



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
occupied Palestinian territory

The Gaza Strip: Access Report June 2005

This report monitors monthly humanitarian access and movement in the Gaza Strip. All movement in and out of the Gaza Strip is controlled by Israeli authorities. Fences and a concrete wall surround the Gaza Strip and sea access is restricted. Movement in and out of the Gaza Strip is controlled through:

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

Palestinian movement within the Gaza Strip is restricted by internal closure:

- Through Abu Holi checkpoint in the central Gaza Strip;
- By over 200 observed closure obstacles, notably military bases and observation towers, as of Jan 2005;
- For Palestinians living in enclaves in close proximity to Israeli settlements.

1. Gaza Strip Crossing Points (see map, page 4)

a. Access for Palestinian workers and traders into Israel

The daily average number of people crossing for work in Israel and the Erez Industrial Zone (EIZ) was higher in June compared with any month since March last year. This is due to the increase in permits issued and reduction in the number of days during which the crossing was closed. Nevertheless, for every one Gazan worker that crosses to Israel now, seven crossed in June before the *intifada*.

Erez Crossing: Average Daily Labour Movement

	Jun 00	Jun 04	Jan 05	Feb 05	Mar 05	Apr 05	May 05	Jun 05
Workers to Israel	22,515	180	49	390	1,451	3,200	2,067	3,588
Traders to Israel	N/A	172	17	70	158	224	103	362
Workers to EIZ	3,086	377	9	278	537	487	259	458

Palestinian National Security Forces | Data for 2000, 2004 obtained from UNSCO

Key events influencing closure in the past year include:

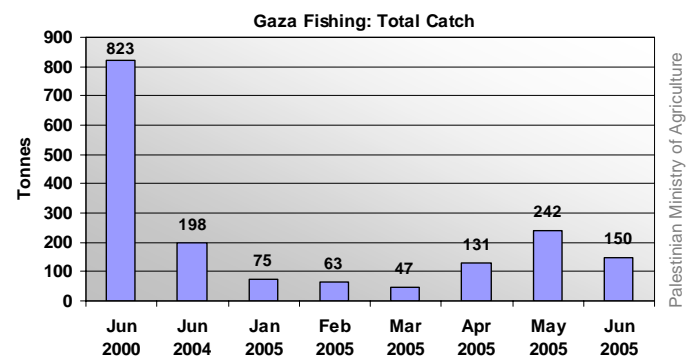
- 22 April – 15 May 2005: The crossing was closed to workers entering Israel (25 April - 14 May) and EIZ (22 April to 15 May) with the onset of the Jewish Passover holidays. The crossing remained closed after the Passover due to an alleged security threat.
- 14 Jan – 12 Feb 2005: Erez crossing was closed after six Israelis were killed in a Palestinian suicide attack at Karni crossing.
- 28 June – 1 July 2004: Erez was closed for movement to Israel and EIZ following a Palestinian militant mortar attack killing two and injuring another two Israelis in the Israeli town of Sderot.

Access for Humanitarian Organisations

International humanitarian organisations require prior coordination with Israeli authorities to enter and leave the Gaza Strip. A small number of high-level Palestinian UN staff members are permitted to cross. On 17 and 18 June, international organisations were allowed entry but not to exit Gaza. Only diplomats with prior coordination were allowed to leave.

b. Access for Palestinian fishing (see map, page 3)

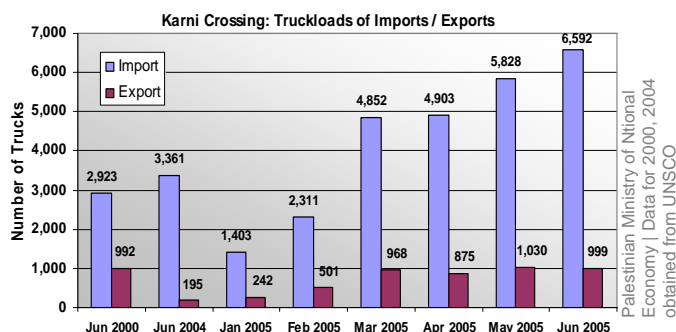
Fishing yielded a smaller catch in June 2005 than in June 2000 and 2004.¹ Since January 2005, the Israeli authorities have permitted Palestinian fishing up to 10 nautical miles from the Gaza Strip coastline compared to 6 nautical miles previously. Under the Oslo Accords, Gaza Strip fishermen are entitled to fish 20 nautical miles from the coast. Fishing is still prohibited for the Al Mawassi – Khan Younis wharf and fishing from the Rafah wharf in Al Mawassi is subject to additional restrictions.² Most fishing happens off the Gaza Wharf.



c. Access for Gazan trade movement Karni crossing

Most goods imported into the Gaza Strip and all exported goods pass through Karni crossing.³ This year there has been an increase in imports to Gaza while exports have remained stable. A higher demand for imported goods reflects the decline in the Gaza Strip's local productive capacity since September 2000. Only in January 2005 was there a decrease in imported goods due to a high number of closure days that month.

