



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings 01 -31 August 2019

During the reporting period (August), the Israeli authorities continued to impose their closure on the Gaza Strip for the 13th consecutive year along with tightened restrictions on the crossings surrounding the Gaza Strip, contrary to the Israeli claims of easing restrictions on the movement of persons and goods. Further, the Israeli authorities continued to control entry and exit for pedestrians from the Gaza Strip at the Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing as they narrowly allow some categories such as patients of urgent cases and their companions, who both undergo a very long and complicated process in order to get travel permits and are subject to tightened security measures while traveling through the crossing. During August, the Israeli authorities at Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing obstructed the travel of 572 patients referred for treatment in the hospitals in Israel and the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the Israeli authorities rejected the travel of many patients under several pretexts, including security reasons, changing the companions, delaying responses to the permits and asking for new appointments, and asking patients for security interviews.

The Israeli authorities also continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports, except for very limited quantities; most of them were agricultural products. In August, the exports recorded a decrease rate of 42.2%, comparing with June while they recorded 1.7 % of the total monthly Gaza exports before the closure. Further, The Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the entry of goods classified as "dual-use items", which include around 118 types and hundreds of basic goods and commodities.

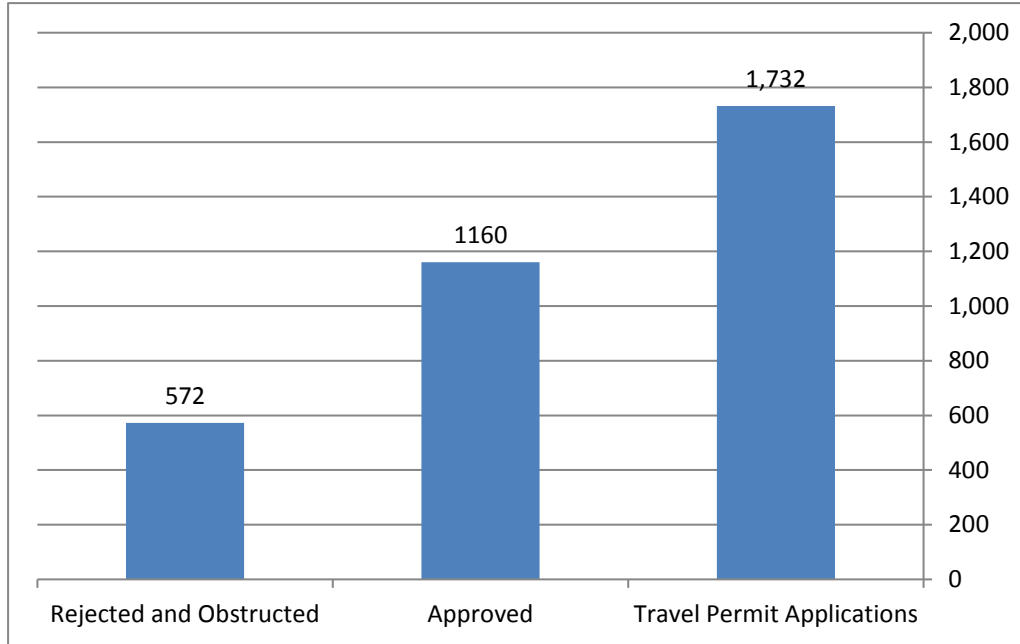
Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- The Israeli authorities continued to impose tightened restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing and allow only limited categories to travel: patients with serious conditions and their companions, Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, international journalists, workers of international humanitarian organizations, businesspeople, relatives of prisoners in the Israeli jails, and persons travelling via the King Hussein Bridge.
- Patients: During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities at Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing obstructed the travel of hundreds of patients referred for medical treatment in the hospitals in Israel or the West Bank under various pretexts, including security reasons, changing the companions, delaying responses to the permits, asking for a new hospital appointment and asking the patient for a security interview. In August, Israel obstructed the travel of 572 patients out of 1,732 patients, who applied for permits for treatment (i.e. 33% of the total permits.) The Israeli authorities rejected 219 permits for security reasons (12.6%), did not reply to 59 applications (3.4%); delayed replies (claiming under security check) to 192 permits (11.1%); asked 13 patients to change their companions (0.7%); and delayed the travel of 89 patients (5.1%) under several pretexts.



