



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings 01 – 31 December 2019

During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities continued to impose closure on the Gaza Strip for the 13th consecutive year and placed tightened restrictions on movement of Gaza Strip residents. The Israeli authorities continued to control entry and exit for pedestrians from and into the Gaza Strip at the Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing, narrowly allowing some categories such as patients with serious diseases 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. All of them 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.

In December, the Israeli authorities at Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing obstructed the travel of hundreds of patients referred for medical treatment in the hospitals in Israel and the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem; and rejected the travel of many patients under several pretexts, including security reasons, requiring patients to change companions or reschedule their appointments, delaying responses to the permits, and summoning patients for security interviews.

The Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the entry of goods classified as "dual-use items",¹ which enhanced the deterioration of economic, health and educational situation in addition to the infrastructure. Furthermore, Israeli authorities continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports, except for very limited agricultural products, constituting only 10% of the total monthly Gaza exports before the closure.

Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

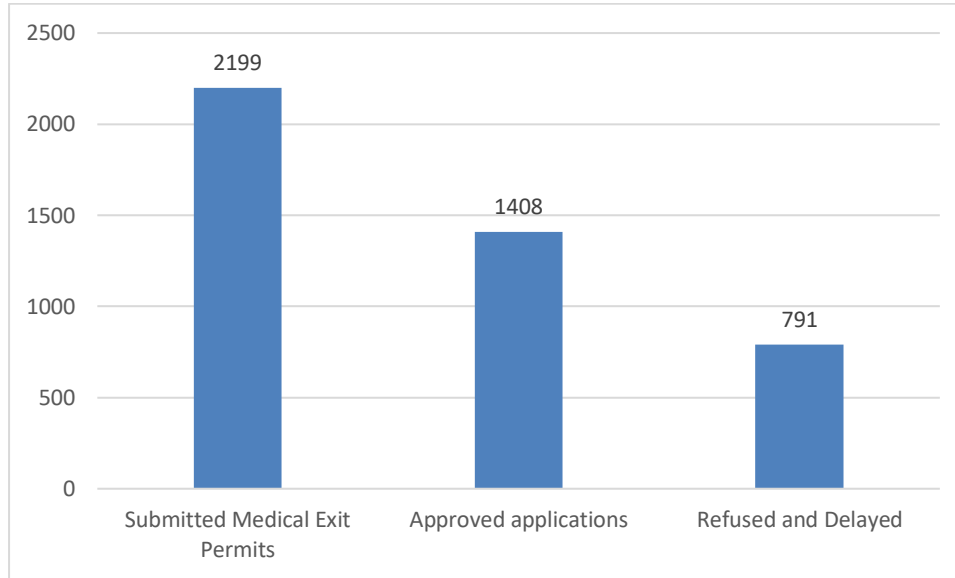
- The Israeli authorities continued to impose tightened restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing and allow only limited categories to travel: patients with serious conditions and their companions, Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, international journalists, 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 summoning the patient for a security interview. In November, Israel obstructed the travel of 791 patients out of 2,199 patients, who applied for permits for treatment (i.e. 35.9% of the total permits.) The Israeli authorities rejected 242 permits for security reasons (11%), did not reply to 255 applications (11.5%); delayed replies

¹ Israeli authorities claim that despite the fact that these items are normally used for civilian purposes, it is possible to use them in developing the Palestinian armed groups' military capacity.



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(claiming under security check) to 245 permits (11.1%); asked 6 patients to change their companions (0.2%); and delayed the travel of 43 patients (1.9%) under several pretexts.



- Obstructing the travel of 8,585 patients referred for medical treatment abroad since the beginning of 2019:** the Israeli authorities obstructed the travel of thousands of 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, summoning patients for security interviews, considering patient's application inappropriate, and considering the patient's case "improving quality of life" and not a "lifesaving" case according to the Israel classification.

