



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
occupied Palestinian territory

The Gaza Strip: Access Report May 2005

This report monitors monthly humanitarian access and movement in the Gaza Strip.¹ All movement through the Gaza Strip's borders is controlled by Israeli authorities. A security fence surrounds all of the Gaza Strip and sea access is restricted. Palestinian movement in and out of the Gaza Strip is through:

- Erez crossing for workers and merchants who have permits to enter Israel;
- Erez crossing for international humanitarian organisations;
- 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.

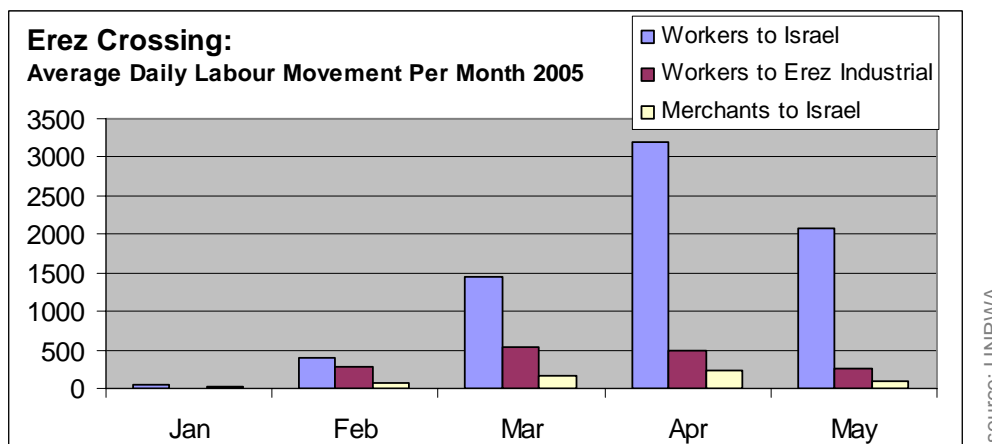
Palestinian movement within the Gaza Strip is restricted:

- through Abu Houli checkpoint in the central Gaza Strip;
- by over 200 observed closure obstacles;
- for Palestinians living in enclaves in close proximity to Israeli settlements.²

1. Gaza Strip Crossing Points

A. Erez crossing and industrial estate

Between January and March, there was a steady increase in the number of Palestinian workers and merchants entering Israel and the Erez industrial zone. This trend ended following the closure at Erez with the onset of the Jewish Passover holidays in the third week of April. The closure continued until 15 May for Palestinian workers and merchants, and 16 May for access to Erez industrial zone. This closure was imposed on the grounds that some workers had been submitting false documents while trying to leave the Gaza Strip. Restrictions continue on international humanitarian organisations who need prior coordination with Israeli authorities to enter and leave the Strip. A few high-level Palestinian UN staff are permitted to cross. (See appendix, Table 1).



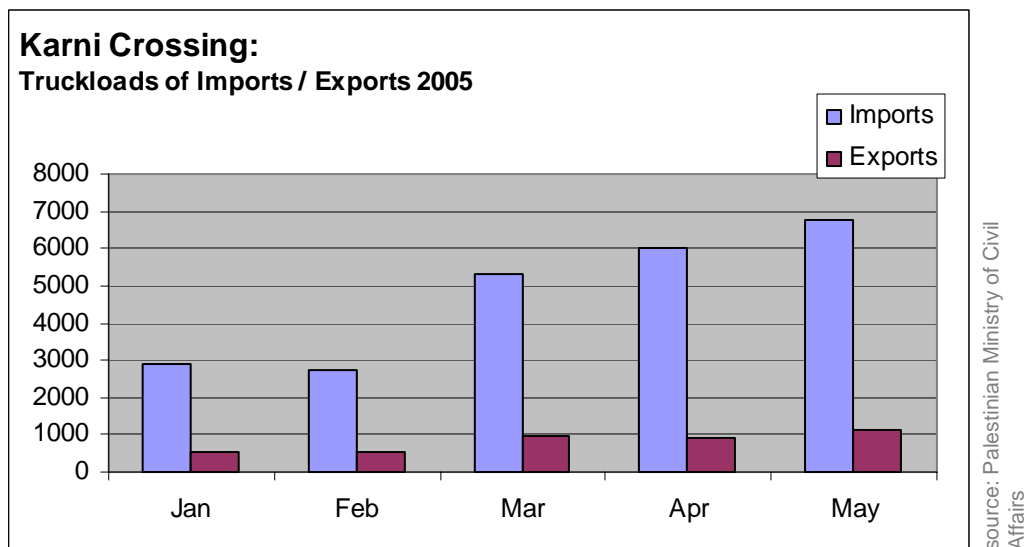
¹ During the Sharm El-Sheikh summit in February 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced an easing in access restrictions for Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip.

