



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings

01 – 31 December 2020

Throughout the past 14 years, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) and other human rights organizations warned of the catastrophic consequences of the illegal and inhuman Israeli-imposed closure on the Gaza Strip. The United Nations (UN) also warned that the Gaza Strip would not be viable by 2020, owing to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation at all levels due to the Israeli closure and the Palestinian internal division. The UN emphasized that the Gaza Strip is going backwards, pointing out to the deterioration of health, energy and water services and highlighted that the Gaza Strip needs vigorous efforts in the housing and education sectors, in addition to creating new job opportunities.

Despite all these warnings, as the year 2020 ends and the closure closes on its 14th year the consequences of the closure are most evident in the Gaza Strip's weathered health system and its fragile economic situation. Unfortunately, the Gaza Strip's ill fortunes were not limited to the Israeli closure policy. The ongoing Palestinian division did not spare Palestinians in Gaza and their rights, particularly their economic, social and cultural rights; and it impacted the provision of basic services to at least 2 million Palestinians, who live in dire conditions in the most overpopulated area in the whole world. As the coronavirus pandemic spread in the Gaza Strip, the situation became more challenging as hundreds of cases are recorded daily and dozens have died of the virus to date.

The Israeli-imposed closure deepens the Gaza Strip's living and humanitarian crises

The ongoing Israeli closure and economic strangulation policies practiced against the Gaza Strip and the alarming indicators of the humanitarian situation of the local population, and their enjoyment of economic and social rights due to the long-term implications of the Israeli policies which have succeeded in annihilating any prospect of revitalizing the Gaza economy.

Health conditions: health facilities in the Gaza Strip have suffered seriously under the Israeli closure, which rendered them fragile and in chronic shortage of basic medicines, medical devices and specialized medical personnel, making the healthcare system unable to meet the Gaza Strip's basic health needs in regular times, let alone in the midst of a pandemic. Gaza's medical facilities struggled to operate after the outbreak of Covid-19 in the Gaza Strip, as they had shortage in coronavirus testing kits, intensive care units (ICU), respirators, and coronavirus diagnostic equipment, medicines, medical consumables and protective gear necessary to combat the coronavirus. Also, the Israeli authorities' ban on the import of new medical devices, such as diagnostic radiological devices needed for the diagnosis of cancerous tumors, and spare parts for maintenance disabled hospitals and medical centers from treating hundreds of patients.

غزة - شارع جمال عبد الناصر "الثلاثيني" - مجمع الرويا - الطابق 12 - مقابل جامعة الأزهر ويجوار الهلال الأحمر - د. حيد عبد الشافي
ص. ب 1328 تليفون 2825893 / 08 2824776 فاكس 2835288

Gaza- Jamal 'Abdel Nasser "al-Thalathini" Street - Al-Roya Building- Floor 12 - Opposite to al-Azhar University - Near
Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) -Dr. Haidar 'Abdel Shafi

PO Box 1328 Tel/: 08 - 2824776 / 2825893 Fax 2835288 E-mail: pchr@pchrgaza.org – Web page: www.pchrgaza.org



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Electricity crisis: The chronic electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip continues, as have the power outages owing to a 64% power deficit. In the best case scenario, the Gaza Strip has available 180 Megawatts (120 MW from Israel, and 60 MW from the Gaza power plant), a far cry from its 500 MW minimum need. The power deficit increases when Israeli authorities decide to suspend the entry of fuel to the Gaza Power Plant. In this case, the power deficit would reach 76%, raising the hours of power outages to 16 – 20 h/day. Such lengthy periods of power outages have direct consequences on the quality of health and sanitation services, including drinking water supply, sanitation and other services, such as reduction in diagnostic and treatment services at both governmental and private health facilities. Additionally, drinking water supply would be interrupted for long periods, and the power shortage will result in untreated sewage water being pumped into sea. Furthermore, the Gaza Strip's economy suffered huge losses as work was suspended in industrial, commercial and agricultural facilities that depend on electricity in their production mechanism, putting them at risk of being shut down.

Water pollution: water remains one of the biggest problems facing the Gaza Strip, as salts and wastewater seep into groundwater. As of now, 95% of groundwater is impotable, which poses a serious threat to the lives of the Gaza population, especially children.

