

State of the Gaza Strip's border crossings 01– 31 July 2016

This report documents the impact of the ongoing Israel-imposed siege on Palestinian civilians, which affects their economic and social conditions. This report also reveals the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Thus, this report exposes the real conditions of the Gaza Strip's population and the Israeli closure imposed on all Gaza's crossings for 10 years. It refutes Israel's claims that it has eased the closure of the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the report highlights that the continuing Israeli measures which are aimed to institutionalize the closure and make the illegal restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and goods acceptable at the international level although they violate the international law, including the international humanitarian and human rights laws. The report shows that the Israeli closure is main obstacle for any development or reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip and the main cause of the humanitarian crisis and deterioration on the economic and social levels. The following are the most significant developments relevant to Gaza's border crossings during the reporting period 01– 31 July 2016:

Movement of commodities

During the reporting period, no remarkable change was witnessed on the movement of goods. An almost complete ban continued on the exportation of goods to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, including industrial and agricultural goods. Restrictions were also imposed on the entry of a number of basic goods, especially materials needed for Gaza reconstruction, infrastructure projects and materials for manufacturing and production. However, Israeli forces allowed the entry of certain types of goods, the majority of which were foodstuffs and consumables, under complicated procedures, including the frequent closure of the only commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom); the crossing was closed for 12 days (38.7%). As a result:

- During the reporting period (July), Israeli forces allowed the entry of construction materials for the Gaza Strip according to the "UN Mechanism to Reconstruct Gaza" after they prevented the entry of construction materials for the private sector in Gaza city for 12 days. As a result, hundreds of private under-construction housing projects stopped in addition to other Reconstruction projects carried out by the private sector.
- In a limited exception, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of very limited quantities of construction materials for the intentional organizations and Qatari projects. According to the National Ministry of Economy, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 54,855 tons of cement, 6,895 tons of construction steel and 215,800 tons of aggregate (3.6%, 1.3% and 7.1% of the total construction materials needed for the Gaza Reconstruction.)

- During the reporting period, Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 12 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 5,354 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 172.7 tons. This amount represents 49.3% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons according to General Petroleum Corporation in Gaza (EGPC).
- Israeli forces continued to impose an almost complete ban on the Gaza Strip's exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, but exceptionally allowed the exportation of 152 truckloads to the West Bank; 124 truckloads of which were agricultural products and 28 truckloads of various goods (furniture, clothes, scrap, spices and stationary). The rate of the Gaza Strip exports for July constitutes 3.3% of the exports before June 2007.
- In a new step, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of vehicles into the Gaza Strip through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing rather than Karm abu Salem Crossing. They allowed the entry of 3 refrigerator trucks, 8 busses and 54 small vehicles.

Movement of persons

During the reporting period, Israeli forces imposed restrictions on the movement of Gaza population at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, the only crossing for the movement of persons to the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and/or Israel. As a result, 2 million people were denied their right to travel to hospitals, universities, holy places and family visitation in the West Bank. Besides, they were prevented from travelling abroad. However, Israeli forces allowed limited categories to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing: patients suffering from serious diseases; businesspeople; family members of prisoners in the Israeli jails; workers of international humanitarian organizations; persons travelling via al-Karama crossing on the Jordanian border; some individuals for personal needs; and elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque. These categories travel through the crossing under very complicated procedures. PCHR documented the following in this regard:

- During the reporting period, Israel closed Beit Hanoun crossing before patients for 11 days (only for urgent cases). However, during the rest of the days, it was open as Israel allowed the travel of 1,381 patients and 1,285 persons accompanying them. Israeli forces obstructed the travel of dozens of other patients referred for medical treatment in the Israeli and/or West Bank hospitals under different pretexts such as prevention due to security reasons, changing the companions, being forced to wait for a new appointment or awaiting an Israeli reply following security interviews.
- In July, Israeli authorities allowed 260 family members of prisoners divided into 4 groups to visit 139 of their relatives in Israeli prisons. During the reporting period, the number of visits was limited compared to the number allowed under the agreement reached between the detainees and Israeli forces in May 2012. According to the agreement, each prisoner has the right to two family visits a month. The number of visits should reach 760 monthly (18.2%), while the number of visitor should reach 1,480 (17.5%).

