

# THE GAZA STRIP: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade

## MAY 2015

### KEY FACTS

- The blockade imposed since June 2007 has reduced Gaza's GDP by 50% (The World Bank, May 2015).
- The unemployment rate in Gaza during 2014 stood at 43% on average: the highest in the world. Youth unemployment exceeded 60% (PCBS).
- Nearly 80% of Gaza's population receives some form of social assistance and 40% fall below the poverty line.
- The daily average of crossings by permit holders out of Gaza via the Israeli-controlled Erez Crossing in the first five months of 2015 stood at 449, compared to 212 in the same period of 2014, and around 26,000 in 2000.
- The Egyptian-controlled crossing (Rafah) has been continuously closed, including for humanitarian assistance, since 24 October 2014, except for 15 out of 219 days of partial openings, as of May 2015.
- Kerem Shalom is the only commercial crossing currently operating, out of four such crossings prior to the imposition of the blockade.
- Israel defines basic construction materials (gravel, steel bars, and cement), along with a wide range of spare parts, computer equipment, and vehicles, as "dual use" items, restricting their import.
- Only 1.9% of construction materials required to meet Gaza's estimated housing caseload, including from destruction during previous conflicts and from natural population growth (2015-2019), have entered Gaza (*Shelter Cluster, May 2015*).
- 408 truckloads of commercial goods exited Gaza via Israel in the first five months of 2015, compared to 83 in the same period of 2014 and 5,451 in the equivalent period of 2007, prior to the imposition of the blockade.
- Access to areas within several hundred meters from the Israeli fence surrounding Gaza is risky or prohibited, discouraging or preventing farming activities.
- Fishermen are allowed to access less than one third of the fishing areas allocated to them under the Oslo Accords: six out of 20 nautical miles.

**1. 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza are 'locked in', denied free access to the remainder of the occupied Palestinian territory and the outside world.** Movement restrictions imposed by Israel since the early 1990's and intensified in June 2007, following the takeover of Gaza by Hamas and the imposition of the blockade, have undermined the living conditions in Gaza and fragmented the oPt and its social fabric. While in recent months the Israeli authorities have significantly increased the number of exit permits issued to Palestinians, those eligible for such permits still constitute a small minority, primarily patients, businesspeople and staff of international organizations. The isolation of Gaza has been exacerbated by restrictions imposed by the Egyptian authorities on its single passengers crossing (Rafah).

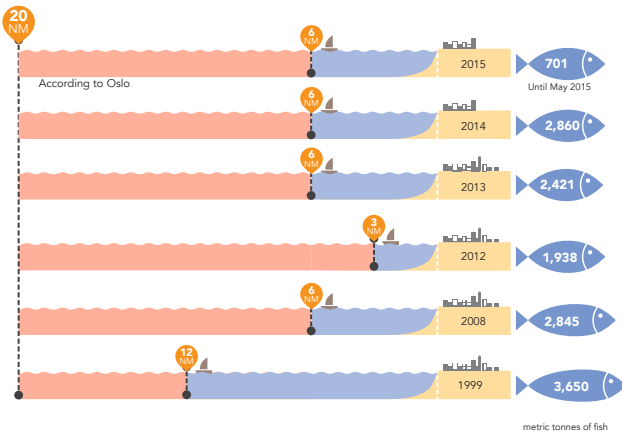
**2. Longstanding access restrictions imposed by Israel have undermined Gaza's economy, resulting in high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and aid dependency.** These include restrictions on transfer of goods to the West Bank and Israel; on the import of "dual use items"; and on the access of people to agricultural land and fishing waters. The Israeli authorities have recently eased some of these restrictions, but the basic constraints remain in place, preventing a significant improvement in the economy. This is compounded by the destruction of economic assets during hostilities and the severe electricity shortage.

**3. Israeli restrictions on the import of basic construction materials and equipment have significantly deteriorated the quality of basic services, and impede the reconstruction and repair of homes.** The limited access to these materials since 2007 has prevented or delayed the construction, repair and upgrade of homes and infrastructure, to address the rapid population growth and the devastation caused by recurrent rounds of hostilities. This has undermined the quality of health, education, and water and sanitation services available in Gaza, and prolonged the displacement of those who have lost their homes. While the import restrictions remain in place, following the August 2014 ceasefire, a temporary *Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM)* allowing for the controlled entry of the restricted materials was established, triggering a significant increase in the entry of such materials.

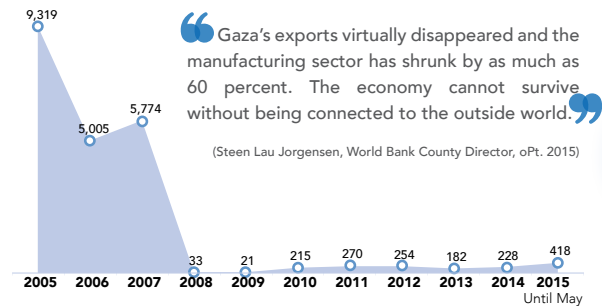
**4. Israel, as the occupying power, must lift the blockade, which prevents the realization of a broad range of human rights for Palestinians in Gaza.** The Secretary General of the United Nations has stated that the blockade and its related restrictions contravene article 33 of the Geneva Convention IV prohibiting collective penalties. **While Israel's recent relaxation measures are welcomed, a full lifting is paramount to stopping the continuing deterioration of the living conditions in Gaza and preventing a new cycle of violence.**



