

Out in the cold

At the Ministry of Health's Central Drug Store in Gaza, stocks have been running low over the last weeks as a protracted shortage of medicine and medical supplies takes its toll on the quality of health care services. While emergency shipments of some essential drugs diverted a full blown crisis last month, budget shortfalls within the Palestinian Authority (PA) are now compounding the ongoing shortages, which have been generally caused by the lack of coordination between the Ministry of Health in Ramallah, run by the PA, and the health ministry in Gaza, which is administered by Hamas.



The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, an Oxfam partner which is monitoring the situation together with the authorities and the World Health Organisation, has been trying to intervene with both parties in order to find a remedy for the shortages.

“The problem is political,” said PCHR’s head of economic and social rights department, Khalil Shahin. “There is a lack of political will from both sides, but there is also a problem in the fact that even the West Bank is suffering from lack of drugs because of a decrease in funding. Right now we’re trying to figure out what is available in the West Bank stores that can be sent to Gaza through the ministry of health in Ramallah.”

The PA, which depends on foreign donors to help cover expenses for essential services delivered by ministries such as the Ministry of Health, is responsible for budgeting for health services in Gaza. Despite the signing of a reconciliation agreement, political divides continue to hamper effective cooperation and delivery of essential drugs and other medical services, further compromising the well being of 1.6 million Palestinians in Gaza living under Israeli blockade.

According to a World Health Organisation report just released, the “quality of medical services in the Gaza Strip is in decline due mainly to the Israeli blockade and the internal political divide between the authorities in Gaza and Ramallah.”

The same report shows how despite chemotherapy being available in Gaza, the treatment for cancer patients is compromised due to frequent shortages of essential drugs. As chemotherapy drugs are often out of stock, it results in more referrals abroad for Gaza’s cancer patients. These patients could be treated comfortably at home if the drugs they need were readily available. Last year, a total of 1,523 patients had to leave the Gaza Strip for oncological care, making up 12% of all medical referrals. In several instances reported by WHO, patients died while waiting for permission from Israel to leave the Gaza Strip.

On a similar note, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility – another Oxfam partner – warned that diesel fuel and water disinfection materials, which used to be financed by international donors, have now run out of funding, leaving a funding gap until March 2012. CMWU said that with the low quality of water and increased health hazards due to the heat and humidity during summer time, this has become a top priority problem facing Gaza.

1. Headlines

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** There were reports this week of the Israeli military undertaking 2 incursions across the perimeter into Gaza. Last week, there were reports that the Israeli military carried out 2 airstrikes in Gaza.

There were reports this week of Palestinian militants firing 2 home made rockets (HMR) towards Israel or Israeli forces. Last week, 4 HMR were reported to have been fired by Palestinian militants.

There were reports that 1 Palestinian civilian was injured this week as a result of Israeli military operations (see *Palestinians in the access restricted area*). Last week, there were reports that 7 Palestinian civilians, including 4 children, were injured as a result of Israeli military activity.

There were no reports of injuries or fatalities amongst Palestinian militants this week. Last week, there were reports that 2 Palestinian militants were injured as a result of Israeli military activity.

No Israeli civilians or soldiers were reported injured this week or last week.

Since January 23, 2011, Oxfam calculates there have been 24 Palestinian civilians reportedly killed, 255 Palestinian civilians reportedly injured, 20 Palestinian militants (including Hamas officers) reportedly killed and 32 militants reportedly injured as a result of Israeli military activity. There have also been reports of 1 Israeli civilian reportedly killed, 1 Israeli civilian reportedly injured and 4 Israeli soldiers reportedly injured as a result of Palestinian militant activity during the same reporting period.

- **Fishermen:** There was 1 report of an Israeli naval vessel opening fire on Palestinian fisherman this week, with no injuries reported. There were no reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fishermen the week before.