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Israeli authorities' Replies to Patients' travel applications via Beit Hanoun Crossing in August 2019



- The Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the travel of the very limited categories via Beit Hanoun “Erez” Crossing. These restrictions include extending the time required to check the applications of Gaza exit-permits from 24 to 70 days for those requesting permits for studying, trade, and travelling abroad; 50 days for visiting a sick relative, attending conferences, appointments in Embassies and Consulates in the West Bank or Israel; and 23 days for non-urgent medical referrals applications. It should be noted that these periods do not include the weekends: Fridays and Saturdays.
- The Israeli authorities also impose restrictions on items that can be carried by travelers via Erez, primarily electronic and electric devices, food, and cosmetics in addition to preventing travelers from using wheeled bags.
- According to the General Authority for Civil Affairs (GACA), in August, 15,838 Palestinians were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing while 16,344 returned. During the same period, 967 internationals were allowed to enter the Gaza Strip, while 1,012 left. It should be mentioned that these statistics do not represent the real number of persons allowed to enter as the permit holders are far less than the passing times and can cross via the crossing many times with the same permit in one month. The categories allowed to travel via Erez Crossing are: international workers, diplomats, persons with personal needs, travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing, and Israeli Arabs.
- **Prisoners’ Visits:** In July, the Israeli authorities allowed 120 family members, including 30 children, to visit 74 of their sons in the Israeli prisons according to the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in Gaza. The number of family visits to prisoners in the Israeli jails during August was very limited comparing with the number of visits reached in the agreement between the Israeli authorities and prisoners in May 2012. Moreover, the families of prisoners are usually subject to arbitrary practices, obstacles and degrading and immoral searches during their visit.

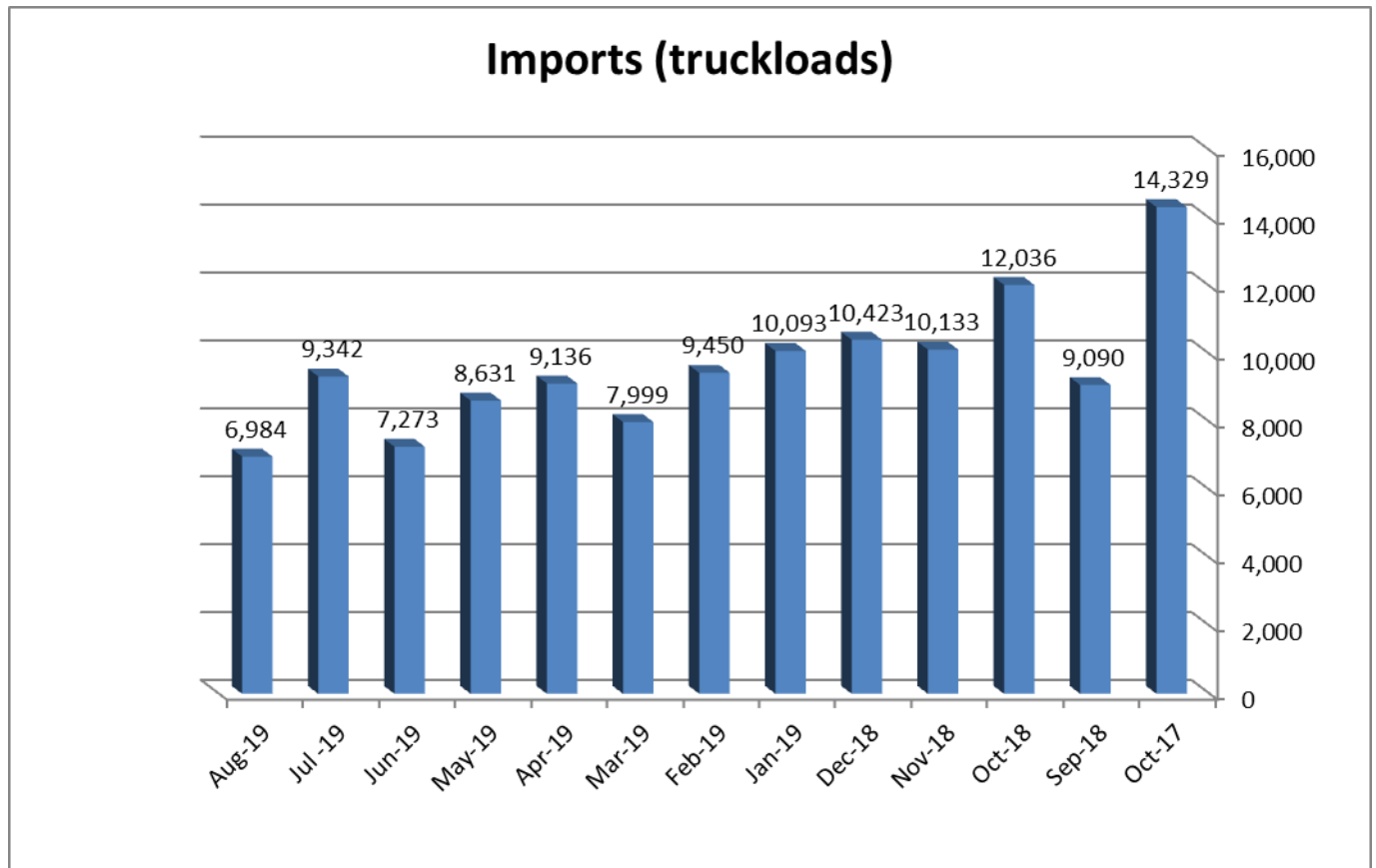
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Restrictions on Movement of Goods

Despite the ongoing tightened restrictions on imports into the Gaza Strip, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 6,984 truckloads. In August, the imports recorded a decrease rate of 25%, comparing with last July, when 9,342 truckloads entered. During August, the crossing was closed for 12 days (i.e. 38.7% of the total days in the reporting period).

