

## **State of the Gaza Strip's border crossings** **01– 30 April 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 9 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– 30 April 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 11 days (36.6%). As a result:

- 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 15,440 tons of cement, 7,200 tons of construction steel and 153 tons of aggregate (

1%, 1.4% and 5.1% of the total construction materials needed for the Gaza Reconstruction.)

- During the reporting period, Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 11 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 4,728 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 157.6 tons. This amount represents 45% 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 146 truckloads to the West Bank; 133 truckloads of which were agricultural products (strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, cabbages, dates, cauliflower, lemons, oranges, hot peppers, sweet peppers, garlicks, eggplants, squashes and mint), 3 truckloads of fish, 4 truckloads of furniture, 3 truckloads of clothes, 3 truckloads of scrap and a truckload of stationary. The rate of the Gaza Strip exports for April constitutes 3.2% of the exports before June 2007.

### **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 (6 days of which were partially open only to urgent cases). However, during the rest of the days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 1,291 and 1,220 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 April, Israeli forces arrested 2 patients while crossing Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing. One of them suffers from serious diseases and could not find the necessary treatment in the Gaza Strip hospitals.

- In April, Israeli authorities allowed 188 family members of prisoners divided into 3 groups to visit 98 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 (12.8%), while the number of visitor should reach 1,480 (12.7%).
- During the reporting period, Israeli forces allowed 7,267 businesspeople, 1,649 people with special needs, 714 workers of international humanitarian organizations and 165 persons travelling via al-Karama crossing. 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 183 elderly people to cross BeitHanoun (Erez) crossing and perform prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque and 994 Christian citizens under complicated security measures and created obstacles in front of them for many days before allowing them to enter the Strip.
- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 30 days. 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 30,000 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 March**

### **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 Strip<sup>1</sup> During the reporting period, Israel closed Karm Abu Salem crossing, for

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<sup>1</sup> -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.

11 days (36% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel allowed the entry of 10,273 truckloads, an average of 342 truckloads daily<sup>2</sup>.

- **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, 146 truckloads were allowed for exportation to the West Bank, including 133 truckloads of agricultural products (strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, cabbages, dates, cauliflowers, lemons, oranges, sweet and hot peppers, garlicks, eggplants, squashes and mints), 3 truckloads of fish, 4 truckloads of furniture, 3 truckloads of clothes, 3 truckloads of scrap and a truckload of stationary. The rate of the Gaza Strip exports for April constitutes 3.2% 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 15,440 tons of cement, 7,200 tons of construction steel and 153 tons of aggregate ( 1%, 1.4% and 5.1% of the total construction materials needed for the Gaza Reconstruction.)

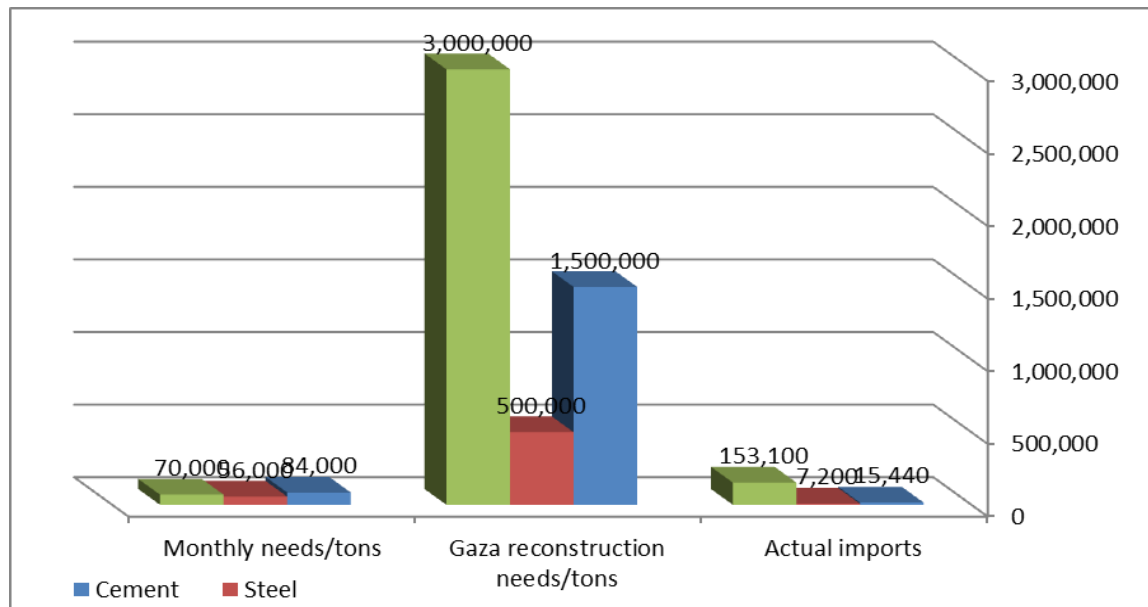
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<sup>2</sup> -According to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.

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

Description	Actual imports	Gaza reconstruction needs/tons	Percentage	Monthly needs/tons	Percentage
Cement	15,440	1,500,000	1%	84,000	18.3%
Steel	7,200	500,000	1.4%	56,000	12.8%
Aggregate	153,100	3,000,000	5.1%	70,000	218.7%

Source: Ministry of National Economy in the Gaza Strip.