- During the reporting period, Israeli forces allowed 5,465 businesspeople, 1,657 people with special needs, 570 workers of international humanitarian organizations, 272 persons travelling via al-Karama crossing and 361 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. It should be noted that these estimations do not emphasize the number of persons allowed to travel which is much less than times of travel. Those who have permits are allowed to travel more than one time a month. They also allowed 1,385 elderly people to cross Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing and perform prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque under complicated security measures and created obstacles in front of them for many days before allowing them to enter the Gaza Strip.
- During the reporting period, Israeli forces arrested a trader and UNDP employee while traveling through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing. They also banned 6 members of Khan Younis Youth Club (3 footballers and 3 administrators) from travelling to the West Bank to play the final Palestine Cup match.
- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 27 days as a result of the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in North Sinai. The crossing was opened for 4 days for specific categories; during which, 2,961 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip, 1,620 returned and the Egyptian authorities returned 159. This unveiled the reality of the situation in the Gaza Strip under the policy of collective punishment and the Israeli closure imposed over all border crossings, especially Beit Hanoun crossing. The number of Palestinians, who registered for traveling via the crossing and are waiting for their turn to travel, was over 28,000 including 5,000 patients, university students and holders of residence visas in countries abroad, according to the Ministry of Interior in Gaza.

Commercial crossings During July

Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing

In light of their plan to strangle the Gaza Strip, Israeli authorities closed all commercial crossings in addition to allowing the use of the only commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, Karm Abu Salem. As a result, the suffering of the Gaza population aggravated and created more obstacles for the limited movement of imports and exports. In addition, the expenses of transportation increased causing a rise in the prices of imports. It was also an extra financial burden for the Gaza exporters because of the location of the crossing in the far southeast of the Gaza Strip¹ During the reporting period, Israel closed Karm Abu Salem crossing, for 12

¹ -The Israeli authorities have tightened the closure over the Gaza Strip to make Karm Abu Salem crossing the main and only crossing in the Gaza Strip in spite of its low operational capacity. Moreover, the Israeli authorities closed Sofa crossing, which was designated to the entry of construction materials in November 2008 and transferred the limited quantities of construction materials to be entered into Gaza also via Karm Abu Salem crossing. On 04 January 2010, the Israeli authorities closed Nahal Oz crossing, which was designated for the entry of fuel into Gaza, and transferred that fuel to be entered via Karm Abu Salem crossing as well. On 02 March 2011, the Israeli authorities closed al-Muntar (Karni) crossing, which was the largest and best equipped commercial crossing. 75% of the Gaza Strip supplies used to enter via Karni crossing that had the capacity of around 400 truckloads daily.

days (38.7% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel allowed the entry of 14,603 truckloads, an average of 471 truckloads daily².

• Exports

Israeli forces continued to impose a ban on the Gaza Strip exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad with exception of limited quantities. During the reporting period, 152 truckloads were allowed for exportation to the West Bank, including 124 truckloads of agricultural products and 28 truckloads of various goods (furniture, clothes, scrap, spices and stationary). The rate of the Gaza Strip exports for July constitutes 3.3% of the exports before June 2007.

• Imports

- Construction Materials

Israeli forces prevented the entry of construction materials for the private sector in Gaza city. As a result, hundreds of private under-construction housing projects stopped in addition to other Reconstruction projects carried out by the private sector for the same reason. Stopping construction works in these projects will aggravate the suffering of civilians who are desperate need of building their houses and facilities. This will also inflict heavy losses on the private sector's companies due to stoppage of work and increase the already high unemployment and poverty rates among the workers and their families.

