



THE GAZA STRIP: THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS ON PEOPLE AND GOODS

JULY 2013

KEY FACTS

- Less than 200 people per day (on average) were allowed out of Gaza via Israel in the first half of 2013, compared to 26,000 in the equivalent period of 2000, before the second Intifada.
- Less than one truckload of goods per day (on average) exited Gaza in the first half of 2013, compared to 38 during the first half of 2007, before the imposition of the blockade.
- Kerem Shalom, the only functioning official crossing for goods to and from Gaza, was closed for almost half of the time (52 days) in the first four months of 2013.
- The volume of construction materials that entered Gaza via the tunnels in 2013 was over three times the amount allowed through the Kerem Shalom crossing.
- Access to land within 300 meters from the fence surrounding Gaza is generally prohibited and access to farming areas several hundred meters beyond is risky.
- Fishermen are allowed to access less than one third of the fishing areas allocated to them under the Oslo Accords: six out of 20 nautical miles.
- 57% of Gaza households are food insecure and about 80% are aid recipients.
- Over a third (34.5%) of those able and willing to work are unemployed (PCBS) - one of the highest unemployment rates in the world.
- A longstanding electricity deficit, compounded by shortages in fuel needed to run Gaza's power plant, results in power outages of up to 12 hours a day.
- Only a quarter of households receive running water every day, during several hours only.
- Over 90% of the water extracted from the Gaza aquifer is unsafe for human consumption.
- Some 90 million litres of untreated and partially treated sewage are dumped in the sea off the Gaza coast each day, creating public health hazards.
- Over 12,000 people are currently displaced due to their inability to reconstruct their homes, destroyed during hostilities.
- At least 230 Palestinian civilians have been killed and over 400 injured while working in tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, used for the transfer of restricted goods, since June 2007.

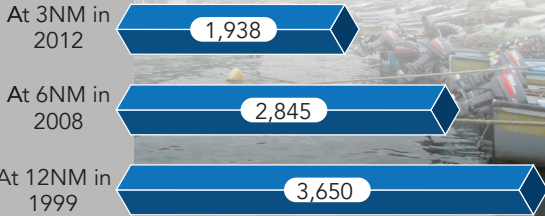
- The longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and goods to, from and within the Gaza Strip have continued to undermine the living conditions of 1.7 million people.** Many of the current restrictions, which were originally imposed in the early 1990's, were intensified in June 2007, following the Hamas takeover of Gaza and the imposition of a blockade by Israel. Some of them have been subsequently eased since 2010. These restrictions have reduced access to livelihoods, essential services and housing, disrupted family life, and undermined the people's hopes for a secure and prosperous future.
- Despite some economic growth in recent years, Gaza's productive capacity remains extremely weak.** The restrictions on external trade, including with Israel, and on transfers to and from the West Bank prevent the realization of the Gaza Strip's economic potential. This is compounded by the restrictions on access to agricultural land and fishing waters, and the chronic shortage of electricity. Current constraints discourage investment, prevent sustainable growth, and perpetuate high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and aid dependency.
- Import restrictions have led to a sharp increase in tunnel activities under the border with Egypt.** These restrictions, particularly on the import of basic construction materials, combined with the lack of employment opportunities and the huge reconstruction needs, have pushed thousands of workers, some of them children, to risk their lives every day in the "tunnels industry".
- The quality and availability of some infrastructure and essential services has deteriorated.** The long-term restrictions have worsened pre-existing gaps in key services such as health, education, electricity, water and sanitation. The situation has been compounded by rapid population growth and damage to infrastructure during recurrent hostilities. International organisations working to address these gaps continue to face impediments stemming from the restrictions on the import of construction materials and the related approval system.
- The restrictions on movement of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are part of a "policy of separation" adopted by the Israeli authorities.** As a result, people in Gaza are denied access to West Bank universities; cannot market their products or seek work in the West Bank; and cannot maintain normal family or cultural ties with Palestinians in the West Bank.
- The UN has repeatedly condemned in the strongest terms the firing of rockets at Israel by Palestinian armed groups. Israel has the right and the obligation to take measures to address this and other security threats. However, such **measures must be in conformity with international law: they must be proportionate to a specific threat, temporary, and must not be punitive in nature.**



Access to fishing areas

The ability of people to gain a living from fishing activities has been severely undermined as a result of the gradual restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on the access of fishermen to sea areas along Gaza's coast.

Annual fish yield at various access limitations



NM: Nautical Miles

metric tonnes of fish

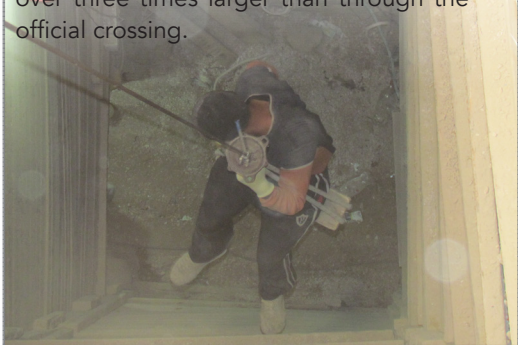
Sewage

The import restrictions have impeded the expansion and upgrading of Gaza's sewage infrastructure. Nearly 90 million litres of untreated or partially treated sewage are discharged into the sea every day. The contamination of seawater poses a serious health hazard.



Tunnels

The blockade has led to a proliferation of tunnels, where thousands of workers risk their lives every day smuggling restricted goods. The volume of construction materials entering through tunnels is over three times larger than through the official crossing.



26,000

Movement of people: Erez crossing



Daily average of travelers out of Gaza



Access to farming land

Despite the recent improvement in access to areas as close as 300 meters from the fence, due to the lack of clarity on the scope of current restrictions and the ongoing risks, farmers are reluctant to invest.



4,769

Exit of goods from the Gaza Strip

Number of truckloads (January – May)