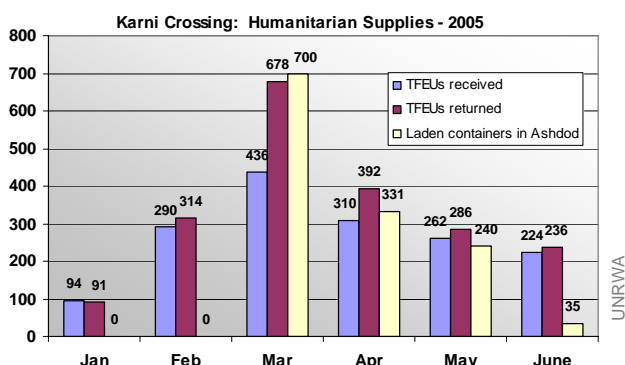
following a Palestinian militant attack that killed six Israelis at the crossing. The increase in exported goods since February 2005 follows the Sharm al Sheikh summit.



d. Access for Humanitarian supplies

Humanitarian supplies, notably from United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), enter the Gaza Strip through Karni crossing. Since the end of March 2005 there has been a decrease in containers (20 feet equivalent units- TFEUs) entering and exiting Karni crossing due to the clearance of the backlog of containers at Ashdod port.⁴ By end of June 2005, there were no empty containers inside the Gaza Strip, and 35 laden containers were waiting in Ashdod.

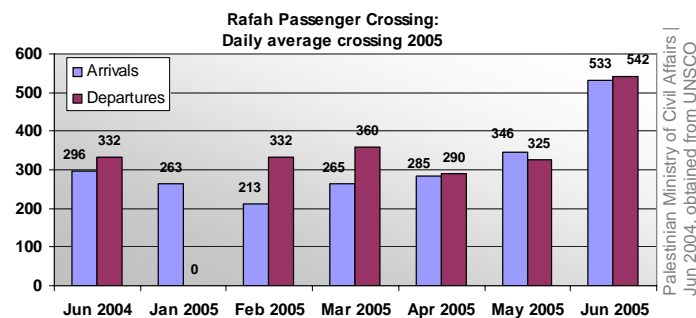
Israeli authorities permitted UNRWA to import 30,000 litres of petrol into the Gaza Strip on 3 June. UNRWA had not been allowed to import petrol during April and May.



e. Palestinians' access internationally from the Gaza Strip

The number of people leaving through Rafah crossing increased since February this year due in part to the lifting of the restrictions on Palestinian men aged between 16 and 35 years. This group was not allowed to exit the Gaza Strip in the period from 17 April 2004 to 20 February 2005. A decrease in April 2005 was due to slower procedures resulting from the installation of an x-ray machine by the Israeli authorities. The machine was removed in May. In January 2005, Rafah crossing was closed for 21 days to those wishing to enter the Gaza Strip and for the entire month for those wishing to leave.⁵

Typically, June is a busy month for travel as was the case this year. Travelers entering the Gaza Strip faced delays due to limited processing capacity at the Israeli-controlled crossing. The crossing was closed on 17 June with partial closures occurring on 18 and 19 June. As a result, a backlog developed. Several thousand Palestinians waited on the Egyptian side of the border for up to three days with inadequate services.



2. Restrictions on internal movement within the Gaza Strip

The IDF have periodically segmented the Gaza Strip into three areas by closing off the coastal road at Netzarim, and Abu Holi junction. In exceptional cases, the IDF divided the Gaza Strip into four segments by also blocking the road as Moraq-Sufa junction.

A. Abu Holi junction

Movement through Abu Holi checkpoint, which was closed for three days, improved in June. Prior to 9 February, the checkpoint at Abu Holi junction closed at night with intermittent closures during the day. After that time, the checkpoint became operational 24 hours a day for vehicular traffic – although traffic movement continued to be restricted to one direction at a time. In March, private vehicles – banned for crossing since 17 June 2004 – were once again allowed to pass through the junction with the requirement of four people per vehicle. In May this requirement was reduced to two people per vehicle. In June, the movement of vehicles in both directions was observed by OCHA on two occasions. Pedestrians, however, were still not allowed to cross.

