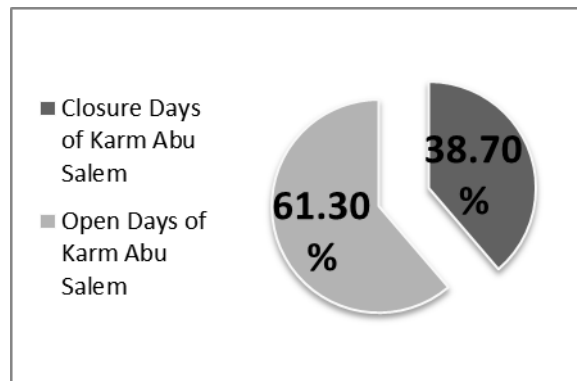

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings 01-31 March 2017

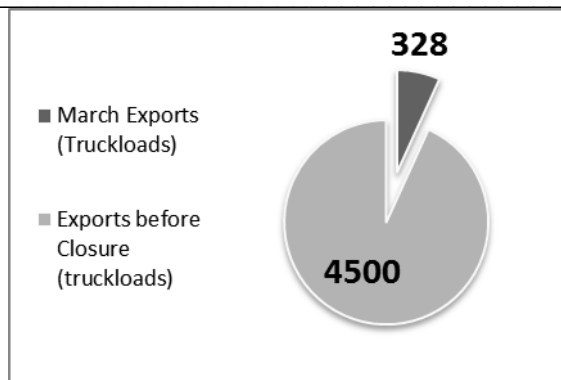
The Israeli closure imposed on the Gaza Strip for the 10th consecutive year continues, and in March the crossings surrounding the Gaza Strip witnessed further restrictions, refuting the Israeli claims of easing the closure.\

- **Restrictions on Goods Movement**

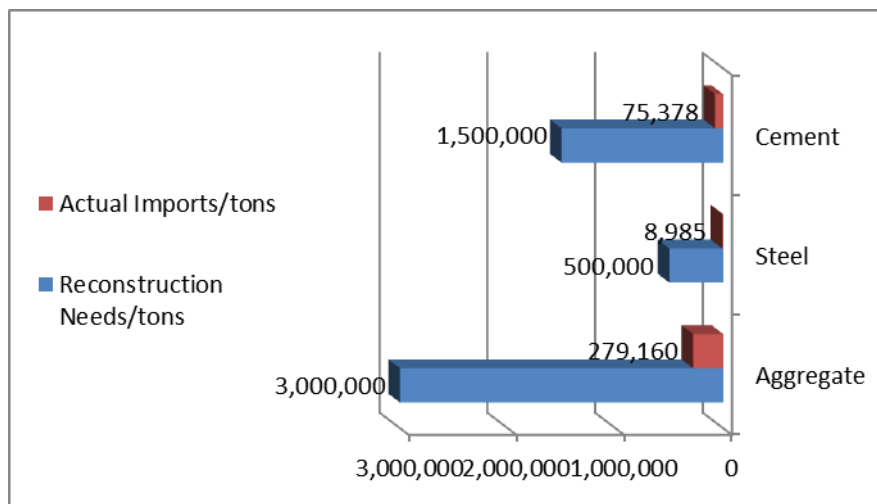
- **Closure of the sole commercial crossing:** the Israeli authorities continued to impose tightened restrictions on the entry of 400 types of goods into the Gaza Strip, most of them are of basic goods and raw materials. The movement of goods from and into the Gaza Strip faced many obstacles, including closure of the sole commercial crossing for 12 days (38.7% of the total period). During the days it was open, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 18,617 truckloads; an average of 600 truckloads daily.



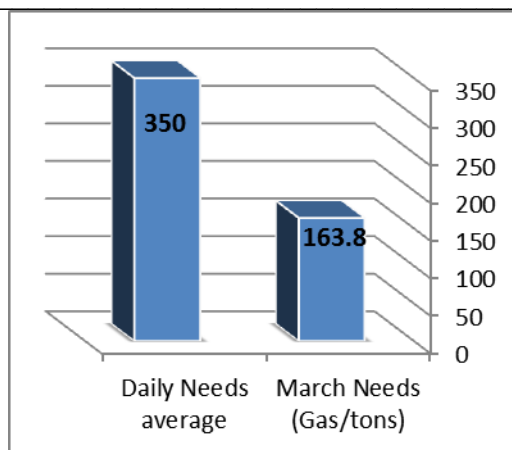
- **Continued ban on exports:** the Israeli authorities continued to ban the Gaza exports. In a limited exception, they allowed 328 truckloads for exportation in March; most of which were agricultural. They allowed 304 agricultural truckloads and 24 truckloads of fish, furniture, aluminum scrap, steel, clothes and spices. The rate of Gaza Strip exports in March constituted only 7.2% of the total exports before June 2007.



