



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
occupied Palestinian territory

The Gaza Strip: Access Report November 2005

This report monitors access in and out of the Gaza Strip. Movement in and out of the Gaza Strip is controlled through:

- 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.

All movement between Israel and the Gaza Strip is controlled by the Israeli authorities.¹ Fences and a concrete wall surround the Gaza Strip and sea access is restricted.

On 15 November an agreement was reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) "... facilitating the movement of people and goods within the Palestinian Territories and on opening an international crossing on the Gaza-Egypt border that will put the Palestinians in control of the entry and exit of people".

1. Gaza Strip Crossing Points

a. Access for Palestinian workers and traders into Israel (see Figure 1)

The closure, imposed on 24 September after Palestinian militants fired rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel, was lifted on 13 November. (Erez closed again from 17 – 19 November due to an alleged security threat). Since then the number of workers entering Israel increased significantly with almost 4,000 crossing on 30 November – the highest number since the start of Israel's Disengagement.

Key Events:

- 24 September – 12 November: The crossing was completely closed for all Palestinian workers and traders to Israel following Palestinian militant rocket attacks towards Israel that injured six Israelis. Some humanitarian cases were allowed access with coordination.
- 13 August – 24 September: The crossing was closed for Palestinians. Only a limited number of workers and merchants, and some humanitarian cases were allowed access.
- 13 – 30 July 2005: The 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, which killed four Israelis.
- 22 April – 15 May 2005: The crossing was closed to workers entering Israel (25 April - 14 May) and EIZ (22 April to 15 May) at the onset of the Jewish Passover holidays. The crossing remained closed after the Passover due to an alleged security threat.

b. Access for Humanitarian Organizations

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. Erez was closed from 17 – 19 November; international organizations required two stages of prior coordination to exit the crossing.

c. Access for Palestinian fishing (see Figure 2)

The fish catch in November 2004 was slightly lower compared to last month and compared to November in 2000 and 2004. On 12 November an 18 year old Palestinian fisherman was shot and seriously injured when an Israeli gunboat opened fire towards the fishing boats at sea off the Rafah – Khan Younis shore.

Since January 2005, the Israeli authorities have permitted Palestinian fishing up to 10 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).

Palestinian fishing is prohibited one nautical mile north of the border with Egypt and one and a half nautical miles south of the border with Israel. Before the Israeli withdrawal of military and settler presence from the Gaza Strip, fishing was prohibited from the Khan Younis wharf and the Rafah wharf was subject to additional restrictions. These wharfs are in need of repair estimated at a cost of US\$ 675,000 for the Khan Younis wharf and US\$ 460,000 for the Rafah wharf. The 16 fish farms in the north of the Gaza Strip, near the former Dugit settlement, are also in need of repair.

2. Gazan trade movement

Karni crossing (see Figures 3 and 4)

Imports and exports in November increased significantly compared to last month. Since the Agreement on Movement and Access on 15 November, the daily average volume of imported goods have remained stable while exports have increased.

In November, 65% of imported goods arrived from Israel, 12% from the West Bank and 23% from other parts of the world. The stated goal in the 15 November Agreement is the export of 150 truckloads daily by the end of the year. This month, 71% of exports were destined for Israel, 27% for the West Bank and 2% to other parts of the world.

The low flow of goods in the first week was due to a closure of the crossing from 3 – 5 November. Most goods imported

into the Gaza Strip and all exported goods pass through Karni crossing.²

Humanitarian Supplies (see Figure 5)

Humanitarian supplies, of which the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) handle about 90%, enter the Gaza Strip through Karni crossing. Since February, there has been a steady flow of humanitarian containers (20 feet equivalent units - TFEUs) through the crossing. UNRWA managed through coordination with the Israeli authorities to transport all of its humanitarian goods to the Gaza Strip prior to Israel's disengagement. This is reflected in the decline in the flow of goods from September onwards.³

3. Palestinians' access internationally from the Gaza Strip (see Figure 6)

Rafah passenger crossing is the point of access for Gazans traveling overseas and is located on the Gazan border with Egypt. Following Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip, Israel closed the crossing on 7 September with only periodic openings since. This month, it was opened on 8, 9, 15 and 16 November. After the Agreement between the PA and Israel was brokered, an official Palestinian opening ceremony was held at Rafah on 25 November. The following day, the crossing began operating under joint

Palestinian/Egyptian control with the presence of European Union monitors. The crossing currently operates from 11am to 4pm.

The low daily average numbers of arrivals and departures in November is due to the fewer opening days. However, the daily average number of passengers crossing after the PA assumed control of the crossing is significantly higher than previously. This is expected to rise further with the future extension of the crossing's opening hours.

4. Restrictions on medical referrals in the Gaza Strip (see Figure 7)

Gazans referred for medical treatment outside the Gaza Strip experience access restrictions. Medical referrals require passage through Erez crossing for treatment in Israel and through Rafah crossing for treatment in other parts of the world.

