

Beyond borders

With just three of Gaza's six crossing points open, the majority of the 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza remain trapped under a blockade that is also conditioning entry of materials and banning all exports except for a few select items allowed shipment to the Netherlands.

While there has been no significant improvement in easing Israeli movement restrictions for Palestinians through Erez crossing, Egypt has voiced its intention to open the Rafah crossing, pictured here, to allow Gaza residents to travel abroad.

Oxfam Israeli partner Gisha said that while it hoped Egypt would expand Gazans' ability to travel, opening Rafah would not improve the movement of people and goods between Gaza and the West Bank, and that the blockade would effectively remain in effect until all crossings points were opened to allow for the free movement of people and goods, in accordance with the 2006 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA).

"Gaza, Israel and the West Bank are part of a single customs envelope, in which free trade is to take place and in which customs regulations are to be uniform. ... Any arrangement for permitting goods to cross via Rafah should consider the need to maintain the unity of the Palestinian economy, existing in Gaza and the West Bank."

Since Egypt reopened the Rafah crossing in the wake of last year's flotilla incident, an average of 19,000 people crossed Rafah monthly, that it just 47% of the number of people crossing in the first half of 2006.

Meanwhile, a recent agreement signed between the Palestinian Authority and the European Union at a donor conference on 13 April, 2011 gives Palestinian agricultural products immediate duty free access to the EU market. However, the agreement, which also includes processed foods, fish and fishery products originating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, will do little to help farmers, fisherman, and other food producers in Gaza as long as the blockade continues to restrict the amount of exports allowed out.

Photo and text: Karl Schembri/Oxfam

**1. Headlines**

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** There was 1 incursion by Israeli forces reported this week. There were no reports of Israeli forces carrying out any military activity the week before.

There were no reports this week or last week of Palestinian armed groups firing rockets or mortars towards Israel or Israeli forces.

There were no reports this week of injuries or fatalities to Palestinian civilians resulting from military activity. Last week, 3 Palestinian civilians, all children, were reported injured as a result of coming into contact with an IED. It is not known who planted the IED.

No injuries or fatalities were reported amongst Palestinian militants this week. Last week, a Hamas officer first reported injured on April 9th reportedly died as a result of his injuries

There were no reports of casualties or injuries to Israeli civilians or soldiers this week or the week before.

- **Fishermen:** There were no reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fishermen this week or last week. 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.
- **Tunnel related fatalities:** There were 2 reports of tunnels collapsing beneath the border between Egypt and Gaza this week, with 2 Palestinian workers reportedly killed. No tunnel related injuries were reported last week.
- **Palestinians in the access restricted area (the so-called "buffer zone"):** There were no reports of the Israeli military opening fire in the access restricted area this week or last week.

Israel first imposed a 150 metre-wide security 'buffer' within Gaza's perimeter in 2000. 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 1,719 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,518 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 188 Palestinians denied entry to Egypt. Last week, the Rafah border crossing was open 4 out of 7 days, with reports of 2,204 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,373 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 251 denied entry to Egypt.

Following the announcement on April 27th that Fatah and Hamas had reached an interim agreement for reconciliation, the Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi announced on April 29th that Egypt would soon be permanently opening the Rafah border crossing. While the terms of the opening have yet to be announced, the permanent opening of Rafah could allow for freer movement of both goods and people between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.

Following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, the Palestinian Authority was made responsible for running the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing, with the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) designated to monitor both Palestinian and Egyptian management of the border crossing. However, citing security concerns, Israel ordered the crossing closed in 2006. As the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip officially started in 2007, Egyptian officials kept the Rafah border crossing closed. Since the border crossing has remained closed, only the limited movement of people- foreign passport holders and Palestinians from Gaza who have been cleared by Israeli security- has been allowed.

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:** There were no reports of additional disruptions to power supplies in Gaza due to blockade related issues or Israeli military activity this week or last week.

Since January 5th, 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:** 383 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week via the Kerem Shalom crossing, as compared to 902 tons of cooking gas reported to have entered Gaza the week before. The 383 tons of cooking gas entering Gaza this week represent 21 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. The Gas Station Owner's 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.
- **Diesel/petrol:** No diesel or benzine 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:** 1 truckload of flowers was reported to have left Gaza this week, representing .002 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average of all exports leaving Gaza.* 2 truckloads of flowers were reported to have left the week before. 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:** The Kerem Shalom crossing was open 3 out of 7 days this week. During the 3 days that Kerem Shalom was open this week, there were reports of 590 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, representing 21 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average. Last week, the Kerem Shalom crossing was open 5 out of 7 days, with a total of 1,056 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, representing 37 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 up to 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.

Kerem Shalom crossing is also not yet equipped to handle the bulk transfer of construction materials. While the Sufa crossing was initially opened temporarily to allow for the transfer of construction materials (aggregates) to humanitarian agencies involved in building projects, such as UNRWA and UNDP, the Sufa crossing has now remained closed since March 30th. Therefore, only limited amounts of aggregates have entered Gaza through Kerem Shalom, which further delays rehabilitation and building projects, already behind schedule.

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.

***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 8- 14 May
Bulk grains (human and animal)	136
UNRWA	90
WFP	15
Commercial	349
Total trucks for the week	590
Percentage of pre blockade average (first 5 months of 2007)	21 %

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.

3. Fuel deliveries (week)

		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
8- 14 May		0	0	902 MT
	Percentage of need *	0		51 %
Previous week		0	0	684 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	8- 14 May
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

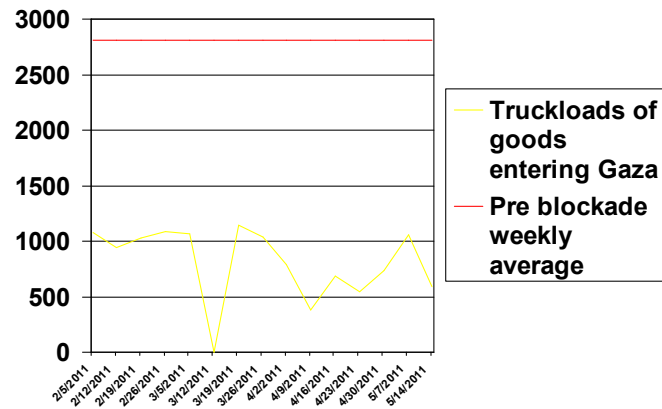
Diesel from the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border	Previous week	8- 14 May
	2.1- 2.8 million litres**	2.1- 2.8 million litres**
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply of 80 MW	60-80%	60-80%

*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. Charts

Weekly truckloads of goods



5. Contact information

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

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