daily undergo long checking procedures that last for several hours, and some of these laborers are severely beaten by Israeli occupation soldiers. Israeli occupation soldiers positioned at the Crossing allow the entry of every ten laborers separately after being checked. These complicated and slow procedures force a high number of Palestinian laborers to reach their work places lately and consequently to come back home.

In a racist escalation, on December 17, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces started to use police dogs in checking Palestinian laborers at a military roadblock of these forces at the entrance of the industrial zone in Beit Hanoun (Erez). These forces enter every ten Palestinian laborers together into a checking room, forcing them to take off their clothes and to put them on a table designed for this purpose. Then, the Israeli occupation forces make a sign to dogs according to which dogs start to check Palestinian laborers and their clothes. In addition, Palestinian laborers have to wait in rows for a long time and have to walk in the middle of barbwire and Israeli occupation forces who are in high alert and whose guns are pointed at these laborers.

In Tuesday morning, December 19, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces opened fire on a number of Palestinian laborers who work in "Erez" industrial zone, wounding two of these laborers with live bullets. PCHR's field officer in the northern area of the Gaza Strip reported that this incident took place when Palestinian laborers protested

against provocative and humiliating checking procedures by the Israeli occupation forces. A case of chaos and noise spread over the area when the Israeli occupation forces were checking a number of Palestinian laborers. The Israeli occupation forces faced the protests of Palestinian laborers with opening fire, which resulted in wounding two Palestinian laborers.

On the following day, December 20, 2000, at approximately 5:30 local time, the Israeli occupation forces opened fire on a number of Palestinian laborers who work in "Erez" industrial zone, wounding three of these laborers with live bullets. A fourth Palestinian laborer was bruised as a result of falling down when Israeli occupation soldiers attacked him. Eyewitnesses said that clashes erupted between Palestinian laborers and the Israeli occupation forces because of strict checking procedures carried out by the Israeli occupation forces on these laborers when they enter the industrial zone. These forces obstruct the passage of Palestinian laborers and humiliate them by using police dogs in checking them, in a violation of the rights of work and self-safety.

3. Continued Restrictions on Free Movement

The Israeli occupation forces have continued to deprive Palestinians from free movement and transportation between the areas under the control of the Palestinian National Authority. Since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Israeli occupation forces have prevented Palestinian from moving between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Palestinian senior officials and members of the Palestinian Legislative council have not been excluded from such measures, in a blatant violation to what was agreed upon between the Palestinian side and the Israeli sides to offer these figures special permits that would facilitate their movement between the areas under the control of the Palestinian National Authority. These procedures have constituted a hindrance in the face of the Palestinian parliamentary process.

Also since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Israeli occupation forces have closed the so-called "Safe Passage" which the two sides agreed upon its operation on October 5, 1999, and was opened on October 25, 2000. The "Safe Passage" connects between the Gaza Strip and the town of Tarqomia in the West Bank. With closing this crossing and other crossings, Palestinians have been deprived of free movement between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli occupation forces have also continued to obstruct the movement of Palestinian citizens between the north and south of the Gaza Strip. These forces have continued to reinforce their presence at the main junctions, at the entrances of Palestinian cities and on Salah El-Din Street (the main road between the north and south of the Gaza Strip.) The Israeli occupation forces have continued to close Salah El-Din Street since November 20, 2000. As a result, Palestinian citizens have been forced to resort to an eastern road branch of Salah El-Din Street, leading to Kissufim Crossing (Abu El-A'jin road). Even on this road there is a military roadblock of the Israeli occupation forces, which allows opening the road only from the morning until 16:00 local time. Israeli occupation forces positioned at military roadblocks, including the above-mentioned one, intentionally provoke Palestinian citizens through obstructing the passage of Palestinian vehicles and checking some of these vehicles.

This obstructs and interrupts the movement of Palestinian citizens and vehicles on the roads of the Gaza Strip. So, Palestinian citizens have been forced to walk 2-3 km in order to avoid long lines of vehicles along the road waiting for a sign by Israeli occupation soldiers positioned at the roadblock which permits their passage.

In another action of escalation, On December 20, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces closed the above-mentioned eastern alternative road with concrete blocks. Consequently, Palestinian citizens have been forced to use the western road branch of Salah El-Din Street (Al-Heker road). This road witnesses traffic jams everyday, especially in the morning and in the afternoon, when employees and university students from the southern area go to and come back from their work places and universities in Gaza City. In the holy month of Ramadan, those citizens sometimes reach homes an hour or more after the time of eating.