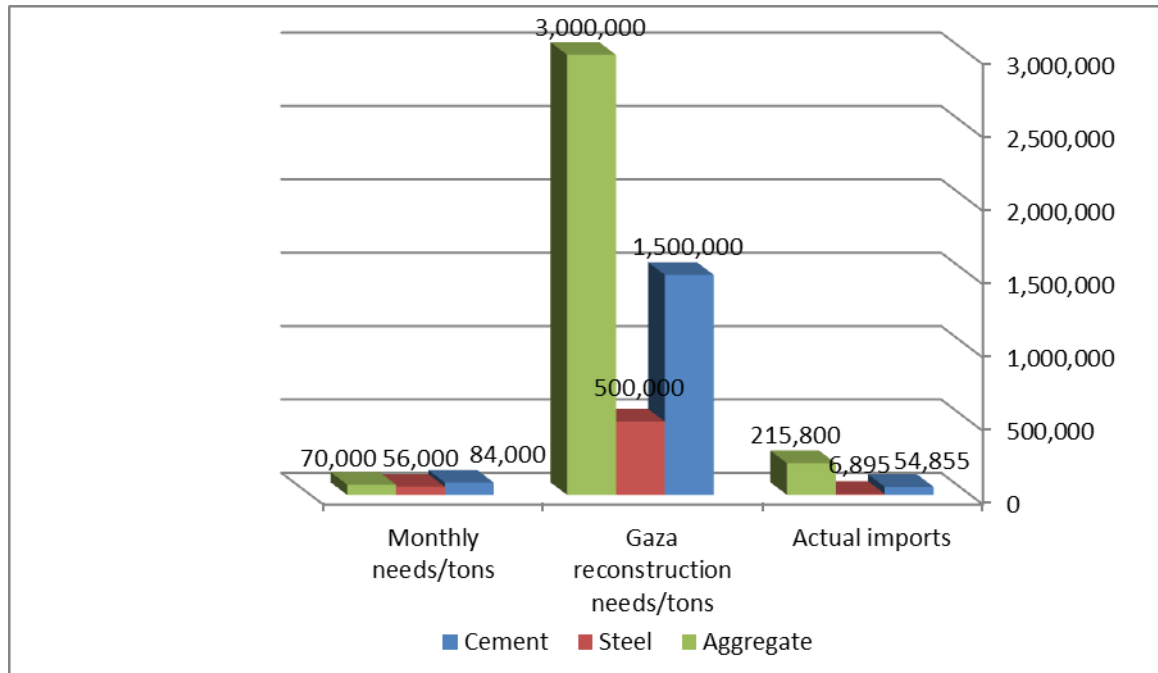
In a limited exception, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of very limited quantities of construction materials for the intentional organizations and Qatari projects. According to the National Ministry of Economy, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 54,855 tons of cement, 6,895 tons of construction steel and 215,800 tons of aggregate (3.6%, 1.3% and 7.1% of the total construction materials needed for the Gaza Reconstruction.)

Table comparing the quantities of construction materials allowed into the Gaza Strip in July 2016, the actual needs and the Gaza Reconstruction Needs

Description	Actual imports	Gaza reconstruction needs/tons	Percentage	Monthly needs/tons	Percentage
Cement	54,855	1,500,000	3.6%	84,000	65.3%
Steel	6,895	500,000	1.3%	56,000	12.3%
Aggregate	215,800	3,000,000	7.1%	70,000	308%

² -According to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.

Source: Ministry of National Economy in the Gaza Strip.



