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The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

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## **The Policy of Collective Punishment Aggravates the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip**



**Report of the Total Siege and Closure of Border Crossings and Their Impacts  
on the Civilian Population in the Gaza Strip  
16 July – 30 September 2007**



# المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

## PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Summary

This report focuses on the total siege and closure imposed by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) on the Gaza Strip. It details the state of border crossings designed for the movement of persons and goods into and from the Gaza Strip. It covers the period from 16 July to 30 September 2007. The report further details the impacts of the total siege and closure of border crossings on the living conditions and economic and social rights of the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip.

The following table details the days of closure of border crossings designed for the movement of persons and goods into and from the Gaza Strip during the reporting period:

| Crossing                               | Days of Complete Closure | Percentage | Days of Partial Closure | Percentage |
|--|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Rafah International Crossing Point     | 77                       | 100%       | 00                      | 00%        |
| Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing1           | 77                       | 100%       | 00                      | 00%        |
| Al-Mentar (Karni) Crossing             | 66                       | 85.7%      | 11                      | 14.3%      |
| Nahal Ouz Crossing                     | 37                       | 48%        | 00                      | 00%        |
| Sofa Crossing2                         | 77                       | 100%       | 00                      | 00%        |
| Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing | 52                       | 67.5%      | 00                      | 00%        |

As shown in the table, all border crossings designed for the movement of persons continued to be closed. Palestinian civilians were banned from moving between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and they were also prevented from traveling abroad and coming back to the Gaza Strip from other countries.

According to sources of the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs, at least 7,500 Palestinian have been waiting to be allowed to travel abroad for vital needs. This figure includes:

- At least 2,500 students wishing to attend universities abroad.
- At least 500 patients who need advanced medical treatment abroad.
- At least 2,500 people who work and reside abroad and came to the Gaza Strip to visit their relatives before the closure of Rafah International Crossing Point.

At least 6,000 Palestinians were able to travel back to the Gaza Strip during the period from 29 July to 9 August 2007 through al-Ouja crossing on the Egyptian-Israeli border, and were able

<sup>1</sup> During the reporting period, IOF allowed a very limited number of people to pass through the crossing, including 400 traders, and a number of staff members of international organizations, as well as patients in serious conditions.

<sup>2</sup> IOF allowed the operation of Sofa crossing, which was designed for the entry of construction raw material into the Gaza Strip, for 26 days to allow the entry of some humanitarian aids.



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to enter the Gaza Strip through Erez crossing. Those Palestinians had been trapped at the Palestinian-Egyptian border for at least 45 under tough humanitarian conditions.

During the reporting period, 5 of the Palestinians who had been stuck at the Palestinian-Egyptian border, including 3 women, died. Thus, the number of deaths among Palestinians who had been stuck at the border since 10 June 2007, mounted to 20, including 7 women. Most of the victims were patients who were on their way back to the Gaza Strip after having received medical treatment at Egyptian hospitals.

The crisis of people stuck at the border renewed, as at least 1,000 Palestinians, including scores of patients, have been stuck at the border waiting to be allowed to travel back to the Gaza Strip.

Additionally, the total siege and closure of border crossing have paralyzed the components of the Palestinian economy due to the blockade of exportation and importation of goods from and into the Gaza Strip. The economic crisis has been demonstrated in the following:

- Complete halt of exportation, especially of industrial products, such as furniture and plastic tools, and agricultural products, such as vegetables, fruits and flowers.
- The lack of raw materials necessary for industry and agriculture.
- Paralysis in the agricultural sector due to the blockade of exportation of agricultural products.
- The entry of limited basic humanitarian needs, which does not meet the actual needs of the population.

Moreover, the problem of poverty has devastated. At least 80% of the families in the Gaza Strip live below the poverty line, and at least 47% of them live in extreme poverty. Unemployment has mounted to more than 40% of the labor force in the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian population suffer form the sharp increase in prices of goods due to the shortage in supplies of basic goods and medicines. Many goods have disappeared from markets and the prices of other goods have increased to unprecedented levels.

Construction has been completely stopped as IOF have denied the entry of raw construction materials, especially cement, aggregate and iron, into the Gaza Strip. Consequently, many infrastructure projects, including roads and sewage systems, have been suspended. In addition, 5 projects funded by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Netherlands and the European Union, which include the construction of 2,354 housing units in Rafah and Khan Yunis for Palestinians whose houses had been destroyed by IOF, have been halted.

The Gaza Strip also suffers form a grave shortage in medicines and medical equipment. Most actors in the field of health have indicated that the health conditions deteriorated due to the restrictions imposed by IOF on the passage of medicines and medical equipment into the Gaza Strip. In this context, at least 140 medicines have been lacked in the Gaza Strip.