Since January 23, 2011, Oxfam calculates there have been 44 reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fisherman, with reports of 1 fisherman injured and 1 lost at sea. Since January 2009, Israeli naval forces have restricted the access of Palestinian fishing boats to three nautical miles from the coast; in practice, access is sometimes restricted to as little as one nautical mile, banning access to around 85% of Gaza's fishing water. In 2010, the annual fishing catch from Gaza decreased by 45% as compared to the 2008 fishing catch before fishing space was restricted to three nautical miles.

- **Tunnel related fatalities:** There were no tunnel related injuries or fatalities reported this week or last week.

In 2010, 43 Palestinian workers, including 5 child labourers, reportedly died in tunnel related accidents and another 88, including 1 child labourer, were reportedly injured.

- **Palestinians in the access restricted area (the so-called "buffer zone"):** There was 1 report of the Israeli military opening fire towards a group of farmers in the access restricted area this week, with 1 injury reported. Last week, there was also 1 report of the Israeli military opening fire on a group of farmers, with no injuries reported.

Since January 23, 2011, Oxfam calculates there have been 54 reports of the Israeli military opening fire on civilians in the buffer zone, with 8 civilians reportedly killed and 32 others

reportedly injured. In 2000, Israel first imposed a 150 metre-wide security 'buffer' within Gaza's perimeter. In certain areas along the northern and eastern perimeters, this official buffer extends up to 500 metres into Gaza. In practice, Israel restricts access to agricultural land up to 1,000-1,500 metres from the fence, which accounts for more than 30% of Gaza's agricultural land and a significant number of water wells. Most of the Gaza Strip's animal production is also concentrated in this area.

- **Rafah border crossing:** The Rafah border crossing was open 5 out of 7 days this week, with reports of 4,391 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 4,823 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 135 denied entry to Egypt. Last week, the Rafah border crossing was open 6 days with reports of 2,649 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 2,803 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 181 Palestinians denied entry to Egypt.

On May 28, 2011, the Egyptian authorities announced that they had permanently opened Rafah border crossing for the movement of people between Gaza and Egypt. During the first official week of opening, Egyptian officials had reported being overwhelmed by the volume of Palestinians from Gaza attempting to use Rafah border crossing, which had resulted in some delays. Hamas officials had also reported that the Egyptian procedures for transferring travelers from one side to the other were not clear.

Although Rafah border crossing does not ease movement restrictions between Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank, a full and consistent opening of Rafah border crossing would offer Palestinians in Gaza an opportunity to travel abroad for higher education opportunities, medical treatment, or to take a personal holiday.

An estimated 500 people rely on the Rafah border crossing every month to reach scheduled or ongoing medical treatment in Egypt or abroad.

- **Power plant and electricity supply:** Since January 5th, 2011, Gaza's power plant has not placed an order for industrial fuel to be transferred from Israel. The fuel for Gaza's power plant is now being supplied through the tunnels underneath the Gaza-Egypt border in the form of Egyptian diesel, at a much lower price than the industrial fuel supplied from Israel.

OCHA estimates that the power plant is buying between 300,000 and 400,000 litres of diesel from the tunnels every day. In addition to what is procured daily from the tunnels, the power plant in Gaza now reportedly has a back up supply of fuel, capable of running the plant at an output of 60 Mw for one month.

- **Cooking gas:** 760 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week via the Kerem Shalom crossing, as compared to 763 tons of cooking gas reported to have entered Gaza the week before. The 760 tons of cooking gas entering Gaza this week represents 43 percent of the 1,750 tons of cooking gas needed weekly. The overall cooking gas shortage has been a main concern for humanitarian agencies since November 2009. Cooking gas cannot safely be transported through the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border as it is highly combustible and requires a special pipeline to transport in bulk. The one tunnel equipped with a cooking gas pipeline was reportedly destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in December 2010. Although this tunnel started functioning again in February, it was damaged soon after and is now used irregularly to transport limited quantities of cooking gas. While cooking gas is supposed to be transferred from Israel via Kerem Shalom crossing, a broken fuel pump on the Israeli side further delayed adequate cooking gas transfers into Gaza. Although the fuel pump was repaired in late June 2011, the ongoing shortage has created huge demand for cooking gas in the local market. The

Gas Station Owners' Association has indicated that of the 28 gas stations that supply cooking gas, only between 10 and 15 are operational due to the overall shortage. As gas stations are unable to meet the local demand for cooking gas, a rationing system remains in place, with customers reporting a waiting time to refill of over 1 month.

