



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings 01 – 30 June 2020

During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities continued to impose closure on the Gaza Strip for the 13th consecutive year and placed tightened restrictions on movement of Gaza Strip residents. The Israeli authorities continued to control entry and exit for pedestrians from and into the Gaza Strip at the Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing, with exceptions to limited categories under severe restrictions. The Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the entry of goods classified as "dual-use items",¹ which enhanced the deterioration of economic, health and educational situation in addition to the infrastructure. Furthermore, Israeli authorities continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports, except for very limited agricultural products, constituting only 7% of the total monthly Gaza exports before the closure.

The ongoing closure coincided with unprecedented developments that negatively affected the Gaza Strip residents and deepened their suffering, particularly patients in desperate need to travel and receive medical treatment abroad. The Coordination and Liaison Department in the Palestinian Ministry of Health suspended the travel coordination for the Gaza Strip patients, who are referred to hospitals in Israel or the West Bank for medical treatment². As a result, hundreds of critically ill patients, whose health conditions cannot afford any delay, were deprived of travel abroad for treatment or completing the treatment protocols they had started in previous periods. The Israeli authorities bear full responsibility for the lives of Palestinian patients in the Gaza Strip who are in dire need for medical treatment abroad and face imminent death as a result of denying them access to basic medical services that are unavailable in the Gaza Strip.

In June, the restrictions on the freedom of movement from and to the Gaza Strip, imposed by the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority since early March 2020, continued for the purpose of combating the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). These measures negatively affected the living conditions of the Gaza Strip population, who have endured already catastrophic living conditions due to 14 years of Israeli closure and restrictions on the movement of goods and individuals, which caused unprecedented rates in poverty and unemployment in the Gaza Strip. These intense measures by Israel limited the number of persons and the already-limited categories allowed to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing with exceptions to individual humanitarian cases, as June witnessed a sharp decline in the number of patients allowed to travel abroad for treatment.

¹ Israeli authorities claim that despite the fact that these items are normally used for civilian purposes, it is possible to use them in developing the Palestinian armed groups' military capacity.

² Coordination stopped pursuant to the Palestinian President's decision on 20 May 2020 to absolve PLO and the State of Palestine's from all treaties and agreements with the Israeli and American governments.



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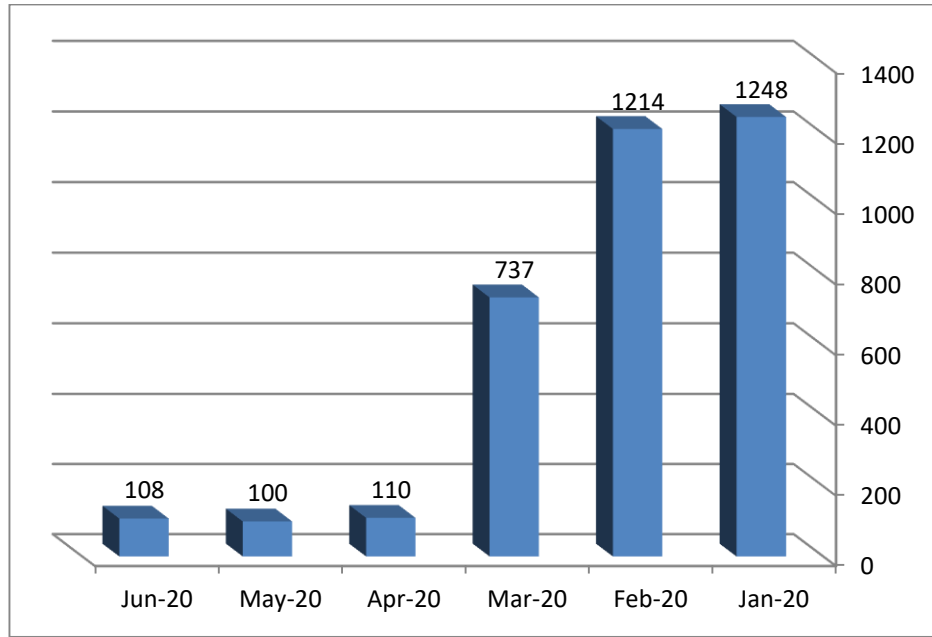
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Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- In June, the Israeli authorities tightened its restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing as these restrictions were intensified since early March due to measures imposed by the Israeli occupying authorities and the Palestinian Authority to combat the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Israeli authorities also banned the movement for all, even the limited categories it previously allowed entry in March 2020, which include: patients with serious conditions and their companions, Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, international journalists, workers of international humanitarian organizations, businesspeople, relatives of prisoners in the Israeli jails, and persons travelling via the King Hussein Bridge. On the other hand, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of several humanitarian cases within the narrowest scope, mainly critically ill patients whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip.
- **Patients:** During the reporting period, the Palestinian Ministry of Health reduced the number of patients referred for medical treatment in the hospitals in Israel or the West Bank for the maximum extent possible. They only granted referrals to patients with serious conditions whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip. In spite of that, 95 patients accompanied by 77 of their relatives, were able to travel for treatment in Israeli hospitals or in West Bank hospitals, including occupied Jerusalem. Because of the coordination and liaison office of the Palestinian Ministry of Health stopping coordination procedures for travel of patients transferred to the Gaza Strip to receive treatment in West Bank hospitals and Israeli hospitals, the Center's researchers were unable to obtain the number of patients who were prevented by the Israeli occupation authorities from traveling for treatment abroad, and refused to grant them a pass through the crossing.