Erez crossing

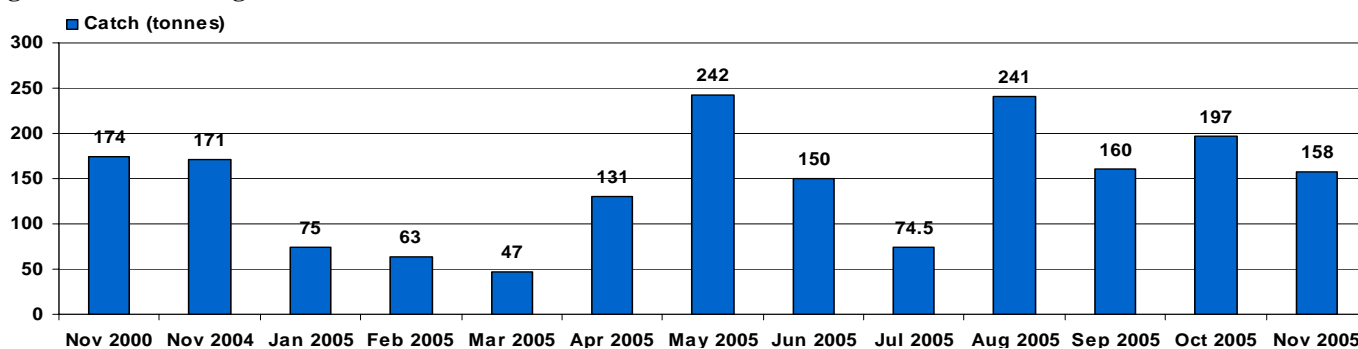
The number of medical referral requests and patients crossing Erez remained constant in September and October but more than doubled in November after the completion of Israel's disengagement.

Figure 1: Erez Crossing - Average Daily Labour Movement

	Nov 1999	Nov 00	Nov 04	Jan 05	Feb 05	Mar 05	Apr 05	May 05	Jun 05	Jul 05	Aug 05	Sep 05	Oct 05	Nov 05
Workers to Israel	23,081	0	0	49	390	1,451	3,200	2,067	3,588	1,767	281	128	0	1,200
Traders to Israel	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	70	158	224	103	362	175	168	120	0	104
Workers to EIZ	3,060	0	13	9	278	537	487	259	458	233	201	41 ⁴	---	---

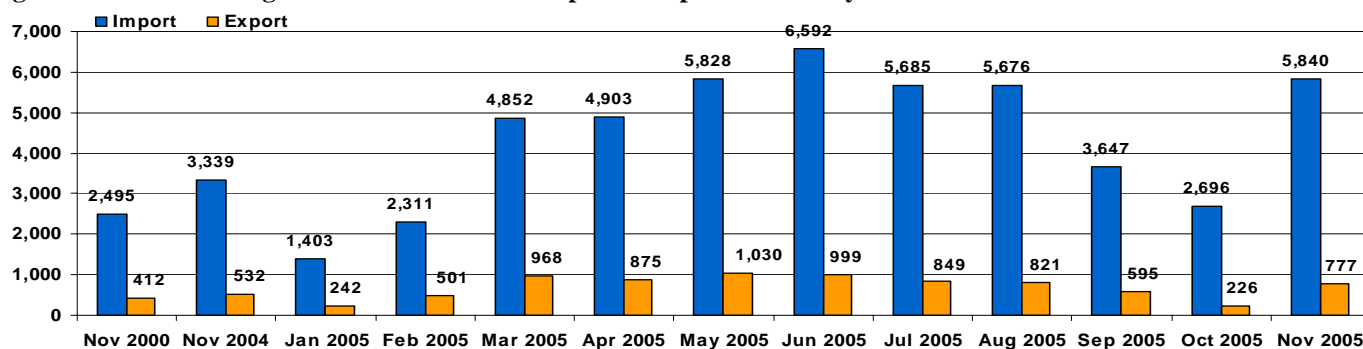
Source: Palestinian National Security Forces/Data. 1999 - 2004 data obtained from UNSCO

