



Published on January 25, 2001

***CLOSURE UPDATE NO.32***

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

**The Gaza Strip Has Transformed into “Gaza Strips,”  
Disastrous Outcomes**

This is the 32nd 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 impose a total siege on the occupied Palestinian territories, including areas of the Palestinian National Authority since September 2000. The Israeli occupation forces have tightened their siege closing all main, branch, and back roads in the Gaza Strip, transforming it into three isolated cantons since December 30, 2000, after a car bomb in Nathania in the north of Israel, which injured 55 Israelis.

The siege was partially lifted on January 17, 2001, but it was re-imposed causing disastrous impacts on the socio-economic situation throughout the Gaza Strip. The recent siege has transformed the Gaza Strip into three collective jails. The Israeli occupation forces have closed all the Strip's outlets to the outside world. As a result, the economy has been paralyzed, unemployment has reached unprecedented levels, medical services have deteriorated, and death threatens dozens of patients whom the Israeli occupation forces have denied access to hospitals. In addition, the educational system has been negatively affected, visits to detainees in Israeli jails have been prohibited, and Palestinians who were traveling abroad have not been able to come back to the country.

The following are the disastrous impacts of the current siege on various aspects of life in the occupied Palestinian territories.

**1. Further Deterioration of the Palestinian Economy**

Under the current siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces, the Gaza Strip is suffering a severe economic crisis that has affected all economic sectors (trade, industry, agriculture, labor, tourism, transportation, and investment).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth mentioning that the Israeli occupation authorities have worked on attaching Palestinian labor force in the occupied Palestinian territories to Israeli labor market under a well-planned policy. This has given the Israeli occupation authorities full control over the labor market and over the Palestinian economy as a whole.



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According to Palestinian official reports, losses to the Palestinian economy are estimated at US\$12.2 million daily and the level of unemployment has risen to 50%, up from 12% before the siege. Furthermore, a report from the Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation indicated that losses to the Palestinian economy were more than US\$ 2 billion, which means a further deterioration of the living conditions of Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian economy depends mainly on the remittances of Palestinian laborers, and the export Palestinian products to Israel and to outside markets through Israel. As a result of the siege, these economic activities have been paralyzed, and commercial transactions between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and between governates of the Gaza Strip, have been severely hampered. Tourism has also been hit hard and investment has significantly decreased. The following are significant losses of Palestinian economic sectors:

### 1) Prohibiting commercial transactions:

Under the current total siege, all commercial transactions of the Gaza Strip have completely stopped, as all crossings and outlets have been closed for Palestinian imports and exports. Eighty percent of the commercial transactions of the Gaza Strip are with Israel and 20% are with the West Bank and outside markets. Since January 7, 2001, the Israeli occupation authorities have allowed the passage of a limited number of trucks loaded with foodstuffs, 30 trucks daily, from and into the Gaza Strip through Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing. In addition, all other crossings are still closed to Palestinian imports and exports.

Consequently, Palestinian exports and imports to and from Israel are a vital part of the Palestinian economy, which significantly affect the gross national product. Export activities contribute to increasing the Palestinian gross national product and generating incomes. Stopping export has caused a drop in the gross national product, and the lack of imported raw materials has halted all production activities by Palestinian businesspersons. In addition, the labor force of this sector has decreased to 40% of the total number of Palestinian laborers and employees, whose losses are estimated at US\$ 270,000 daily of a total of US\$ 675,000. This does not include fines and storage fees that Palestinian traders have to pay for their goods at Israeli harbors.

### 2) Further Deterioration of the Industrial Sector

Under the current total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli occupation authorities since September 29, 2000, which has been toughened since January 1, 2001, losses of the Gazan industrial sector have increased. This sector has deteriorated as 90% of raw materials necessary for factories are imported from outside markets through crossings controlled by the Israeli authorities. Israeli occupation forces have obstructed the passage of these materials through Israeli crossings. In addition, sales in the local market have decreased and exports to

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Such control strengthened after Paris Economic Agreement signed between the Palestinian National Authority and the Israeli occupation authorities, which was supposed to be discussed biannually, but Israel refused this.



