



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS  
occupied Palestinian territory

## The Gaza Strip: Access Report September 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 for Palestinians. Movement in and out of the Gaza Strip is controlled through a number of crossing points:

- Erez crossing for Palestinian workers and merchants and medical referrals 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.

The Gaza Strip has been completely sealed off since 24 September to date, with the closure of Erez, Karni, and Sufa crossings and access to the sea prohibited for Palestinian fisherman. Rafah crossing had been closed since 7 September. A limited number of humanitarian cases were granted passage to Israel or Egypt with prior coordination. This closure was imposed after Palestinian militants fired over 20 rockets from the northern Gaza Strip towards Israel, injuring six Israelis.

The withdrawal of remaining Israeli forces on 12 September from the Gaza Strip following Israeli disengagement resulted in the removal of internal closures within the Gaza Strip. Palestinian internal movement had until that time been restricted through a series of internal closures including Abu Holi checkpoint in the central Gaza Strip and over 200 observed closure obstacles, notably military bases and observation towers.

### 1. Gaza Strip Crossing Points

#### a. Access for Palestinian workers and traders into Israel

Coinciding with the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, movement through Erez crossing was severely restricted since 13 August with only a very limited number of Palestinian workers and traders allowed access into Israel and only a small number of factory owners allowed access into the Erez Industrial Zone (EIZ). After Palestinian militants fired more than 20 homemade rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel, injuring six Israelis on 24 September, the crossing was closed for all Palestinian workers and traders.

#### Erez Crossing: Average Daily Labour Movement

	Sep 00	Sep 04	Jan 05	Feb 05	Mar 05	Apr 05	May 05	Jun 05	Jul 05	Aug 05	Sep 05
<b>Workers to Israel</b>	24,057	0	49	390	1,451	3,200	2,067	3,588	1,767	281	137
<b>Traders to Israel</b>	N/A	N/A	17	70	158	224	103	362	175	168	120
<b>Workers to EIZ</b>	3,505	0	9	278	537	487	259	458	233	201	41 <sup>2</sup>

Source: Palestinian National Security Forces/Data for 2000, 2004 obtained from UNSCO

#### Key Events:

- 24 September to date: Erez crossing was closed for all Palestinian workers and traders to Israel following Palestinian militant rocket attacks towards Israel injuring six Israelis. Limited humanitarian cases were allowed access with prior coordination.
- 13 August – 24 September: The crossing was restricted for Palestinians. Only a limited number of workers and merchants, and some humanitarian cases were allowed access.
- 13 – 30 July 2005: Erez crossing was closed for all Palestinians following a general closure imposed on the oPt in the aftermath of a Palestinian suicide bombing in Netanya on 12 July killing four Israelis.
- 22 April – 15 May 2005: Erez crossing was closed to workers entering Israel (25 April - 15 May) and EIZ closed (22 April to 15 May) due to the Jewish Passover holidays. Erez crossing remained closed after the Passover due to an alleged security threat.

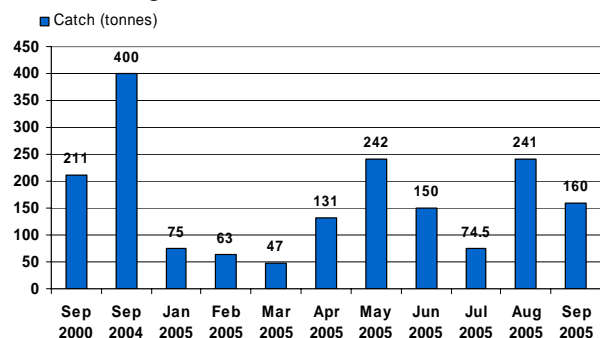
#### Access for Humanitarian Organisations

International humanitarian organizations 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 7 and 18 September, Erez crossing was closed to international organizations for most of the day and between 24 - 25 September access was denied for all internationals, including diplomatic passport holders.

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

The fishing catch in September 2005 was lower than during the same month last year and lower than in September 2000. Since January 2005, the Israeli authorities have permitted Palestinian fishing up to ten 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. Fishing was prohibited for the Al Mawassi – Khan Younis wharf and fishing from the Rafah wharf in Al Mawassi was subject to additional restrictions.<sup>1</sup> These restrictions are no longer in place following the completion of the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip on 12 September. Fishing is once again allowed along the Al Mawassi – Khan Younis wharf. However, the fishing fleet at this wharf needs repair while the Rafah wharf requires investment so as to become fully operational. Since 24 September, all fishing from the Gaza coastline was prohibited.