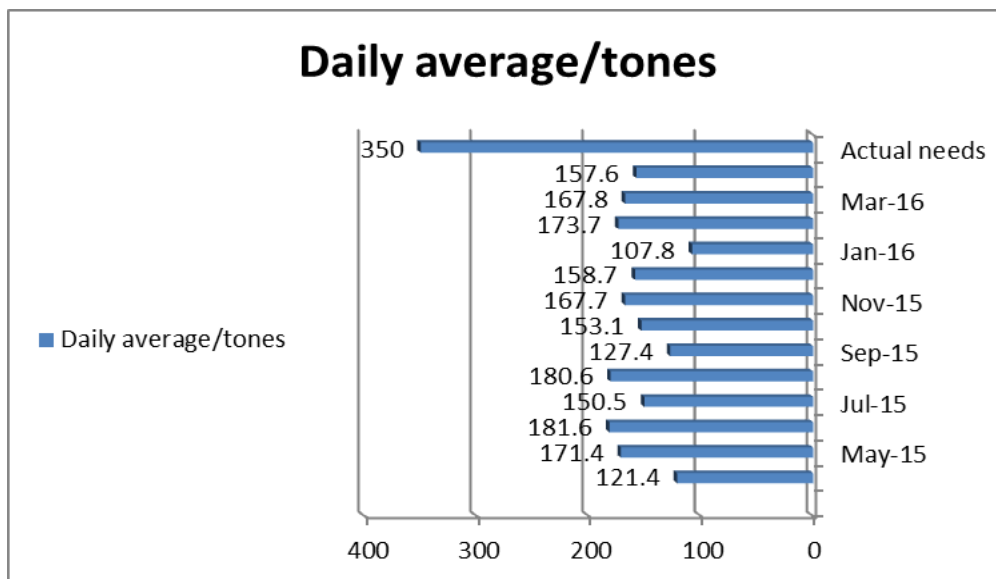
## • Fuel

During the reporting period, Israel allowed the entry of 10,673,000 liters of diesel; 3,950,000 liters of benzene and 3,482,000 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 11 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 4,728 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 157.6 tons. This amount represents 45% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons according to General Petroleum 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
April 2015	121.4	34.7%
May 2015	171.4	48.9%
June 2015	181.6	51.8%
July 2015	150.5	43%
August 2015	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%
March 2016	167.8	47.9%
April 2016	157.6	45%
Actual needs	350	100%

Source: EGPC.





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## **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; 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 in the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Israel closed the crossing completely for 8 days (during 4 days of which, only urgent cases were allowed to travel via the crossing) during the reporting period.

### **Patients**

During the reported period (April), Israel closed Beit Hanoun crossing for patients for 11 days (6 days of which cases open to patients). During days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 1,291 patients and 1,220 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.

### **2 Patients were arrested at Beit Hanoun crossing (Erez)**

Israeli forces arrested 2 patients while crossing the Beit Hanoun crossing, as they suffer from serious diseases and could not find the necessary medical treatment in the Gaza Strip hospitals.

At approximately 19:00, on Monday, 11 April 2016, Israeli forces stationed at Beit Hanoun “Erez” crossing, arrested Hasan Barawi Hasan al-Ra’i (38), from al-Sabra neighborhood in Gaza City, while he was returning to the Gaza Strip. It should be mentioned that on 06 April 2016, the abovementioned civilian left the Gaza Strip with a blind karate team to attend a conference in Ramallah. Hassan works as a trainer of a Palestinian blind karate team in Al-Mashtal Academy for Martial Arts. Israeli forces detained Hassan while leaving the Gaza Strip for more than 4 hours and when he returned they allowed the delegation to enter the Gaza Strip except Hassan, who was arrested.

At approximately 09:00, on Monday, 18 April 2016, Israeli forces stationed in Beit Hanoun “Erez” crossing, north of the Gaza Strip, arrested a Palestinian patient, Mahmoud Sa’id al-‘Abed Abu Foul (19), from Jabalia refugee camp, after he was summoned for a security interview at the abovementioned crossing. It should be mentioned that Abu Foul was

wounded during clashes erupted with Israeli forces on 09 October 2015, east of al-Shuja'iya neighborhood, east of Gaza City in protest at the Israeli violations against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Jerusalem. At that time, Abu Foul was hit with a live bullet to the left leg, cutting his tendons and arteries. He completed all the needed procedures for treatment abroad. On 15 October 2016, Abu Foul obtained a medical referral to al-Najah University Hospital in Nablus, where he underwent a surgery and then returned to the Gaza Strip. Mahmoud's family recently noticed changes in the operated leg as its natural color turned into red and then to black. As a result, his family immediately completed all the procedures needed to refer him again to al-Najah Hospital. On 18 April 2016, Mahmoud obtained a new appointment. However, on Sunday, 17 April 2016, the Medical Coordination Officers informed the family that their request was rejected. On the same day evening, the family received another call from an unknown number telling them that Mahmoud has a security interview at the crossing on Monday, 18 April 2016. Mohamed then headed to Beit Hanoun crossing and did not return back.

### Prisoners' Visits

In April, Israeli authorities allowed 188 family members of prisoners divided into 4 groups to visit 98 of their relatives in Israeli prisons.

#### Family visits to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons in April 2016

Day	Number of visitors	Number of children	Number of visited prisoners	Prison
04 April 2016	44	10	24	Ramon prison
11 April 2016	66	16	37	Nafha prison
18 April 2016	78	21	37	Nafha prison

Source: Media statements by the Spokesperson of the International Red Cross

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 98 visits (12.8%) in April. The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 244, in March whereas, the number should include 1,480 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month (16.4%).

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 7,267 traders, 1,694 persons for personal needs, 714 workers of international organizations into the Gaza Strip, 183 of elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa mosque, 994 Christian civilians and 165 travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing, 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.

### **Rafah International Crossing Point**

- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed during March for 31 days. 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 30,000, including 5,000 patients, in addition to thousands of Palestinians who want to travel but did not registered for traveling according to the Ministry of Interior in Gaza.

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## 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.