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Additionally, the closure of border crossings, especially al-Mentar (Karni) crossing, has impacted the educational process. The Palestinian Ministry of Education has not been able to provide books and necessary educational equipment. Also due to the lack of paper, the delivery of printed copies of 39 school textbooks had been late for at least one month. Schools of various educational stages lacked at least 570,000 copies of school books.

Although IOF have allowed the entry crossing and Sofa crossings, such aids have not met the actual needs of the population of the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip actually needs 200 trucks of goods daily, which used to be entered into the Gaza Strip through al-Mentar (Karni) crossing. IOF have decided to allow the entry of only 9 materials through Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) and Sofa crossings, including flour; sugar; dairy products; salt; oil; frozen foods; and medicines. Dozens of other basic needs, such as stationary, educational equipment and electrical and electronic appliances, have been excluded from the list of goods allowed by IOF to be entered into the Gaza Strip.



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### Introduction

During the reporting period, IOF maintained the total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. They even imposed additional restrictions on the movement of Palestinian civilians from the Gaza Strip to Palestinian National Authority controlled areas in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and to the outside world. IOF banned the free and safe flow of the daily basic needs of the Palestinian civilian population into the Gaza Strip, and completely paralyzed importation and exportation. On 19 September 2007, the Israeli government even declared the Gaza Strip as “a hostile entity.”

IOF have escalated measures of economic and social stranglehold against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. They have transformed the Gaza Strip into a big jail, in which at least 1.5 million people are detained and denied their right to the freedom of movement. IOF have banned the entry of basic daily needs of the Palestinian civilian population, including foodstuffs, medicines, fuels and raw materials.

The total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip and restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods constitute a form of collective punishment, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. They violate the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of the Palestinian civilian population, especially the rights to appropriate living conditions, health, food, work and education.

The total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip has almost paralyzed the already deteriorated economic activities due to the ban of exportation and importation. Dozens of factories have stopped functioning due to the lack of raw materials, and many construction projects of a humanitarian nature have been suspended due to the lack of raw construction materials. Subsequently, thousands of workers have joined the unemployed segment, thus increasing the level of unemployment to at least 40%<sup>3</sup> and the level of poverty to more than 80%.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Most reports published by international agencies working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have pointed out the levels of unemployment and poverty have increased in the Gaza Strip. For instance, UNRWA indicated that the level of unemployment in the Gaza Strip has mounted to 40%, as many factories have stopped functioning and many construction projects have been suspended due to the law of raw materials.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



## 1. The State of Border Crossings

This section focuses on developments related to border crossings during the reporting period (16 July – 30 September 2007).

### ***Crossings Designed for the Movement of Persons***

IOF have continued to close border crossings designed for the movement of persons. Rafah International Crossing Point on the Egyptian border, which is the sole outlet for the Gaza Strip to the outside world, has been closed. IOF have also continued to close Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing in the northern Gaza Strip, banning travel to the West Bank, including Jerusalem. Only a few Palestinians have been allowed to pass through the crossing, but under extremely complicated procedures.

### **Rafah International Crossing Point**

The crossing point has been closed for 113 days, and IOF have not allowed reopening it even partially to allow Palestinian stuck at the Egyptian side of the crossing point to travel back to the Gaza Strip. The crossing point has been closed since 10 June 2007 after Palestinian security services and EU observers has withdrawn from it during Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip. The following table shows the number of days of closure of Rafah International Crossing Point since 25 June 2006, when an IOF military post was attacked by the Palestinian resistance:<sup>5</sup>

| Detail  | Period                           | Complete closure | Partial closure |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Reporting Period  | 16 July – 30 September           | 77               | 00              |
| Since Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip                     | 10 June – 30 September           | 113              | 00              |
| Since the beginning of the year                             | 1 January – 30 September         | 223              | 50              |
| Since the armed attack against the IOF post in Kerem Shalom | 25 June 2006 – 30 September 2007 | 374              | 82              |

- At least 6,000 Palestinian civilians have been stuck at the Egyptian side of the crossing point for at least 50 days. On 29 July 2007, IOF allowed 100 of those civilians to travel back to the Gaza Strip through al-Ouja crossing on the Egyptian – Israeli border. They then entered the Gaza Strip through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing. IOF continued to allow Palestinians to travel back to the Gaza Strip through al-Ouja crossing until 13 August 2007. On 13 August 2007, IOF allowed another 33 Palestinians to travel back to the Gaza

<sup>5</sup> On 30 September 2007, as a sole exception, on 30 September 2007, 108 Palestinians, most of them are members of Hamas, were able to travel back to the Gaza Strip through Rafah International Crossing Point. They refused to travel back to the Gaza Strip through al-Ouja and Erez crossing claiming that they are wanted by IOF.



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Strip the same way. About 100 other Palestinians refused to the travel back to the Gaza Strip the same way out of concern that they might be arrested by IOF.

