



## State of the Gaza Strip's border crossings 01– 29 February 2016

This report documents the impact of the ongoing Israel-imposed siege on Palestinian civilians, which affects their economic and social conditions. This report also reveals the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Thus, this report exposes the real conditions of the Gaza Strip's population and the Israeli closure imposed on all Gaza's crossings for 9 years. It refutes Israel's claims that it has eased the closure of the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the report highlights that the continuing Israeli measures which are aimed to institutionalize of the closure and make the illegal restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and goods acceptable at the international level although they violate the international law, including the international humanitarian and human rights laws. The report shows that the Israeli closure is main obstacle for any development or reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip and the main cause of the humanitarian crisis and deterioration on the economic and social levels. The following are the most significant developments relevant to Gaza's border crossings during the reporting period 01– 29 February 2016:

### Movement of commodities

During the reporting period, no remarkable change was witnessed on the movement of goods. An almost complete ban continued on the exportation of goods to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, including industrial and agricultural goods. Restrictions were also imposed on the entry of a number of basic goods, especially materials needed for Gaza reconstruction, infrastructure projects and materials for manufacturing and production. However, Israeli forces allowed the entry of certain types of goods, the majority of which were foodstuffs and consumables, under complicated procedures, including the frequent closure of the only commercial crossing in the Gaza Strip, Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom); the crossing was closed for 8 days (27.5%). As a result:

- The Gaza Strip witnessed a significant rise in prices of all construction materials and lack of some of them in the markets due to restrictions imposed on their entry. During the reporting period, Israeli forces allowed the entry of limited quantities of construction materials. They allowed 74,160 tons of cement; 310,640 tons of aggregates; and 11,094 tons of construction steel. These quantities do not respectively exceed 4.9%, 2.2 % and 10.3% of the needs for Gaza reconstruction.
- Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 8 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 5,039 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 173.7 tons. This amount represents 49.6% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons according to General Petroleum Corporation in Gaza (EGPC).
- Israeli forces continued to impose an almost complete ban on the Gaza Strip's exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad, but exceptionally allowed the exportation of 190 truckloads to the West Bank; 181 truckloads of agricultural products (strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, cabbages, hot peppers, cauliflowers, sweet peppers, lemons, garlic, eggplants, dates, zucchinis and mints), 6 truckloads of fish, a truckload of furniture, a truckload of cloths and a truckload of scrap. The rate of the Gaza Strip exports for February constitutes 4.3% of the exports before June 2007.

### Movement of persons



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During the reporting period, Israeli forces imposed restrictions on the movement of Gaza population at Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, the only crossing for the movement of persons to the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and/or Israel. As a result, 2 million people were denied their right to travel to hospitals, universities, holy places and family visitation in the West Bank. Besides, they were prevented from travelling abroad. However, Israeli forces allowed limited categories to travel via Beit Hanoun crossing: patients suffering from serious diseases; Arabs holding Israeli ID's; international journalists; workers of international humanitarian organizations; businesspeople; persons travelling via al-Karama crossing on the Jordanian border; and elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque. These categories travel through the crossing under very complicated procedures. PCHR documented the following in this regard:

- During the reporting period, Israel closed Beit Hanoun crossing for patients for 8 days (during 4 days of which, only urgent cases were allowed to travel via the crossing). However, during the days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 1,299 patients permitted to get some medical treatment at the Israeli hospitals or at hospitals in the West Bank, and 1,224 persons accompanying them. Israeli forces obstructed the travel of dozens of other patients under different pretexts such as prevention due to security reasons, changing the companions, being forced to wait for a new appointment or awaiting an Israeli reply following security interviews.
- In February, Israeli authorities allowed 252 family members of prisoners divided into 4 groups to visit 142 of their relatives in Israeli prisons. The number of visits during the reporting period (February) was limited compared to the number allowed under the agreement reached between the detainees and Israeli forces in May 2012. According to the agreement, each prisoner has the right to two family visits a month; therefore, the number of visits should reach 760 monthly (18.6%), while the number of visitors should reach 1,480 (17%).
- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 26 days as a result of the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai. The crossing was opened for 3 days for specific categories during which, 2,439 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip, 1,122 returned and the Egyptian authorities returned 334 persons. This unveiled the reality of the situation in the Gaza Strip under the policy of collective punishment and the Israeli closure imposed over all border crossings, especially Beit Hanoun crossing. The number of Palestinians, who were registered for traveling via the crossing and are waiting for their turn to travel, was over 25,000, aside from thousands of Palestinians wishing to travel but have not been registered at the Ministry of Interior in Gaza.