- **Diesel/petrol:** No diesel or benzene was reported to have been delivered to the private sector this week or last week. A near total ban on fuel imports for public sale was put in place by the Government of Israel in October 2008. Around 600,000 litres of diesel and 200,000 litres of petrol for public sale are reported to enter Gaza every day through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border (OCHA, January 2011).
- **Exports:** No exports were reported to have left Gaza this week or the week before. The last truckload of exports to exit Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing was 1 truck of flowers reported to be destined for the Netherlands on May 13, 2011.

Since 2007, and despite Israeli government promises this past December to make additional efforts to increase exports from Gaza, exports have to date been entirely agricultural in nature, contributing to the de-development of Gaza's private sector. According to UNRWA calculations, before the blockade, 90 percent of garments, 76 percent of furniture products and 20 percent of food products produced in Gaza were marketed to the West Bank and Israel.

The limited exports now leaving Gaza are allowed as a result of an agreement between Israel and the Netherlands permitting limited exports of seasonal agricultural items. The agreement resumed on 28 November 2010.

**Pre-blockade weekly average (490 truckloads) is calculated on the daily average of all truckloads that exited Gaza between January 2005 and mid June 2007, before Israel's imposition of the blockade.*

- **Truckloads of supplies:** Kerem Shalom crossing was open 5 out of 7 days this week, with reports of 1,100 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, which represents 39 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average. ** Last week, Kerem Shalom crossing was also open 5 out of 7 days with reports of 1,241 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, representing 44 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average.

Following the permanent closure of Karni crossing in early March, Kerem Shalom is now the sole permanent crossing through which goods enter Gaza. While Karni could accommodate up to 1,000 trucks a day, Kerem Shalom can only accommodate around 250 trucks per day. UNRWA has referred to the Kerem Shalom crossing, located in the deep south of Gaza, as an inefficient bottleneck that adds 20 percent in transport and labor costs to the price of humanitarian goods. Kerem Shalom crossing is also not equipped to handle the bulk transfer of large quantities of wheat and animal feed, while Karni is.

While imports remain limited, and raw materials severely restricted, exports remain banned almost entirely except for limited truckloads of strawberries, carnations and cherry tomatoes exported to the Netherlands. As a result, the scale of economic activity remains heavily dependent on local demand in Gaza, which in turn is constrained by the low purchasing power of the population and the relatively small size of the local market. Until crossings are fully opened for export, the impact of the easing of the blockade on unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates remains limited.

This update is compiled by **Oxfam International** from the best available information drawn from reliable international sources. Some of the information is preliminary and may be updated in subsequent reports.

****Pre-blockade weekly average (2,807 truckloads) is calculated based on the monthly average of all truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007, before Israel's imposition of the blockade.**

2. Humanitarian trucks (week):

Truck originator	Total for week 24 July- 30 July
Bulk grains (human and animal)	151
Aggregates (for UNRWA, USAID, and UNDP)	124
UNRWA	72
WFP	35
Water Authority	10
Gaza Institutions	4
Commercial	704
Total trucks for the week	1100
Percentage of pre blockade average (first 5 months of 2007)	39%

3. Fuel deliveries (week)

		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
24 July – 30 July		0	0	760 MT
	Percentage of need *	0		43 %
Previous week		0	0	763 MT

* Fuel association 2006 estimates - ** Imports of diesel and petrol for the general public and public sector in Gaza were exceptionally authorized on 6 occasions since October 2008

Request* of Industrial Fuel to the Power Plant via Israel (week):

Industrial diesel from Israel	Previous week	24 July- 30 July
0	0	0
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply capacity of 80 MW		0%

Estimates of fuel supplied to the power plant from the tunnels

Diesel from the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt	Previous week	24 July- 30 July

