



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
occupied Palestinian territory

The Gaza Strip: Access Report December 2005

This report monitors access in and out of the Gaza Strip. Movement in and out of the Gaza Strip is controlled through:

- Erez crossing for Palestinian workers and merchants and medical referrals who have permits to enter Israel;
- Erez crossing for international organisations;
- Rafah crossing, between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, for access to other countries, including for overseas medical referrals; and
- Four commercial crossings, of which Karni crossing is the largest.
- Palestinian access to the sea is controlled by IDF naval vessels.

All movement between Israel and the Gaza Strip is controlled by the Israeli authorities.¹ Fences and a concrete wall surround the Gaza Strip and sea access is restricted.²

1. Erez crossing

a. Access for Palestinian workers and traders into Israel (see Figure 1)

Movement of Palestinian workers and traders through Erez crossing increased significantly from 13 November until 5 December 2005, with some 4,000 workers and around 200 traders crossing daily in the first week of December. Following the Netanya suicide bombing on 5 December that killed five Israelis and injured 58 others, the crossing closed and remained closed until 12 December. With its re-opening, again more than 4,000 workers and 200 traders crossed daily into Israel. However, Erez crossing closed again on 16 December in response to Palestinian militants' firing of rockets from the northern Gaza Strip into Israel.³

Key Events:

- 16 – 31 December: The crossing was closed for all Palestinian workers and traders following Palestinian militants' firing of rockets into Israel. Some humanitarian cases were allowed access with prior coordination.
- 6 – 11 December: The crossing was closed for all Palestinian workers and traders following a suicide bombing in Netanya that killed five Israelis and injured 58 others. Some humanitarian cases were allowed access with prior coordination.
- 24 September – 12 November: The crossing was closed for all Palestinian workers and traders to Israel following Palestinian militants' firing of rockets into Israel that injured six Israelis. Some humanitarian cases were allowed access with prior coordination.

b. Restrictions on medical referrals (see Figure 2)

Medical referrals require passage through Erez crossing for treatment in Israel.

In December 98% of all medical requests through Erez crossing were granted passage by Israeli authorities.

c. Access for humanitarian organisations

International humanitarian organisations require prior coordination with Israeli authorities to enter and leave the Gaza Strip through Erez crossing. A small number of high-level Palestinian UN staff members are permitted to cross.

2. Karni crossing (see Figure 3)

Most goods imported into the Gaza Strip and all exported goods pass through Karni crossing.⁴

a. Commercial goods

On 15 November, an agreement was reached between the Government of Israel (GoI) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) "... facilitating the movement of people and goods within the Palestinian territories and on opening an international crossing on the Gaza-Egypt border that will put the Palestinians in control of the entry and exit of people" (the 15 November Agreement). Since the 15 November Agreement the daily average volume of imported goods have remained stable while exports have increased.

In December 2005, 66% of imported goods arrived from Israel, 14% from the West Bank and 20% from other parts of the world.

The number of truckloads of exported goods in December almost doubled compared to last month (November 2005). The highest number of truckloads of exported goods in any day in December was 100 (15 December), bringing the daily average for that month to 56. The stated goal in the 15 November Agreement is the export of 150 truckloads daily by the end of the year. This month, 53% of exports were destined for Israel, 15% for the West Bank and 32% to other parts of the world.

b. Humanitarian supplies

Humanitarian supplies, of which the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) handle about 90%, enter the Gaza Strip through Karni crossing. Since February 2005, there has been a steady flow of humanitarian containers (20 feet equivalent units - TFEUs) through the crossing. UNRWA managed through coordination with the Israeli authorities to transport all of its humanitarian goods to the Gaza Strip prior to Israel's disengagement. This is reflected in the decline in the flow of goods from September onwards.⁵

3. Rafah crossing

Rafah passenger crossing is the point of access for Gazans traveling overseas and is located on the Gazan border with Egypt.

a. Palestinians' access internationally from the Gaza Strip (see Figure 4)

Following the 15 November Agreement an official Palestinian opening ceremony was held at Rafah crossing on 25 November. The following day, the crossing began operating under joint Palestinian/Egyptian control with the presence of European Union (EU) monitors.

The crossing initially operated from 11am to 4pm (five hours per day). Starting from 18 December the operational hours increased to eight hours per day – from 8am to 4pm. The increased opening hours led to the average daily number of arrivals and departures through the crossing in December climbing to **537** and **577** persons respectively.

On 30 December Rafah crossing was closed for several hours and EU monitors were evacuated to Kerem Shalom after dozens of PA officers forcibly shut it down.

b. Import of international goods

Kerem Shalom crossing in Israel, bordering the Gaza Strip and Egypt will operate as an additional crossing point for imported goods primarily originating from Egypt and for non-Palestinian identification card holders arriving to the Gaza Strip from Egypt. This crossing is currently not operating and a final agreement on the crossing between the PA and the GoI is yet to be reached.

c. Restrictions on medical referrals⁶

Medical referrals require passage through Rafah crossing for international treatment.

In December 100% - a total of 334 patients, of all medical requests for referral abroad were granted passage.

