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

The Israeli occupation authorities continued to impose an illegal and inhuman closure on the Gaza Strip. This coincided with unprecedented restrictions tightened at the Gaza Strip's crossings, making the period following the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip in May 2021 the worst period over the years of closure.

The 15-year Israeli closure deepened the humanitarian and living crises in the Gaza Strip, as the Gaza unemployment rate is 45% (i.e. 217,100 are unemployed), 63% of which is among youth.1 Also, more than half of the Gaza population lives in poverty as the poverty rate reached 53% according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Meanwhile, more than 62.2% of the Gaza population who suffer from food insecurity according to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA.)

As for commercial crossings, although the occupation authorities allowed the entry of construction materials not within the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, they maintain unprecedented restrictions on the import of thousands of goods into the Gaza Strip, including construction materials necessary for the reconstruction of what was destroyed by the latest Israeli offensive, and the equipment and materials needed to repair the massive damage caused to the water and sanitation facilities and electricity networks by the offensive. Moreover, IOF continued to impose tightened restrictions on the entry of 62 types classified as "dual-use items"2 that include hundreds of major goods and essential materials, which are essential for the population. The ban on the entry exacerbates the Gaza Strip’s crises across various sectors, including infrastructure, economic, health, and education.

At Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing, the Israeli occupation authorities decreased the number of persons allowed travel via the crossing of the already-limited groups that were allowed passage after a thorough security check. Even though the Israeli occupation authorities declared they will allow patients’ travel, they refused to respond to dozens of permit requests applied by the Health Ministry’s Coordination and Liaison Department on behalf of patients with serious diseases, whose treatment is not available at the Gaza hospitals, and

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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.
referred abroad for treatment in the hospitals in Israel, the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem, and abroad.

Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- **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 619 patients out of 1,362 patients (i.e. 45.4% 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 10 applications for security reasons (1.6%), did not reply to 180 applications (29%); delayed replies (allegedly for security check) to 422 permits (68.1%); asked 2 patients to change their medical appointments (.3%); and delayed the travel of 5 patients (0.8%) under several pretexts.

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 8594 Palestinians to exit the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing, including 743 patients and 279 for personal needs; 271 foreign international organizations’ staff; and 155 from Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. Meanwhile, 6780 were allowed entry to the Gaza Strip, including 756 patients and 248...
persons for personal needs, 244 foreign international organizations’ staff, 81 King Hussein Bridge, 124 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, and 10 released prisoners.

- **Prisoners’ Visits:** In September, 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**

- After the May 2021 IOF aggression on Gaza, and despite IOF allegation that it reopened Karm Abu Salem crossing and that goods would be allowed entry into Gaza, field observation proved the opposite. IOF imposed unprecedented restrictions on import of goods, and only allowed, gradually, the entry of limited food items, petrol, and goods directed for international organizations.

- Israel maintained tightened restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip. In September, they allowed the entry of 6,775 truckloads via "Kerem Shalom" border crossing, including 351 humanitarian aid truckloads, 401 fuel trucks and 6023 truckloads of goods for the private sector as reported by the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza. September witnessed a decrease of 20.7% in the number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip comparing to last April before the latest Israeli offensive, as the Israeli occupation authorities allowed the entry of 8,553 trucks.

- During the reporting period, 1979 truckloads entered via Rafah Crossing, including 578 fuel truckloads and 1401 truckloads of goods for the private sector.
The months after the offensive ended recorded a significant decrease in the number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip comparing with the month before the offensive when the Israeli occupation authorities allowed the import of 8,553 truckloads, while in May they allowed the entry of 3,637 truckloads (42.5%). They also allowed the entry of 3,340 truckloads (39%) in June, while they allowed the entry of 4,183 truckloads (48.9%) in July. Moreover, in August they allowed the entry of 6,502 truckloads (76%), and in September the entry of 6,775 truckloads (79.3%).

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 crossing. A number of merchants and contractors said to PCHR that the abovementioned measures are very imports (truckloads) complicated as the Israeli authorities deliberately delay responses to applications for months. Additionally, in many cases, the Israeli forces stationed at (Karm Abu Salem 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.

**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 September, the Israeli authorities allowed the export of 357 truckloads (85 to the West Bank, 117 to Israel, and 155 truckloads abroad, including 150 scrap truckloads) according to the Ministry of National Economy. Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and furniture. The exports during the reporting period constitute only 7.9% of Gaza’s total monthly exports before closure was imposed in June 2007 (4500 truckloads/month).

**Movement at Rafah Border Crossing:** According to the Crossing and Borders Authority in Gaza, in September, 14238 persons traveled from the Gaza Strip while 8450 persons returned to the Strip. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities denied travel of 498 persons during the reporting period.
Travelers returning to the Gaza Strip via Rafah Crossing suffer from prolonged, recurrent and unjustified searches.