- Those Palestinians, including at least 1,200 patients, had been stuck for more than 45 days, lacking appropriate food, medical care and housing. They had traveled out of the Gaza Strip to receive medical care, to study, to visit relatives or to work. The number also included hundreds of Palestinian families living abroad who were on their way to the Gaza Strip to visit their relatives. The lives of patients were endangered due to the lack of basic medical care.
- During the reporting period, 5 of these Palestinians died. Thus, the number of Palestinian who died at the Egyptian side of the crossing point at Egyptian hospitals since 10 June 2007, when the crossing point was completely closed, increased to 20. IOF had not allowed the bodies of those Palestinians into the Gaza Strip for days, and in the end, the bodies were allowed into the Gaza Strip through Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing, in violation of the Palestinian – Israeli Border Crossing Agreement brokered by the United States and signed on 25 November 2007. The following table details deaths among patients at the Egyptian side of Rafah International Crossing Point during the reporting period:

| No. | Name                         | Age | Place of residence | Date of death  | Date of bring the body into the Gaza Strip |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|--------------------|----------------|--|
|     | Sanaa' Ahmed Shanan (Shalha) | 29  | Jabalya            | 17 July 2007   | 18 July 2007                               |
|     | Wafaa' Hamdi al-Je'el        | 41  | Gaza City          |                | 19 July 2007                               |
|     | Ahmed Ramadan al-Khatib      | 43  | Rafah              | 28 July 2007   | 31 July 2007                               |
|     | 'Abdul Rahman Isma'il Lubbad | 17  | Beit Lahia         | 5 August 2007  | 7 August 2007                              |
|     | Fatema Mousa 'Obaid          | 54  | Nusairat           | 10 August 2007 | 12 August 2007                             |

- At least 7,500 Palestinians have not been able to travel out of the Gaza Strip due to the continued closure of Rafah International Crossing Point. This number includes 2,500 university students and at least 500 patients. Many others are threatened to lose their jobs and residences abroad as they have been stuck in the Gaza Strip.

### Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing

IOF have continued to close Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing. During the reporting period, IOF had completely closed the crossing for 77 days. Thus, the number of days of complete closure of the crossing since the beginning of this year has increased to 273. During the reporting period, IOF allowed a maximum of 400 traders, some staff members of international organizations and some humanitarian cases, including patients and wounded persons, were allowed to pass through the crossing.



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- In the middle of August, IOF declared that they would allow limited number of Palestinian civilians to travel abroad in groups through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing and then through al-Ouja crossing on the Israeli – Egyptian border. The travel of these Palestinians would be coordinated between IOF and the Palestinian Authority. Thousands of Palestinians, including university students and patients, went to offices of the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs to register their names for coordination to be allowed to travel abroad. The names of those Palestinians were sent to the Israeli liaison office at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing to coordinate their passage.
- From 26 August to 18 September 2007, IOF issued names of Palestinians allowed to travel in 5 groups through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing. The first four groups included only 625 persons only. These Palestinians had to undergo prolonged and complicated travel procedures, and dozens of them were interrogated by IOF. IOF also prevented 101 of these Palestinians from passing through for various claims, including security allegations. The Egyptian authorities also prevented 67 others from entering Egypt due to their lack of visas.
- Some of these Palestinians wanted to travel to Jordan to study or receive medical treatment, but IOF did not allow them through al-Karama International Crossing Point on the Palestinian – Jordanian border. They were forced to travel first to Egypt, where they had to stay for days at airports before they were allowed to travel to Jordan. It is worth noting that it takes only 90 minutes to travel from Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing to al-Karama International Crossing Point on the Egyptian border.
- On 18 September 2007, IOF issued names of the fifth group of Palestinian allowed to travel through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, but in fact, they did not allow any of these Palestinians to travel. The five groups included 811 Palestinians, but only 457 of them were allowed to travel over more than 3 weeks. The following table gives details of Palestinians who arrived at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, and the actual numbers of those who were able travel:

| Date             | The number of Palestinian who arrived at Erez crossing | The number of Palestinians who were prevented by IOF from passing through | The number of Palestinians who were prevented by the Egyptian authorities from entering Egypt | The number of travelers who were actually allowed to travel |
|------------------|--|---|---|---|
| 26 August 2007   | 102  | 25  | 00  | 77  |
| 30 August 2007   | 164  | 15  | 25  | 124   |
| 4 September 2007 | 179  | 31  | 12  | 136   |
| 6 September 2007 | 180  | 30  | 30  | 120   |



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|                   |     |     |    |    |
|-------------------|-----|-----|----|----|
| 18 September 2007 | 186 | 186 | 00 | 00 |
|-------------------|-----|-----|----|----|

