State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings
(01 – 30 April 2021)

Coinciding with the ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip, the Israeli authorities continued its illegal and inhuman 14-year closure on the Gaza Strip.

Before the beginning of the offensive, the Israeli authorities tightened the closure on the Gaza Strip and completely closed the one and only commercial border (Kerem Abu Salem), banning the entry of the commodities and goods essential to the Strip. Moreover, they closed Beit Hanoun “Erez” Crossing and allowed only humanitarian cases. Also, they completely closed the Sea and banned fishing.

The consequences of the closure negatively affected the provision of basic services to at least 2 million Palestinians living in dire conditions in the most densely-populated area in the whole world. However, Gaza Strip’s Electricity Distribution Company announced that the whole Strip will lack electricity as the only power plant is about to shut down due to the closure of Kerm Abu Salem and running out of the fuel necessary for its operation. The shutdown of the power plant will have serious implications on the basic services provided to citizens, as the hours of power outage will increase to more than 20 hours per day, and potable water supply will be cut for long periods. Also, sanitation and sewage treatment services will be suspended and untreated sewage water will be pumped into the sea.

Moreover, the power outage for long hours in health facilities will adversely affect health services needed by the Gaza Strip population, especially in light of the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip and the hospitals and Intensive Care Units (ICUs) that are overcrowded with hundreds of wounded persons due to the Israeli airstrikes. The death toll since the beginning of Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip has mounted to 143, including 40 children and 22 women, and total number of injuries has risen to 655, including 194 children and 154 women. Furthermore, the power outage negatively affects operation of laboratories and blood banks by failing to do the required laboratory tests, especially in light of the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Gaza Strip. The total number of coronavirus cases in the Gaza Strip is 105861, including 99254 recovered, 5624 active cases, and
983 deaths. Among active cases: 108 receive special health care at hospitals; 84 of them are in serious and critical health condition.

Also, the Israeli closure caused a true humanitarian crisis and a catastrophic situation for thousands of families, as it is the direct cause of high unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates, as the Gaza unemployment rate is 46% (i.e. 211,300 are unemployed), 63% of which is among youth. Also, the poverty rate reached 53%, and more than 62.2% of the Gaza population suffers from food insecurity according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The Gaza Strip economy has incurred heavy losses due to the 14-year long Israeli closure. Economic facilities have suffered from tight restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on the entry of goods classified as “dual-use.” The dual-use items are essential to the life of the population; hence, the restrictions on their entry contribute to the deterioration of infrastructure and the deterioration of economic, health and education sectors.

This report covers the state of the Gaza Strip border crossings in April, before the current Israeli military offensive on the Gaza Strip.

Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- In April, Israeli authorities maintained tightened restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing; the restrictions were intensified in early March 2020 due to measures imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities and the Palestinian Authority to combat the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).

- **Patients:** the Palestinian Ministry of Health reduced the number of patients referred for medical treatment in the hospitals in Israel or the West Bank to the maximum extent possible. MOH only grants referrals to patients with serious conditions and whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip. Despite this, Israeli authorities obstructed the travel of 2028 patients out of 7041 patients (i.e. 28.8% of the total permit applications), who were referred for treatment in Israeli hospitals or in the West Bank hospitals, including occupied East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities rejected 55 applications for security reasons (0.7%), did not reply to 400 applications (5.6%); delayed replies (allegedly for security check) to 1150 permits (16.3%); asked

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2 Israeli authorities claim that these items, although used for civilian purposes, could be used to develop the combat capabilities of the Palestinian armed groups.
The Israeli authorities also impose restrictions on items that can be carried by travelers via Erez, primarily no electronic and electric devices, food, and cosmetics are allowed, as well as wheeled luggage.

According to GACA April data, Israeli authorities allowed 2235 Palestinians to exit the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing, including 112 for personal needs; 214 foreign international organizations’ staff; and 69 from Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. Meanwhile, 2138 were allowed entry to the Gaza Strip, including 50 for personal needs, 182 foreign international organizations’ staff, 78 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, and 4 released prisoners.

Prisoners’ Visits: In April, the Israeli authorities banned family visits to Palestinians in Israeli prisons. This violates the right of detainees to be in contact with their families through family visits, which is a fundamental right under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Restrictions on Movement of Goods

Israel maintained tightened restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip. In April, they allowed the entry of 8,553 truckloads via “Kerem Shalom” border crossing, including 442 humanitarian aid truckloads, 383 fuel trucks and 7728 truckloads of goods for the private sector.

82 patients to change their medical appointments (1.1%); and delayed the travel of 341 patients (4.8%) under several pretexts.
• The border crossing was closed for 8 days in April which constitute 26.6% of the reporting period.

• During the reporting period, 1664 truckloads entered via Rafah Crossing, including 458 fuel truckloads and 1206 truckloads of goods for the private sector.

- **Ongoing ban on Gaza Strip exports:** Israeli authorities continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports. However, in a limited exception, they allowed the export 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 April, the Israeli authorities allowed the export of 351 truckloads (195 to the West Bank, 140 to Israel, and 16 truckloads abroad). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and furniture. The exports during the reporting period constitute only 7.8% of Gaza’s total monthly exports before closure was imposed in June 2007 (4500 truckloads/month).
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 import goods classified by the Israeli authorities as “dual-use items” is very complex and ambiguous. A 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. Afterwards, the goods are classified and sent to the relevant Israeli officer to examine it. Moreover, the Palestinian merchant must complete the transaction with the Israeli seller or broker and pay for it in full as a first step towards submitting a request for import. If the response is positive, the coordination for the entry of goods is allowed through the Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing. A number of merchants 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 Shalom) crossing return the goods that had been already approved entry.
▪ This inflicts heavy losses on merchants who pay large sums of money for the storage and demurrage charges and to contractors who are legally obliged to deliver their orders on time.

▪ **Movement at Rafah Border Crossing:** According to the Crossing and Borders Authority in Gaza, in April, 5261 persons traveled from the Gaza Strip while 5112 persons returned to the Strip. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities denied travel of 541 persons. Travelers returning to the Gaza Strip via Rafah Crossing suffer from prolonged, recurrent and unjustified searches.