## Commercial crossings

### Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) Crossing

Commercial crossings were established to provide the Gaza Strip with manufactured or raw materials and to export the products of the Gaza Strip to Israel, the West Bank or abroad. The closure of al-Mentar (Karni) crossing, the demolition of its facilities in early January 2012 and using Karm Abu Salem instead created more obstacles for the limited movement of imports and exports. In addition, the expenses of transportation increased causing a rise in the prices of



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imports. It was also an extra financial burden for the Gaza exporters because of the location of the crossing in the far southeast of the Gaza Strip.<sup>1</sup>

During the reporting period, Israel closed Karm Abu Salem, which is the sole commercial crossing, for 8 days (27.5% of the total period). On the days it was open, Israel allowed the entry of 19,224 truckloads, an average of 663 truckloads daily<sup>2</sup>.

### • Exports

Israeli forces continued to impose a ban on the Gaza Strip exports to the West Bank, Israel and abroad with exception of limited quantities. During the reporting period, 190 truckloads were allowed for exportation to the West Bank, including 181 truckloads of agricultural products (strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, sweet and hot peppers, cauliflowers, garlic, eggplants, cabbages, dates, zucchinis and mints), 6 truckloads of fish, a truckload of furniture, a truckload of cloths and a truckload of scrap. The rate of the Gaza Strip exports for February constitutes 4.3% of the exports before June 2007.

### • Imports

#### - Construction Materials

During the reporting period, construction materials allowed into the Gaza Strip were limited and do not meet the minimal level of the Gaza Strip actual needs. Israel allowed 74,160 tons of cement, 310,640 tons of aggregates and 11,094 tons of construction steel according to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza. These quantities do not respectively exceed 4.9%, 2.2 % and 10.3% of the needs of Gaza reconstruction. The majority of these quantities were entered for international organizations or Palestinian companies under strict monitoring mechanism under which Gaza reconstruction can be impossible. This data proves that UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has failed to fulfill the minimum level of Gaza reconstruction needs as one more than a year has passed since this Mechanism entered into force.

<sup>1</sup>The Israeli authorities have tightened the closure over the Gaza Strip to make Karm Abu Salem crossing the main and only crossing in the Gaza Strip in spite of its low operational capacity. Moreover, the Israeli authorities closed Sofa crossing, which was designated to the entry of construction materials in November 2008 and transferred the limited quantities of construction materials to be entered into Gaza also via Karm Abu Salem crossing. On 04 January 2010, the Israeli authorities closed Nahal Oz crossing, which was designated for the entry of fuel into Gaza, and transferred that fuel to be entered via Karm Abu Salem crossing as well. On 02 March 2011, the Israeli authorities closed al-Muntar (Karni) crossing, which was the largest and best equipped commercial crossing. 75% of the Gaza Strip supplies used to enter via Karni crossing that had the capacity of around 400 truckloads daily.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Ministry of National Economy in Gaza.