- During the reporting period, IOF did not allow dozens of patients to pass through the crossing to receive medical treatment at hospitals in the West Bank and Israel. IOF a limited number of patients (only 20 patients daily) to pass through the crossing. Patients who apply to receive medical treatment at hospitals in the West Bank and Israel suffer from serious diseases and need advanced medical treatment.
- Patients who are allowed to pass through the crossing have to undergo prolonged and degrading checking, and they have to pay additional costs to use Israeli ambulances to transport them from the crossing to hospital, as IOF have continued to prevented Palestinian ambulances from passing through the crossing. Last year, the number of patients allowed to travel through the crossing was 50 ones daily, but it has been gradually decreased.
- On 15 August 2007, IOF troops positioned at the crossing arrested Ahmed al-Sheikh Khalil, 40, when he was on his way to al-Maqassed Hospital in Jerusalem to receive medical treatment.
- Also on 15 August 2007, Ali Shehada Khalaf Elayan, 52, died as IOF denied him access to Ichilov Hospital in Israel for follow up treatment. Elayan had undergone a cancer-related surgery in Ichilov Hospital in Israel in January 2006. On 25 July 2007, he received an open appointment from the hospital for follow up treatment. On 1 August 2007, Elayan applied for a permit to enter Israel for treatment, but on 6 August, IOF rejected his application. Eleyan applied for a second time on 9 August; but he did not receive any response to the second application. PCHR had asked the Physicians for Human Rights – Israel in a letter dated 13 August 2007 to intervene with relevant parties. The letter asked for attaining Israeli approval allowing the patient and his companion to enter Israel out of concern over the possible deterioration of his health condition.
- On 24 September 2007, IOF troops held at least 150 persons, including a number of persons who have permits issued for international organizations and a number of patients, at the crossing for at least 10 hours. IOF security officers interrogated the majority of persons wishing to travel to the West Bank. IOF troops then allowed only 20 persons to pass through the crossing and forced the others to travel back to the Gaza Strip although they had valid permits. The following table details days on which the categories of Palestinians allowed to travel through the crossings were prevented from passing through:

| Date              | Reason of prevention | Notes                              |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 12 September 2007 | Jewish occasions     | All categories were denied passage |
| 13 September 2007 | Jewish occasions     | All categories were denied passage |



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|                   |                    |  |
|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| 14 September 2007 | Jewish occasions   | All categories were denied passage   |
| 15 September 2007 | Jewish occasions   | All categories were denied passage   |
| 20 September 2007 | No apparent reason | All categories were denied passage   |
| 21 September 2007 | No apparent reason | All categories were denied passage   |
| 22 September 2007 | No apparent reason | All categories were denied passage   |
| 23 September 2007 | No apparent reason | 8 patients and some staff members of international agencies were allowed to pass through |
| 26 September 2007 | Jewish occasions   | All categories were denied passage   |
| 27 September 2007 | Jewish occasions   | All categories were denied passage   |
| 28 September 2007 | Jewish occasions   | All categories were denied passage   |
| 29 September 2007 | Jewish occasions   | All categories were denied passage   |
| 30 September 2007 | Jewish occasions   | All categories were denied passage   |

- IOF have continued for the 11<sup>th</sup> successive week to prevent Palestinian from visiting their relatives who are detained in Israeli jails. The ICRC used to organize family visitation for Palestinians detained in Israeli jails until the middle of June. IOF have continued also to prevent members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, especially those affiliated to Hamas, from passing through the crossing.



## Commercial Crossings

### Al-Mentar (Karni) Commercial Crossing

During the reporting period, IOF closed the crossing for 66 days completely and for 11 others partially. Since the beginning of this year, IOF have closed the crossing for 114 days completely and for 48 others partially. The closure of the crossing has escalated since 13 June 2007. During the reporting period, IOF operated the crossing for short periods to allow the entry of wheat, flour and animal feeds. The following table details days of the operation of the crossing and the imported goods:

| Date              | Period              | Imported goods                       |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 23 July 2007      | From 10:00 to 15:30 | 2,440 tons of wheat                  |
| 30 July 2007      | From 10:00 to 17:00 | 2,820 tons of wheat and animal feeds |
| 6 August 2007     | From 09:30 to 14:00 | 2,574 tons of wheat and animal feeds |
| 12 August 2007    | From 10:30 to 16:00 | 2,335 tons of wheat                  |
| 21 August 2007    | From 09:30 to 16:00 | 2,560 tons of wheat and animal feeds |
| 3 September 2007  | From 09:30 to 16:00 | 61 trucks of wheat and animal feeds  |
| 6 September 2007  | From 09:00 to 16:00 | 60 trucks of wheat and animal feeds  |
| 10 September 2007 | From 09:30 to 16:00 | 60 trucks of wheat and animal feeds  |
| 20 September 2007 | From 10:00 to 15:30 | 62 trucks of wheat and animal feeds  |
| 24 September 2007 | From 10:00 to 15:30 | 72 trucks of wheat and animal feeds  |
| 25 September 2007 | From 10:00 to 15:30 | 62 trucks of wheat and animal feeds  |