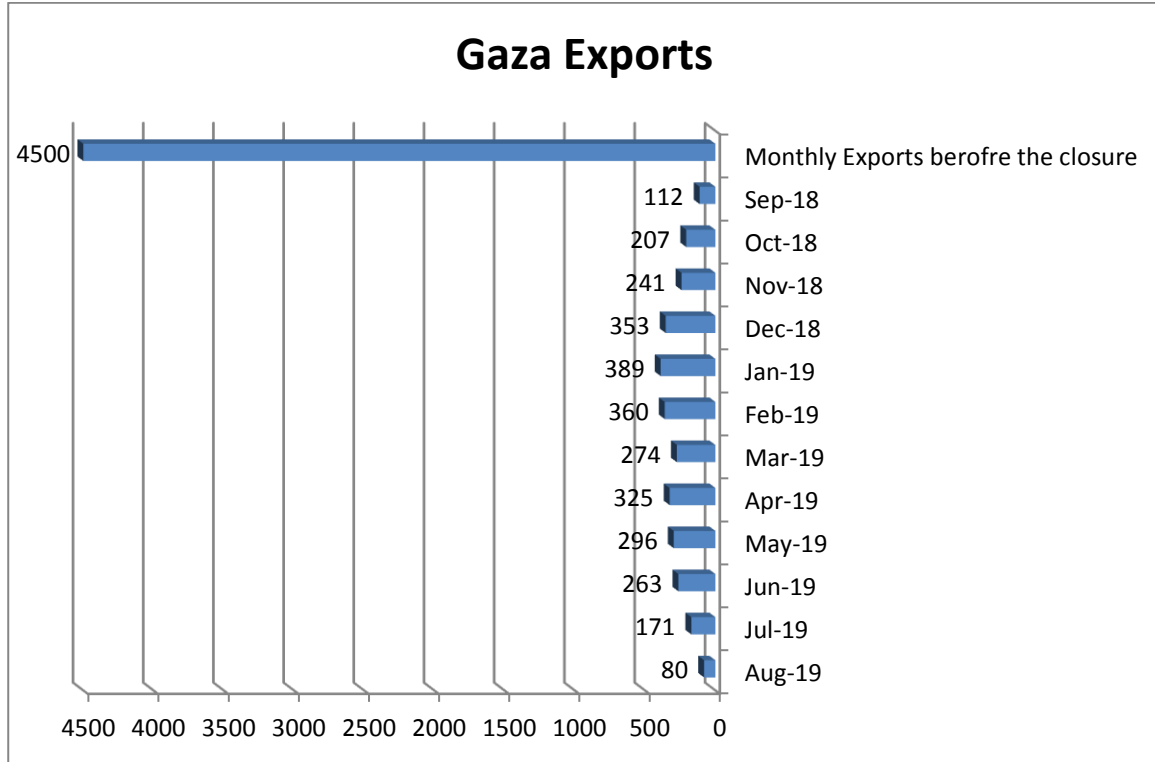


- **Ongoing ban on Gaza Strip exports:** The Israeli authorities continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports. However, in a limited exception, they allowed the exportation of very limited types of goods; most of which are exported to the West Bank and the rest are exported to Israel and other countries. In August, the Israeli authorities allowed the exportation of 80 truckloads (45 were exported to the West Bank, 25 to Israel and 10 abroad.) In August, the exports recorded a decrease rate of 53.2%, comparing with July when 171 truckloads were exported; and a decrease of 72.9% comparing with June when 296 truckloads were exported. Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, and clothes. The exports during the reporting period only constitute 1.7% of the total monthly exports before the closure was imposed in June 2007 when 4500 truckloads used to be exported.



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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 118 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 enter goods classified by the Israeli authorities as dual-use items is very complex and ambiguous. Any 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. After that, the goods will be classified and sent to the relevant Israeli officer to check it. Moreover, the Palestinian trader should close the transaction with the Israeli seller or broker and pay for it to be able to submit the request. If the response was positive, the coordination for the entry of goods will be allowed through the Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shaloum) crossing. A number of traders 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

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Shaloum) crossing return the goods that had been already approved on to enter. This inflicts heavy losses on traders who pay large amount of money for the storage and demurrage charges and to contractors who undertake to deliver their projects on time.

- **Movement at Rafah Border Crossing:**

The Egyptian authorities continued to open Rafah Border Crossing, which is the only outlet for the Gaza Strip residents to the world, and allow the humanitarian cases to leave and those outside the Gaza Strip to return. The crossing was closed for 15 days on holidays and weekends and was operated for comer for 5 days and worked in both sides for 11 days.

During the reporting period, 6,691 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip, including 515 patients and 256 companions; while 9,263 persons, including 3 death cases, returned to the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities returned 633 persons and banned their travel without clarifying the reason. Further, thousands of Palestinians registering for travel at the Ministry of Interior are unable to travel according to the Crossing and Borders Authority in Gaza.



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