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outsides markets have dropped significantly as Palestinian factories cannot meet the requests of outside markets. At the same time, Palestinian laborers cannot reach their work places neither in Israel nor inside the occupied Palestinian territories, due to the total siege. Consequently, the buying power of Palestinian citizens has decreased. The following table shows losses of the industrial sector since imposing the current total siege up to January 15, 2001, according to estimates of the Palestinian Ministry of Industry:

Current losses from September 28 to December 12, 2000	US\$273.6 million
Current losses from December 13, 2000 to January 15, 2001	US\$78.88 million
Destroyed domestic resources	US\$15 million
Emergent additional losses	US\$1.5 million
Losses of potential investment	US\$336 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>US\$704.98 million</b>

Source: Department of Studies and Planning, the Palestinian Ministry of Industry.

### 3) 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. These losses are attributed to several reasons. First, Palestinian farmers have not been able to reach their farms, especially in Al-Mawasi (agricultural) area, which is the main source of agriculture in the Gaza Strip. Second, Palestinian farmers have not been able to transport their agricultural products to markets in other Palestinian governates due to the internal siege. Finally, due to closed border crossings, especially Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing – the main commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, they have not been able also to transport their agricultural products to markets in the West Bank, Israel and foreign countries, through Israel. Despite the Israeli occupation authorities having partially reopened crossings on January 17, 2001, they have continued to impose restrictions on transportation, either on the main roads between Palestinian cities or at crossings, where they obligate Palestinian trucks to unload their cargoes and transport them by other trucks. These procedures have caused damage to Palestinian agricultural products, and consequently lowered their prices. A Palestinian official source stated that 500 tons of tomatoes ready for export to Saudi Arabia were damaged as a result of the siege imposed on the governates of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation forces blocked Palestinian trucks loaded with tomatoes in the middle area and then at Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing. Saudi Arabia is the major market for Palestinian tomatoes. It usually imports about 40,000 boxes daily.

Furthermore, many Palestinian farms were destroyed and razed, especially in Al-Mawasi area and in Beit Hanoun, by the Israeli occupation forces and groups of settlers. Additionally, dozens of greenhouses were burnt, many wells were destroyed, and thousands of trees were



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uprooted.<sup>2</sup> The Director General of the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture estimated that losses due to these attacks reached US\$180 million.

Agricultural exports have decreased this year in comparison with those of the last year, despite the fact that Palestinian farmers expanded planted areas, which was supposed to increase agricultural exports. The following table shows the amounts of Palestinian agricultural products in the last four months of the year 2000, in comparison with the last four months of the year 1999.<sup>3</sup>

Product	The Amount in Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. 1999	The Amount in Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. 2000
Tomatoes	15079	8906
Cucumbers	10289	5644
Peppers	330	401
Eggplants	345	222
Zucchinis	402	247
Potatoes	1102	819
Cherries	18	6
Guavas	2383	701
Dates	388	66
Other	1338	765
<b>Total</b>	<b>31674</b>	<b>17757</b>

Source: The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture

The total amount of agricultural exports for the last four months of this year is 43% of the exports for the same period in 1999. This dramatic drop has had disastrous impact on Palestinian farmers and on the Palestinian agricultural sector as a whole. It is yet another attack on an already weak Palestinian economy.

#### 4) Continued Denial of Access of Palestinian Laborers to Their Work Places, and an Increase of Unemployment

Under the total siege imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories by the Israeli occupation forces the crisis of Palestinian laborers has increased significantly, as thousands of these laborers have not been able to reach their work places in Israel. In addition, thousands more have not been able to reach their work places in the areas of the Palestinian National Authority, due to the internal siege imposed on Palestinian cities, the closing of many factories and the leveling of large areas of agricultural land. Furthermore, many institutions have dismissed many of their laborers as work in such institutions has stopped. The Palestinian construction

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on land leveling, see PCHR's reports on this subject.