- The closure of this border crossing has led to serious shortages of basic foodstuffs in the Gaza Strip, especially dairy products, flour, medicines and baby milk. Many other goods have also disappeared from markets, such as raw construction materials, car parts and electronic sets. The prices of goods have also increased to unprecedented levels. For example, the prices dairy product, baby milk, oil, sugar, rice, flour, domestic gas and cigarettes have increased by 20-80%.
- The closure of border crossings, especially al-Mentar- (Karni) crossing, has seriously impacted the economy of the Gaza Strip, and the private sector is at the edge of collapse due to the ban of importation and exportation. At least 85% of factories have been forced to stop their production,<sup>6</sup> and the remaining 15% were forced to decrease their productive capacity to less than the half due to the lack for raw materials. As a consequence, the production capacity of the Gaza Strip has decreased by at least 80%. Many employers have been forced to dismiss worker, which has increased the levels of unemployment. Additionally, at least 35,000 out of approximately 42,000 construction workers have lost their jobs due to the lack of raw construction materials, which has led to the suspension of many construction projects.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> On 21 June 2007, Israel erased from its computers the customs code used to identify goods entering Gaza and issued orders not to release them until further notice. This policy has cost Palestinian importers large losses, including fines paid for the use of rented containers, breach of contracts and damage to goods stored in warehouses for extended periods of time.

<sup>7</sup> Report on the impacts of the closure of border crossings on the private sector, Paltrade, 13 July 2007.



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- The closure of al-Mentar (Karni) crossing has caused large losses to the industrial sector in the Gaza Strip, especially to factories that used to export their products to external markets. For instance, the losses of sewing factories have mounted to US\$ 8 million monthly and at least 25,000 workers have lost their jobs.<sup>8</sup> The sector of office furniture production has lost at least US\$ 12 million since the middle of last June, and at least 8,000 workers have lost their jobs.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, at least 400 containers of furniture products ready for exportation have been stuck in factories as IOF have continued to ban exportation from the Gaza Strip.
- The declaration of the Gaza Strip as “a hostile entity” has further impacted the Palestinian private sector, which largely depends on the Israeli market. The decisions end the relation between products of the Gaza Strip with outside markets, which has incurred large losses to the Palestinian economy. This declaration followed a decision by the Israeli customs department to erase the customs code used to identify goods entering Gaza, which has cost Palestinian importers large losses, including fines paid for the use of rented containers, breach of contracts and damage to goods stored in warehouses for extended periods of time.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence of this measure, at least 750 containers of goods belonging to traders from the Gaza Strip have been blocked by IOF, and the destination of 950 others was moved from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank.<sup>11</sup>

### Nahal Ouz Crossing

During the reporting period, this crossing, which is designed for the entry of fuels into the Gaza Strip, was operated with a very low capacity. It was closed for 37 days; thus, this crossing has been closed for 74 days since the beginning of this year. Also during the reporting period, the entry of benzene and gasoline was not allowed for 47 days and 35 days respectively. The following table shows days of closure of the crossing:

| Date           | Details                           | Reason of closure  |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 27 July 2007   | The entry of all fuels was banned | No apparent reason |
| 28 July 2007   | The entry of all fuels was banned | No apparent reason |
| 29 July 2007   | The entry of all fuels was banned | No apparent reason |
| 1 August 2007  | The entry of all fuels was banned | No apparent reason |
| 16 August 2007 | The entry of all fuels was banned | Security claims    |
| 17 August 2007 | The entry of all fuels was banned | Security claims    |
| 18 August 2007 | The entry of all fuels was banned | Security claims    |

<sup>8</sup> A statement by Mohammed Abu Shanab, Chairman of the Union of Sewing Factories in the Gaza Strip to the daily local al-Ayyam, 26 September 2007.

<sup>9</sup> A statement by Hisham al-'Owaini, Chairman of the Union of Wood Industry in the Gaza Strip to the daily local al-Ayyam, 26 September 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Impacts of the Closure of Border Crossings on Euro-Palestinian Trade, the Palestinian Shipment Union, September 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



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- The Israeli Dur Allon Company, which provides the Gaza Strip with fuels, stopped providing fuel supplies for the Gaza electricity generation plant for 12 days. On 119 August 2007, the company stopped providing the plant with fuels as the European Union abstained from paying the cost of fuels to the company. As a result, the operation of the plant was completely stopped, and a shortage of electricity supplies in the Gaza Strip emerged. It is worth noting that the plant does not have storages of fuels as it is provided by its fuel needs on a daily basis, so if the provision of fuels stopped for one day, the operation of the plant would be completely stopped.
- On 13 September 2007, the Israel Dur Allon Company suspended the provision of fuels to the Gaza electricity generation plant due to increasing debts required from the Palestinian company. On the following day, the Israeli company resumed providing the Gaza Strip with limited amounts of fuels that meet the Gaza Strip's needs for one day. The Israeli company suspended the provision of fuels to the Gaza Strip again from 15 to 20 September 2007. The Gaza Strip needs 200 tons of domestic gas, 350,000 liters of gasoline, 80,000 liters of benzene and 500,000 liters of energy fuel.