4. Coastal area

a. Access for Palestinian fishing (see Figure 5)

The fishing catch in December 2005 (243 tonnes) was the highest this year and also higher compared to the months of December in 2000 and 2004. Israeli naval gunboats opened fire towards Palestinian fishing boats at sea on three occasions this month – 3, 10 and 11 December. Two Palestinians were shot and killed and one injured during these incidents. The circumstances of these incidents remain unclear.

Since January 2005, the Israeli authorities have permitted Palestinian fishing up to 10 nautical miles from the Gaza Strip coastline compared to six nautical miles previously (under the Oslo Accords, Gaza Strip fishermen are entitled to fish 20 nautical miles from the coast). Palestinian fishing is prohibited one nautical mile north of the border with Egypt and one and a half nautical miles south of the border with Israel.

b. Seaport

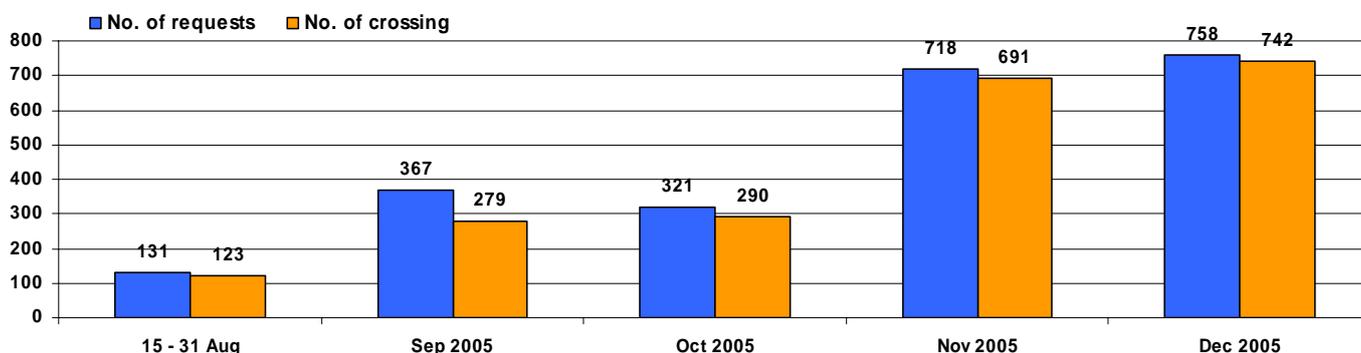
The 15 November Agreement stated that construction of a seaport in the Gaza Strip can commence but is not expected to be operational within two years.

Figure 1: Erez Crossing - Average Daily Labour Movement

	Dec 1999	Dec 00	Dec 04	Jan 05	Feb 05	Mar 05	Apr 05	May 05	Jun 05	Jul 05	Aug 05	Sep 05	Oct 05	Nov 05	Dec 05
Workers to Israel	23,207	725	72	49	390	1,451	3,200	2,067	3,588	1,767	281	128	0	1,200	1,502
Traders to Israel	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	70	158	224	103	362	175	168	120	0	104	73
Workers to EIZ	3,159	2,231	35	9	278	537	487	259	458	233	201	41 ⁷	---	---	---

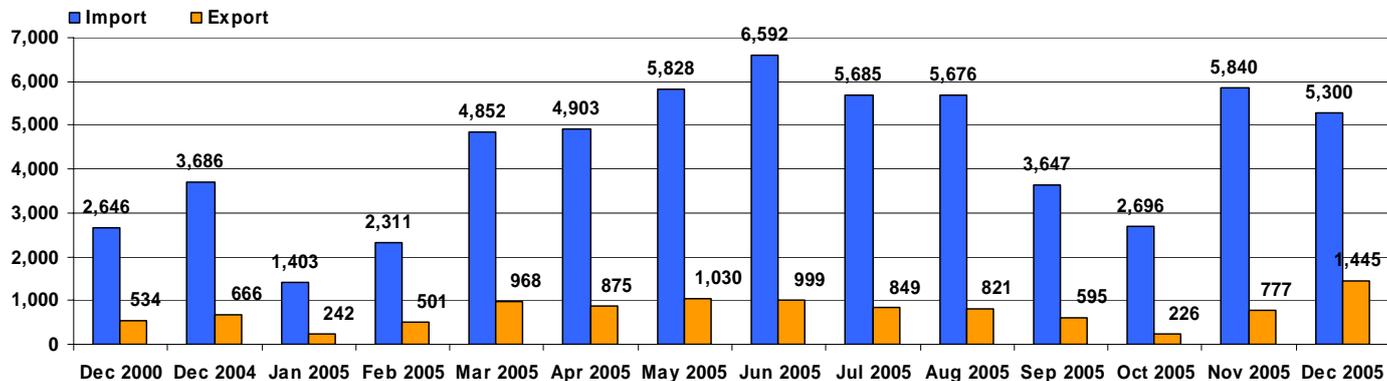
Source: Palestinian National Security Forces/Data. 1999 - 2004 data obtained from UNSCO