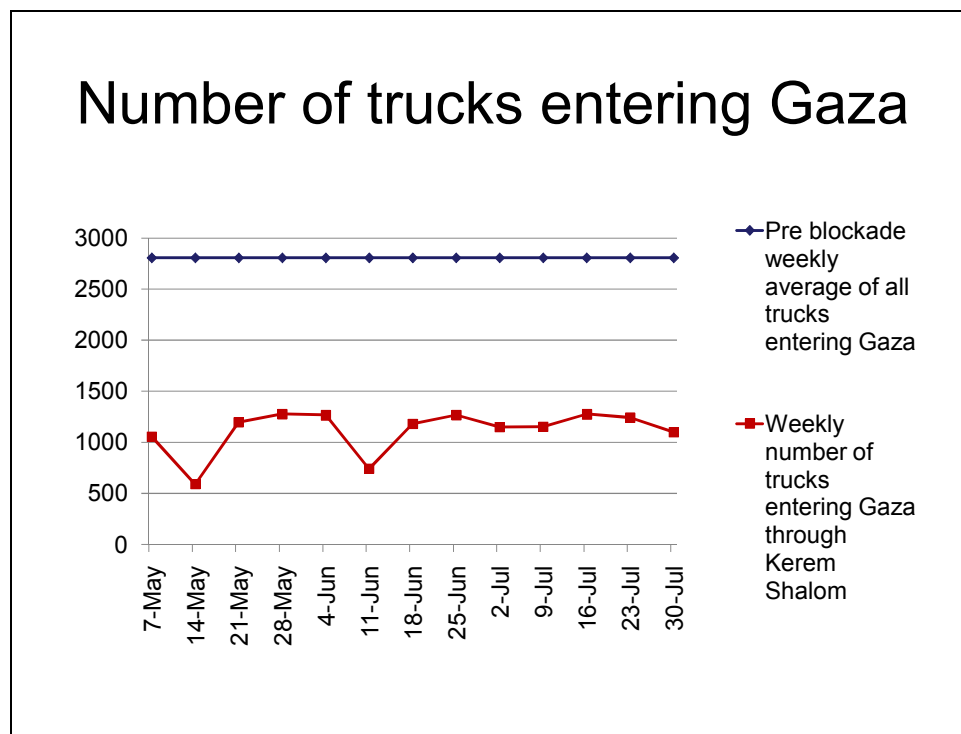
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border		
	2.1- 2.8 million litres**	2.1- 2.8 million litres**
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply of 80 MW	60-80%	60-80%

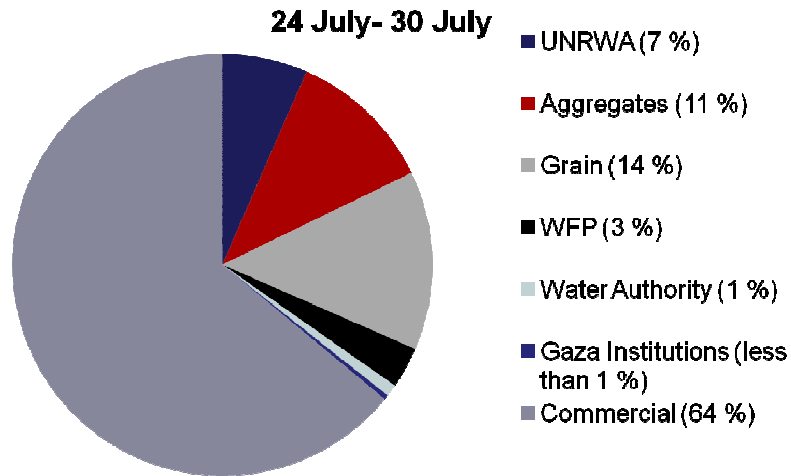
**The power plant has not requested any industrial fuel to be transferred from Israel since January 5, 2011*

