



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings 01 – 31 July 2020

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities continued to impose closure on the Gaza Strip for the 14th consecutive year and continued to control entry and exit to and from the Gaza Strip at the Beit Hanoun “Erez” Crossing. Furthermore, Israeli authorities continued to impose restrictions on the entry of goods classified as “dual-use items” and continued to ban the Gaza Strip exports, except for very limited agricultural products, constituting only 7% of the total monthly Gaza exports before the closure. This enhanced the deterioration of economic, health and educational situation in addition to the infrastructure.

The ongoing closure coincided with unprecedented developments that negatively affected the Gaza Strip population and deepened their suffering, particularly patients in desperate need to travel and receive medical treatment abroad. The Coordination and Liaison Department in the Palestinian Ministry of Health suspended the travel coordination for the Gaza Strip patients, who are referred to hospitals in Israel or the West Bank for medical treatment.¹ As a result, patients referred for treatment in Israeli hospitals have been forced to coordinate directly with their hospitals in order to communicate with Israeli authorities and facilitate their exit from the Gaza Strip through Beit Hanoun “Erez” Crossing. Regarding patients referred for treatment at the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH)'s hospitals in the West Bank, Israeli human rights organizations have coordinated their travel. In limited cases (life-saving), the International Committee of the Red Cross coordinates patients' travel, upon a request submitted by the Gaza Ministry of Health.

In July, the restrictions on the freedom of movement from and to the Gaza Strip, imposed by the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority since early March 2020, continued for the purpose of combating the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). These measures negatively affected the living conditions of the Gaza Strip population, who have endured already catastrophic living conditions due to 14 years of Israeli closure and restrictions on the movement of goods and individuals, which caused unprecedented rates in poverty and unemployment in the Gaza Strip. These intense measures by Israel limited the number of persons and the already-limited categories allowed to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing with exceptions to individual humanitarian cases, as June witnessed a sharp decline in the number of patients allowed to travel abroad for treatment.

¹ Coordination stopped pursuant to the Palestinian President's decision on 20 May 2020 to absolve PLO and the State of Palestine's from all treaties and agreements with the Israeli and American governments.



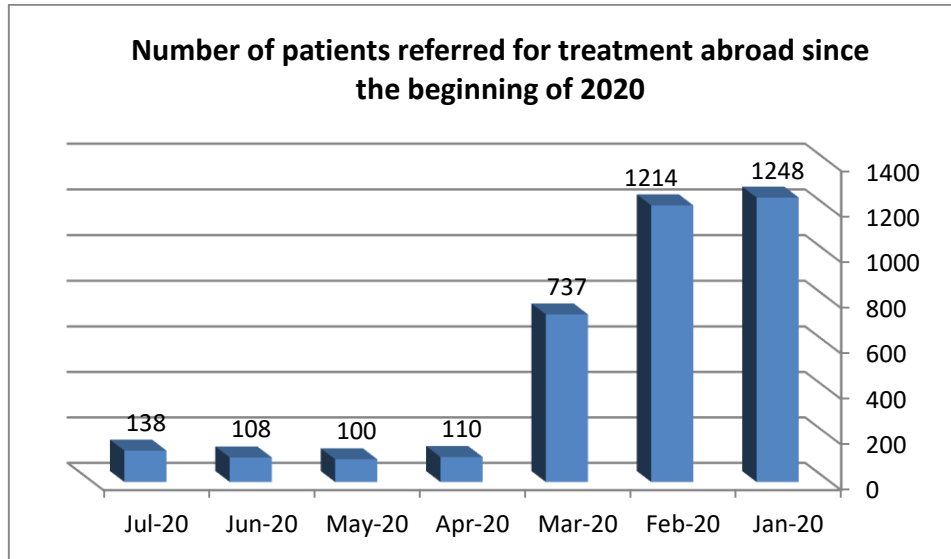
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Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- In July, Israeli authorities tightened its restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing as these restrictions were intensified since early March due to measures imposed by the Israeli occupying authorities and the Palestinian Authority to combat the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Israeli authorities also banned the movement for all, even the limited categories it previously allowed entry in March 2020, which include: 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. On the other hand, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of several humanitarian cases within the narrowest scope, mainly critically ill patients whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip.
- **Patients:** during the reporting period, the Palestinian Ministry of Health reduced the number of patients referred for medical treatment in the hospitals in Israel or the West Bank for the maximum extent possible. They only granted referrals to patients with serious conditions whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip. In spite of that, 138 patients accompanied by 122 of their relatives, were able to travel for treatment in Israeli hospitals or in West Bank hospitals, including occupied Jerusalem. Because of the coordination and liaison office of the Palestinian Ministry of Health stopping coordination procedures for travel of patients transferred to the Gaza Strip to receive treatment in West Bank hospitals and Israeli hospitals, the Center's researchers were unable to obtain the number of patients who were prevented by the Israeli occupation authorities from traveling for treatment abroad, and refused to grant them a pass through the crossing.