<sup>3</sup> Amounts are in tons.



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sector has also been paralyzed. Approximately 5,000 Palestinian laborers have lost their work places. In addition, the Palestinian transportation sector has been severely damaged due to closed crossings and roads, which has meant thousands more laborers out of work.

The continued closure of crossings and outlets, and the denial of access of Palestinian laborers to their work places, has caused large losses to the Palestinian economy. The Palestinian labor force constitutes a major foundation of the Palestinian economy. This force was estimated at about 549,613 in 1999, and according to expectations of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 1999, this number would increase by 7.8% in the year 2000 to become 601,323. The PCBS estimates that this number is equal to 20% of the population of the occupied Palestinian territories, 3,150,056.

The following table shows the numbers of Palestinian laborers in Israel and in the areas of the Palestinian National Authority, which we will use to estimate losses of the Palestinian labor force, under the current total siege that has been imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories for four months:

Location	Kind of Work	Number of Laborers
In Israel	Various	143,766
In the areas of the PNA	Agriculture and fishing	63,482
	Construction	<b>56,275</b>
	Trade, hotels and restaurants	81,893
	Transportation and communication	25,472
	Services	50,422
	Industry	73,903
	The PNA	106,110
<b>Total</b>		<b>601,323</b>

Losses of the Palestinian labor sector under the current siege can be estimated as follows:

143,766 laborers in Israel x US\$27.5 daily x 100 work days = US\$395,356,500

Taxes and health insurance 4 months x US\$5 million = US\$20 million.

Estimated number of the unemployed in the areas of the Palestinian National Authority, according to the above table: 200,000 x US\$25 daily x 100 days = US\$500,000,000. Total losses: US\$897,356,500.

Israeli occupation authorities reopened Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing on January 22, 2001. On that day 931 Palestinian laborers from the Gaza Strip, who had valid work permits under the new conditions of the Israeli occupation authorities, went to their work places in Israel. From the following day until now 5,000 Palestinian laborers have gone to their work places in Israel



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daily. PCHR's field officer in the northern area of the Gaza Strip reported that those laborers were underwent strict security checks, that even prohibited carrying cellular telephones.

Approximately 9,210 Palestinian laborers from the Gaza Strip have permits to work in Israel, including 5,152 in construction, 1,447 in services, 886 in industry and 1,725 in agriculture, and they are all over 35 years old.

### 5) Further Deterioration of the Transportation Sector

The transportation sector is the sinew of the Palestinian economy. Revenues of this sector have significantly decreased under the current total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. Thousands of Palestinian trucks and lorries have not been able to transport goods from and into the Gaza Strip, because crossings have been closed. Three different commodities are brought into the Gaza Strip through three major crossings; raw materials for construction come in through Sofa Crossing; goods and industrial products come in through Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing; and imported goods through Israeli harbors are entered into the Gaza Strip through Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing. As these crossings have been closed most of the time since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada, Palestinian truck drivers have not been able to work.

Taxis have also been unable to work normally. Their incomes have decreased in an unprecedented manner. Additionally, the movement of buses that used to transport Palestinian citizens, especially university students, from the southern and middle areas of the Gaza Strip, has been halted due to the internal siege imposed on Palestinian cities.

The following table shows the impacts of closure on the Palestinian transportation sector in the Gaza Strip:

Means of Transportation	Number		Total	Daily Average Income	Percentage of Losses
	The North	The South			
Commercial Vehicles	5707	2449	8156	500 NIS	95%
Taxis	568	605	1173	100 NIS	90%
Buses	143	14	157	1025 NIS	95%
Lorries and Trucks	249	40	289	---	---

Source: The Palestinian Ministry of Transportation

Under the current siege, the Palestinian transportation sector has been almost paralyzed. This is an additional stroke to the Palestinian economy, as the percentage of those who work in this sector is 4.8% of the Palestinian labor force.