### **Sofa Crossing**

During the reporting period, this crossing, which is designed for the entry of raw construction materials, was completely closed for 77 days. It was partially reopened for 26 days to allow the entry of food aids. Thus, the crossing has been completely closed for 212 days since the beginning of this year.

- IOF have closed the crossing since 15 June 2007, banning the entry of raw construction materials. When the crossing was partially reopened, IOF allowed the entry of 2,172 containers of goods for local traders and 23 containers of flour, rice, lentil and peas for UNRWA.
- The closure of Sofa Crossing and the denial of entry of raw construction materials have almost paralyzed the construction sector in the Gaza Strip. Many infrastructure projects have been also suspended, especially housing projects designed for the rehabilitation of people whose houses were destroyed by IOF in Rafah and Khan Yunis.

### **Karm Abu salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing**

During the reporting period, the crossing was used for the entry of humanitarian aids, and some goods for local traders due to the continued closure of al-Mentar (Karni) commercial crossing.

- During the reporting period, the crossing was completely closed for 52 days. Thus, the number of days of complete closure of the crossing since the beginning of this year has mounted to 206. The crossing was partially opened for 25 days during the reporting period to allow the entry of 66 containers of food aids for World Food Programme, UNRWA and



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Cooperative Housing Foundation; 7 containers of medicines for the Palestinian Ministry of Health; and 471 containers of goods for local traders.

- IOF have made serious efforts to force the Palestinian side to use Karm Abu Salem (Kerem) Shalom crossing for commercial transactions as a substitute to al-Mentar (Karni) commercial crossing, through the continued closure of the latter.
- IOF have limited the goods allowed to be entered into the Gaza Strip in 9: flour; sugar; dairy products; rice; salt; oil; frozen goods; medicines; and medical equipments.



## 2. Impacts of the Closure on Economic and Social Rights

The closure of border crossings imposed on the Gaza Strip by IOF has left grave impacts on the Palestinian economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. Palestinians have been suffering from a severe economic crisis that has impacted all economic sectors, including trade, industry, agriculture, labor, tourism, transportation, investment and development. IOF have created a new apartheid system in the Occupied Palestinian Territories through isolating Palestinians in cantons that lack geographical continuity, leaving them deprived of their right to the freedom of movement.

Such measures, which constitute a form of collective punishment against Palestinian civilians and a means to combat the population in their means of subsistence. As a consequence, the sectors of health, education, work, appropriate living conditions and development have gravely deteriorated. Levels of unemployment and extreme poverty have alarmingly escalated. Palestinian civilians have become unable to provide food, medicines and basic needs of their family. The outcome of 7 years of closure has been destructive to the Palestinian civilian population and the economy.

### ***The Right of Health***

During the reporting period, hospitals and medical care centers suffered from extreme shortages in medicines, especially for patients who suffer from chronic and serious diseases. The closure of border crossings has negatively impacted the efficiency of the health sector due the following reasons:

- There have been shortages in some medicines, which are necessary for serious diseases, such as cancer, kidney failure and epilepsy. For instance, Shifa Hospital, the largest hospital in the Gaza Strip has lacked at least 140 medicines.<sup>12</sup>
- It has been so difficult to transfer patients in critical conditions to hospitals in the West Bank and Israel.
- Health conditions of patients who had received medical care at Egyptian hospitals and were on their way back to the Gaza Strip deteriorated due to the closure of Rafah International Crossing Point, and 5 of these patients died.
- Pharmacies in the Gaza Strip have run out of at least 20 medicines necessary for the treatment of some diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes. There are concerns that the number of missing medicines may increase.

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<sup>12</sup> A field visit to the warehouse of the General Bureau of Pharmacy at Shifa Hospital.