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- the Coordination and Liaison Department in the Palestinian Ministry of Health continued suspending the travel coordination for the Gaza Strip patients who receive treatment in the hospitals in Israel or the West Bank. This move came upon the Palestinian President's decision declared on 20 May 2020, stating that the State of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) are no longer bound by treaties and agreements with the American and Israeli governments and all consequent obligations to such treaties and agreements. As a result, hundreds of critically ill patients, whose health conditions cannot afford any delay, were deprived of traveling abroad for treatment or completing the treatment protocols they had started in previous periods. Some of those patients have obtained approval on travel for treatment abroad and received medical referral and financial coverage. The occupation authorities bear full responsibility for the lives of patients, who are at risk of dying because they are denied access to basic medical services that are not available in the Gaza Strip and are in desperate need of treatment abroad.
- The Israeli authorities also impose restrictions on items that can be carried by travelers via Erez, primarily electronic and electric devices, food, and cosmetics in addition to preventing travelers from using wheeled bags.
- According to GACA, in May, 255 Palestinians were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip via "Erez" Crossing, including 3 traders, 108 patients, 90 patient's companion, 21 workers of international humanitarian organizations, 13 diplomats, and 16 Arabs holding Israeli ID

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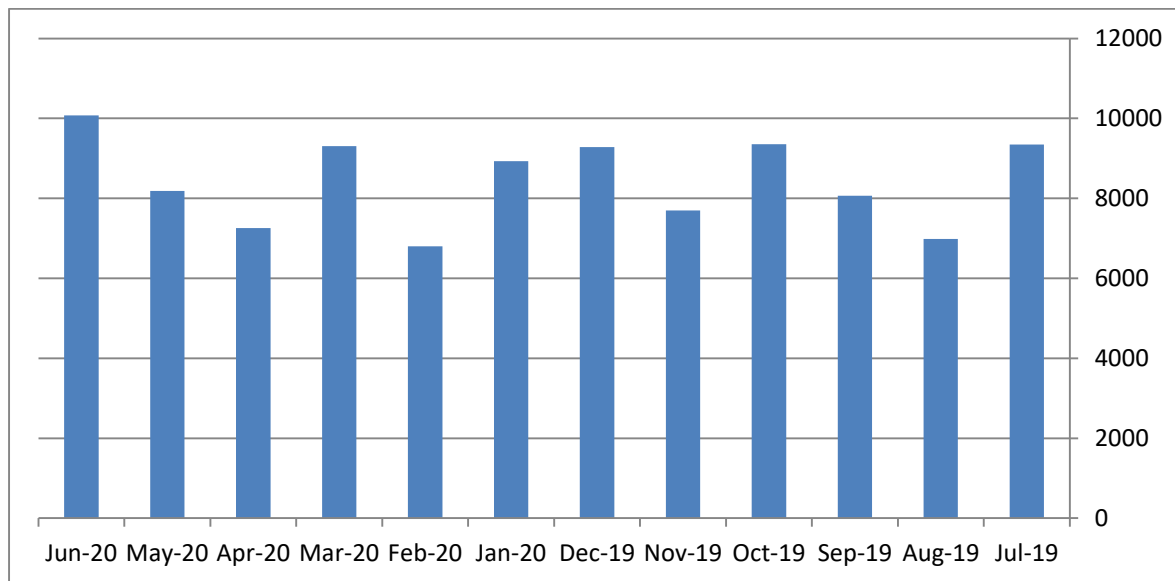
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cards; while 287 returned, including 63 traders, 77 patient's companion, 12 workers of international humanitarian organizations, 30 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, 9 detainees released, and 3 dead persons.

- **Prisoners' Visits: In June**, Israeli authorities did not permit prisoners' visits. Denial of visitation rights is in violation of the agreement reached between prisoners and the Israeli authorities in May 2012. Moreover, the families of prisoners are usually subject to arbitrary practices, obstacles and degrading and immoral searches during their visit. The Israeli blockade coincided with the tightened measures to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus.

Restrictions on Movement of Goods

Despite the ongoing tightened restrictions on imports into the Gaza Strip, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 10,076 truckloads, including 423 truckloads of fuel, 818 aid truckloads, and 8835 truckloads of goods for the private sector. In June, the crossing was closed for 8 days (i.e. 26.6% of the reporting period). Also, 903 truckloads entered the Gaza Strip via Rafah crossing, including 496 truckloads of fuels, and 407 truckloads for the private sector.