### 6) Further Deterioration of Tourism



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Tourism is one of the major sectors of the Palestinian economy. This sector has been directly affected under the current siege imposed on the areas of the Palestinian National Authority, so it has suffered large losses, which have impacted the Palestinian economy as a whole. Losses in the Palestinian tourism sector can be summed up in the following, according to a report of the Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation:

- ◆ Losing foreign tourism, and canceling hotel reservations 100%, which have caused a loss of US\$128,000.
- ◆ Losing tourist nights (2,130 nights), causing a loss of about US\$ 284,240.
- ◆ The decrease of tourist labor by 65% out of a total of 3,460 laborers and employees. The average daily wage in this sector is US\$20. In addition, the number of those who used to work in tourist services, such as restaurants, has decreased by 46% out of 4,000 laborers, with an average daily individual income of US\$12.
- ◆ The damage to the overall image of tourism in Palestine will require at least four years to return to the position it had attained before imposing the current siege.
- ◆ Losses during the season of Christian pilgrimage in the year 2000, as the average number of tourists is estimated at 7,500, and the average cost of a night in a hotel is about US\$50, in addition to 95,000 tourist nights, the revenues of each are estimated at US\$100.
- ◆ The lack of internal tourism between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- ◆ Losing tourism from Palestinian abroad, about 15,560 of them used to stay here for 21-30, spending US\$10 daily.
- ◆ Direct foreign investment in the Palestinian tourism sector, which is estimated at US\$25 million, including a Marriot Hotel. Such investment could provide 790 direct job opportunities and 1200 indirect job opportunities.

### 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 three isolated areas. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces have closed all crossings and outlets from and into the Gaza Strip. As a result of the actions carried out by the Israeli occupation forces, the educational process has been interrupted, health services have retreated, and the lives of Palestinian citizens have been threatened. 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

The Israeli occupation forces have prohibited internal movement between Palestinian areas, including the movement between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Recently, these forces have escalated their aggressive measures, when they closed all crossings, outlets and roads in the Gaza Strip, and divided the Gaza Strip into three isolated areas on December 30, 2000. The Israeli occupation forces closed the following roads and roadblocks:



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- (a) Salah El-Din Street (the main road between the north and south of the Gaza Strip) near the junctions leading to the Gush Qatif settlement block and to Kfar Darom settlement.
- (b) Salah El-Din Street near Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction.
- (c) All branch roads of Salah El-Din Street, which are:
  - Abu Al-A'jin road to the east of Kissufim junction.
  - Al-Heker road to the west of Kfar Darom settlement.
  - The eastern road between Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction and Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing.
  - The western road between Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction and the seashore.
- (d) Tal Al-Sultan and Al-Tuffah roadblocks in Al-Mawasi (agricultural) area.

Under these conditions, Palestinian citizens were not able to move between these areas; employees were not able to reach their work places and students could not reach their universities and schools. This siege left more than 1 million people of the Gaza Strip in inhumane conditions. The Israeli occupation forces violated their basic civil and social rights ensured by international covenants and conventions.

On January 11, 2001, the Israeli occupation authorities partially lifted the siege, as they reopened the main roads and Rafah Border Crossing. On the following day, they reopened Gaza International Airport.

Although the siege was lifted, the Israeli occupation forces continued to close roads when vehicles of settlers crossed the main junctions, especially Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction, to the south of Gaza City. Furthermore, tanks of the Israeli occupation forces were still positioned on the eastern side of the mentioned junction, pointing their guns at passing Palestinian vehicles. At the same time, tanks were also positioned near Al-Moghraqa mosque, threatening the safety and security of Palestinian citizens. The Israeli occupation forces imposed a strict siege on Al-Moghraqa area. These forces were shooting at every Palestinian who tried to exit the area and were attacking Palestinian homes and properties. Residents of the area said that Israeli occupation soldiers barbarously attacked women and children, terrifying them.

On the other hand, tanks of the Israeli occupation forces were still positioned near Al-Matahen junction at Salah El-Din Street, on the eastern side of Kissufim junction and at roadblocks, especially Al-Tuffah and Tal Al-Sultan roadblocks. It seems that these tanks took the responsibility for directing traffic, which poses a threat to the safety and security of Palestinian citizens.