² See monthly *Gaza Situation Reports* at <www.ochaopt.org> under *Special Reports*.

B. Karni crossing point

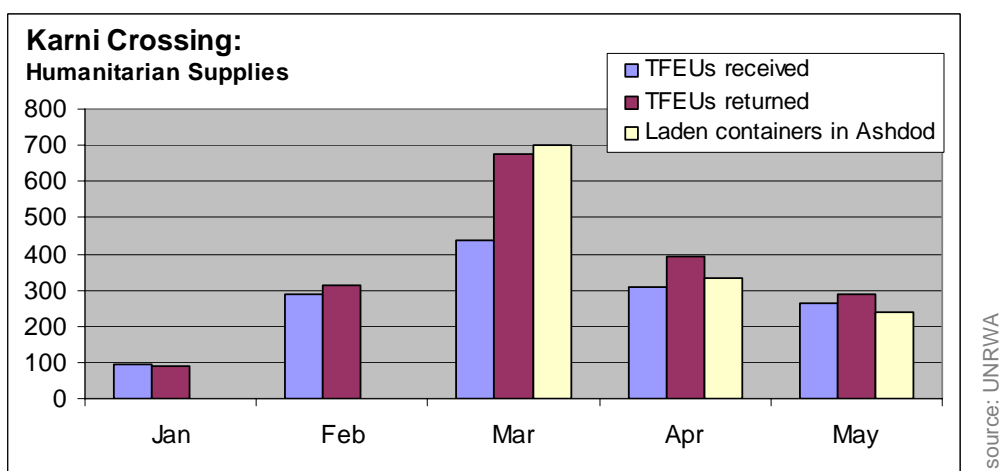
Commercial Supplies

Imports and exports through Karni have increased since March 2005.



Humanitarian Supplies

Humanitarian supplies, notably from UNRWA, go through this crossing. Since the end of March 2005, there has been a decrease of both containers (20 feet equivalent units- TFEUs) entering and exiting Karni crossing due to the fact that the backlog of containers at Ashdod port had cleared³ (See appendix, Table 2).



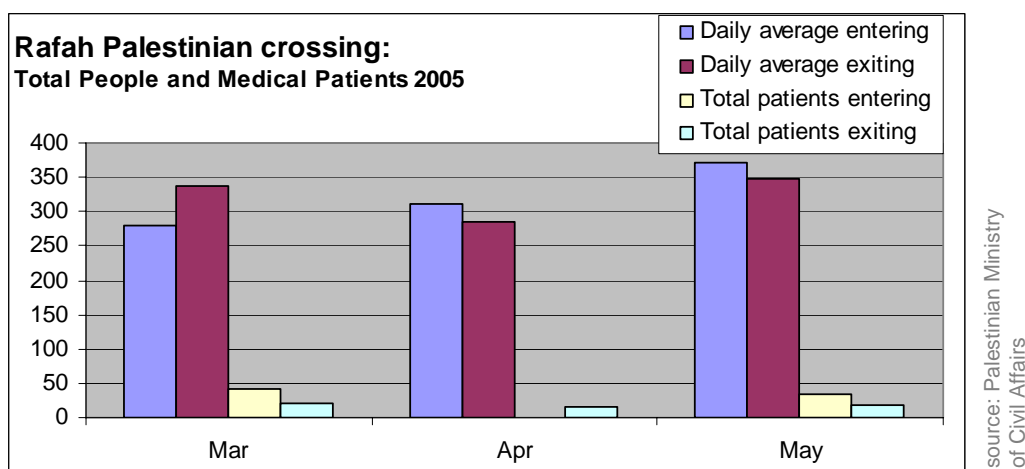
Israeli authorities did not allow the import of petrol into the Gaza Strip for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in May, as was the case in April.

³ 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 (Sunday through Thursday) via Sufa checkpoint, and 40 empty containers to leave the Gaza Strip daily (Monday through Thursday) via Karni cargo crossing point. Sufa crossing has however been closed since 29 March; all incoming humanitarian containers pass through Karni.