## Gaza Fishing: Total Catch

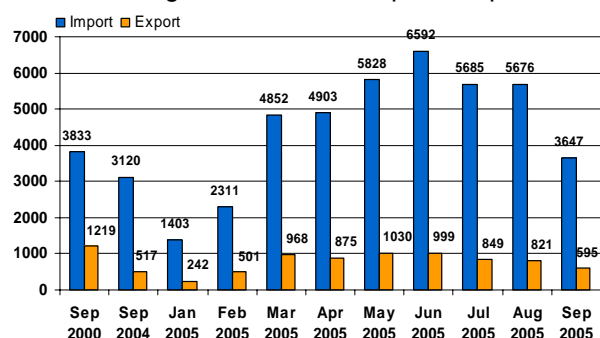


Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture/Department of Fisheries

## Access for Gazan trade movement through Karni Crossing

Most goods imported into the Gaza Strip and all exported goods pass through Karni crossing.<sup>3</sup> Truckloads of imported goods to the Gaza Strip fell in September 2005 compared with the previous month but remained comparable to the same month during previous years of the *intifada*. Of imported goods, 66% came from Israel, 13% from the West Bank and 21% from other parts of the world. A higher demand for imported goods reflects the decline in the Gaza Strip's local productive capacity since September 2000. Exports dropped this month compared to August and remained lower than pre-*intifada* levels. The decreased flow of goods is partly due to the closure of the crossing since 24 September. Of total exports, 68% were destined for Israel and 32% for the West Bank.

## Karni Crossing: Truckloads of Imports/Exports

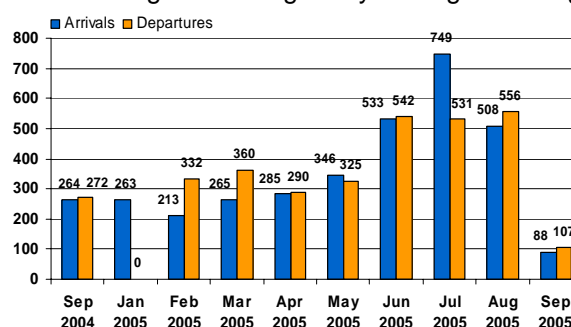


Palestinian Ministry of National Economy, 2000 and 2004 Data obtained from UNSCO

## c. Palestinians' access internationally from the Gaza Strip

Rafah passenger crossing is the principal point of access for Gazans travelling overseas and is located on the Egyptian border. Following the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, Israel closed the crossing on 7 September (it was reopened for one day on the 23 September).<sup>4</sup> This is reflected in the very low average number of daily arrivals and departures in September.<sup>5</sup> At the current time, alternative arrangements for movement in and out of the Gaza Strip have yet not been agreed upon between Israeli and Palestinian authorities. Between 600 and 700 medical referrals per month require passage out of the Gaza Strip through Rafah crossing for secondary and tertiary treatment.

## Rafah Passenger Crossing: Daily average crossing



Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs. Sep 2004 Data obtained from UNSCO

## 2. Restrictions on medical referrals in the Gaza Strip

Following the withdrawal of Israeli forces on 12 September, all internal closures restricting Palestinian movement within the Gaza Strip were lifted. This had a particularly positive impact on the residents of the five enclaves of As Seafa, Al Mawassi, Al Ma'ani, Abu Nahia and Abu al Ajin whose movement was severely restricted by the IDF. (For more information about the enclaves see <http://www.ochaopt.org> Gaza Access & Infrastructure Situation Report, 15 September 2005.)

19 October 2005

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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<sup>1</sup> Fishermen could only access the wharf during opening hours (8-11am and 3-5:30pm) and were not allowed on shore at other times. Fishing was limited to eight nautical miles off the coastline and three kilometers north of the wharf along the coastline and two nautical miles north of the Egyptian border. Fishermen, boats, equipment and catch were searched by the IDF and only three traders were allowed to enter Al Mawassi to purchase the catch.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> The other three commercial crossings in the Gaza Strip are Rafah, Sufa and Nahal Oz.

<sup>4</sup> The Israeli authorities originally agreed on partially reopening Rafah crossing again 24 September but this was cancelled following the rocket attacks against Israel from the northern Gaza Strip.

<sup>5</sup> Thousands of Palestinians moved from the Gaza Strip into Sinai and back in the days after Israeli forces withdrew on 12 September. This movement was stopped by the Palestinian Authority from 17 September.

## THE GAZA STRIP: ACCESS FOR PALESTINIAN FISHING - SEPTEMBER 2005