On January 14, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces re-closed the southern area (Rafah and Khan Yunis), Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing and the Rafah Border Crossing. As a result, trucks loaded with goods could not unload their cargoes, Palestinian citizens were not able to travel through Rafah Border Crossing, and employees working in Gaza City could not come back to their homes in Rafah and Khan Yunis. In addition, many families visiting relatives could not return home.



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In the evening of the same day, the Israeli occupation forces reopened the southern area and Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing, allowing trucks to unload their cargoes. They also allowed movement under the guns of their tanks and military roadblocks.

On the following day, January 15, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces re-tightened the siege on the Gaza Strip, when they closed all outlets, crossings and main roads. They also re-positioned their troops and tanks on branch roads, and raised concrete blocks and mud barricades. This made the situation become worse than in the past, dividing the Gaza Strip into four isolated cantons; they were: Gaza City and the northern area; the middle area; Khan Yunis and Rafah; and the Al-Mawasi area.

### **Al-Mawasi Area: A Witness to the Israeli Occupation's Barbarism**

The Al-Mawasi area has been the most affected area by the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. On the morning of January 10, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces prohibited residents of the area under 30 years old from entering or exiting the area, except those who had magnetic cards or fishing permits. On January 15, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces closed more than 20 branch roads, which Palestinian farmers used to use to move between their farms, with concrete blocks. These forces also established a new military site and an observation point near Al-Joura quarter in the Al-Mawasi area of Khan Yunis. On the following day, the Israeli occupation forces established a sand barrier 700m long from the Al-Berka area in Deir El-Balah to the coastal road, separating Al-Mawasi area completely from Deir El-Balah. They also established several observation points along the barrier, to tighten their grip on the area. Under such measures, residents of Al-Mawasi area lived under an undeclared curfew, as they were prevented from moving. Farmers were not able to reach their farms, pupils were not able to reach their schools, employees were not able to go to their work places including those who work in medical services, fishermen could not carry out their work, and ambulances were denied entry into the area.

In a blatant violation of human rights, contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention, and before the eyes of the world, groups of settlers accompanied by Israeli occupation soldiers attacked the Al-Mawasi area, beating citizens, burning a number of houses and destroying greenhouses and agricultural products. At the same time, Israeli occupation forces positioned at Al-Tuffah roadblock denied the entry of ambulances and cars of ICRC into the area to evacuate the injured and to observe the dire situation in the area. The Israeli occupation forces also prohibited the entry of milk, medicines and foodstuffs into the area. The incidents that took place in Al-Mawasi area provide clear evidence of the Israeli occupation forces' barbarism and apartheid.

On January 17, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces reopened Al-Mawasi area in Rafah and Khan Yunis, under tough restrictions, including the forced registration of ID numbers of persons who crossed Al-Tuffah and Tal Al-Sultan roadblocks.



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On the same day, the Israeli occupation forces reopened a branch road Khan Yunis and the middle area, and Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction, to the south of Gaza City (it was re-closed for a short time on January 22, 2000). These steps allowed limited movement of people between the three isolated areas of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation forces also reopened Rafah Border Crossing, allowing travel.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces reopened Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing, allowing Palestinian traders and farmers to transport their goods and agricultural products.

On January 18, 2001, the Israeli occupation authorities partially reopened Gaza International Airport, allowing the travel of Palestinian citizens. Since October 8, 2000, the Airport has only been open for six hours a day, causing a significant decrease of flights. In this context, on January 23, 2001, the Israeli occupation authorities extended the working time to 16 hours – from 9:00 to 24:00 local time. The same was applied to the Rafah Border Crossing. However, on January 24, 2001, the Israeli occupation authorities closed the Rafah Border Crossing after a quarrel with the Palestinian side which disputed the security checks carried out by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian staff at the crossing. The crossing has been closed since.