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



- During the reporting period, the Coordination and Liaison Department in the Palestinian Ministry of Health continued suspending the travel coordination for the Gaza Strip patients who receive treatment in the hospitals in Israel or the West Bank. This move came upon the Palestinian President's decision declared on 20 May 2020, stating that the State of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) are no longer bound by treaties and agreements with the American and Israeli governments and all consequent obligations to such treaties and agreements. As a result, patients referred for treatment in Israeli hospitals have been forced to coordinate directly with their hospitals in order to communicate with Israeli authorities and facilitate their exit from the Gaza Strip through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing. Regarding patients referred for treatment in the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH)'s hospitals in the West Bank, Israeli human rights institutions have coordinated their travel. In limited cases (life-saving), ICRC coordinates for those patients, upon a request submitted by the Gaza Ministry of Health.
- 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 July data available at the General Authority for Civilian Affairs (GACA), Israeli authorities allowed 325 Palestinians to leave the Gaza Strip via "Erez" Crossing, including 17 for personal needs; 138 patients; 122 patients companions; 21 international organizations employees; 24 diplomats, and one from Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. Meanwhile, 305 were allowed to return to the Gaza Strip, including 35 traders, 108 patients, 94 patient companions, 34 workers of international humanitarian organizations, 4 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, and 7 detainees released.

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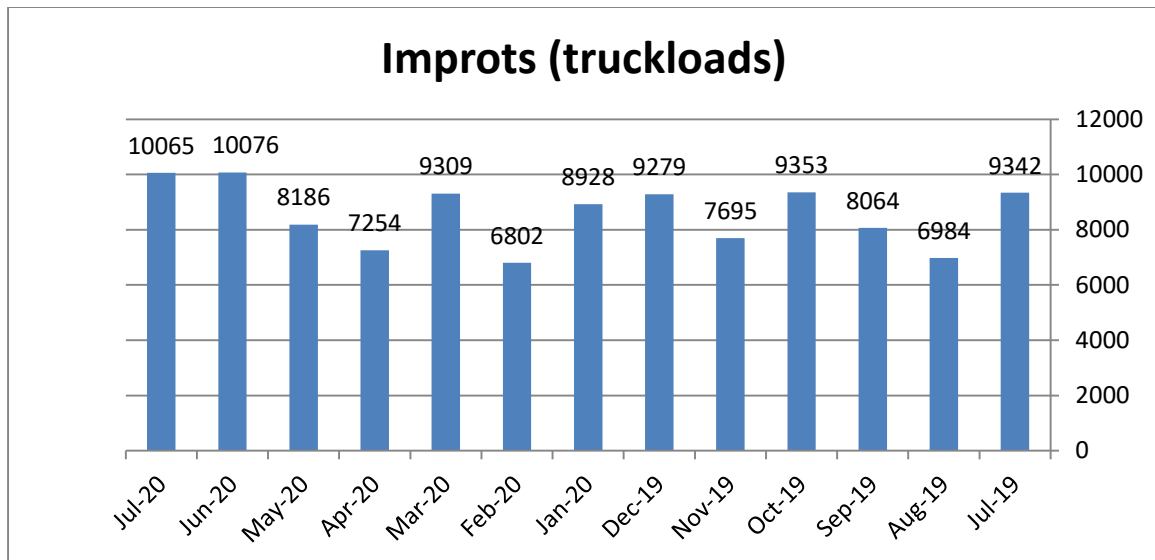


المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

- **Prisoners' Visits:** In July, Israeli authorities did not permit prisoners' visits. Denial of visitation rights is in violation of the agreement reached between prisoners and the Israeli authorities in May 2012. The Israeli blockade coincided with the tightened measures to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus.