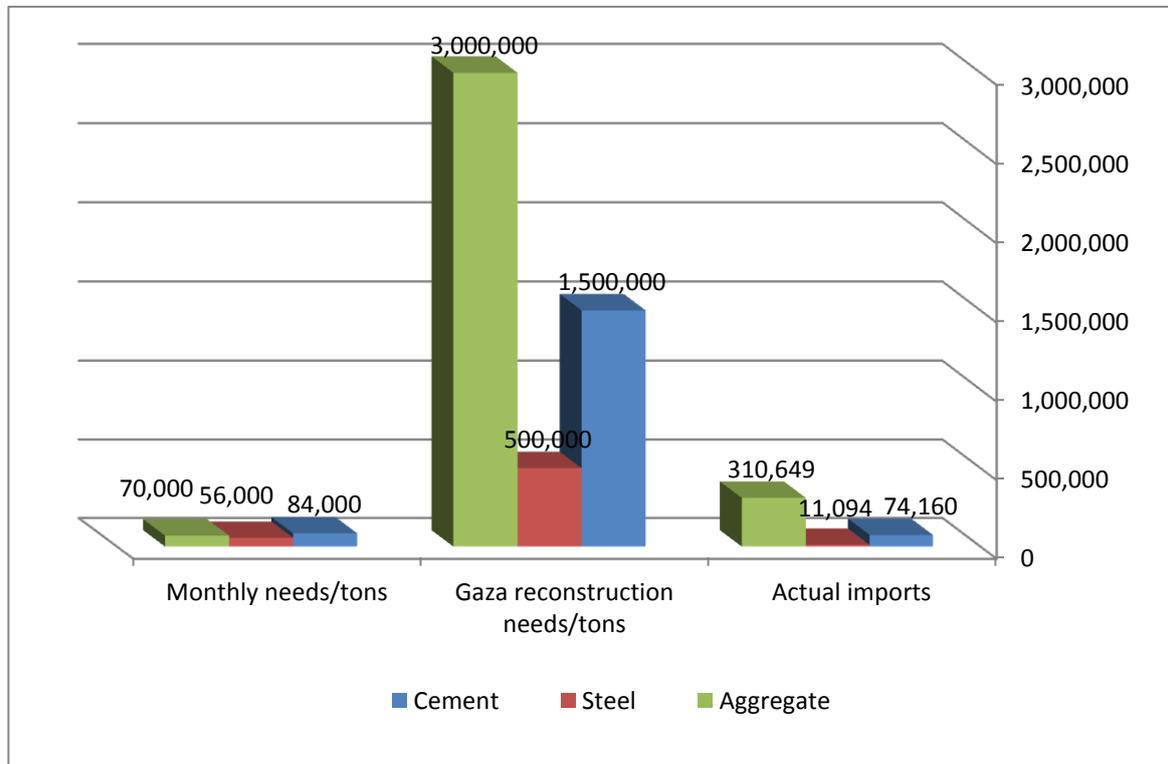
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**Table comparing the quantities of construction materials allowed into the Gaza Strip in February 2016, the actual needs and the Gaza Reconstruction Needs**

Description	Actual imports	Gaza reconstruction needs/tons	Percentage	Monthly needs/tons	Percentage
Cement	74,160	1,500,000	4.9%	84,000	88.2%
Steel	11,094	500,000	2.2%	56,000	19.8%
Aggregates	310,649	3,000,000	10.3%	70,000	443.7%

Source: Ministry of National Economy in the Gaza Strip.



### • Fuel

During the reporting period, Israel allowed the entry of 15,719,000 liters of diesel; 4,296,000 liters of benzene and 7,408,000 liters of industrial fuel to operate the Gaza power plant. Moreover, Israeli forces prevented the entry of cooking gas for 8 days. During the days the crossing was open, Israeli forces allowed the entry of only 5,039 tons of cooking gas; a daily average of 173.7 tons according to General Petroleum Corporation in Gaza. This amount represents 49.6% of the actual daily needs of the population, which is 350 tons. This resulted in



