



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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

As the coronavirus continues to spread in the Gaza Strip with hundreds of cases recorded each passing day, the Israeli authorities continue to impose harsher restrictions under its illegal and inhuman 14-year long closure of the Gaza Strip.

Gaza remains on the brink of a true catastrophe which shall deepen its humanitarian crises especially with the skyrocketing unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates. The Gaza unemployment rate is 46% (i.e. 211,300 are unemployed), 63% of which is among youth. Also, more than half of the Gaza population lives in poverty as the poverty rate reached 53% according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Meanwhile, more than 62.2% of the Gaza population suffer from food insecurity according to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Furthermore, the tightened closure restrictions led to a catastrophic deterioration in humanitarian conditions, exhausted the health system, and weakened Gaza's economic structures. All of these factors negatively reflected on the provision of basic services for at least 2 million Palestinians who live in poor living conditions in the Gaza Strip, classified as the most overpopulated area in the whole world.

Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- In October, Israeli authorities tightened 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 occupation authorities and the Palestinian Authority to combat the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19). Israeli authorities also banned the

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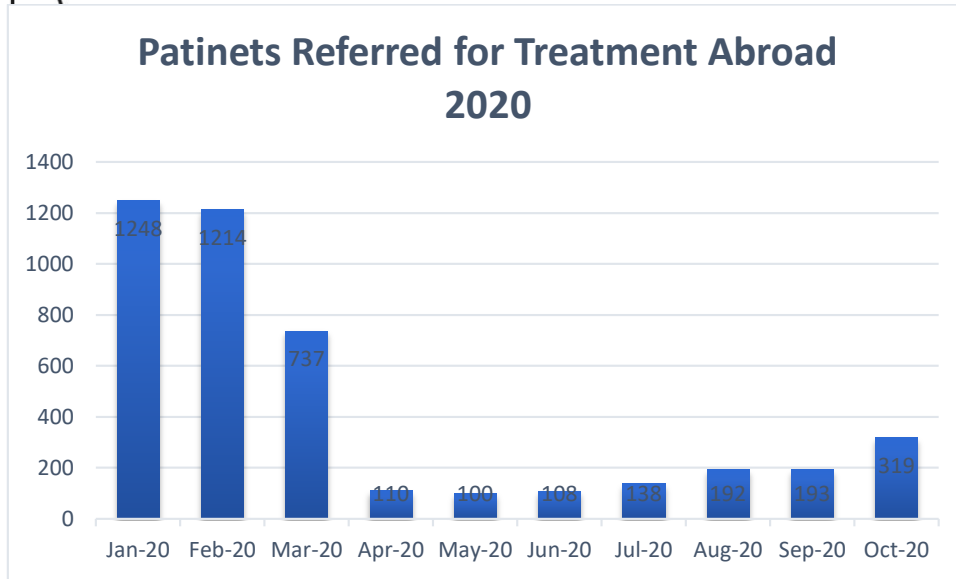
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movement for all, even the limited categories it previously allowed entry, which include: patients with serious conditions and their companions, Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, international journalists, workers of international humanitarian organizations, 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:** the Palestinian Ministry of Health reduced the number of patients referred for medical treatment in the hospitals in Israel or the West Bank to the maximum extent possible. MOH only grants referrals to patients with serious conditions whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip. According to the General Authority of Civil Affairs, 319 patients accompanied by 267 companions, were able to travel for treatment in Israeli hospitals or in West Bank hospitals, including occupied East Jerusalem. As MOH's Coordination and Liaison Office maintained the suspension of coordination procedures for the travel of Gazan patients referred for treatment in West Bank hospitals and Israeli hospitals, PCHR researchers were unable to obtain data on the number of patients who were denied travel and exit permits by the Israeli authorities.