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- At least 500 patients are in need for advanced medical treatment abroad, which is not available in the Gaza Strip, but the closure of Rafah International Crossing Point and the restrictions imposed at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing have obstructed their access to medical treatment outside the Gaza Strip.
- During the reporting period, at least 1,200 patients had been stuck for more than 45 days at the Egyptian side of Rafah International Crossing Point under severe humanitarian conditions, waiting to be allowed to travel back to the Gaza Strip after having received medical treatment at Egyptian hospitals. They were allowed, together with others travelers who had been stuck at the crossing point, to travel back to the Gaza Strip through al-Ouja crossing on the Egyptian – Israeli crossing and then through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing.
- The suffering of patient emerged again following the closure of al-Ouja crossing on 14 August 2007, which had been temporarily operated as a substitute for Rafah International Crossing Point. Dozens of patients who had received medical treatment at Egyptian hospitals were stuck again at Rafah International Crossing Point waiting to be allowed to travel back to the Gaza Strip.
- IOF have also obstructed the passage of patients who are in serious conditions through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing to receive medical treatment at hospitals in the West Bank and Israel. IOF have allowed only 20 patients daily to pass through the crossing. The number of patients allowed to pass through the crossing to receive medical treatment at hospitals in the West Bank and Israel used to be 50 per day one year ago.
- Patients who are allowed to travel through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing have to undergo complicated, prolonged and degrading checking. They have also to pay additional costs to hire Israeli ambulances to transport them to hospitals as IOF have continued to prevent Palestinian ambulances from passing through the crossing.
- On 15 August 2007, IOF troops positioned at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing arrested Nahidh Ahmed Sheikh Khalil, 40, when he was on his way to al-Maqassed Hospital in Jerusalem to receive medical treatment.

### The Right of Education

The total siege imposed by IOF on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially the Gaza Strip, has violated the right of Palestinians to received education. IOF have sought to separate educational institutions in the West Bank from those in the Gaza Strip, through a series of restrictions on the movement of students, which led in the end to denial of access of students from the Gaza Strip to education in the West Bank. IOF even arrested Gazan students who remained in the West Bank and expelled. Gazan students used to constitute at least 25% of the total number of students at educational institutions in the West Bank.



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- The total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip has impacted the school year 2007-2008, which started on 1 September 2007. The Gaza Strip suffered from shortages in educational materials and stationary, which affected preparations for the new year.
- Press houses in the Gaza Strip lacked raw materials necessary for printing textbooks. They were not able to meet their contractual obligations to deliver textbooks to the Ministry of Education on time. Therefore, the Ministry was forced to concede some quality and timing conditions. Students in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip need at least 14 million textbooks, which cost nearly US\$ 12 million.
- The Ministry of Education used to invite bids to print textbooks for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip jointly, but this year it was forced to invite bids for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip separately. So, the textbooks were printed in 7 press houses in the West Bank and 4 others in the Gaza Strip.
- Due to the restriction imposed by IOF, by 21 August 2007, the Ministry received 63% of the textbooks for Gaza and 74% of textbooks for the West Bank, 2 weeks later than the specified date for their delivery.
- UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip lacked at least 350,000 textbooks.
- IOF have continued to prevent to prevent the importation of textbooks from Egypt to the Gaza Strip due to the closure of Rafah International Crossing Point.
- The Ministry of Education has not been able to transfer textbooks to two schools in Qatar and Australia, which follow the Palestinian curricula.
- Schools in the West Bank suffer from a shortage of 50% of furniture which is often imported from the Gaza Strip.
- IOF have continued to deny the entry of textbooks designed for the blind, which were printed in the West Bank. Such books used to be printed in the Gaza Strip, but press houses in the Gaza Strip were not able to print them this year due to the lack of raw materials.
- At least 2,500 Gazan students, which study at universities abroad, have not been able to travel due to the total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip.



## The Right to Appropriate Living Conditions

The right to appropriate living conditions incorporates some other economic and social rights, such as the rights of health and food, but certain violations of the right to appropriate living condition may arise to violations of the right of life. The restrictions imposed on the flow of food and medical supplies have caused deterioration to health and nutrition conditions in the Gaza Strip. Several basic foodstuffs have been lacked in the markets, and priced have excessively increased.

The total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip has impacted nutrition as many civilians had already lost their means of subsistence due also due to the siege. Palestinian civilians are mostly concerned for malnutrition of their children, a problem which has been also warned of by health and children organizations.

## The Right of Development

The Palestinian people have faced extreme difficulties in economic and social development due to measures taken by IOF, which have focused to undermine any chance for improving their living conditions. IOF have played a major role in obstructions sustainable development in the Palestine.

During the current Palestinian Intifada, IOF have adopted measures and policies that have made the process of development almost impossible. These measures and policies include:<sup>13</sup>

1. The total siege imposed on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
2. The denial of free importation and exportation.
3. The closure of border crossings and the restrictions imposed on internal movement.
4. The erosion of the customs code used to identify goods entering the Gaza Strip.
5. Freezing or closing industrial zones.
6. Division of Palestinian territories into isolated cantons.
7. Disruption of the production force, which has increased the levels of unemployment and poverty.

International aids, even before their suspension for more than one year, have not been able to improve the Palestinian economy and make it independent from the Israeli economy. Thus, all forms of development have become almost impossible as the Palestinian economy has remained dependent on the Israeli one. Additionally, restrictions imposed by IOF on economic activities have forced the transfer of businesses from the Gaza Strip.