On the other hand, although the Israeli occupation forces reopened Rafah Border Crossing on December 4, 2000, and Gaza International Airport on December 1, 2000 for Palestinian travelers from the Gaza Strip, these forces take arbitrary and complicated measures against Palestinian travelers.

Palestinian official sources stated that new measures taken by the Israeli occupation forces in regard to the operation of Rafah Border Crossing can be summarized in the following:

- 1) The Crossing operates from 10:00 to 15:30 local time, and practically until 14:00 local time.
- 2) A reduced Palestinian staff, which consists of seven secretaries, to customs employees, a bank employee and three administrative officials, work at the Crossing.
- 3) Palestinian travelers undergo strict checking by the Israeli occupation forces. Such checking starts at a sensitive electronic gate which makes a peep sound as soon as anything passes under it, and then Palestinian travelers undergo strict personal checking.
- 4) All facilitation offered to patients, including avoiding complicated procedures at the Crossing are canceled.

Under such complicated procedures, Palestinians traveling from the Gaza Strip have to stay at the Crossing for 60-90 minutes, and those coming to Gaza Strip through the Crossing have to undergo strict checking and to stay at the Crossing for 3-4 hours.

The above Palestinian official sources also stated that only two busses of departing Palestinian travelers and three busses of coming Palestinian travelers are allowed to pass through the Crossing daily, due complicated procedures and reducing the working staff. In light of this, Dozens of departing and coming Palestinian travelers have to spend night at the waiting hall until they are allowed to pass. So, Palestinian travelers, especially women, children and old people, suffer too much on their way passing through Rafah Border Crossing.

The same procedures are also taken at Gaza International Airport. The Airport operates for only six hours daily, which is enough for the landing and taking off of

only three flights, in a violation of the agreement signed between the Palestinian side and the Israeli side concerning the operation of Gaza International Airport 24 hours a day. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces adopt a policy of completely closing the Airport frequently, which interrupts the work of the Palestinian Aviation Company and the Airport itself. This also leads to a lack of confidence by foreign aviation companies in Gaza International Airport, and in effect, some of these companies have actually stopped their flights to Gaza International Airport.

The Israeli occupation authorities partially reopened Gaza International Airport on December 1, 2000, but under new work conditions and time limits, after it had been closed for more than three weeks. But what is the benefit of re-opening the Airport as long as Salah El-Din Street (the main road between the north and south of the Gaza Strip) is closed, and the Palestinian territories are cut from one other by military roadblocks of the Israeli occupation forces. Following are the new conditions put by the Israeli occupation authorities to operate Gaza International Airport:

- 1) The operation of the Airport shall be limited to six hours, from 9:00 to 15:00 local time.
- 2) Privileges granted to Palestinian VIP's of categories A and B shall be canceled.
- 3) Privileges granted to staffs of Palestinian planes shall be canceled.
- 4) Security checking of travelers through the Airport shall be continued in Rafah Border Crossing. These travelers shall be transported to the Crossing by special vehicles that shall be escorted by tanks of the Israel occupation forces instead of Israeli security personnel. PCHR's field officer in Rafah that the Israeli occupation forces demolished a part of the fence of the Airport to facilitate the entry and exit of tanks.

For instance, a Palestinian citizen from Gaza City who wishes to travel through Rafah Border Crossing or Gaza International Airport has to pass through long stages of suffering and waiting. First, he has to arrive at the Airport at least three hours before the time at which his flight takes off. In addition, he has to leave home two additional hours earlier in order to have time to pass military roadblocks of the Israeli occupation forces on roads, especially the one in the vicinity of Kfar Darom settlement and the one at the junction leading to Gush Qatif settlement block, established along Salah El-Din Street, which separate between the north and south of the Gaza Strip. Salah El-Din Street always witnesses traffic jams because the Israeli occupation forces intentionally obstruct the passage of Palestinian vehicles and check some of them. In addition, Palestinian citizens who pass through these roadblocks face a real threat on their lives, as heavily armed Israeli occupation forces positioned at these roadblocks are always on high alert and point their weapons at Palestinian vehicles.

