

The Gaza Cheat Sheet • Real Data on the Gaza Closure • July 09, 2015

Economic situation

More than 70% of the population relies on humanitarian aid • On the eve of Operation Protection Edge, 57% of the population suffered from food insecurity • The unemployment rate was 41.6% in the 1st quarter of 2015 (compared to 18.7% in 2000) • 27 government schools in Gaza were heavily damaged or destroyed during the fighting last summer • Even before the military operation, the Strip was short over 200 schools, including 150 government schools • Classes are usually taught in two shifts • More than 100,000 housing units were damaged during the recent hostilities, including 17,000 housing units which were severely damaged or destroyed • Some 562 factories and workshops were also damaged or destroyed.

Access policy

Entrance of goods into Gaza: Kerem Shalom, connecting Gaza to Israel, is the only official crossing open for the transfer of goods into and out of the Strip • Israel allows entrance of civilian goods into Gaza, except for a list of materials that it defines as "dual-use", whose entry into Gaza is restricted • On September 2, basic construction materials (cement, gravel and steel) were again allowed to enter for international aid organizations and the Palestinian Water Authority • A mechanism that is meant to allow materials in for use by the private sector is also operating, yet what has entered is just a fraction of what is needed • Since the ceasefire, from August 26 until the end of June 2015, 1.3 million tons of construction material entered the Strip through Kerem Shalom Crossing, which constitutes about 5.5% of the total need, estimated at about 23 million tons • Only 21% of the construction materials that have entered the Gaza Strip so far are designated for private use to repair damages incurred during Operation Protective Edge, while the rest entered for international organizations or projects funded by Qatar • In June, cement for the private sector entered Gaza via Rafah Crossing, in addition to gravel for use primarily in projects funded by Qatar.

Exit of goods from Gaza: In November 2014, Israel canceled a seven-year ban on the marketing of some commodities from Gaza in the West Bank and in March it canceled the ban on entrance of some agricultural products to Israel for the sake of the Jewish practice of "shmita" or allowing agricultural land to lie fallow every seven years • From September 2014 until the end of June 2015, an average of 67 truckloads of goods exited Gaza per month, or about 6% of what exited monthly on the eve of the closure in 2007.

Travel between Gaza and the West Bank: The only crossings through which people are permitted to travel to and from the Gaza Strip are Erez (to Israel) and Rafah (to Egypt) • Until Operation Protective Edge, Israel allowed passage through Erez only "in exceptional humanitarian cases, with an emphasis on urgent medical cases" in addition to some merchants • After the cessation of hostilities, Israel changed some of the criteria for travel from Gaza, but these remain very narrow • In the first six months of 2015, a monthly average of 13,832 exits of Palestinians was recorded at Erez Crossing, of which 67% were exits of traders, medical patients and their companions • In 2014, the monthly average was 6,270 exits, compared to a monthly average of 4,766 exits in 2013.

Travel from Gaza to the outside world: Such travel takes place mostly through Egypt • During the first half of 2013, approximately 40,000 people transited at Rafah in both directions every month • Starting in July 2013, Egypt began limiting passage to exceptional cases only, following instability in the country, as well as limiting the days of operation of the crossing • In the first six months of 2015, Rafah Crossing was open for transit into Gaza on 18 days only, with transit out of Gaza to Egypt allowed on 15 of these • During this period, a monthly average of 2,208 entrances and exits through Rafah was recorded • In June 2015, Rafah Crossing operated for transit in both directions for 10 days, and was meant to remain open all through Ramadan, but closed following attacks in northern Sinai • Through its control of the Palestinian population registry, Israel has indirect control over the issuing of Palestinian passports, which are required for travel through Rafah.

Access to the Gaza Strip's land, territorial waters and air space: Israel prevents all access to and from the Gaza Strip by sea and air • Following the end of Operation Protective Edge, on August 27, the fishing zone was changed again, expanding to six nautical miles from the coast and the "buffer zone" along the border was reduced to 100 meters.

Gisha's position

By virtue of Israel's substantial control of the Gaza Strip, international law requires Israel to facilitate normal life in the Strip, including by allowing access for civilians and civilian goods. Alongside this obligation, Israel has the authority to decide by which routes both people and goods enter and leave Gaza and to establish reasonable and proportionate security measures to prevent the transfer of weapons and other military activity. Accordingly, Gisha's position is that Israel must lift the sweeping restrictions that remain and allow entrance of construction materials, sale of goods to the West Bank and Israel and travel of people between Gaza and the West Bank, subject to individual security inspections. Since Egypt has begun to reduce the flow of people through the Rafah crossing, Gaza residents have almost no possibility of leaving Gaza. Israel has a responsibility to allow regular movement of people and goods between Gaza and the West Bank, which continue to share a single economy, a single education system, a single healthcare system and countless familial, cultural and social ties.