Restrictions on Movement of Goods

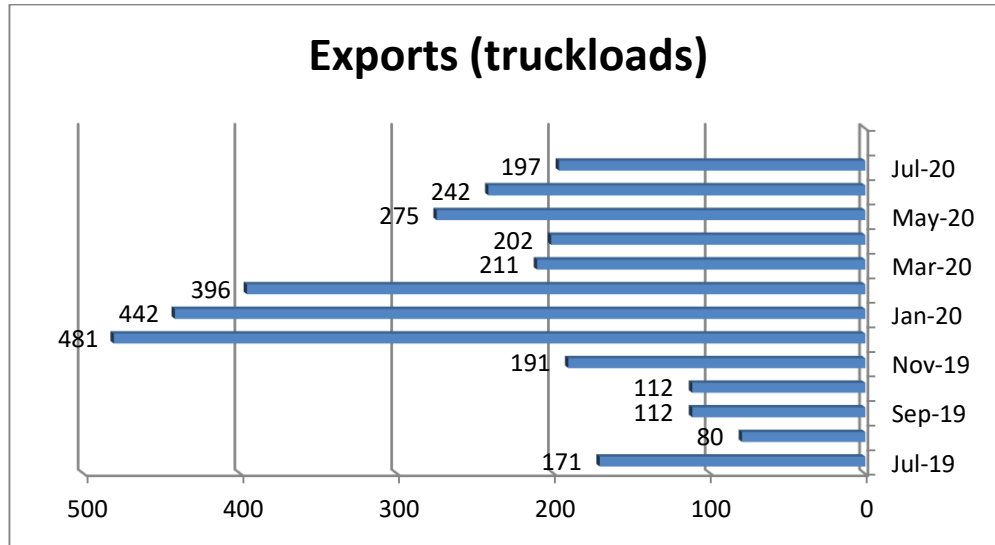
Israel continues to impose tightened restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip. In July, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 10,065 truckloads, including 509 truckloads of fuel, 504 aid truckloads, and 9052 truckloads of goods for the private sector. In July, the crossing was closed for 9 days (i.e. 29% of the reporting period). Also, 771 truckloads entered the Gaza Strip via Rafah crossing, including 423 truckloads of fuels, and 348 truckloads for the private sector.



- **Ongoing ban on Gaza Strip exports:** 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 July, the Israeli authorities allowed the exportation of 197 truckloads (157 to the West Bank, 39 to Israel and 1 abroad). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and masks. The exports during the reporting period constitute only 6.1% of the total monthly exports before the closure was imposed in June 2007 (4500 truckloads/month).



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



- 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 import 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. Afterwards, the goods will be classified and sent to the relevant Israeli officer to examine 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 entry. This inflicts heavy losses on traders who pay large amounts of money for the storage and demurrage charges and to contractors who are legally obliged to deliver their projects on time.



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Movement at Rafah Border Crossing:

- Gaza authorities, in agreement with the Egyptian authorities, decided to shut Rafah Border Crossing, under the state of emergency declared for the purpose of combating the spread of coronavirus. The Crossing was opened exceptionally for 3 days for humanitarian cases. During the reporting period, 4 persons were allowed to return to the Gaza Strip, in addition to 2 bodies of deceased persons who had passed away in Egypt. Furthermore, thousands of Palestinians registered for travel at the Ministry of Interior are unable to travel according to the Crossing and Borders Authority in Gaza.
- Travelers returning to the Gaza Strip 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 despite the fact that the same journey used to last less than 6 hours via car.

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