PCHR's field officer in Khan Yunis reported that on January 24, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces stopped an UNRWA convoy headed by the Commissioner General of UNRWA Peter Hansen, and accompanied by three Reuters journalists, at Al-Matahen junction in Khan Yunis. They were on their way to Khan Yunis to observe the situation there. The Commissioner General tried to discuss the matter with them, but they threatened to shoot in the air. Fifteen minutes later, they allowed his entry

### 2) Deprivation of the Right to Travel

The siege imposed on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli occupation forces included closing all outlets and crossings to the outside world. From December 30, 2000, the Israeli occupation forces closed Rafah Border Crossing, Gaza International Airport, Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing, Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing and all other crossings. Consequently, Palestinian citizens of the Gaza Strip were not able to leave the Strip or enter it through these outlets and crossings. Thousands of Palestinians who left the country before the closure were locked outside of the Strip, waiting for crossings and outlets to be reopened. The Palestinian Liaison Officer of Rafah Border Crossing stated that about 80 Palestinian pilgrims were blocked at the Egyptian side of the Crossing, waiting for being allowed to enter the Strip. Later, about 40 of them were allowed to cross at the Al-O'uja Crossing with Egypt upon coordination between the Palestinian side and the Israeli side. The remainder was permitted to enter at the Rafah Border Crossings during the short periods when the Israeli occupation forces reopened the Crossing (see Annex 1).

Palestinian officials stated that thousands of people who left the Strip to visit their relatives during Aid Al-Ftr were not able to come back throughout the recent period of closure. Additionally, many patients who received medical treatment abroad could not come back to the



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Strip due to closing Rafah Border Crossing and Gaza International Airport. According to one patient who came back from Egypt, about 100 cancer and heart patients and people who were wounded in the Intifada, who had received treatment at Nasser Medical Institute in Egypt, were waiting the reopening Rafah Border Crossing and Gaza International Airport to come back to the Strip. It is worth mentioning that hundreds of the wounded of Al-Aqsa Intifada receive treatment at hospital in Arab and other friendly countries. Travelers undergo strict security checks at crossings. The Israeli occupation forces arrested some travelers because of security concerns, when Rafah Border Crossing was partially reopened.

### 3) Further Deterioration of the Medical Situation

The Palestinian health sector significantly deteriorated under the current siege imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories. On January 12, 2001, the Israeli occupation forces denied the entry of a delegation of the UAE Red Crescent Society into the Gaza Strip. They were also unable to move freely in the West Bank due to the siege.

In a press conference held on January 15, 2001, the Director General of the Palestinian Ministry of Health E'mad Tarawia stated that the Israeli occupation forces were still denying entry into the Gaza Strip of tons of medicines, foodstuffs, 18 ambulances, and four operating rooms currently held up in Al-A'rish, Egypt. They also prevented the transfer of 20 wounded and some cancer patients of who receive chemical and radiation treatment in Austria. Tarawia added that the siege obstructed the work of Palestinian medical staffs, especially in regard to the vaccination of children. Additionally, 250 medical cadres of the middle area were not able to reach their work places at Shifa' hospital in Gaza City due to the strict siege. He also said that a number of the wounded who received treatment at hospitals in Arab countries were waiting to be allowed to enter the Gaza Strip.

In the Al-Mawasi area, the sole clinic stopped its work due to the siege imposed on the area. Furthermore, the Israeli occupation forces denied entry to ambulances into the area who came to evacuate citizens wounded in attacks launched by settlers on January 15, 2001.

On January 16, 2001, Israeli occupation forces positioned at Al-Shuhada' (Netzarim) junction opened fire on two ambulances of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, which transported four children for whom surgical operations were performed at Israeli hospitals. They were:

- Asmaa' Abu E'isheh, 3 years old, a spinal cord plantation;
- Suhaila Hejazi, a surgical operation in the heart;
- Abdel-Karim Fasfosi, a surgical operation in the heart; and
- Akram Al-Masri, a surgical operation in the heart.

All of them are residents of the south of Gaza. Under fire, the two ambulances were forced to drive back to Al-Nasser hospital in Gaza City.