Economic Situation: the Gaza Strip economy has incurred heavy losses due to the 14-year long Israeli closure. Economic facilities have suffered from tight restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on the entry of goods classified as "dual-use¹." The dual-use items include 62 types and hundreds of goods and commodities that are essential to the life of the population; hence, the restrictions on their entry contributes to the deterioration of infrastructure and the deterioration of economic, health and education sectors. Israeli authorities also continue to ban the export of Gaza Strip products, excluding limited quantities (mostly agricultural goods) that do not surpass 5% of Gaza's monthly exports before the closure in June 2007. The Israeli closure raised unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates, as the Gaza unemployment rate is 46% (i.e. 211,300 are unemployed), 63% of which is among youth. Also, the poverty rate reached 53%, and more than 62.2% of the Gaza population suffer from food insecurity.

Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

- In December, Israeli authorities maintained tightened restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing; the restrictions were intensified in early March 2020 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 movement for all, even the limited categories it previously allowed entry, which include: patients with serious conditions and their

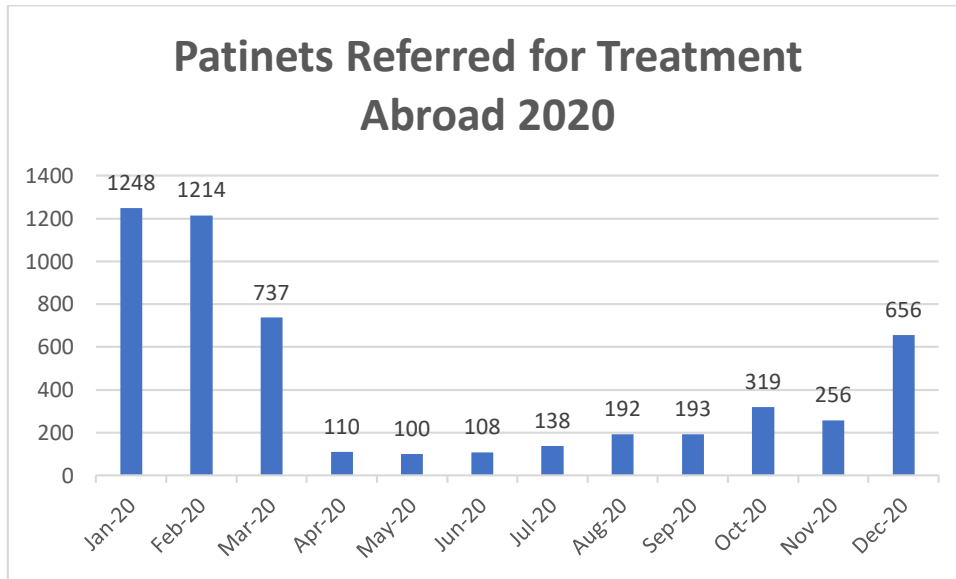
¹ Israeli authorities claim that these items, although used for civilian purposes, could be used to develop the combat capabilities of the Palestinian armed groups.



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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 and whose treatment is unavailable in the Gaza Strip. Despite this, Israeli authorities obstructed the travel of 274 patients out of 930 patients (i.e. 39.4% of the total permits.), who were referred for treatment in Israeli hospitals or in West Bank hospitals, including occupied East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities rejected 15 permits for security reasons (1.6%), did not reply to 108 applications (11.6%); delayed replies (claiming under security check) to 85 permits (9.1%); asked 15 patients to change their companions (1.6%); and delayed the travel of 51 patients (5.4%) under several pretexts.



- 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.
- According to GACA December data, Israeli authorities allowed 1520 Palestinians to exit the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing, including 30 for personal needs; 73 foreign international organizations’ staff; and 8 from Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. Meanwhile, 1466 were allowed entry to the Gaza Strip, including 39 for personal needs, 155 foreign international organizations’ staff, 63 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, and 3 released prisoners.

غزة - شارع جمال عبد الناصر "الثلاثيني" - مجمع الرويا - الطابق 12 - مقابل جامعة الأزهر ويجوار الهلال الأحمر - د. حيد عبد الشافي
ص. ب 1328 تليفون 2825893 / 2824776 فاكس 2835288

Gaza- Jamal ‘Abdel Nasser “al-Thalathini” Street - Al-Roya Building- Floor 12 - Opposite to al-Azhar University - Near
Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) -Dr. Haidar ‘Abdel Shafi

PO Box 1328 Tel/: 08 - 2824776 / 2825893 Fax 2835288 E-mail: pchr@pchgaza.org – Web page: www.pchgaza.org