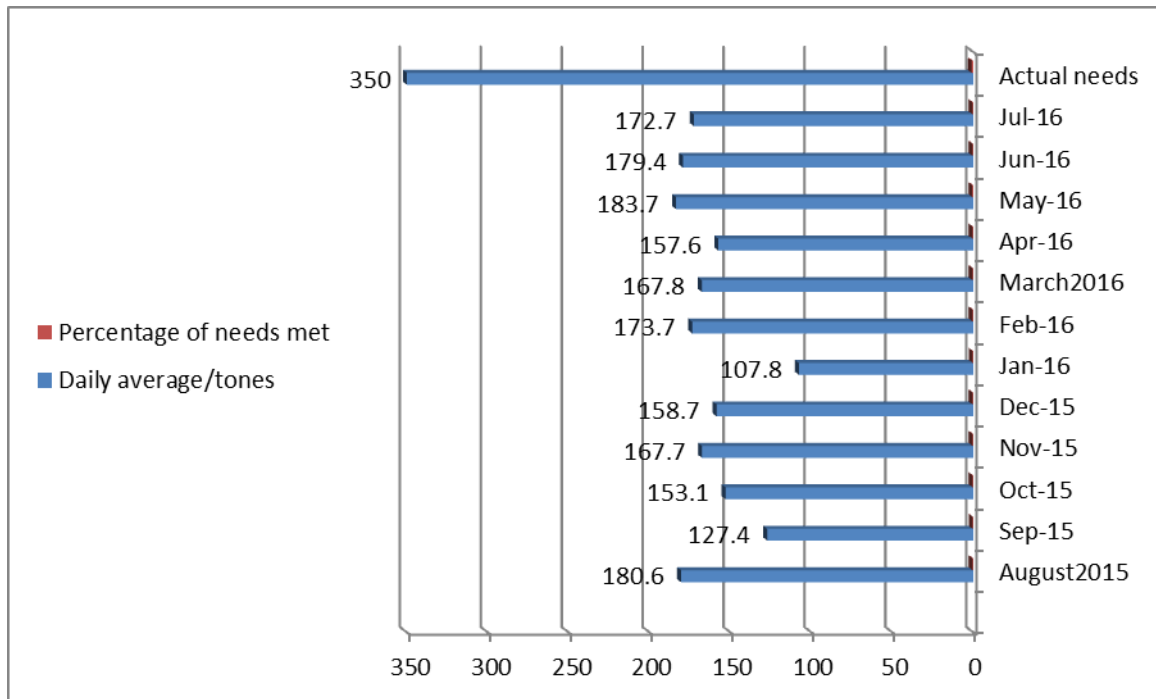
- Fuel**

During the reporting period, Israel allowed the entry of 13,496,000 liters of diesel; 4,690,000 liters of benzene and 5,755,000 liters of industrial fuel to operate the power plant in the Gaza Strip. These limited quantities do not meet the needs of the Gaza Strip, and what deteriorates the conditions more is lack of fuel reserves in the petrol station in the Gaza Strip. During the reporting period, Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 12 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 5,354 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 172.7 tons. This amount represents 49.31% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons according to General Petro3.leum Corporation in Gaza (EGPC).

Quantities of gas allowed during the last year compared with the actual needs of the population of the Gaza Strip

Month	Daily average/tones	Percentage of needs met
August2015	180.6	51.6%
September 2015	127.4	36.4%
October 2015	153.1	43.7%
November 2015	167.7	47.9%
December 2015	158.7	45.3%
January 2016	107.8	35.9%
February 2016	173.7	49.6%
March2016	167.8	47.9%
April 2016	157.6	45%
May 2016	183.7	61.2%
June 2016	179.4	51.2%
July 2015	172.7	49%
Actual needs	350	100%

Source: EGPC.



In a new step, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of vehicles into the Gaza Strip through Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing rather than Karm Abu Salem Crossing. They allowed the entry of 3 refrigerator trucks, 8 buses and 54 small vehicles.

Crossings Designated to the Movement of Persons

- **Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing**

Israel has closed the Beit Hanoun crossing to the movement of Palestinian civilians, with the exception of limited categories: patients suffering from serious illnesses and their companions; Arabs holding Israeli IDs; international journalists; workers of international humanitarian organizations; business people; and persons travelling via al-Karama crossing. These categories are allowed to travel through the crossing under very complicated procedures. According to the Civil Liaison Office at the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Israel closed the crossing completely for 11 days (only urgent cases were allowed to travel via the crossing) during the reporting period.