Ongoing ban on Gaza Strip exports:

The Israeli authorities continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports. However, in a limited exception, they allowed the exportation of very limited types of goods; most of which are exported to the West Bank and the rest are exported to Israel and other countries. In June, the Israeli authorities allowed the exportation of 242 truckloads (180 to the West Bank, 47 to Israel and 15 abroad).

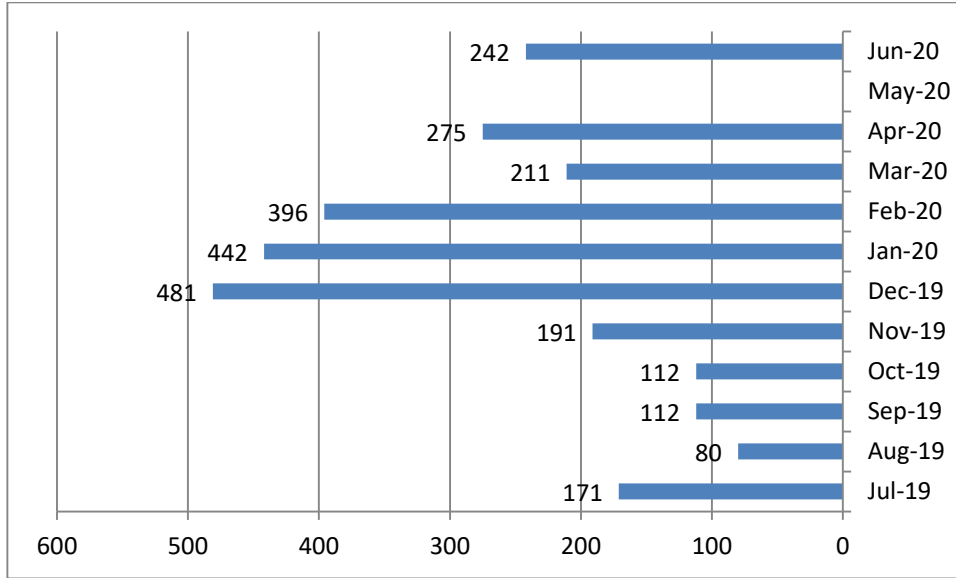
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Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and masks. The exports during the reporting period only constitute 6.1% of the total monthly exports before the closure was imposed in June 2007 when 4500 truckloads used to be exported.



- The Israeli authorities continued to impose tightened restrictions on the list of items classified as “dual-use.” The dual-use items include 62 types and hundreds of goods and commodities that are essential to the life of the population. Imposing these restrictions caused infrastructure, economy, healthcare, and education to deteriorate severely. These items include communications equipment, pumps, big generators, iron bars, iron pipes in all diameters, welding equipment and welding rods used in welding, various types of wood, UPS devices that protect the electric devices from breaking down when the electricity suddenly cuts off, X-ray machines, cranes and heavy vehicles, elevators, types of batteries and several types of fertilizers.
- The process of submitting applications by the Gaza Strip residents to enter goods classified by the Israeli authorities as dual-use items is very complex and ambiguous. Any person from the Gaza Strip should send a request to the Palestinian Coordination Committee for the Entry of Goods, which refers the request to the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Office at “Erez” Crossing. After that, the goods will be classified and sent to the relevant Israeli officer to check it. Moreover, the Palestinian trader should close the transaction with the Israeli seller or broker and pay for it to be able to submit the request. If the response was positive, the coordination for the entry of goods will be allowed through the Karm Abu

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Salem (*Kerem Shaloum*) crossing. A number of traders and contractors said to PCHR that the abovementioned measures are very complicated as the Israeli authorities deliberately delay responses to applications for months. Additionally, in many cases, the Israeli forces stationed at (*Kerem Shaloum*) crossing return the goods that had been already approved on to enter. This inflicts heavy losses on traders who pay large amount of money for the storage and demurrage charges and to contractors who undertake to deliver their projects on time.

Movement at Rafah Border Crossing:

- Gaza authorities, in agreement with the Egyptian authorities, decided to shut Rafah Border Crossing, under the state of emergency declared for the purpose of combating the spread of coronavirus. The Crossing was opened exceptionally for 3 days for arrivals only. During the reporting period, 14 persons were allowed to return to the Gaza Strip, in addition to 3 dead bodies to people who died in Egypt were also returned to the Gaza Strip, while 8 persons travelled to Egypt. Furthermore, thousands of Palestinians registering for travel at the Ministry of Interior are unable to travel according to the Crossing and Borders Authority in Gaza.
- The Gaza Strip travelers via Rafah Crossing suffer from prolonged, recurrent and unjustified searches, extending the return journey from Cairo to Rafah Crossing several days where travelers sleep in cars and restaurants after the journey could only take 6 hours.

This Project is Funded by



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