IOF replies to patients' travel requests in 2019

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Approved | 1611 | 1181 | 1291 | 1396 | 1341 | 1444 | 1634 | 1124 | 1176 | 1021 | 1128 | 1408 | 15755 |
| Refused for security reasons | 191 | 118 | 74 | 120 | 177 | 257 | 196 | 219 | 219 | 159 | 190 | 242 | 2162 |
| No reply | 14 | 14 | 20 | 25 | 200 | 48 | 88 | 95 | 144 | 212 | 326 | 255 | 1441 |
| Pending | 417 | 259 | 533 | 514 | 410 | 238 | 271 | 192 | 309 | 229 | 191 | 245 | 3808 |
| Changing companion | 6 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 22 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 104 |
| Rejected under | 161 | 62 | 81 | 103 | 72 | 118 | 93 | 89 | 57 | 129 | 62 | 43 | 1070 |

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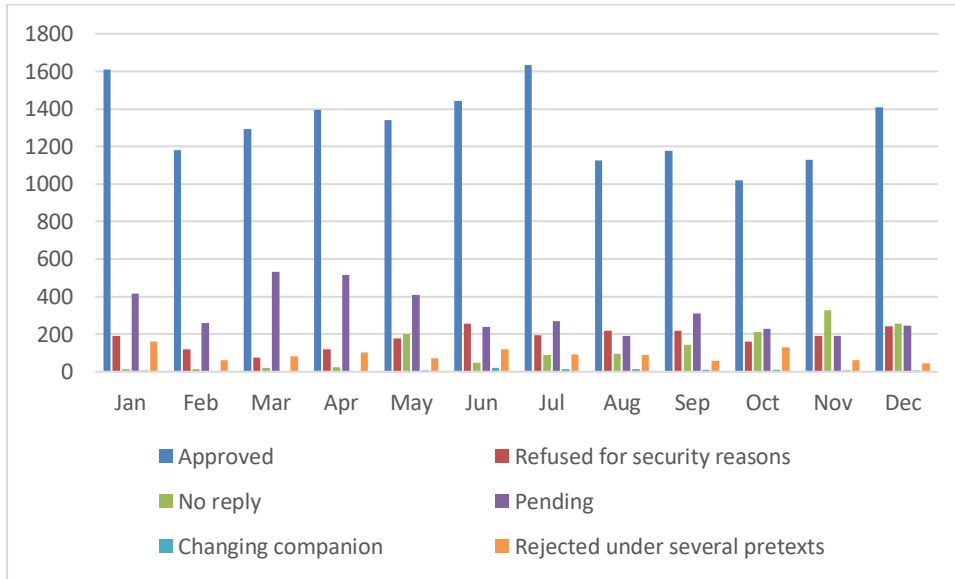
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|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| several pretexts | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total permits | 2400 | 1636 | 2002 | 2161 | 2206 | 2127 | 2295 | 1732 | 1916 | 1761 | 1905 | 2199 | 24340 |



- Statistics in the table show that from 01 January to December 2019, Israeli authorities obstructed the travel of 8,585 patients out of 24,340, who were referred for medical treatment in the hospitals in Israel and the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem (i.e. 35.2% of the total permits). The Israeli authorities rejected 2,162 permits for security reasons (8.8%), did not reply to 1,441 applications (5.9%); delayed replies (claiming under security check) to 3,808 permits (15.6%); asked 104 patients to change their companions (0.4%); and delayed the travel of 1,070 patients (4.3%) under several pretexts, including waiting for a reply after security interview, considering the patient's case "improving quality of life" and not a "lifesaving" case according to the Israel classification, considering patient's application inappropriate, and asking the patient to change the treatment appointment or submit a new application.
- 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 December, 22,691 Palestinians were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip via "Erez" Crossing while 20,881 returned. During the same period, 1,313 internationals were allowed to enter the Gaza Strip while 1,202 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 Israeli authorities allow only

