



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings (01 – 31 May 2021)

During the reporting period, IOF launched an exhaustive military operation on the Gaza Strip between 10 and 21 May 2021, amid unprecedented tightening of the closure on the Strip. This Israeli aggression has caused extensive destruction to the civilian facilities and inflicted heavy casualties, rendering the Gaza Strip unsafe place, where everything is under IOF's strikes. This scene of massive destruction by IOF's aggression proves that they meant to increase the suffering of civilians, who had already been in deteriorating humanitarian conditions due to the Israeli unjust closure imposed for the last 15 years on the Gaza Strip.

Before the beginning of the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, the Israeli authorities completely closed the one and only commercial crossing (Kerem Shalom) and banned the entry of the essential goods into the Strip. Moreover, they closed Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing and only humanitarian cases were allowed, and completely closed the sea and banned fishing.

Following the end of the offensive and although IOF declared on 25 May 2021 the re-opening of "Kerm Shalom" crossing, the reality proves the opposite. The Israeli authorities has imposed unprecedented restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip via the crossing and only allowed the entry of limited quantities of food supplies and limited types of humanitarian aid for international organizations. Meanwhile, they banned the entry of all other goods and essential materials, including construction materials necessary for the reconstruction of what was destroyed by the latest Israeli offensive, and the fuel necessary for the operation of the only power plant in the Gaza Strip in addition to the equipment and materials needed to repair the massive damage caused to the water and sanitation facilities and electricity networks during the offensive. Moreover, IOF continued to impose tightened restrictions on the entry of 62 types classified as "dual-use items" that include hundreds of goods and essential materials. Moreover, IOF continue to ban the exportation of the Gaza Strip's products after it was allowed to export only very limited quantities; mostly agricultural products, before the latest offensive.

May witnessed a decrease of 57.4% in the number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip comparing to last month, as the Israeli occupation authorities allowed the entry of 3,637 trucks in May, while in April 8,553 trucks were allowed. May exports (124 trucks) is only %35.3 of April's exports, as 351 trucks were allowed for exportation, representing only %2.7 of the monthly exports before the closure in June 2007, when around 4,500 trucks were allowed for exportation monthly.

Regarding Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing, although the Israeli occupation authorities declared they will only allow the travel of urgent "lifesaving" cases starting from 25 May 2021, they refused to respond

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to dozens of permit requests applied by the Health Ministry's Coordination and Liaison Department on behalf the persons wounded in the latest offensive and patients with serious diseases, whose treatment is not available at the Gaza hospitals, and referred abroad for treatment in the hospitals in Israel, the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem, and abroad. The Israeli authorities allowed only the travel of 13 patients out of the 191 requests applied by the Coordination and Liaison Department to the Israeli authorities between 25 and 30 May 2021. Meanwhile, in May, the Israeli authorities allowed the travel of 279 patients, which means there is a 70% decline in the number of patients allowed to travel in April, where 925 patients travelled.

May witnessed a 60% decrease in the number of persons allowed to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing comparing to April as 963 persons were allowed to travel in May while 2235 persons were allowed to travel in April. Moreover, there was a 43% decrease in the number of persons allowed to return to the Gaza Strip via Beit Hanoun crossing in May, when 1215 persons returned, while 2138 persons returned in April.

The Israeli closure and repercussions of the offensive has negatively affected the provision of basic services to 2 million Palestinians living in dire living conditions in the Gaza Strip, which is classified as the most densely populated area in the world.

The electricity crisis has also aggravated during the offensive due to the Israeli authorities' ban on the entry of fuel necessary for the operation of the only power plant in the Gaza Strip and due to the extensive destruction in the electricity distribution network.

This report covers the state of the Gaza Strip border crossings during May, during which the Gaza Strip witnessed an Israeli military operation from 10 to 21 May 2021.

Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- The Israeli authorities closed Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing on 11 May 2021, when the Israeli offensive started on the Gaza Strip, banning the travel of all categories limitedly allowed, including patients referred for treatment abroad. After the offensive ended, the Israeli authorities declared that only the urgent "lifesaving" cases will be allowed to travel via the crossing; however, the reality on the ground says that the Israeli authorities refused to respond to dozens of permit requests applied by the Health Ministry's Coordination and Liaison Department on behalf patients with serious diseases, whose treatment is not available at the Gaza hospitals, and referred abroad for treatment in the hospitals in Israel, the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem, and abroad. It should be noted that the Israeli authorities allowed only the travel of 13 patients out of the 191 requests applied by the Coordination and Liaison Department to the Israeli authorities between 25 and 30 May 2021.

