



## المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

### State of the Gaza Strip Border Crossings 01 – 28 February 2021

During February, the Israeli authorities continued its illegal and inhuman 14-year closure on the Gaza Strip. The consequences of the closure are most evident in the Gaza Strip's weathered humanitarian conditions, exhausted health system and fragile economic situation, which hampered the ability of the authorities in the Gaza Strip to combat the spread of Covid-19. Furthermore, the Israeli closure 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.

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-use<sup>1</sup>." The dual-use items are essential to the life of the population; hence, the restrictions on their entry contribute to the deterioration of infrastructure and the deterioration of economic, health and education sectors.

Also, the Israeli closure caused a true humanitarian crisis and a catastrophic situation, as it is the direct cause of high 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 suffers from food insecurity according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

On the other hand, on 09 February 2021, the Egyptian authorities re-opened Rafah Border Crossing for the travel of humanitarian cases, including students, patients, holders of permanent residencies, daily (except for the weekends and holidays) and until further notice for the first time in years as thousands of Palestinians could travel from and to the Gaza Strip in February. This coincided with Cairo's hosting the talks and meetings of 15 Palestinian factions on the arrangements for holding the presidential and parliamentary elections in Palestine. In February.

#### Restrictions on the Movement of Persons:

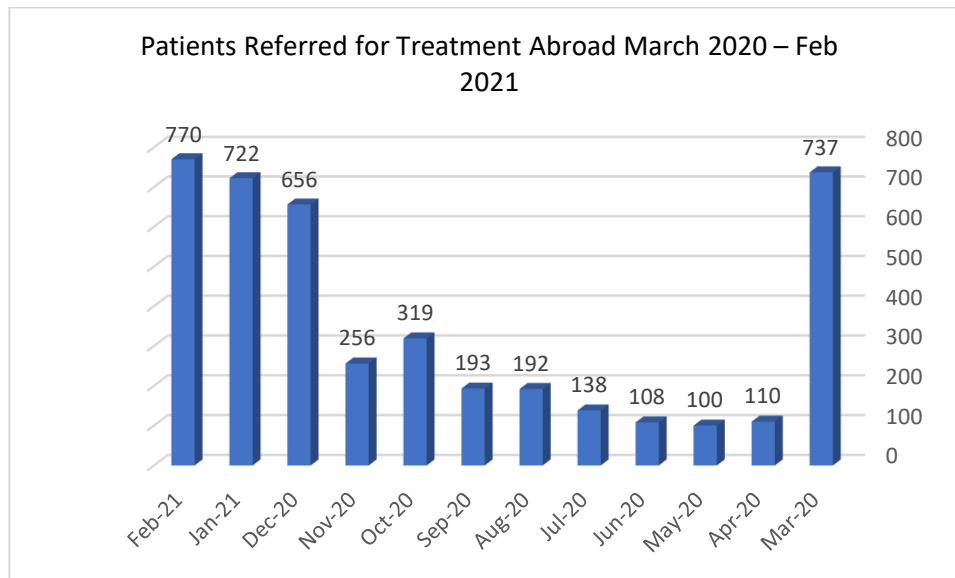
- In February, Israeli authorities maintained tightened restrictions on the movement of the Gaza Strip population through Beit Hanoun "Erez" Crossing; the restrictions were intensified in early March 2020 due to measures imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities and the Palestinian Authority to combat the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).

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



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- **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 278 patients out of 1048 patients (i.e. 26.5% of the total permit applications), who were referred for treatment in Israeli hospitals or in the West Bank hospitals, including occupied East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities rejected a permit for security reasons (0.1%), did not reply to 21 applications (2%); delayed replies (allegedly for security check) to 222 permits (21.1%); asked 6 patients to change their companions (0.5%); and delayed the travel of 28 patients (2.7%) under several pretexts.