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- During the reporting period, coordination between GACA and Israeli Authorities were suspended, this included MOH's Coordination and Liaison Department's services for the Gaza Strip patients who receive treatment in Israeli or West Bank hospitals. As a result, hundreds of seriously ill patients were unable to access treatment or continue treatment protocols they had already started in Israeli and West Bank hospitals.
- World Health Organization office (WHO) is currently facilitating patients' travel coordination, as MOH communicates with the Israeli side for patients who obtained referrals by MOH; this process has been ongoing since 06 September 2020. WHO has yet to announce the numbers of patients who applied for travel and those denied.
- The Israeli authorities bear full responsibility for the lives of Palestinian patients who are in dire need for medical treatment abroad and face imminent death, as they cannot access basic medical services due to their unavailability in the Gaza Strip.
- The Israeli authorities also impose restrictions on items that can be carried by travelers via Erez, primarily no electronic and electric devices, food, and cosmetics are allowed, as well as wheeled luggage.

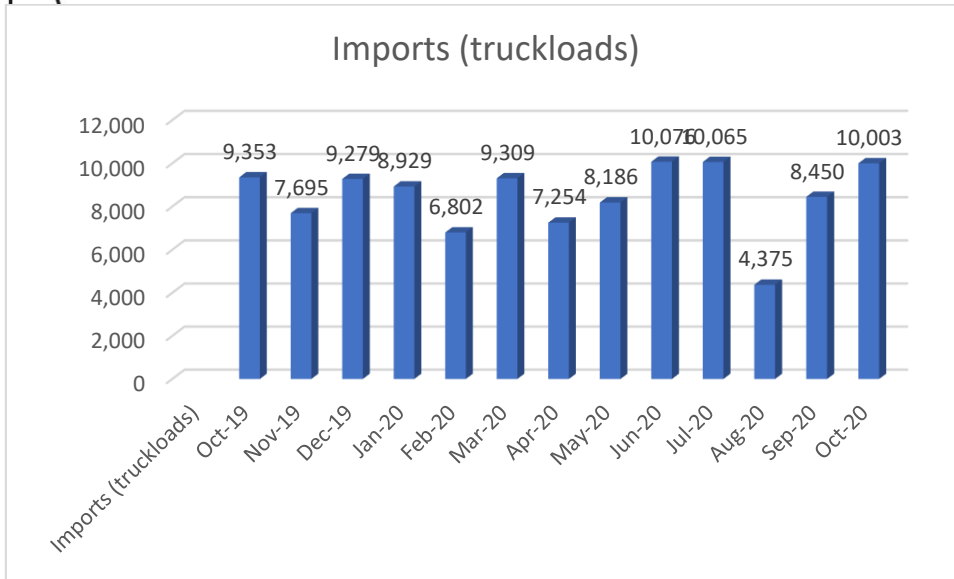


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- According to GACA October data, Israeli authorities allowed 651 Palestinians to exit the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing, including 9 for personal needs; 319 patients; 267 patient-companions; 30 international organizations employees; 9 diplomats, and 9 from Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. Meanwhile, 628 were allowed entry to the Gaza Strip, including 288 patients, 220 patient-companions, 28 for personal needs, 44 foreign international organizations’ staff, 2 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, and 10 released prisoners.
- **Prisoners’ Visits:** In October, the Israeli authorities banned family visits to Palestinians in Israeli prisons. This violates the right of detainees to be in contact with their families through family visits, which is a fundamental right under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Restrictions on Movement of Goods

- Israel maintained tightened restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip. In October, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 10,003 truckloads; including 391 truckloads of fuel and 664 truckloads of aids, and 8,948 truckloads for the private sector. The border closed for 10 days during October which constitute only 32.2% of the reporting period.
- 1,196 truckloads entered the Gaza Strip via Rafah crossing, including 391 truckloads of fuels, and 805 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 export 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 October, the Israeli authorities allowed the export of 166 truckloads (77 to the West Bank, 89 to Israel). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and furniture. The exports during the reporting period constitute only 3.6% of the total monthly exports before closure was imposed in June 2007 (4500 truckloads/month).



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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 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

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Coordination and Liaison Office at “Erez” Crossing. Afterwards, the goods are 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 is positive, the coordination for the entry of goods is 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 orders on time.

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, 14 persons were allowed to return, while 13 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip to Egypt, in addition to 3 bodies of deceased persons who had passed away in Egypt. Furthermore, thousands of Palestinians registered for travel at the Ministry of Interior were 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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الاتحاد الأوروبي

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