The process of development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has faced challenges that have impacted all of its aspects. The most significant of such challenges is the total siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, which has disrupted the Palestinian economy between the Gaza

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<sup>13</sup> For more details, see: <http://home.birziet.edu/dsp/Arabic/library/resources.html#economic>.



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Strip and the West Bank; the dependence of Palestinian trade on Israeli markets; the dependence of Palestinian commercial transactions with the outside world on Israeli outlets; and the high levels of unemployment and poverty.

These and other factors have negatively impacted the process of development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which has been interpreted into the following:

1. The gross national product and the gross national income have gravely deteriorated.
2. Importation and exportation into and from the Gaza Strip have been stopped since 10 June 2007.
3. Investment has left the market of the Gaza Strip due to the absence of political stability.
4. Unemployment levels in the Gaza Strip have mounted to at least 40%, and poverty levels have mounted to nearly 80%.
5. Material and human losses in the Palestinian society have accumulated, threatening long-term development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip.



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### Conclusion

The suffering of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip has peaked due the continued total siege imposed by IOF. The Gaza Strip has been isolated from the outside world as all of its outlets have been closed. Productions sectors in the Gaza Strip, especially the industry and agriculture, have been paralyzed. Additionally, IOF have continued to conducted military operations inside the Gaza Strip. They have attacked Palestinian civilians and civilian property and infrastructure. Due to the closure of border crossing, there has been a severe shortage in basic needs.

The policy of collective punishment practiced by IOF against the Palestinian people is prohibited under human rights standards and international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In light of the above:

1. PCHR reiterates its call for the international community, including the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to take effective steps to pressure Israel to stop collective punishment and lift the siege imposed on the OPT and force it to comply with its obligations under the international law.
2. PCHR calls upon the international community to provide humanitarian aids to the Palestinian people as their living conditions have deteriorated due to the total siege imposed by IOF.
3. PCHR calls for activating mechanisms of immediate intervention by United Nations agencies and the ICRC to ensure the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip.
4. PCHR calls upon the European Union to activate article 2 of the Euro-Israeli Association Agreement, which provides that Israel must respect the international human rights law and the international humanitarian law



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### Annex:

#### Palestinians Who Died While Stuck at Rafah International Crossing Point

| No. | Name                             | Age | Place of residence | Date of death | Death of the delivery of the body | Notes                  |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1.  | Hisham Salim Salama              | 45  | Nussairat          | -             | 20 June                           | A patient              |
| 2.  | Inshirah Talal al-Sane'          | 50  | Rafah              | -             | 20 June                           | A patient              |
| 3.  | Mohammed Rashad al-Ghefari       | 35  | Gaza               | -             | 21 June                           | A patient              |
| 4.  | Zainab Mohammed al-Suradi        | 55  | Nussairat          | -             | 21 June                           | A patient              |
| 5.  | Tariq Mohammed Abu Jame'         | 21  | Khan Yunis         | 22 June       | 26 June                           | Died in a car accident |
| 6.  | Majdi al-Sayed Abu Jame'         | 21  | Khan Yunis         | 22 June       | 26 June                           | Died in a car accident |
| 7.  | Ahmed 'Ali Abu Tayem             | 75  | Rafah              | 23 June       | 27 June                           | A patient              |
| 8.  | Mohammed Khamis 'Azara           | 57  | Rafah              | 24 June       | 27 June                           | A patient              |
| 9.  | Sa'di Mohammed 'Ayad             | 67  | Gaza               | -             | 29 June                           | A patient              |
| 10. | Khadra Mohammed 'Oraif           | 60  | Gaza               | -             | 30 June                           | A patient              |
| 11. | Suleiman 'Abed Dhaher            | 70  | Gaza               | 29 June       | 2 July                            | A patient              |
| 12. | Taghreed Mohammed Tayeh ('Aabed) | 30  | Jabalya            | 29 June       | 2 July                            | A patient              |
| 13. | 'Olayan al-'Abed al-Murshedi     | 70  | Gaza               | -             | 5 July                            | A patient              |
| 14. | Hasan Mohammed al-Skafi          | 52  | Beit Lahia         | -             | 8 July                            | A patient              |
| 15. | Farah Baraka Abu Nasser          | 54  | Beit Lahia         | -             | 11 July                           | A patient              |
| 16. | Sanaa' Ahmed Shanan (Shalha)     | 29  | Jabalya            | 17 July       | 18 July                           | A patient              |
| 17. | Wafaa' Hamdi al-Je'el            | 41  | Gaza               | -             | 19 July                           | A patient              |
| 18. | Ahmed Ramadan al-Khatib          | 43  | Rafah              | 28 July       | 31 July                           | A patient              |
| 19. | 'Abdul Rahman Isma'il Lubbad     | 17  | Beit Lahia         | 5 August      | 7 August                          | A patient              |
| 20. | Fatema Mousa 'Obaid              | 54  | Nussairat          | 10 August     | 12 August                         | A patient              |