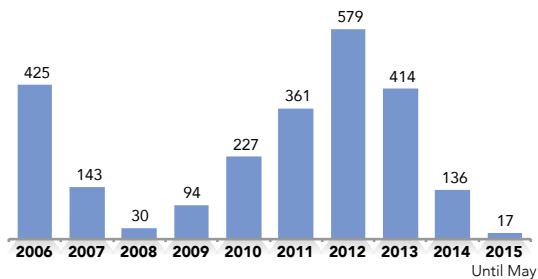
## ACCESS TO FISHING AREAS (tonnes)



## EXIT OF GOODS FROM THE GAZA STRIP (Truckloads)

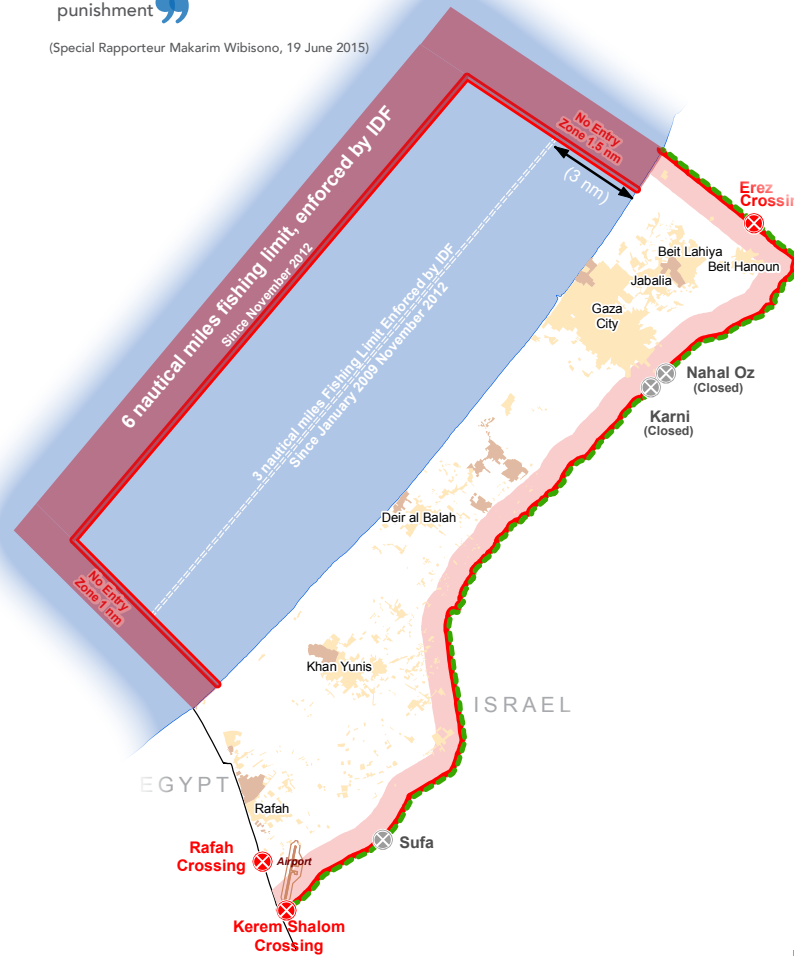


## RAFAH CROSSING Daily average of travelers out of Gaza



“if Gaza is to recover from the damage wrought by multiple rounds of hostility and a shattered economy, the blockade must be lifted. The people deserve help and realisation of their human rights, not collective punishment”

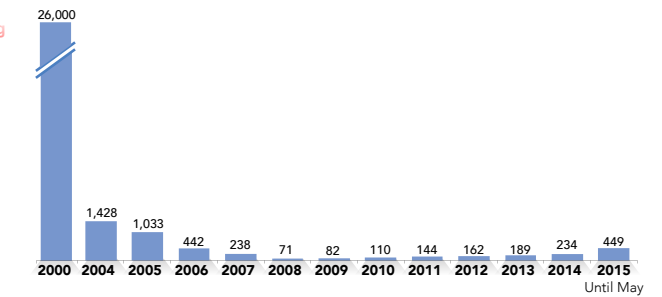
(Special Rapporteur Makarim Wibisono, 19 June 2015)



## GAZA STRIP KEY FACTS



## EREZ CROSSING Daily average of travelers out of Gaza



## CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS VIA ISRAEL (Truckloads)



Daily Average is calculated based on calendar days not on the actual days

1994	1995	2001	2001	2002	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014											
nt	imeter fence	eli closes safe passage between Gaza and West Bank	Israel bombs Gaza Airport	UN-Israeli "Bertini Commitment" easing access restrictions	Israel unilaterally disengages from Gaza	Hamas wins Palestinian elections	Israel stops the entry of Palestinian workers into Israel	Hamas takes over Gaza and Israel imposes a blockade	Israel closed Karni crossing except for a conveyor belt	War: Israel launches "Operation Cast Lead"	Fishing activities beyond 3 NM	Access to areas closer than 300m from the fence is prohibited	Israel closes Nahal Oz Crossing closed	Israel intercepts flotilla headed to Gaza from Turkey	Israeli eases import restrictions	Egypt reopens Rafah Crossing	Israel closes Karni conveyor belt	Israel closes Sufa Crossing	War: Israeli launches "Pillar of Defense"	Fishing areas extended to 6NM	Egypt launches military campaign to destroy tunnels	Egypt closes Rafah Crossing to entry of commercial goods	War: Israel launches "Protective Edge"	Transfer of goods from Gaza to West Bank resumed	Egypt closes Rafah to movement of people, with exceptions