Patients

During the reporting period (July), Israel closed Beit Hanoun crossing for patients for 11 days (only for urgent cases). During the days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 1,381 patients and 1,285 companions. Israeli forces obstructed the travel of dozens of other patients under various pretexts, including security reasons, changing the companions, waiting for a new appointment and awaiting an Israeli reply following security interviews.

Prisoners' Visits

In July, Israeli authorities allowed 260 family members of prisoners divided into 4 groups to visit 139 of their relatives in Israeli prisons.

Family visits to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons in July 2016

Day	Number of visitors	Number of children	Number of visited prisoners	Prison
04 July 2016	63	14	34	Ramon prison
11 July 2016	67	19	37	Nafha prison
18 July 2016	81	15	48	Nafha prison
25 July 2016	49	15	20	Eshel prison

Source: Media statements by the Spokesperson of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in Gaza

The above table shows that the number of visitors is limited compared to the number of visits allowed under the prisoners' deal. According to the agreement, each prisoner has the right to two family visits a month. With 380 prisoners in Israeli prisons, the number of visits should reach 760 monthly. However, the Israeli forces only allowed 139 visits (18.2%) in July. The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 260 in July whereas, the number should include 1,480 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month (17.5%).

The families were subjected to arbitrary practices, obstacles and immoral and degrading treatment. They also suffered from the Israeli provocative measures and the continuous threats to cancel their visits in the future if they did not obey Israeli orders.

It should be noted that the Israeli authorities determine a visitor who is allowed to visit a prisoner, and those authorized visitors are limited to the prisoners' father, mother or wife and one or two of them only. Furthermore, in case either one is incapable of visiting (due to sickness, old age or death), the Israeli authorities do not allow the change of the visitors' names; thus, the prisoner loses the right to his visit. Moreover, Israeli authorities continue to deprive children from visiting their fathers in Israeli prisons. Prisoners' families are not allowed to bring with them personal items, including clothes and food.

• **Other categories**

During the reporting period, Israel allowed the entry of 5,465 traders, 1,657 persons for personal needs, 570 workers of international organizations into the Gaza Strip, 272 travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing and 1,385 elderly people of elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa mosque, under some complicated security conditions. The procedures for entering the Gaza Strip are complicated, resulting in prolonged waiting periods, sometimes up to several days. It should be mentioned that these statistics do not represent the number of persons allowed to enter as the permit holders are far less than the passing times.

Israeli Forces Arrest Trader and UNDP Employee;

- In July, Israeli forces arrested a trader and UNDP employee, while traveling through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing. They also banned 6 members of Khan Yunis Youth Club (3 footballers and 3 administrators) from travelling to the West Bank to play the final Palestine Cup match.
- At approximately 17:00 on Sunday, 03 July 2016, Israeli forces stationed at Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing, north of the Gaza Strip, arrested Wahid Abdullah Ali al-Bursh (37), an engineer at the UNDP from Jabalia, north of the Gaza Strip.

Wahid's brother, who is also an employee at the UNDP, said that Wahid left the Gaza Strip through the abovementioned crossing on 01 July 2016 after obtaining a 3-day permit. He headed to Jerusalem in order to perform prayers in al-Aqsa mosque in addition to being on a work mission in his field on the Gaza Reconstruction. While Wahid was on his way back to Gaza on Sunday, Israeli forces arrested him. On Monday afternoon, 04 July 2016, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) officially informed his family. Al-Bursh is so far under arrest.