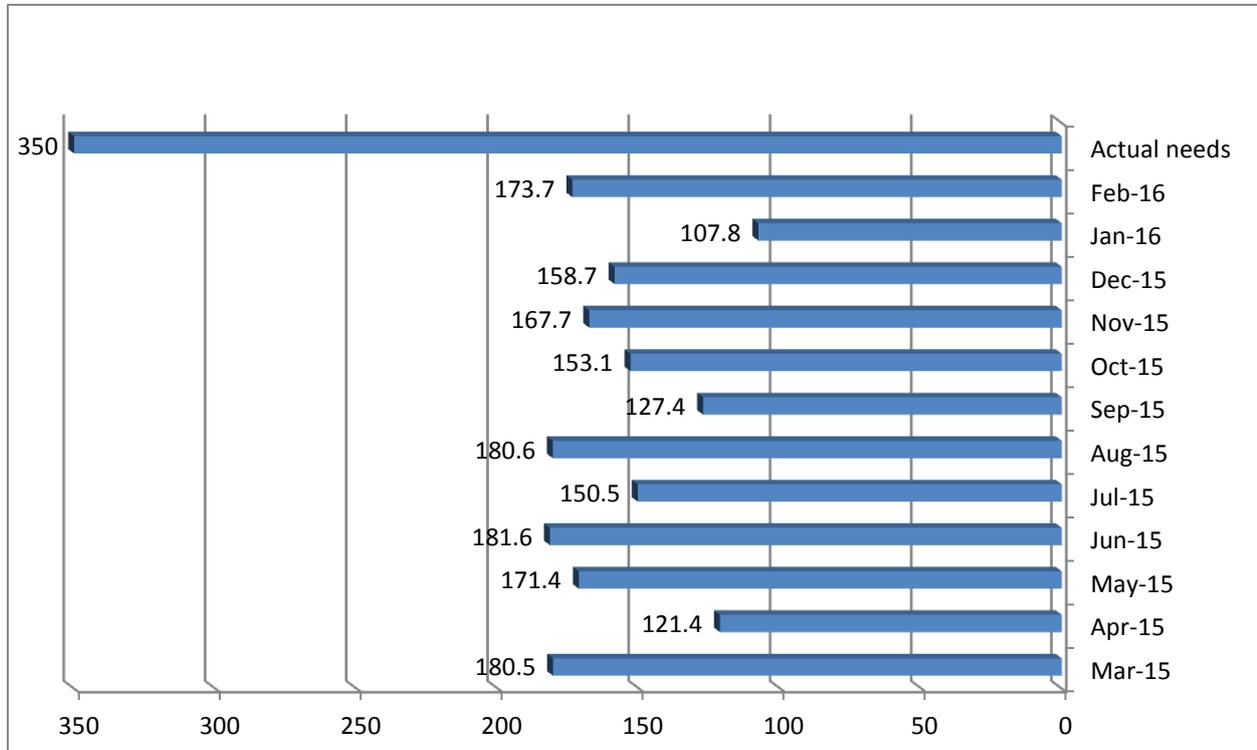
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shortage of cooking gas at gas stations, due to which, the civilians were obliged to wait for prolonged periods to fill half a cylinder.

### Quantities of gas allowed during the last year compared with the actual needs of the population of the Gaza Strip

Month	Daily average/tones	Percentage of needs met
March 2015	180.5	51.7%
April 2015	121.4	34.7%
May 2015	171.4	48.9%
June 2015	181.6	51.8%
July 2015	150.5	43%
August 2015	180.6	51.6%
September 2015	127.4	36.4%
October 2015	153.1	43.7%
November 2015	167.7	47.9%
December 2015	158.7	45.3%
January 2016	107.8	35.9%
February 2016	173.7	49.6%
Actual needs	350	100%





## Crossings Designated to the Movement of Persons

### • Beit Hanoun (Erez) Crossing

Israel has closed the Beit Hanoun crossing to the movement of Palestinian civilians, with the exception of limited categories: patients suffering from serious illnesses; Arabs holding Israeli IDs; international journalists; workers of international humanitarian organizations; business people; and persons travelling via al-Karama crossing. These categories are allowed to travel through the crossing under very complicated procedures. According to the Civil Liaison Office in the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Israel closed the crossing completely for 8 days (during 4 days of which, only urgent cases were allowed to travel via the crossing) during the reporting period.

### Patients

Israel closed Beit Hanoun crossing for patients for 8 days (during 4 days of which, only urgent cases were allowed to travel via the crossing). During days it was open, Israel allowed the travel of 1,299 patients and 1,224 companions. Israeli forces obstructed the travel of dozens of other patients under various pretexts, including security reasons, changing the companions, waiting for a new appointment and awaiting an Israeli reply following security interviews.

### Prisoners' Visits

In February, Israeli authorities allowed 252 family members of prisoners divided into 4 groups to visit 142 of their relatives in Israeli prisons.