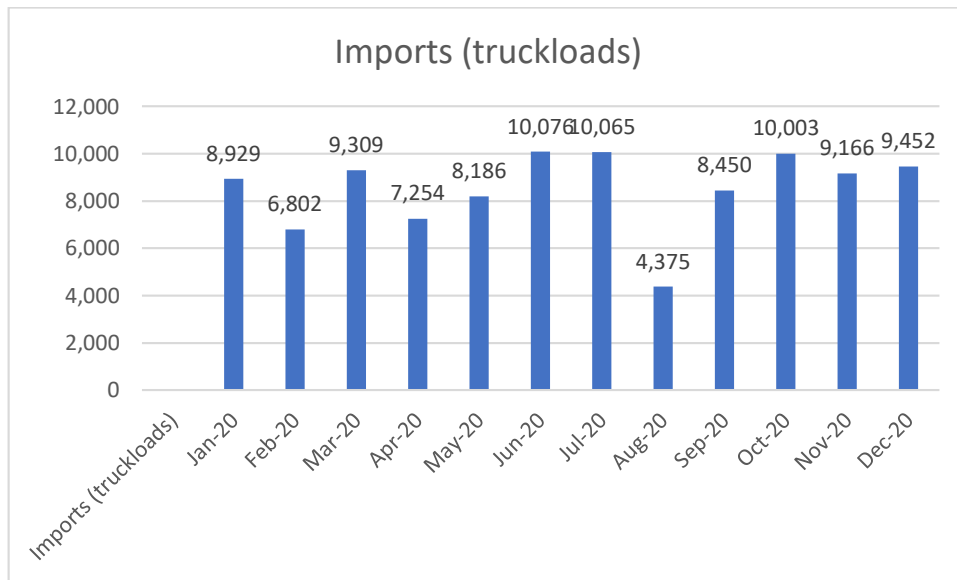


المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

- **Prisoners' Visits:** In December, 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 December, Israeli authorities allowed the entry of 9452 truckloads; including 427 truckloads of fuel. The border closed for 8 days during December which constitute 25.8% of the reporting period.
- 1,224 truckloads entered the Gaza Strip via Rafah crossing, including 476 truckloads of fuels, and 748 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 December, the Israeli authorities allowed the export of 413 truckloads (316 to the West Bank, 97 to Israel). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and furniture. The exports during the reporting period constitute only 9.1% of Gaza's total monthly exports before 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. A 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 are classified and sent to the relevant Israeli officer to examine it. Moreover, the Palestinian merchant must complete the transaction with the Israeli seller or broker and pay for it in full as a first step towards

غزة - شارع جمال عبد الناصر "الثلاثيني" - مجمع الرويا - الطابق 12 - مقابل جامعة الأزهر ويجوار الهلال الأحمر - د. حيد عبد الشافي
ص. ب 1328 تليفون 2825893 / 08 2824776 فاكس 2835288

Gaza- Jamal 'Abdel Nasser "al-Thalathini" Street - Al-Roya Building- Floor 12 - Opposite to al-Azhar University - Near
Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) -Dr. Haidar 'Abdel Shafi
PO Box 1328 Tel/: 08 - 2824776 / 2825893 Fax 2835288 E-mail: pchr@pchgaza.org – Web page: www.pchgaza.org



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

submitting a request for import. If the response is positive, the coordination for the entry of goods is allowed through the Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing. A number of merchants 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 Shalom) crossing return the goods that had been already approved entry. This inflicts heavy losses on merchants who pay large sums 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:

In December, Rafah Border Crossing continued to be closed due to the state of emergency declared in the Gaza Strip to curb the spread of coronavirus. The Crossing was opened exceptionally for 3 days for humanitarian cases. During the reporting period, 6 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip while 15 persons were allowed to enter the Gaza Strip, in addition to 6 corpses were allowed reentry into the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Meanwhile, thousands of Palestinians registered for travel at the Ministry of Interior remain unable to travel according to the Crossing and Borders Authority in Gaza.

Travelers returning to the Gaza Strip via Rafah Crossing suffer prolonged, recurrent and unjustified searches, extending the return journey from Cairo to Rafah Crossing for 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.

هذا المشروع بدعم من



الاتحاد الأوروبي

"This publication was funded by the European Union; its contents are the sole responsibility of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union."

غزة - شارع جمال عبد الناصر "الثلاثيني" - مجمع الرويا - الطابق 12 - مقابل جامعة الأزهر ويجوار الهلال الأحمر - د. حيد عبد الشافي
ص. ب 1328 تليفون 2825893 / 08 2824776 فاكس 2835288

Gaza- Jamal 'Abdel Nasser "al-Thalathini" Street - Al-Roya Building- Floor 12 - Opposite to al-Azhar University - Near
Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) -Dr. Haidar 'Abdel Shafi

PO Box 1328 Tel/: 08 - 2824776 / 2825893 Fax 2835288 E-mail: pchr@pchrgaza.org – Web page: www.pchrgaza.org