

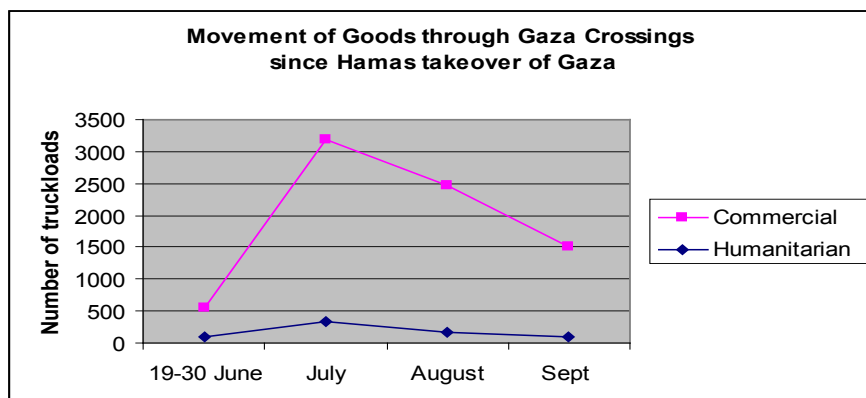


## GAZA HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT 09 OCTOBER

### SUMMARY POINTS

1. Since 19 September<sup>1</sup>, a large reduction has been reported in the number of truckloads entering Gaza through the Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossings. The average of 106 truckloads per day that was recorded between 10 June and 13 September has dropped to approximately 50 truckloads per day since mid-September. This trend is giving rise to growing concerns among aid agencies about shortages of certain food supplies.
2. Food prices remain inflated; according to WFP, this is especially the case for vegetable oil, flour, and fresh and frozen meat. Drip flow of items into Gaza implies that there are no additional stocks available and that any closures will have a direct impact on availability and prices.
3. In September, there has been a significant reduction in the number of patients crossing into Israel/West Bank for medical treatment: fewer than five patients crossed each day compared to an average of 40 patients per day in July.
4. Due to increasing restrictions on access, aid agencies continue to face difficulties on a daily basis to implement programs and respond to humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip.
5. Sufa and Kerem Shalom crossings still lack the appropriate infrastructure to handle food and medical supplies. Concerns over the way supplies are being processed are increasing, especially with the rainy season approaching.
6. An escalation in IDF activity was reported in northern Gaza between 26 September and 2 October, resulting in an increase of Palestinian casualties (15 deaths and 32 injuries).
7. Up to 87 Palestinians were reported to have re-entered Gaza from Egypt via an opening in the Egypt-Gaza border wall on 30 September. However, more than 1,000 Gazans remain stranded in Egypt.

### ACCESS AND CROSSINGS



The movement of goods via the Gaza border crossings has significantly declined in September compared to previous months. Sufa crossing (usually open 5 days a week) was closed during 16 days in September, including 8 days for Jewish holidays, while Kerem Shalom was only open for 14 days throughout the month. The Israeli Civil Liaison Administration (CLA) has affirmed that the reduction of working hours is due to the Muslim holy

<sup>1</sup>In 19 September, the Israeli security cabinet voted to declare the Gaza Strip "hostile territory," approving among other things the restriction of commercial supplies to Gaza, in response to the ongoing Qassam rocket fire at Israeli communities.



month of Ramadan, Jewish holidays and more importantly attacks on the crossings by Palestinian militants from inside Gaza.

During the month of September, a total of 1,508 truckloads, including 102 from humanitarian agencies, crossed into Gaza through Sufa, Kerem Shalom and Karni. This compares to 2,468 truckloads in the month of August and 3,190 in July. The average of 106 truckloads per day that was recorded between 19 June and 13 September has dropped to approximately 50 truckloads per day since mid-September.

As a result of the increased restrictions on the Gaza border crossings, some food items – including milk powder – are in shortage on the local markets. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has reported significant increases in the costs of some items. The price of a one kg of fresh meat has increased from NIS 32 to NIS 40 (20%) while the price of chicken rose from NIS 8 to NIS 12 (33%).

Erez crossing was completely closed on 20, 21, 22 and 27 September as well as 4 October due to the Jewish holidays and security reasons. In general, Erez remains closed for all Palestinians except critical medical cases and those working with international organizations. Since 17 September, no Palestinian trader has been allowed to cross into Israel. On 2 October, 30 Palestinian prisoners were released by the Israeli Government as part of a deal brokered between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. CLA has announced that, as of 12 October, the Erez terminal will be closed from 1500 on Fridays to 0700 on Sundays.