#### Family visits to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons in February 2016

Day	Number of visitors	Number of children	Number of visited prisoners	Prison
08 February 2016	26	-	21	Eshel prison
15 February 2016	90	23	51	Nafha prison
22 February 2016	86	25	43	Ramon prison
28 February 2016	27	15	27	Nafha prison

Source: Media statements by the Spokesperson of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The abovementioned table shows that the number of visitors is limited compared to the number of visits allowed under the prisoners' deal. According to the agreement, each prisoner has the right to two family visits a month. With 380 prisoners in Israeli prisons, the number of visits should reach 760 monthly. However, the Israeli forces only allowed 142 visits (18.6%) in February. The same applies to the number of family members who are allowed to visit their relatives; the number of these members mounted to 252, in February whereas, the number should include 1,480 persons in case each prisoner is visited by 2 members of his family twice a month (17%).



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The families were subjected to arbitrary practices, obstacles and immoral and degrading treatment. They also suffered from the Israeli provocative measures and the continuous threats to cancel their visits in the future if they did not obey Israeli orders.

It should be noted that the Israeli authorities determine a visitor who is allowed to visit a prisoner, and those authorized visitors are limited to the prisoners' father, mother or wife and one or two of them only. Furthermore, in case either one is incapable of visiting (due to sickness, old age or death), the Israeli authorities do not allow the change of the visitors' names; thus, the prisoner loses the right to his visit. Moreover, Israeli authorities continue to deprive children from visiting their fathers in Israeli prisons. Prisoners' families are not allowed to bring with them personal items, including clothes and food.

### • Other categories

During the reporting period, Israel allowed the travel of 8,273 traders, 2,081 persons for personal needs, 755 workers of international organizations into the Gaza Strip, 728 of elderly people to perform prayers in al-Aqsa mosque and 256 travelers via al-Karama (Allenby) crossing under complicated security procedure, resulting in prolonged waiting periods, sometimes up to several days.

### Rafah International Crossing Point

- During the reporting period, Rafah International Crossing Point was closed for 26 days as a result of the Egyptian internal situation and the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai. The crossing opened for 3 days only for specific categories in which, 2,439 persons were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip, 1,122 returned and the Egyptian authorities returned 334 persons. This unveiled the reality of the situation in the Gaza Strip under the policy of collective punishment and the Israeli closure imposed over all border crossings, especially Beit Hanoun crossing. The number of Palestinians, who registered for traveling via the crossing and are waiting for their turn to travel, was over 25,000, aside from thousands of Palestinians wishing to travel but have not been registered at the Ministry of Interior in Gaza.

### Recommendations

PCHR calls upon the international community, particularly the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to:

- Exert effective pressure on Israel to compel it to open all of Gaza's crossings, both those used for commercial purposes and those used for the movement of civilians, to allow the civilian population of the Gaza Strip to reconstruct civilian property destroyed during Israel's latest offensive on Gaza and to enable them to enjoy their fundamental civil and political rights, as well as their economic, social and cultural rights;
- Promptly and urgently intervene to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to put an end to the deterioration of living conditions across the Gaza Strip;



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- Compel Israel to put an end to measures of collective punishment against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, including the tightening of the closure of Gaza's border crossings;
- Cancel the UN Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, as it failed to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, especially owners of houses and property that were completely destroyed, who have not received any compensations or construction materials to rebuild their destroyed houses and property;
- Remind the State of Israel, the Occupying Power, of its obligations towards the civilians of the Gaza Strip, under Article 55 of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates that: "To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles if the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate. The Occupying Power may not requisition foodstuffs, articles or medical supplies available in the occupied territory, and then only if the requirements of the civilian population have been taken into account." The High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention must fulfill their obligation under Article 1 of the Convention by ensuring the implementation of the Convention's provisions by the State of Israel, in order to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip; and
- Call on the Egyptian authorities to take more measures to facilitate movement at the Rafah International Crossing Point, in particular by increasing the number of travelers and opening hours, and to find a solution for the thousands of Palestinians wishing to travel via the crossing, particularly during the summer when the number of travellers doubles.
- Reminds that the Israeli-imposed closure on the Gaza Strip is one of the gravest violations and collective punishments committed by Israeli forces against Palestinians in the Israeli occupation history. This inhumane and illegal closure constitutes a man-made disaster and is a part of an ongoing war crime against the Palestinian civilians.