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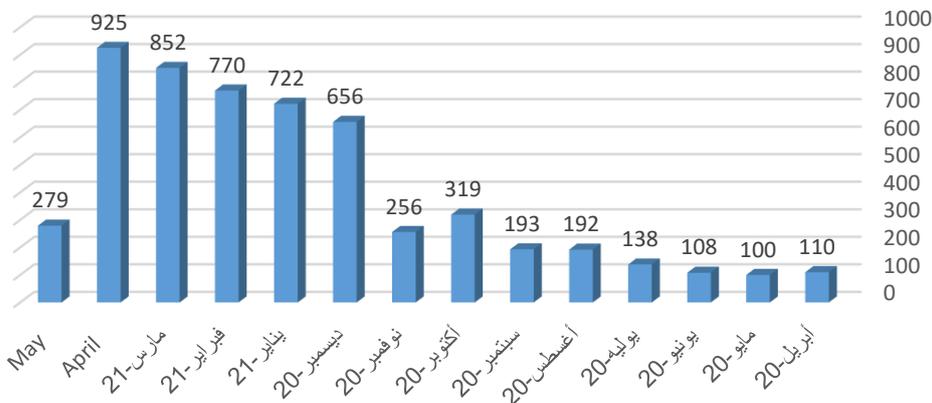
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- PCHR received complaints from patients or persons injured during the latest Israeli offensive on Gaza, calling for the urgent intervention to guarantee their travel for treatment abroad after their health conditions deteriorated and the Strip's hospitals are incapable of providing them treatment. PCHR managed to obtain permits for 6 patients and persons injured that are in critical conditions after it sent appeals to the Israeli legal authorities and Public Prosecution.
- Since MARCH 2020, the Israeli authorities have restricted the movement and travel pf the Gaza Strip's people via beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing as part of the Israeli and PA's measures taken to curb the outbreak of the coronavirus.
- **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 persons wounded during the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip and patients with serious conditions and whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip. Despite this, Israeli authorities obstructed the travel of 616 patients out of 895 patients (i.e. 84.2% 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 did not reply to 519 applications (57.9%); delayed replies (allegedly for security check) to 95 permits (10.6%); and 2 permits were cancelled by the hospital (0.2%)

Number of patients referred for treatment abroad since the beginning of 2020



- Accordingly, the major decrease in the number of patients allowed to travel and reach hospitals is very clear as the Israeli authorities allowed 925 patients to travel in April while only 279 were allowed to travel in May (around 70% decline.)
- 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 963 Palestinians to exit the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing, including 32 for personal needs; 262 foreign international

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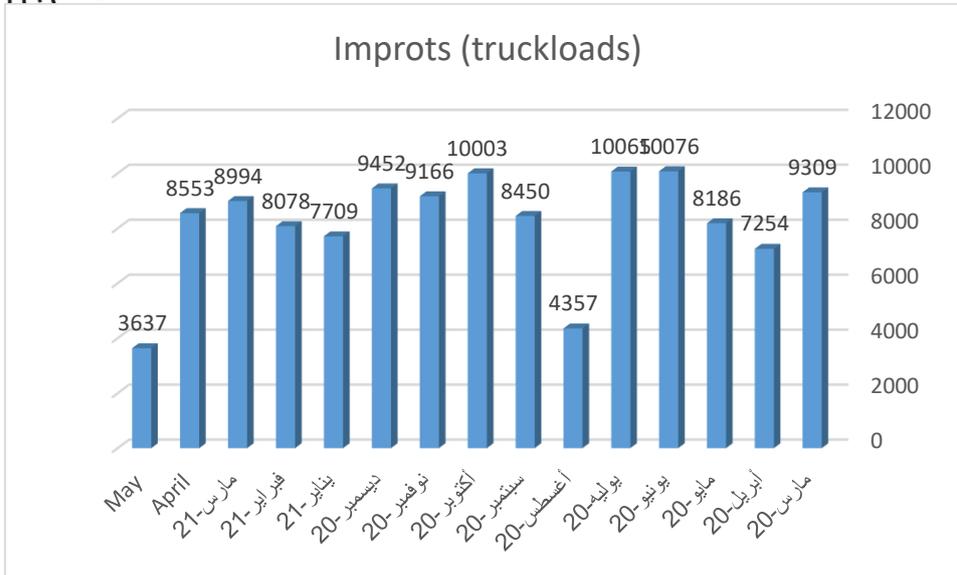
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organizations' staff; and 100 from Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. Meanwhile, 1215 were allowed entry to the Gaza Strip, including 75 for personal needs, 290 foreign international organizations' staff, 39 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, and 3 prisoners released from the Israeli jails. May witnessed a 60% decrease in the number of persons allowed to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing comparing to April as 963 persons were allowed to travel in May while 2235 persons were allowed to travel in April. Moreover, there was a 43% decrease in the number of persons allowed to return to the Gaza Strip via Beit Hanoun crossing in May, when 1215 persons returned, while 2138 persons returned in April.