Figure 2: Erez Crossing - Total number of medical referral requests and crossing



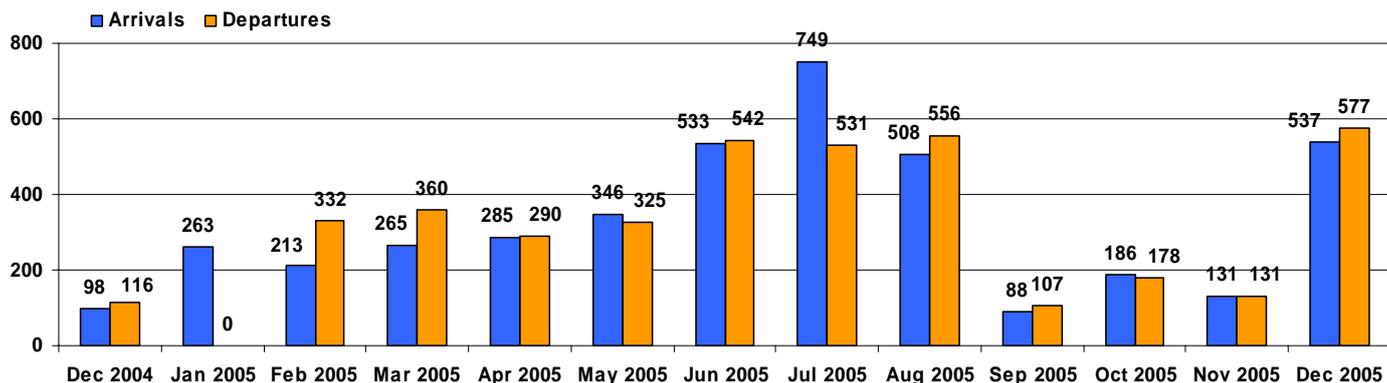
Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture/Department of Fisheries

Figure 3: Karni Crossing – Total Truckloads of Imports / Exports – Monthly



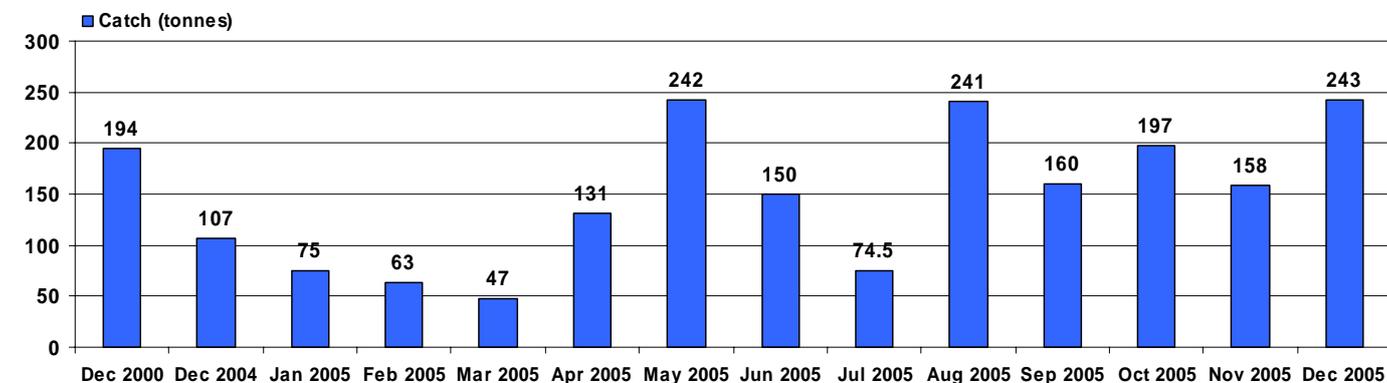
Source: Palestinian Ministry of National Economy; 2000 and 2004 data obtained from UNSCO.

Figure 4: Rafah Passenger Crossing - Daily average crossing



Source: Palestinian Passport and Border police. Dec 2004 data obtained from UNSCO.

Figure 5: Gaza Fishing - Total Catch



Source: Palestinian Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation.

¹ Rafah crossing is no longer controlled by Israeli authorities. See below for developments on the crossing.

² The Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip has been closed since the beginning of the second *intifada* in late September 2000. The 15 November Agreement mentions "an understanding between the parties [the PA and the GoI] on the importance of an operating Palestinian airport..." although no agreement has been reached on reopening the airport.

³ This closure lasted until 22 January 2006, with the exception of some Palestinian traders allowed passage into Israel on 17 January.

⁴ The other four commercial crossings in the Gaza Strip are Rafah, Sufa for construction materials and Nahal Oz for fuel. Some goods (mainly vehicles) are also imported through Erez crossing.

⁵ Data for last four days of November and for December is currently not available. See coming January 2006 Gaza Access Report for updated numbers.

⁶ Ministry of Health.

⁷ As of 12 September 2005 Erez Industrial Zone was no longer operational following the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The daily average number of workers crossing is calculated for the first 12 days of the month.

THE GAZA STRIP: ACCESS FOR PALESTINIAN FISHING - December 2005