- **Restrictions on the entry of construction materials:** the Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the entry of construction materials. According to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 75,378 tons of cement; 8,985 construction steel; and 279,160 construction aggregates (consecutively constituting 5 %; 1.8% and 9.3% of the total needs for the Gaza reconstruction.)



- **Ongoing crisis of cooking gas:** the Israeli authorities continued to decrease the entry of cooking gas into the Gaza Strip as only 5,079 tons of cooking gas were allowed; a daily average of 163.8 tons. According to the General Petroleum Corporation in Gaza (EGPC), this amount represents 46.8% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons. As a result, people were forced to wait for a long time, exceeding 3 months, to refill half of a gas cylinder.



- **Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:**

- The Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the Gaza population. The rate of rejected permits to cross the Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing increased, so the limited categories that were allowed to travel through the crossing decreased. In March, 4,413 Palestinians and 697 foreigners were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip while 4,401 Palestinians and 729 foreigners were allowed to enter.¹ Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing was closed for 9 days (4 days of which were partially open only for urgent cases); constituting 29% of the month.
- **Patients:** During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities stationed at Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing obstructed the travel of dozens of patients referred for medical treatment in the Israeli hospitals or the West Bank under various pretexts, including security reasons, changing the companions, waiting for a new appointment and awaiting an Israeli reply following security interviews. In March, Israel allowed the entry of 1,118 patients and 1,241 companions according to the Civil Affairs in Gaza. It should be mentioned that the number of patients

¹ It should be mentioned that on 26 March 2017 following the assassination of Mazen Foqahaa', the Ministry of Interior in the Gaza Strip announced imposition of restrictions on the movement of the limited categories allowed to enter and leave the Gaza Strip via Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing. In a his Statement, Eyad al-Buzom, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior and National Security in the Gaza Strip emphasized that only 3 categories are allowed to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing and identified as prisoners' families, which is restricted to women and males under 15 years old and over 45 years old; patients, which is restricted to women as well and males under 15 years old and over 45 years old; and the 3 Ministers of the National Unity Government from Gaza. Meanwhile, all categories are allowed to enter the Gaza Strip via Beit Hanoun crossing without any exception. This negatively affected the movement of limited categories allowed to travel via Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing, particularly male patients between 15 and 45 years old. On 06 April 2017, the Ministry of Interior re-allowed all categories to move via the crossing without any restrictions.



allowed traveling monthly via Beit Hanoun Crossing represents only half of the number of patients who applied for permits to travel via the Crossing.

It should be mentioned that according to the Coordination and Liaison Department in the Ministry of Health, the number of patients who applied for permits to travel via Beit Hanoun Crossing in 2016 was 26,280 applications; 16,277 were approved (61.9% of the total applications.)

▪ Prisoners' Visits:

The Israeli authorities allowed 153 family members of prisoners divided into 3 groups to visit 88 of their relatives in the Israeli prisons according to the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in Gaza. On Monday, 13 March 2017, the Israeli authorities banned the prisoners' families from visiting their sons under the pretext of closing the Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing for the Jewish holidays.

Family visits to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons in March 2017

Day	Number of visitors	Number of children	Number of visited prisoners	Prison
06 March 2017	75	21	44	Ramon
20 March 2017	59	16	35	Nafha
27 March 2017	19	5	9	Ramon

- 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 350 prisoners in Israeli prisons, the number of visits should reach 700 monthly. However, the Israeli forces only allowed 88 visits (12.5%). The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 153 in March whereas the number should include 1,400 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month (10%). The families were subjected to arbitrary practices, obstacles and immoral and degrading treatment.
- **The Israeli authorities continued to prevent worshippers from performing prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque:** for the fourth month consecutively, Gaza elderly people were prevented from performing prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque.
- **Number of businessmen who are allowed to travel declined:** the Israeli authorities allowed 2,510 businessmen to travel via Beit Hanoun "Erez" crossing in March. This number decreased from last month with a rate of 41.6% as 3,290 businessmen were allowed in February and a decline of 41.6% from January when 4,304 were allowed.
- **Other categories:** According to the General Authority of Civil Affair, Israel allowed the entry of 695 international workers; 837 persons with personal needs; 120 diplomats and 121 travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing. 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 due to passing many times via the crossing with the same permit in one month.
- **Rafah International Crossing Point:**



During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 28 days as a result of the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai. Exceptionally, the crossing point was opened for only 3 days. During the days it was open, 1,961 Palestinians travelled abroad while 1,961 returned to the Gaza Strip. Moreover, 194 were returned by the Egyptian authorities. This unveiled the reality of the situation in the Gaza Strip in light of the collective punishment policy and Israeli closure imposed on all the surrounding border crossings, especially Beit Hanoun Crossing, which is totally under the Israeli control. Thousands of Palestinians, who registered for traveling via the crossing, are waiting for their turn to travel according to the Ministry of Interior in Gaza.