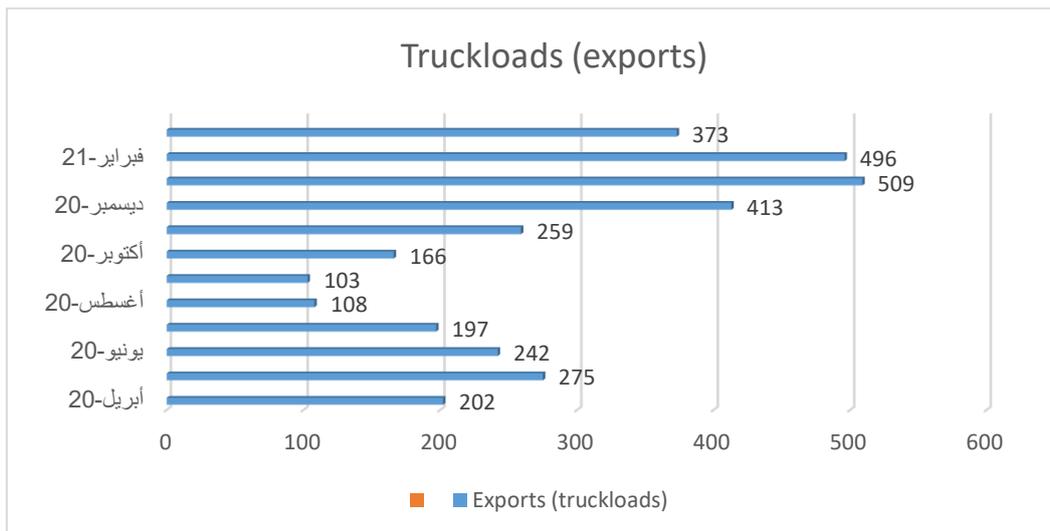
- **Prisoners' Visits:** In May, the Israeli authorities banned family visits to Palestinians in Israeli prisons. This violates the right of detainees to be in contact with their families through family visits, which is a fundamental right under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Restrictions on Movement of Goods

- Israel maintained tightened restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip. In May, they allowed the entry of 3,637 truckloads via "Kerem Shalom" border crossing, including 243 humanitarian aid truckloads, 194 fuel trucks and 3200 truckloads of goods for the private sector. May witnessed a decrease of 57.4% in the number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip comparing to last month, as the Israeli occupation authorities allowed the entry of 3,637 trucks in May, while in April 8,553 trucks were allowed.
- The crossing closed for 19 days in May which constitute 61.3% of the reporting period.
- During the reporting period, 1234 truckloads entered via Rafah Crossing, including 353 fuel truckloads and 881 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 124 truckloads (61 to the West Bank, 56 to Israel, and 7 truckloads abroad). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and furniture. May exports is only %35.3 of April's exports, as 351 trucks were allowed for exportation, representing only %2.7 of the monthly exports before the closure was imposed in June 2007 (4500 truckloads/month).





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- 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 May, 5900 persons traveled from the Gaza Strip while 4100 persons returned to the Strip. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities denied travel of 500 persons. Travelers returning to the Gaza Strip via Rafah Crossing suffer from prolonged, recurrent and unjustified searches.