In another incident, an official of the Palestinian Ministry of Health stated that the Israeli occupation forces attacked two ambulances near Kfar Darom settlement, checking them and the ID's of patients.



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The Israeli occupation forces also denied permission to ambulances transporting medicines and medical equipment from Gaza City to hospitals of the south (Nasser and Al-Joneina hospitals), despite the critical need.

On January 18, 2001, Israeli occupation forces positioned at Al-Matahen junction denied the passage of an ambulance transporting the child Ne'ma Mohammed Al-Qotatti, 3 years old, to Shifa' hospital in Gaza City. The child was in critical condition after she swallowed a coin. Physicians of Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis were unable to remove it. So, her family was forced to transfer her to Dar Al-Salam hospital in Khan Yunis where physicians were able to take out the coin and save the child.

The Israeli occupation forces prohibited the sanitation staff of Khan Yunis Municipality from transferring solid waste to a processing facility in Deir El-Balah. The waste accumulated to the extent that it threatened the health of residents of the area.

Furthermore, a driver of a solid waste vehicle of Gaza Municipality was wounded while carrying out his duties in Al-Mentar area. The Gaza Municipality vacates about 500 tons of solid waste daily. The Israeli occupation forces had prevented the access of Gaza Municipality' solid waste vehicles to those facilities for two weeks.

#### 4) Continued Deprivation of the Right of Education

The internal siege imposed on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli occupation forces has disrupted the Palestinian educational process. Teachers from the southern and middle areas of the Gaza Strip were not able to reach their schools in Gaza City and the northern area. The same was true for teachers from Gaza City and the northern area who could not reach their schools in the southern and middle areas. UNRWA could partially overcome this problem by obligating teachers to work at schools closer to their areas of residence.

Furthermore, 11,045 university students, 7,295 from the southern area and 3770 from the middle area, were not able to attend classes at their universities in Gaza City. The total number of students at universities of Gaza City is 28,703 as shown in the following table:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> These figures were provided by departments of public relations of the above universities.



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University	The Number of Students in Each Area			Total
	The South	The Middle Area	Gaza City and the North	
The Islamic University	2,747	1,374	7,325	11,446
College of Education	1,570	742	2,235	4,547
Al-Azhar University	2,978	1,654	8,078	12,710
<b>Total</b>	<b>7595</b>	<b>3770</b>	<b>17,638</b>	<b>28,703</b>

University staff from the southern and the middle areas of the Gaza Strip were unable to reach their work places in Gaza City. Consequently many study programs were halted. University students started to have final exams from the first semester. Islamic University opened several centers in the southern and middle areas, which to some extent helped solve the problems which threaten the current semester. Other universities also did the same thing. The following table shows the number of employees at universities and their areas of residence:

University	The Number of Employees			Total
	The South	The Middle Area	Gaza City and the North	
The Islamic University	143	109	428	680
College of Education	46	27	87	160
Al-Azhar University	77	40	343	460
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>1,300</b>

Although the main roads of the Gaza strip were reopened and the siege was eased, tanks and military jeeps of the Israeli occupation forces still pose a serious threat to the safety of students. In some cases, these forces killed students in cold blood on the grounds of security concerns.

In addition, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to deny the access of pupils to Jerar Al-Qedwa School in Al-Mawasi area, at which about 600 pupils have classes. This school is the only one in the area in which about 5,000 people live.

The siege has continued to stand as a barrier in the face of thousands of Gazan university students attempting to attend classes at their universities in the West Bank. Furthermore, thousands of Gazan students have been locked in the West Bank and have not been able to visit



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their families in the Gaza Strip due to the total siege imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories.

### 5) Continued Denial of the Access to Religious Sites

Under the total siege imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the occupied Palestinian territories, Palestinians of the Gaza Strip, Muslims and Christians, have been denied visits to holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem for worship. In addition, the Israeli occupation forces have continued to deny the access of Palestinians of the West Bank and Palestinians from towns and villages inside the Green Line, to *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* (the Holy Sanctuary), especially if they are under 45.