- On Wednesday, 27 July 2016, Israeli authorities prevented seven Palestinian footballers and members from Khan Yunis Youth Club from travelling via Beit Hanoun (“Erez”) crossing, north of the Gaza Strip, to Hebron in the West Bank as they were supposed to play the final Palestine Cup match against Ahli al-Khalil Club on 30 of July 2016. According to footballers’ statements to a PCHR’s fieldworker, following the decision of the Palestine Football Federation to hold the final Palestine Cup match against Ahli al-Khalil club in al-Husain playground in Hebron on Saturday, 30 July 2016, after the first match that was held on 26 July 2016 in Gaza, the Khan Yunis Club coordinated with the Palestine Football Federation to obtain permits from the Israeli authorities to allow the Khan Yunis Youth Club to enter Hebron via Beit Hanoun (“Erez”) crossing in order to hold the final match on the above-mentioned. After submitting to obtain permits for 34 footballers, club members and others, the Israeli forces did not issue permits for six persons, including three members of the club namely Husain al-Batrawi, Mohammed Abu Mousa, Ibrahim Salamah, Khalid Saqer, Nasser Awad and Taha Kullab. Moreover, the Israeli forces issued permits to 8 members (5 players and 3 members of the club). The Israeli forces also conditioned making interviews with the 18 other members and players before giving them permits. Due to this, on Wednesday, 27 July 2016, 26 persons went to Beit Hanoun crossing where the Israeli forces searched them, took their ID cards and forced them to wait in a hall in the crossing. They then individually interrogated them and blackmailed some of them to get some information about some resistance acts in their places of residence.

At approximately 00:00 on Thursday, Israeli forces allowed 18 persons (11 players and 7 members of the club) to enter via the above-mentioned crossing, while prevented 8 of whom and forced them to return to the Gaza Strip. However, Mohammed al-Qarm, member of club, who was allowed to enter via the crossing, decided to return in solidarity with his colleagues who were forced to return to Gaza.

On Monday, 01 August 2016, the abovementioned persons were able to travel after Gianni Infantino, president of the International Federation of Football Association (FIFA) intervened after a statement from the Palestine Football Federation. The match was held on that day

Rafah International Crossing Point

- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed during July for 27 days as a result of the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai. The crossing was opened for 4 days for specific categories during which, 2,961 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip, 1,620 returned and the Egyptian authorities returned 159. This unveiled the reality of the situation in the Gaza Strip under the policy of collective punishment and the Israeli closure imposed over all border crossings, especially Beit Hanoun crossing. The number of Palestinians, who registered for traveling via the crossing and are waiting for their turn to travel, was over 28,000, including 5,000 patients, in addition to thousands of Palestinians who want to travel but did not register for traveling according to the Ministry of Interior in Gaza.

Recommendations

PCHR calls upon the international community, particularly the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to:

- Exert effective pressure on Israel to compel it to open all of Gaza's crossings, both those used for commercial purposes and those used for the movement of civilians, to allow the civilian population of the Gaza Strip to reconstruct civilian property destroyed during Israel's latest offensive on Gaza and to enable them to enjoy their fundamental civil and political rights, as well as their economic, social and cultural rights;
- Promptly and urgently intervene to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to put an end to the deterioration of living conditions across the Gaza Strip;
- Compel Israel to put an end to measures of collective punishment against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, including the tightening of the closure of Gaza's border crossings;
- Cancel the UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, as it failed to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, especially owners of houses and property that were completely destroyed, who have not received any compensations or construction materials to rebuild their destroyed houses and property;
- Remind the State of Israel, the Occupying Power, of its obligations towards the civilians of the Gaza Strip, under Article 55 of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates that: "To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles if the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate. The Occupying Power may not requisition foodstuffs, articles or medical supplies available in the occupied territory, and then only if the requirements of the civilian population have been taken into account." The High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention must fulfill their obligation under Article 1 of the Convention by ensuring the implementation of the Convention's provisions by the State of Israel, in order to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip; and
- Call on the Egyptian authorities to take more measures to facilitate movement at the Rafah International Crossing Point, in particular by increasing the number of travelers and opening hours, and to find a solution for the thousands of Palestinians wishing to travel via the crossing, particularly during the summer when the number of travellers doubles.
- Reminds that the Israeli-imposed closure on the Gaza Strip is one of the gravest violations and collective punishments committed by Israeli forces against Palestinians in the Israeli occupation history. This inhumane and illegal closure constitutes a man-made disaster and is a part of an ongoing war crime against the Palestinian civilians.