***based on OCHA estimates of 300,000- 400,000 litres of diesel per day*

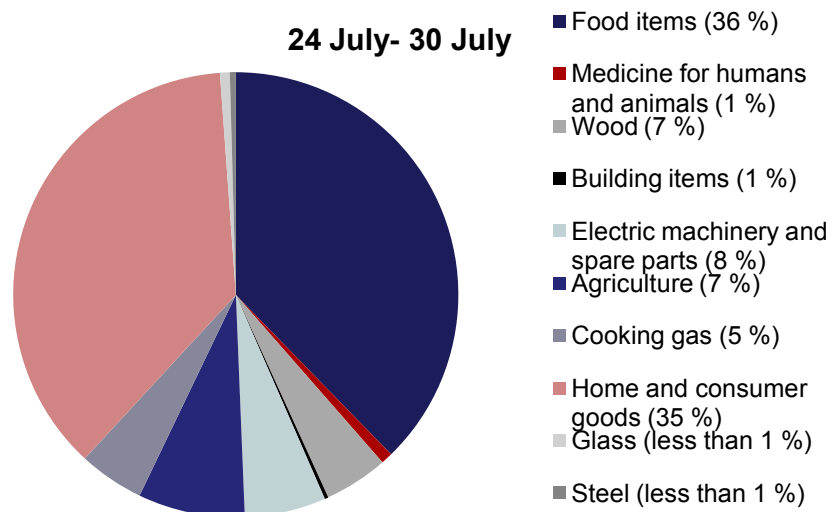
4. Weekly Charts



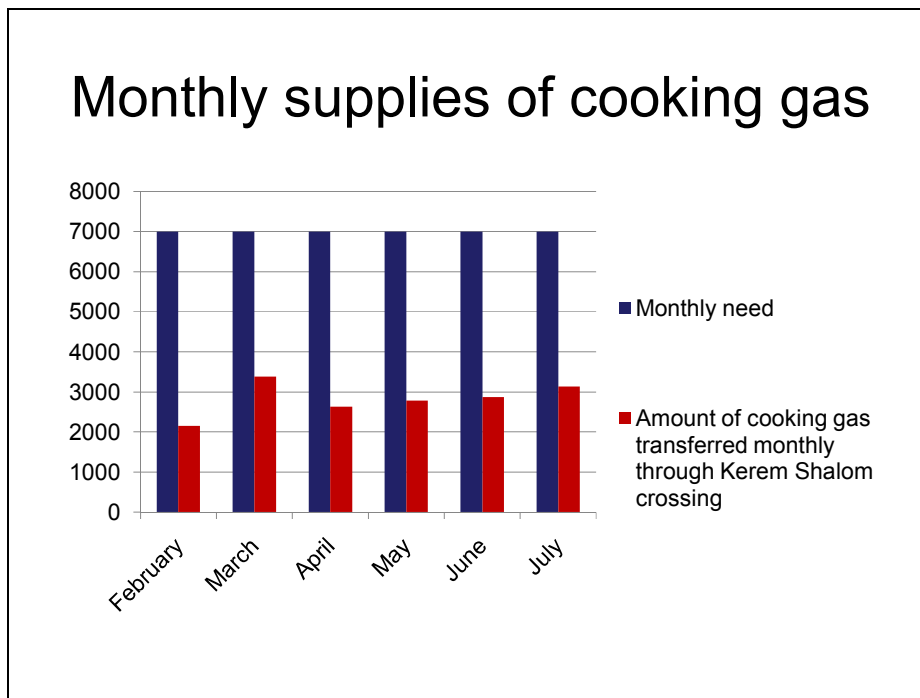
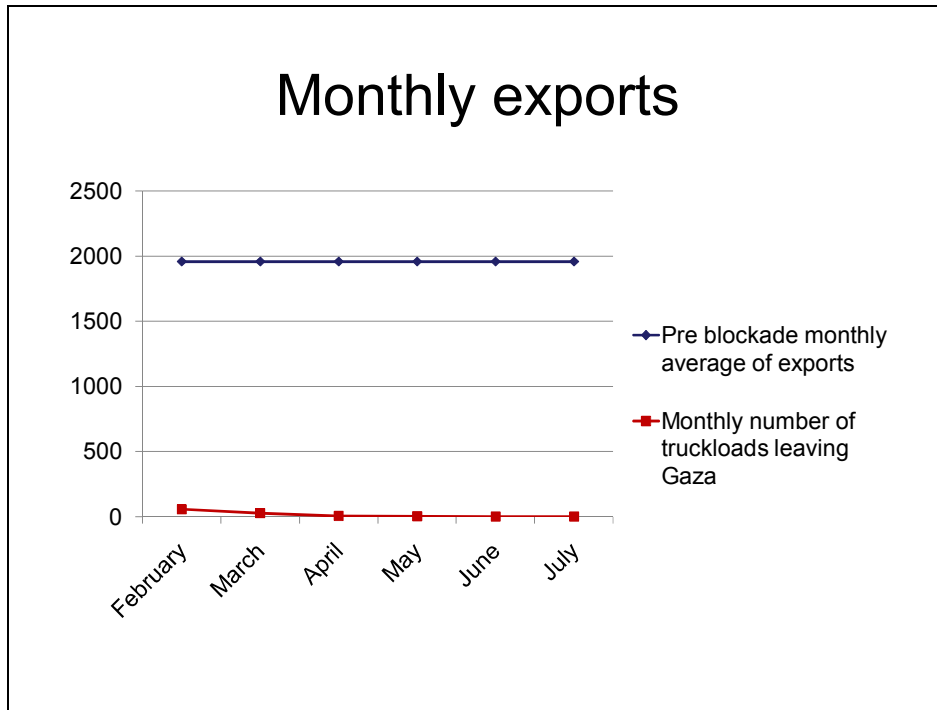
Weekly trucks entering Gaza through Kerem Shalom by provider