It is worth mentioning that Palestinian VIP's, categories B and C, now undergo the above-mentioned checking procedures at Gaza International Airport and Rafah Border Crossing, although this was not the case in the past. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces intentionally delay some Palestinian travelers under faint security pretexts and claims, and after the taking off of flights they release those travelers. In this context, on December 19, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces delayed Dr. Fathi Arafat from 9:00 to 13:00 local time, and Rachid Abu Shebak, an official of the Palestinian Preventive Security Service in Gaza, from 10:00 to 15:00 local time.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces arrest whoever they want among Palestinian travelers at Gaza International Airport and Rafah Border Crossing. On December 19, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces arrested Ghassan El-A'aydi, a mechanic engineer from Rafah, when he came back from the UAE through Rafah Border Crossing.

In another action of escalation, on December 19, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces prevented the entry of Ziad A'waja, a Palestinian official at Rafah Border Crossing, into the Crossing.

On the other hand, the Palestinian transportation sector suffer large losses due to the continued measures taken by the Israeli occupation forces which divide the Palestinian territories, preventing the movement of Palestinian citizens and transportation throughout these territories. Palestinians who work in the transportation sector constitute 4.8% of the Palestinian labor force in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This category has suffered large losses due to the continued internal and external siege imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a recent development, on December 18, the Israeli occupation forces re-closed Rafah Border Crossing in the face of Palestinian travelers. It is worth mentioning that these forces partially reopened the Crossing on December 4, 2000 under strict security procedures and with a reduced staff. These forces reopened the Crossing on the following day.

4. Continued Deprivation of the Right of Education

Since the current siege was imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the occupied Palestinian territories, Gazan students have not been able to attend classes at their universities in the West Bank, in a violation of their right of education. Additionally, Gazan students who have been in the West Bank have not been able to visit their families in the Gaza Strip.

On the other hand, since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifad, roadblocks of the Israeli occupation forces between Palestinian cities in the Gaza Strip have stood as a hindrance in the face of Palestinian students from the southern area of the Gaza Strip on their way to their universities in the Gaza City. It is worth mentioning that students from the southern area of the Gaza Strip constitute about 50% of the total number of students at the universities of Gaza City, so the educational process at these universities have been interrupted. The Islamic University in Gaza was forced to open branches in the southern area in order for its students from the southern area to be able to attend classes. Other universities developed compensation programs designed to provide their students from the southern area with classes they lost.

5. Continued Prevention of Visit to Palestinian Prisoners in Israeli Jails

The Israeli occupation forces are still detaining more than 1,600 Palestinians, including about 3,000 from the Gaza Strip, in Israeli jails. When these forces started their redeployment in the Gaza Strip on May 1994, they transferred Palestinian prisoners from jails in the occupied Palestinian territories into jails inside the Israeli

territories, in a blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention which prohibits the transfer of protected persons from occupied territories into territories of the occupying power. Since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Israeli occupation forces have imposed a total siege on the occupied Palestinian territories and have deprived Palestinian prisoners from visits by their families. In additions, the Israeli occupation authorities have prevented lawyers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from visiting Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. As a result, Palestinian prisoners have been deprived of appropriate legal services, which negatively affects the psychological conditions of these prisoners. In addition, these prisoners live inhumane conditions in Israeli jails.

Since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Israeli occupation forces have arrested hundreds of Palestinians. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Prisoners, the number of Palestinian prisoners from the West Bank in Israeli jails up to December 18, 2000 was 2,014.

Recently, the Israeli occupation forces put prejudicing conditions to allow the visit of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails by their families. These forces provided that visits would be limited to fathers, mothers, wives and children under 10. Families of Palestinian prisoners, and the prisoners themselves refused such conditions.

6. Further Deterioration of Health Conditions

The Israeli occupation forces have continued to obstruct the entry of medical assistance offered to the Palestinian people by Arab and friend countries. In this context, PCHR's field officers reported that these forces prevented World Physicians from entering a cargo weighing six tons of medicines, offered by Greek NGO's, into the occupied Palestinian territories. The organization has negotiated with the Israeli occupation authorities for more than 20 days to allow the entry of these medicines into the occupied Palestinian territories. In a protesting movement, two members of the organization, Morante Demetros and Nkitis Kankas attempted to enter the occupied Palestinian territories, but the Israeli occupation forces threatened to shoot them.