Rafah crossing has now been closed for nearly 4 months, having last opened on 9 June. On 30 September, a group of 87 Hamas members crossed the border from Egypt through an opening in the border wall. The CLA said that Israel was not informed of this arrangement. It is estimated that at least 1,000 Palestinians are currently stranded in Egypt waiting to cross back to Gaza. More than 5,000 Palestinians in Gaza have put applications for permits to Israel through the Palestinian Civil Affairs Department in order to leave Gaza to Egypt via Israel. So far, fewer than 500 have been allowed to leave on an Erez-Nitzana bus since Israel started this alternative route on 26 August (halted since 9 September). It is also estimated that around 1,000 Palestinian pilgrims were unable to leave Gaza in order to perform one of the Muslim religious ceremonies (Al Omra) in Mekka, which is traditionally preferable to do during the holy month of Ramadan.

Karni crossing was last open on 11 June and since then has been closed for all incoming and outgoing commodities with the exception of a single conveyor belt used for entering wheat grain and animal feed into the Gaza Strip which typically operates twice a week.

## PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

Since 19 September, the IDF has carried out eight air strikes and 16 ground operations in Gaza, resulting in 22 Palestinian deaths and 42 injuries. An increase in deaths and injuries was noted in the second week of the reporting period; 15 deaths and 32 injuries resulted from conflict-related violence. On 26 September, an Israeli helicopter-fired missile strike killed five Palestinian militants southeast of Gaza city. Four additional people were killed and 25 were injured when an IDF tank fired a missile towards a house during a ground military operation southwest of Beit Hanoun. During the operation, IDF tanks and bulldozers leveled twenty dunums of date and citrus trees. Ten houses were demolished and more than 100 dunums of olive trees leveled during an IDF operation in Al Bureij area that also left four deaths.

A total of 44 Qassam rockets and 78 mortar shells were fired from Gaza towards southern Israel between 19 September and 9 October. Five rockets and 2 mortars landed near the Gaza border crossing of Sufa, and



36 mortar shells were fired towards Kerem Shalom crossing. 14 additional mortars were fired at IDF troops inside Gaza. On 7 October, Israel reported that a Grad-type Katyusha rocket fired from Gaza landed near the southern Israeli town of Netivot. No one was injured.

## HEALTH

The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that, compared to last year, the number of children aged three years and less diagnosed in UNWRA Primary Health Care facilities in Gaza with diarrhoea has increased by 20%. Such an increase of diarrhoea has been attributed to the irregular collection of garbage by municipal workers, increased unemployment and increased poverty.

As of 17 September, the number of patients allowed to cross into Israel for medical treatment has significantly decreased. In September, fewer than five patients crossed each day compared to an average of 40 patients per day in July. Reasons varied from the lack of permits to delays or denial of access. WHO has indicated that an average of 1,000 patients used to leave Gaza for treatment each month prior to the mid-June closures.

WHO is concerned about a potential shortage of certain medical supplies. Currently, 61 drug items (13% of the essential drug list (EDL)) are out of stock and another 125 drug items (26% of the EDL) are at a stock rate of 2-3 months.

## WATER

The Coastal Municipality Water Utility still lacks a large number of spare parts needed for water and waste water pumps to keep its 165 water wells and three treatment plants in good condition.

## AGRICULTURE

The export season for Gaza's cash crops (strawberries, carnation flowers and cherry tomatoes) is expected to begin in mid-November. This year, 2,500 dunums of strawberries have been planted with an expected production of approximately 6,250 tons of strawberries including 2,500 destined for European markets. 490 tons of cherry tomatoes are also expected to be produced. If exports are not allowed by this time, farmers will be exposed to tremendous losses in terms of production cost and potential sales.

## POWER

The Gaza Power Generating Company confirmed that the Siemens team responsible for the maintenance of the Gaza Power Plant's electricity turbines returned to Gaza last Tuesday. They returned after Israel allowed a two ton spare part and tools shipment into Gaza on 30 September. 80% of the shipment has been delivered. The team will stay in Gaza for the next 20-25 days.

## MUNICIPALITY STRIKE

Gaza city municipal workers resumed strikes on 4 October, though garbage collection workers have accepted to postpone their strike until after the end of the Muslim Eid holidays. This marks the fourth strike since the month of August. The stated reason for these strikes is the continued non-payment of salaries due to the municipality's lack of funds. Municipality workers have not been paid since early this year; they have recently received 70% of their salaries from February 2007. 80% of the municipality's revenues come from service fees however increasing poverty levels mean many Gazans are unable to pay these charges.