- The Israeli authorities also imposed 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 February data, Israeli authorities allowed 1807 Palestinians to exit the Gaza Strip via “Erez” Crossing, including 33 for personal needs; 219 foreign international organizations’ staff; and 63 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards. Meanwhile, 1701 were allowed entry to the Gaza Strip, including 33 for personal needs, 181 foreign international organizations’ staff, 58 Arabs holding Israeli ID cards, and 8 released prisoners.
- **Prisoners’ Visits:** In February, the Israeli authorities banned family visits to Palestinians in Israeli prisons. This violates the right of detainees to be in contact

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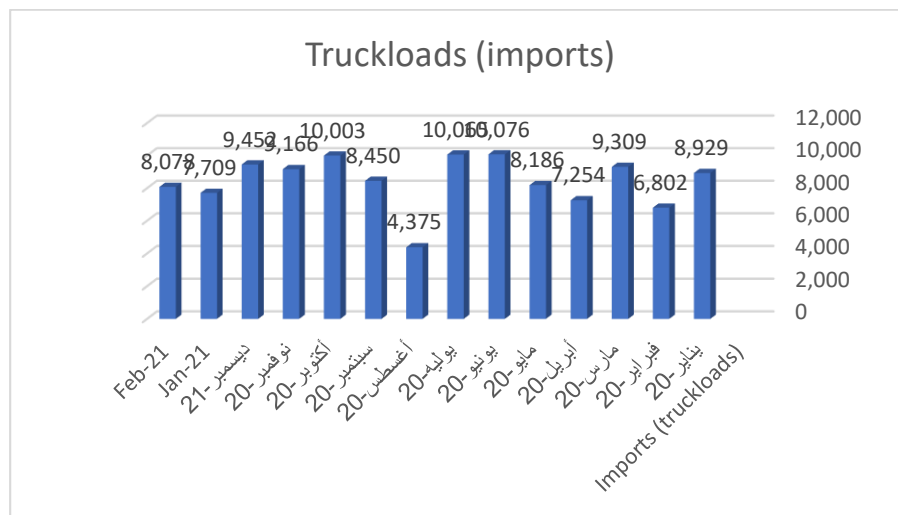


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with their families through family visits, which is a fundamental right under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

### Restrictions on Movement of Goods

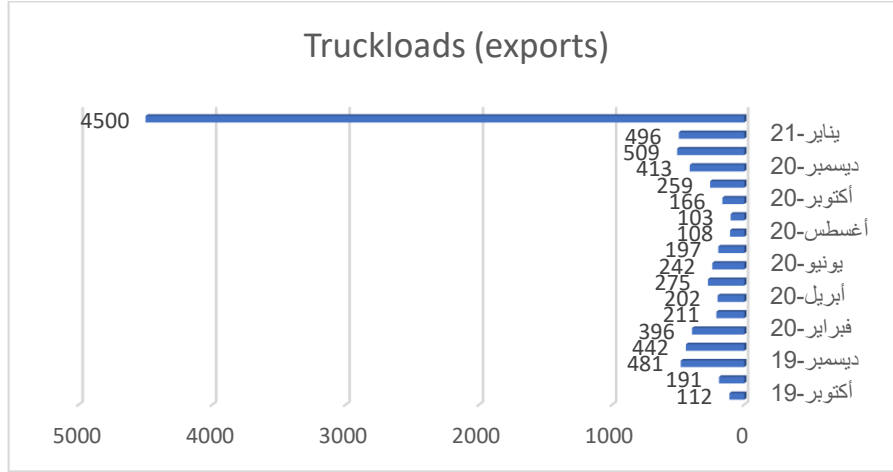
- Israel maintained tightened restrictions on the entry of goods into the Gaza Strip. In February, They allowed the entry of 8,078 truckloads via "Kerem Shalom" border crossing, including 618 humanitarian aid truckloads, 382 fuel trucks and 7078 truckloads of goods for the private sector.
- The border closed for 8 days in February which constitute 28.5% of the reporting period.
- During the reporting period, 1234 truckloads entered via Rafah Crossing, including 391 fuel truckloads and 843 truckloads of goods 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 February, the Israeli authorities allowed the export of 496 truckloads (353 to the West Bank, 136 to Israel, and 7 truckloads abroad). Those truckloads included agricultural products, fish, furniture, animal skin, aluminum scrap, clothes, and furniture. The exports during the reporting period constitute only 11% of Gaza's 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. 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 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.



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## ▪ Movement at Rafah Border Crossing:

On 09 February 2021, the Egyptian authorities reopened Rafah Border Crossing for the travel of humanitarian cases, including students, patients, and holders of permanent residencies, daily (except for the weekends and holidays) and until further notice for the first time in years. This coincided with Cairo's hosting the talks and meetings of 15 Palestinian factions on the arrangements for holding the presidential and parliamentary elections in Palestine. In February, 9526 persons traveled from the Gaza Strip while 5285 persons returned to the Strip. Moreover, the Egyptian authorities denied travel of 1088 persons to Egypt without clarifying the reasons.

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