7. Further Deterioration of the Agricultural Sector

The Palestinian agricultural sector has suffered large losses due to the total siege imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli occupation forces have continued to put restrictions on the export of agricultural products from the Gaza Strip to outside markets, including markets of the West Bank and Israel.

The following table shows the amounts of agricultural products exported from the Gaza Strip to outside markets at the period of September 28 – December 15, 2000 in the years 1999 and 2000 (amounts are in tons):

The year	Fruits	Citrus	Vegetables	Strawberries	Fruits (in numbers)
1999	1,535	1,931	17,012	407	6 million
2000	19	105	9,766	200	3 million

In addition, the Israeli occupation forces swept large areas of agricultural land in the Gaza Strip as part of their aggression against the Palestinian people and their properties. They also destroyed agricultural equipment and facilities, water pumps and greenhouses owned by Palestinian farmers, which caused large losses to these farmers. The most dangerous aspect of these actions is that the Israeli occupation forces annexed parts of swept areas to settlements, or established military positions or bypass roads on them. From September 28, 2000 to December 18, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces swept 4,456 of agricultural and wooded land in the Gaza Strip.¹

8. Further Deterioration of the Industrial Sector

The Palestinian industrial sector suffered large losses under the total siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the occupied Palestinian territories. This siege has been a hindrance in the face of exporting Gazan industrial products to outside markets. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces have prevented the entry of raw materials necessary for industry in the Gaza Strip, so many Palestinian factories have stopped to operate.

On the other hand, the siege have decreased the buying capacity of Palestinian citizens, as many Palestinian laborers have lost their work places either inside the Israeli territories or in the occupied Palestinian territories, and unemployment in the Palestinian society has increased.

In an interview by a PCHR's field officer with Dr. Sa'di Al-Kronz, the Palestinian Minister of Industry, Al-Kronz stated that the Palestinian industrial sector suffered indirect losses, losses of missed opportunities, which mean investment, either local, Arab or foreign, as some investors froze their new investments, and some foreign investors canceled their investment in Palestine. Losses of missed opportunities under the current total siege are estimated at US\$ 350 million.

Al-Kronz added that reopening of Al-Mentar (Karni) outlet partially contributed to decreasing the losses of the Palestinian industrial sector, as the percentage of the decrease of industrial production has become 40% instead of 80% at the beginning of the current siege.

It is worth mentioning that the Israeli occupation authorities partially reopened Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet on November 19, 2000, allowing the entry of raw materials necessary for the Palestinian industry. However, the amounts of raw materials allowed entry are little due to strict procedures by the Israeli occupation forces at the Outlet which obstruct the passage of Palestinian trucks as it was the case before imposing the current total siege.

On the other hand, the aggression launched by the Israeli occupation forces against the occupied Palestinian territories has included attacking Palestinian factories. Bulldozers of the Israeli occupation forces demolished some Palestinian factories, and

¹For more details, see the third report by PCHR on the sweeping of land titled "Uprooting Palestinian Trees."

these forces fired artillery shells and heavy bullets at some factories, causing severe damage to these factories. They also stole machines and equipment.

The Israeli occupation forces have so far attacked the following factories in the Gaza Strip:

- 1) An iron factory near Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction, to the south of Gaza City, owned by Mohammed El-A'schi: On October 4, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces demolished and destroyed the factory on its machine, equipment and furniture, and transformed the place into a vacant space.
- 2) Metalco factory for aluminum in Deir El-Balah, owned by citizens of the families of Al-Ja'farawi and Al-Rayyes: On November 20, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces and settlers attacked the factory, stealing its machines and destroying it.
- 3) A factory of electrical tools near Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet, owned by Sha'ban El-Souda: On October 30, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces shelled it, causing severe damage, and losses were estimated at US\$200,000.
- 4) Al-Matahen (mills) company in Khan Yunis: The Israeli occupation forces shot at its buildings, destroying its electrical network, and losses were estimated at US\$24,000.
- 5) Al-Sakhra milk factory in Deir El-Balah: The Israeli occupation forces shot at the factory, destroying its electrical network twice, and losses were estimated at US\$15,000.
- 6) Mushtaha factory for plastic near Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet: The Israeli occupation forces fired artillery shells at the factory, causing severe damage, and losses were estimated at US\$15,000.
- 7) Malaka brick factory near Al-Mentar (Karni) Outlet: The Israeli occupation forces demolished the factory, and losses were estimated at US\$20,000.
- 8) A brick factory to the east of Gaza City: The Israeli occupation forces demolished the factory and its machines were destroyed.
- 9) Al-Ghosein gas company to the east of Gaza City: The Israeli occupation forces demolished a part of its factory, causing damage to a number of its machines.
- 10) A car maintenance atelier to the east of Gaza City, owned by Ali El-Zae'im: The Israeli occupation forces completely destroyed the atelier and a well, and uprooted some trees.
- 11) Al-Amal station for packing fruits and vegetables in Deir El-Balah, owned by Abdel-Rahman Khalil Abu Bashir: The Israeli occupation forces demolished it and destroyed its machines and equipment.