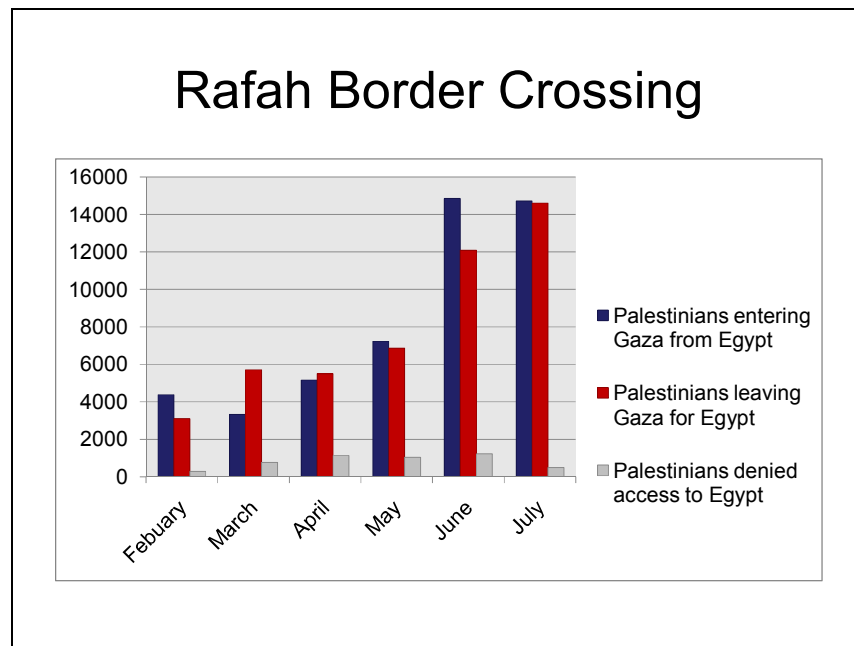
Weekly breakdown of commercial items entering Gaza via Kerem Shalom by item type



5. Monthly Charts



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6. Contact information

Willow Heske, OI OPTI Media Lead: +972 (0) 59 71 33 646
or +972 (0) 54 63 95 002 – willow.heske@oxfamnovib.nl

Karl Schembri, Communication Officer: +972 (0) 59 89 10 981 – kschembri@oxfam.org.uk