C. Rafah crossing

Palestinian movement

There was an increase of both arrivals and departures through Rafah crossing in May compared to the previous month (*See appendix, Table 3*). The current opening hours, according to the Rafah passenger authorities, are 9am until 4pm for departures and 9am and until 7pm for arrivals.



The x-ray machine installed at Rafah crossing point earlier this year by the Israeli authorities was removed in May. Concerns had been expressed by the Palestinian Authority over the levels of radiation transmitted by the machine as well as cultural sensitivities regarding the screening of women.

2. Internal Movement

Palestinian movement is restricted within the Gaza Strip by more than 200 observed closure obstacles. The IDF have periodically segmented the Gaza Strip into three areas by closing off the coastal road at Netzarim, and Abu Houli junction. In exceptional cases, the IDF divided the Gaza Strip into four segments by blocking the road at Morag-Sufa junction.

A. Abu Houli junction

As of 9 February, Abu Houli checkpoint was operational 24 hours a day for vehicular traffic. Prior to this, the opening hours had been from 7am until 6pm. In March, private vehicles 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. People are still not allowed to cross by foot, and it is only possible to cross the junction in one direction at any time, which leads to delays.

- 20 to 22 May: The checkpoint was closed from 1pm on 20 May to 1am on 22 May with the exception of one hour on 20 May when the checkpoint was opened.

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*). 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.
- Residents are afraid to leave their homes after dark due to the close proximity of IDF observation towers and patrols.

3. Fishing

Since January 2005, the Israeli authorities have permitted fishing up to 10 nautical miles from the Gaza Strip coast 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 permitted from the Rafah wharf in Al Mawasi, but is prohibited in Al Mawasi- Khan Younis, where restrictions have been in place since October 2003.

17 June 2005

Appendix

Table 1: Palestinian workers/merchants crossing to Israel and Erez Industrial Zone by month and daily average

	Jan 2005		Feb 2005		Mar 2005		Apr 2005		May 2005	
	Total Month	Daily Average	Total Month	Daily Average	Total Month	Daily Average	Total Month	Daily Average	Total Month	Daily Average
Workers Israel	1,073	49	8,545	390	37,286	1,451	73,621	3,200	50,146	2,067
Merchants Israel	373	17	1,552	70	4,055	158	5,279	224	2,661	103
Erez Industrial Zone	205	9	5,560	278	12,936	537	9,741	487	5,955	259

Figures provided by UNRWA

Table 2: UNRWA humanitarian supplies through Karni crossing by twenty feet equivalent units (TFEUs)

	Jan 2005	Feb 2005	Mar 2005	Apr 2005	May 2005
TFEUs received	94	290	436	310	262
TFEUs returned	91	314	678	392	286
Laden containers in Ashdod by end month	N/A	N/A	700	331	240

Figures provided by UNRWA

Table 3: Truckloads of imports / exports through Karni crossing – May 2005

	January 2005	February 2005	March 2005	April 2005	May 2005
Import Truckloads	2,919	2,749	5,340	5,994	6,769
Export Truckloads	545	551	957	916	1,107

Figures provided by Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs

Table 4: Daily average number of people crossing in and out of Gaza Strip through Rafah crossing.

	1 March to 4 April	5 April to 2 May	3 May to 31 May
Daily average entering Rafah	279	310	370
Daily average exiting Rafah	336	286	347
Total patients entering Rafah	42	39	33
Total patients exiting Rafah	22	16	18

Figures provided by Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs

Key Dates

Erez

- 14 January: Erez crossing was closed following an attack by Palestinian militants in the Karni area that killed six Israelis.
- 13 February: The crossing re-opened and there was a steady and sustained increase in the number of workers entering Israel and the Industrial Estate.
- 15 and 16 May: Erez crossing and Industrial Estate opened.

Karni

- 14 January: Karni crossing point was closed following an attack in the area that killed six Israelis.
- 7 February: Karni crossing point re-opened for the passage of agricultural goods and humanitarian assistance.
- 29 March: Sufa crossing closed for incoming humanitarian containers.

Rafah

- 12 December 2004: Rafah crossing closed following the killing of five Israeli soldiers during an attack by Palestinian militants.
- 21 January: The crossing re-opened for arrivals from Egypt.
- 1 February: The crossing re-opened for departures with the exception of Palestinian men aged 16 to 35. This group could not leave the Gaza Strip since 17 April 2004 with a small number of exceptions.
- 20 February: Palestinian men aged 16 to 35 were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip through Rafah.

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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