9. Construction

The Israeli occupation forces have continued to close Sofa Crossing, through which construction materials are entered into the Gaza Strip since October 8, 2000. On November 28, 2000, the Israeli occupation authorities allowed the entry of cement used in construction into the Gaza Strip in limited amounts, after its entry into the Gaza Strip was completely prevented. Gradually, the Israeli occupation forces allowed the entry of more amounts of cement until it equaled the amounts that entered the Gaza Strip before imposing the current siege. Palestinian official sources stated that the Israeli occupation authorities have allowed the entry of 3,000 tons of cement

into the Gaza Strip daily. They have also allowed the entry of iron used in construction, but they have continued to prevent the entry of aggregate and some other raw materials used in construction.

As the Israeli occupation authorities have continued to prevent the entry of these materials, Palestinian concrete, brick and tile factories have stopped their operation. As a result, construction sector has completely stopped and many construction laborers have lost their work places, which increases unemployment in the Palestinian society. In addition, many development projects, mainly infrastructure development, in the Gaza Strip have stopped.

10. Continued Violation of the Right to Free Worship

The Israeli occupation authorities have continued to prevent the access of Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation forces have prevented the access of thousands of Palestinian Muslims to the sacred city in the holy month of Ramadan to do prayers there, in a violation of the right to free worship.

On the other hand, under the current total siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the occupied Palestinian territories, thousands of Palestinian Muslims from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have been deprived of traveling to Saudi Arabia to do the lesser pilgrimage, in a violation to their right to free worship. In addition, Palestinian offices of tourism and pilgrimage have suffered large losses, and there are fears that such measures taken by the Israeli occupation forces may continue during the coming season of pilgrimage.

Conclusion

The Israeli occupation forces have continued to impose a total siege on the occupied Palestinian territories for the 13th consecutive week. In addition, these forces have been imposing an internal siege on Palestinian cities and villages. Under the siege, the suffering of the Palestinian people is continuous. Living conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories have deteriorated on all levels, and their economic, social and cultural rights are violated.

PCHR reiterates its calls to lift the total siege imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories and to stop all measures of collective punishment taken by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people. PCHR warns of the disastrous impacts of the current siege imposed on the Palestinian people.

PCHR reiterates its call upon the international community to immediately intervene to put an end to the violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories by the Israeli occupation forces, and to ensure Israel's compliance to international conventions through:

- (a) Pressing Israel to lift the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, and to stop its barbarian aggression against the Palestinian people and their property.

- (b) Providing immediate medical and humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people, whose living conditions have been increasingly deteriorating under the siege.
- (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”

Annex (1)

A table that shows closures of crossings since Al-Aqsa Intifada

The Crossing	Closure	Partially Reopening
Al-Mentar (Karni)	Closed on September 29, 2000 Re-closed on October 8, 2000 Re-closed on November 14, 2000	On October 2, 2000 On October 10, 2000 On November 19, 2000
Sofa	October 8, 2000 – now	
Erez	October 8, 2000 – now	
Rafah Border Crossing	Closed on October 8, 2000 Re-closed on October 12, 2000 Re-closed on October 16, 2000 Re-closed on November 8, 2000 Re-closed on December 11, 2000, from 10:00 to 12:00 local time Re-closed on December 18, 2000	On October 10, 2000, with reduced staff On October 15, 2000 On October 19, 2000 On November 20, 2000, and was re-closed on the same day Partially on November 28, 2000 for one day only On December 19, 2000
Gaza International Airport	Closed on October 8, 2000 Re-closed on October 29, 2000 Re-closed on November 8, 2000	On October 15, 2000 On November 6, 2000 Partially on December 1, 2000