



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings 01 - 29 February 2020

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, with exceptions to limited categories under severe restrictions. 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:

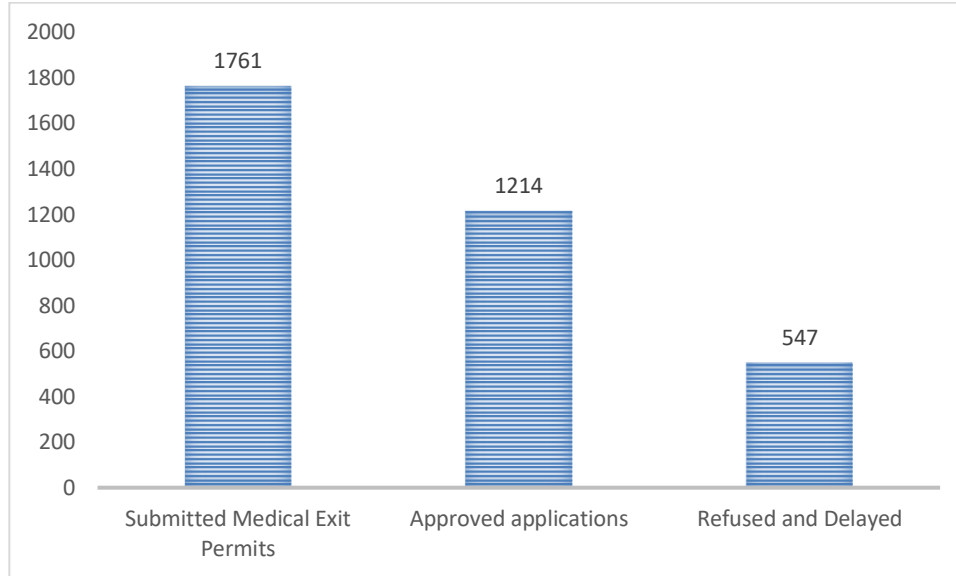
- The Israeli authorities continued to impose tightened restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing and allow only limited categories to travel: patients with serious conditions and their companions, Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, international journalists, 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 February, Israel obstructed the travel of 547 patients out of 1,761 patients, who applied for permits for treatment (i.e. 30% of the total permits.) The Israeli authorities rejected 159 permits for security reasons (9%), did not reply to 93 applications (5.2%); delayed replies (claiming under security check) to 219 permits (12.4%); asked 21 patients to change their companions (1.1%); and delayed the travel of 55 patients (3.1%) under several pretexts.

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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- 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 February, 21,193 Palestinians were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing while 20,925 returned. During the same period, 939 internationals were allowed to enter the Gaza Strip while 957 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 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 February, the Israeli authorities allowed 15 persons to visit their family members in the Israeli prisons all 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.

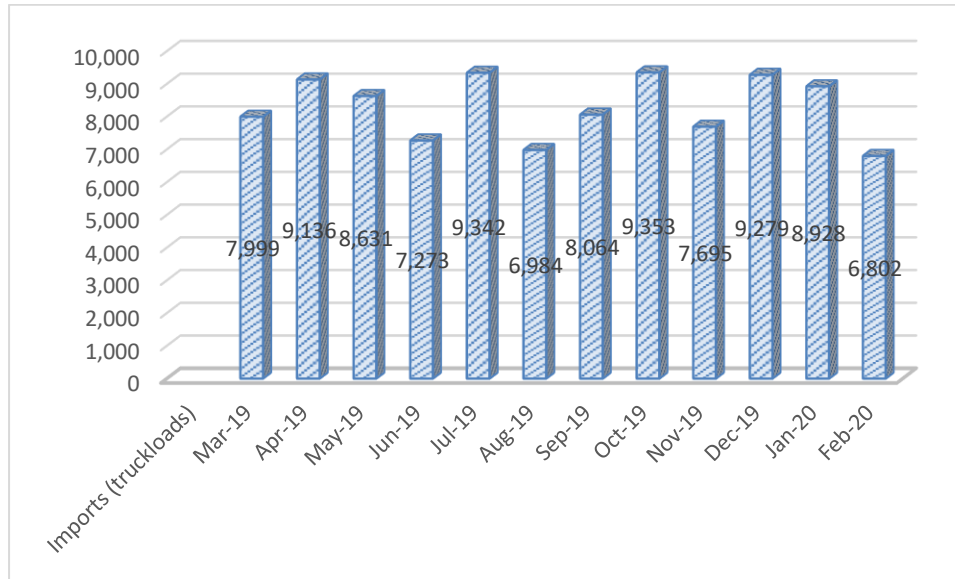
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Restrictions on Movement of Goods

Despite the ongoing tightened restrictions on imports into the Gaza Strip, the Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 6,802 truckloads. In February, the crossing was closed for 11 days (i.e. 37.9 % of the total days in the reporting period).

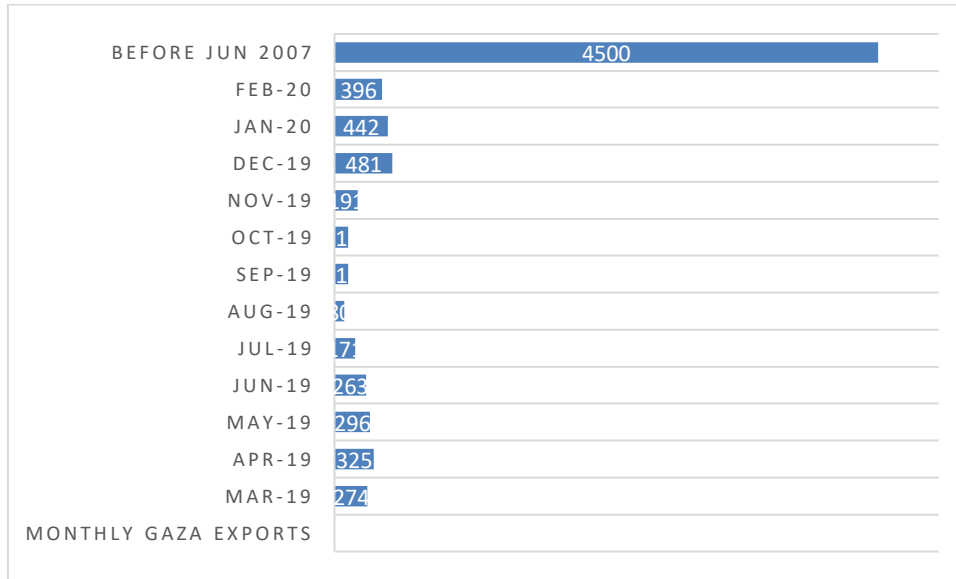


- **Ongoing ban on Gaza Strip exports:** The Israeli authorities continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports. However, in a limited exception, they allowed the exportation of very limited types of goods; most of which are exported to the West Bank and the rest are exported to Israel and other countries. In February, the Israeli authorities allowed the exportation of 396 truckloads (319 to the West Bank, 46 to Israel and 31 abroad). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, and clothes. The exports during the reporting period only constitute 8.8% 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 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 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 12 days.

During the reporting period, 6,095 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip, while 5,401 persons returned to the Gaza Strip, including 10 deaths. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities returned 668 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.

This Project is Funded by



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