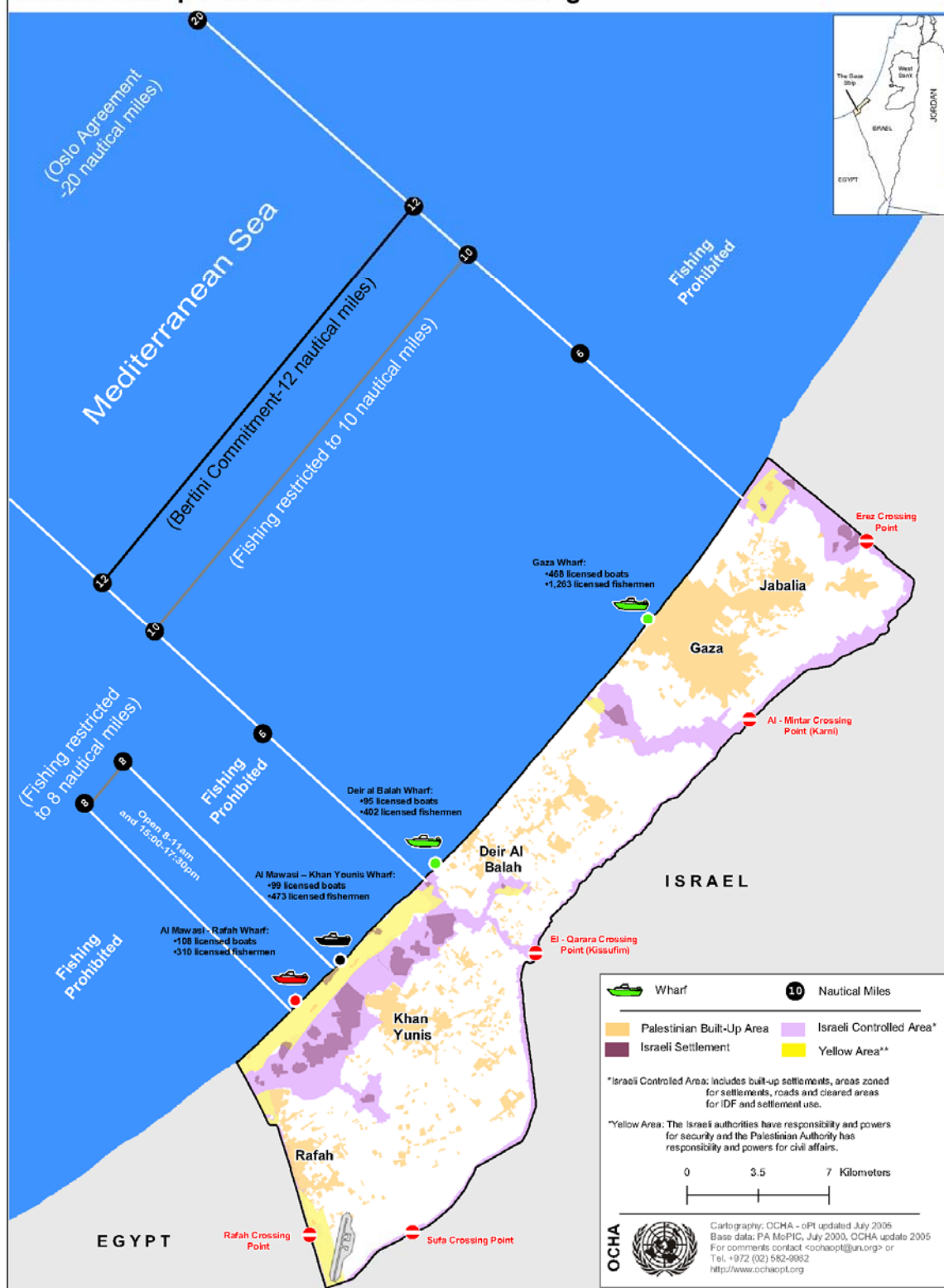
- 10, 18 and 28 June: The checkpoint was closed for between three and eight hours.

B. Palestinian enclaves

Isolated Palestinian communities in close proximity to Israeli settlements or settlement roads have been particularly affected by internal closures (*See attached map of the Gaza Strip*). Common characteristics of these areas; or 'enclaves' are:

- Access is controlled by the IDF through a gate or a checkpoint;
- Vehicles are not permitted to cross. Goods, including drinking water and cooking gas, are carried by hand or donkey cart;
- Restrictions according to gender and age are often in place;
- Access in and out of the enclaves is limited to residents. Humanitarian organizations require prior coordination with the IDF;
- The back-to-back transfer of patients through coordination is required;
- Students often miss classes due to irregular opening hours at the gates/checkpoints; and
- Residents are afraid to leave their homes after dark due to the close proximity of IDF observation and patrols.

The Gaza Strip: Access for Palestinian Fishing



OCHA oPt provides humanitarian information, maps and analysis through a range of services, products and briefings. It is headquartered in Jerusalem and has six field offices: Jerusalem, Gaza, Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus and Tulkarm.

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¹ Fishing is seasonal, meaning that it is accurate to compare the same month in different years.

² Fishermen can only access the wharf during opening hours (8-11am and 3-17:30pm) and are not allowed on the shore at other times. Fishing is limited to 8 nautical miles west and three kilometers north of the wharf and two nautical miles north of the Egyptian border. Fishermen, boats, equipment and catch are searched by the IDF and only three traders are allowed to enter al Mawasi to purchase the catch.

³ The other three commercial crossings are Rafah, Sufa and Nahal Oz.

⁴ On 27 February 2005, an agreement was reached between UNRWA and the Israeli authorities to allow 20 full containers to enter the Gaza Strip daily via Sufa crossing, and 40 empty containers to leave the Gaza Strip daily via Karni crossing point. Sufa crossing has however been closed since 29 March; all humanitarian cargo passes through Karni.

⁵ Rafah crossing closed on 12 December 2004 following the attack and killing of five Israeli soldiers by Palestinian militants.

The Gaza Strip: Enclaves June 2005