### 6) Continued Deprivation of Prisoner Visitation Rights

Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails have been deprived of visitations by their families for more than four months as a consequence of the total siege imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories. Lawyers have not been able to visit prisoners to follow up their cases. This negatively affects prisoners' psychological condition, especially when taken in conjunction with the inhumane conditions of detention. An official source of the Palestinian Ministry of Prisoners stated that the Israeli occupation forces had arrested about 650 Palestinians since the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada. So, the number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails has increased to about 2,250, including 300 from the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian prisoners rejected the new conditions that the Israeli occupation authorities imposed to allow their families to visit them. These conditions included that visits would be limited to fathers, mothers, wives and children under 10.

### 7) A Halt of Development Projects in the Gaza Strip

Under the current siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, most development projects in the Gaza Strip stopped. These projects are of great importance to the Palestinian people, especially as they are concerned with the rehabilitation of infrastructure destroyed by the Israeli occupation forces. Among these projects are:

- A development project of Al-Bahar (the sea) Street and the area of Al-Tuffah roadblock.
- A project of drainage of rainwater in Khan Yunis, which was supposed to start during the past few days, but the lack of raw materials has made that impossible. The Government of Japan (US\$8 million) finances the project.
- A project for sewage treatment in Khan Yunis, which is one of the most important projects in the area. Currently, Khan Yunis depends mainly on simple under ground storage, which constitutes a significant threat to the environment.
- Rafah Municipality has stopped work in similar vital projects.
- The work on the Gaza harbor and on an electricity generating station, which are the most important strategic projects for the Gaza Strip. The power station was supposed to be operated at the end of November 2000, but due to the continued siege and the sealing equipment for the



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project in Israeli harbors this was not possible. The Mayor of Gaza City O'un Al-Shawa stated that the municipality suffered a financial crisis that threatened the continuity of development projects.

### 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 is continuous. The Gaza Strip has been transformed into three isolated collective jails. Living conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories have deteriorated on all levels, and the economic, social, and cultural rights of the people are being violated.

The policy of collective punishment adopted by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people is internationally prohibited, and 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 unjustifiably detains as hostages. The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is the most disastrous since they were occupied by the Israeli occupation forces on June 5, 1967. PCHR calls for:

- (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”*



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### Annex (1)

#### The closures of crossings since Al-Aqsa Intifada began

The Crossing	Closure	Partial Reopening
Al-Mentar (Karni)	<p>Closed on September 29, 2000  Re-closed on October 8, 2000  Re-closed on November 14, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on January 1, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed in the morning of January 14, 2001  Re-closed on January 15, 2001</p>	<p>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 on January 17, 2001</p>
Sofa	October 8, 2000 – now	Reopened on January 17, 2001
Erez	<p style="text-align: center;">October 8, 2000 – now</p> <p>Re-closed on January 1, 2001</p>	<p>Partially reopened on November 14, 2000, allowing the entry of a limited number of Palestinian laborers  Partially reopened on January 22, 2001</p>
Rafah Border Crossing	<p>Closed on October 8, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on October 12, 2000  Re-closed on October 16, 2000  Re-closed on November 8, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on December 11, 2000, from 10:00 to 12:00 local time  Re-closed on December 18, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on December 30, 2000  Re-closed on January 14, 2001  Re-closed on January 24, 2001</p>	<p>Reopened on October 10, 2000, with reduced staff  Reopened on October 15, 2000  Reopened on October 19, 2000  Partially reopened on November 20, 2000, and was re-closed on the same day  Partially reopened on December 4, 2000</p> <p>Reopened on December 19, 2000  Reopened on January 11, 2001  Reopened on January 17, 2001</p>
Gaza International Airport	<p>Closed on October 8, 2000  Re-closed on October 29, 2000  Re-closed on November 8, 2000</p> <p>Re-closed on January 1, 2001</p> <p>Re-closed on January 15, 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</p>



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*“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)**



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*“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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