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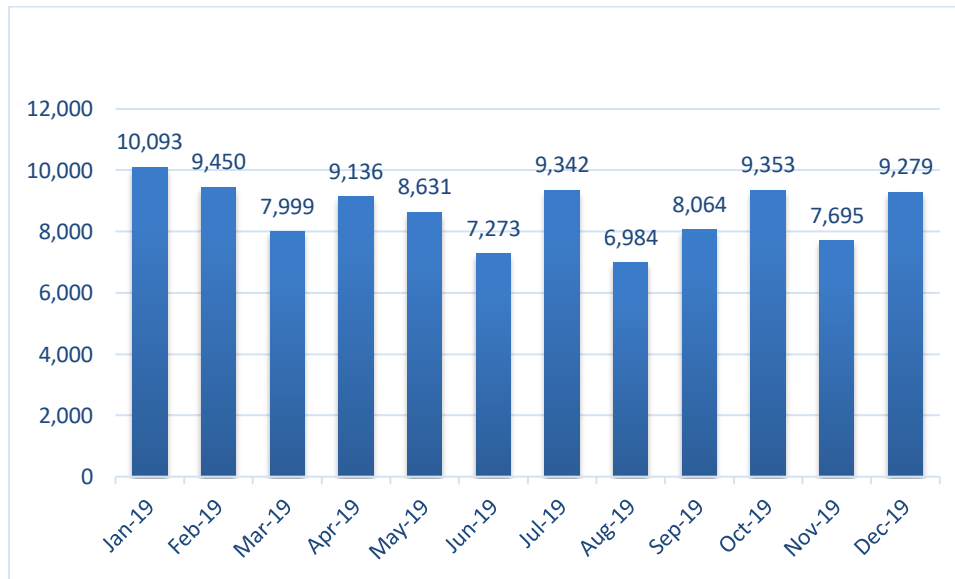
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limited categories to travel: workers of international humanitarian organizations, diplomats, people with special needs, persons travelling via the King Hussein Bridge and Arabs holding Israeli ID cards.

- **Prisoners' Visits:** In December, the Israeli authorities allowed 57 family members, including 10 children, to visit 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 this month was very limited in comparison with the number of visits agreed upon by 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.

Restrictions on Movement of Goods

Despite the ongoing tightened restrictions on imports into the Gaza Strip, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 9,279 truckloads. In December, the crossing was closed for 9 days (i.e. 29 % 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 November, the Israeli authorities allowed the exportation of 481 truckloads (401 to the West Bank, 46 to Israel and 35 abroad). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, and clothes. The exports during the reporting period only constitute 10.6% of the total monthly exports before the closure was imposed in June 2007 when 4500 truckloads used to be exported.

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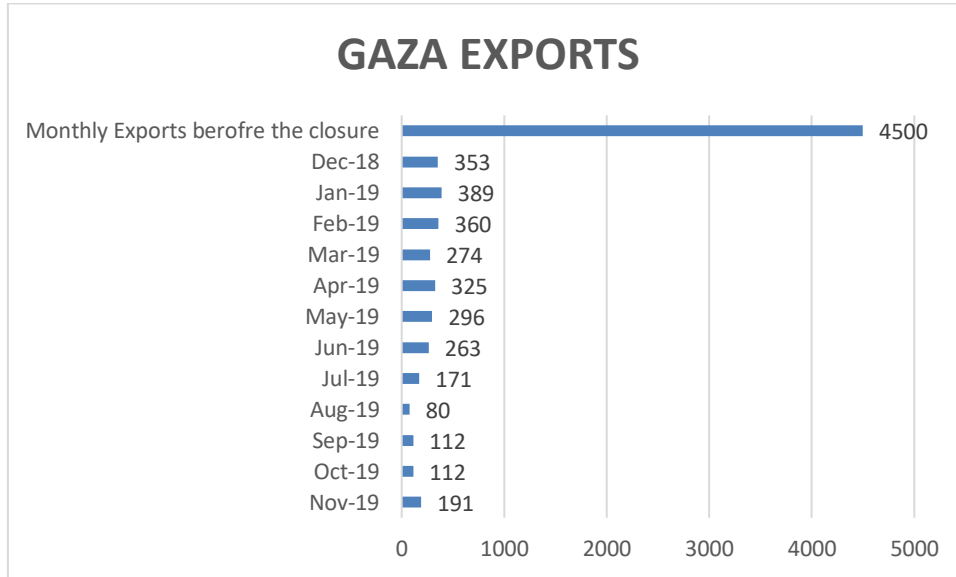
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- The Israeli authorities continued to impose tightened restrictions on the list of items classified as “dual-use.” The dual-use items include 118 types and hundreds of goods and commodities that are essential to the life of the population. Imposing 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 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.

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- **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 17 days on national holidays and weekends and was operated for both sides for 14 days.

During the reporting period, 5,307 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip, while 3,469 persons returned to the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities returned 1,066 persons and banned their travel without clarifying the reason. Furthermore, thousands of Palestinians registering for travel at the Ministry of Interior are unable to travel according to the Crossing and Borders Authority in Gaza.

The Gaza Strip travelers via Rafah Crossing suffer from prolonged, recurrent and unjustified searches, extending the return journey from Cairo to Rafah Crossing several days where travelers sleep in cars and restaurants after the journey could only take 6 hours.

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