Figure 2: Gaza Fishing - Total Catch



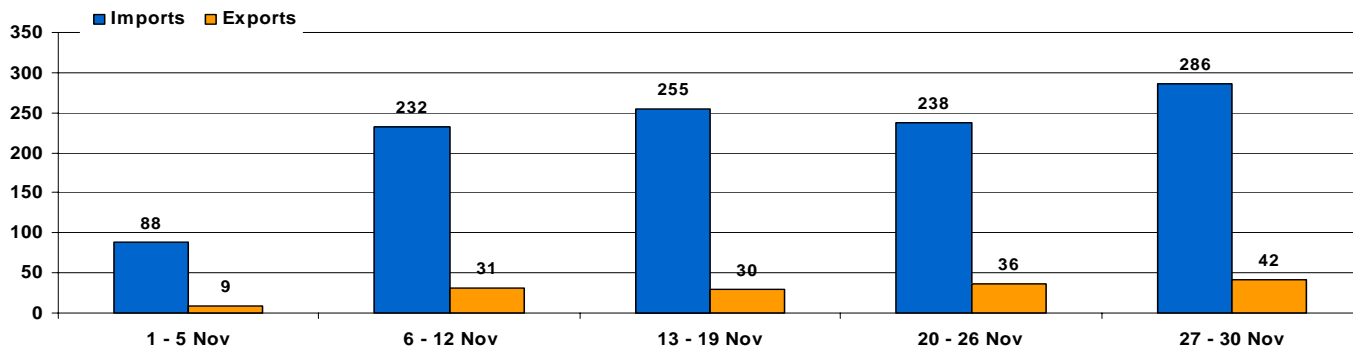
Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture/Department of Fisheries

Figure 3: Karni Crossing - Total Truckloads of Imports / Exports - Monthly



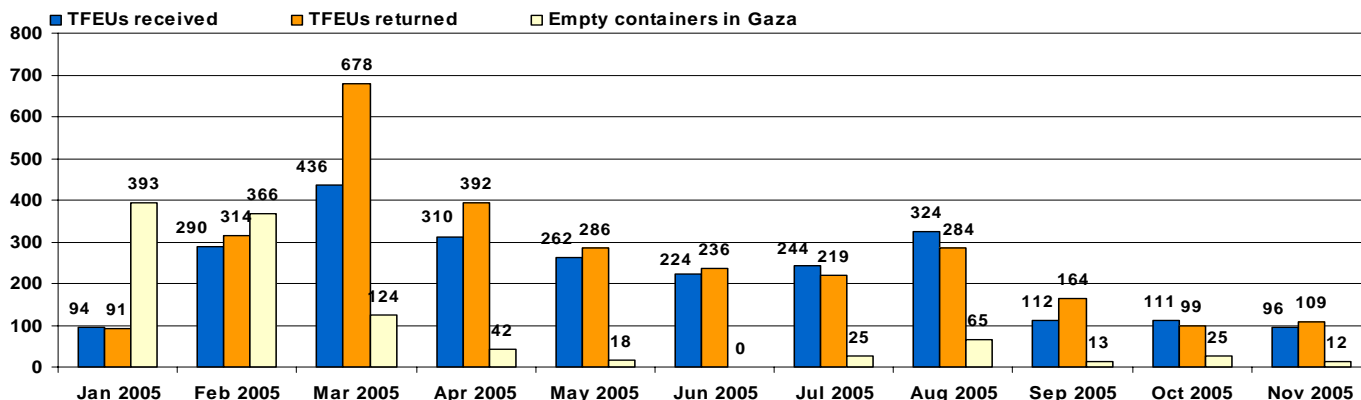
Source: Palestinian Ministry of National Economy; 2000 and 2004 data obtained from UNSCO.

Figure 4: Karni Crossing – Daily average Truckloads of Imports / Exports – November 2005



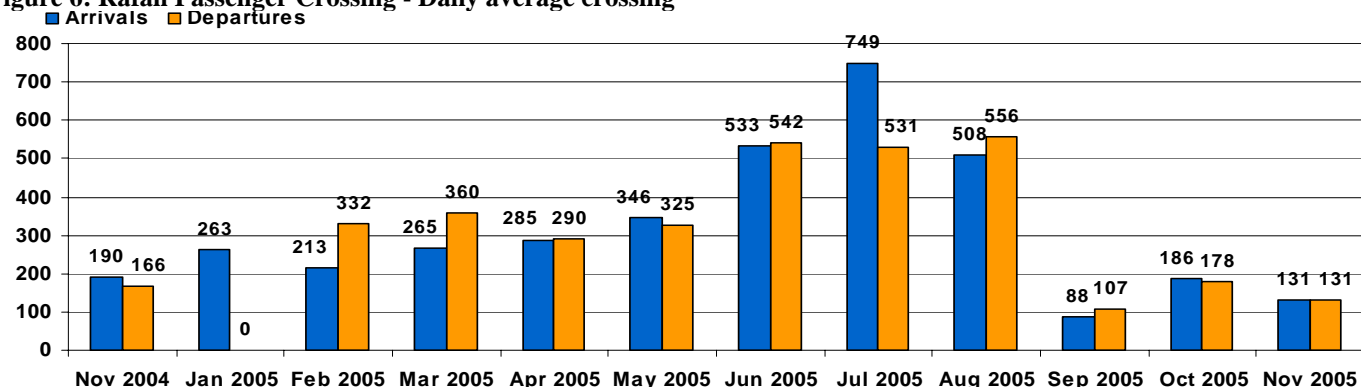
Source: Palestinian Ministry of National Economy; 2000 and 2004 data obtained from UNSCO.

Figure 5: Karni Crossing – UNRWA Humanitarian Supplies



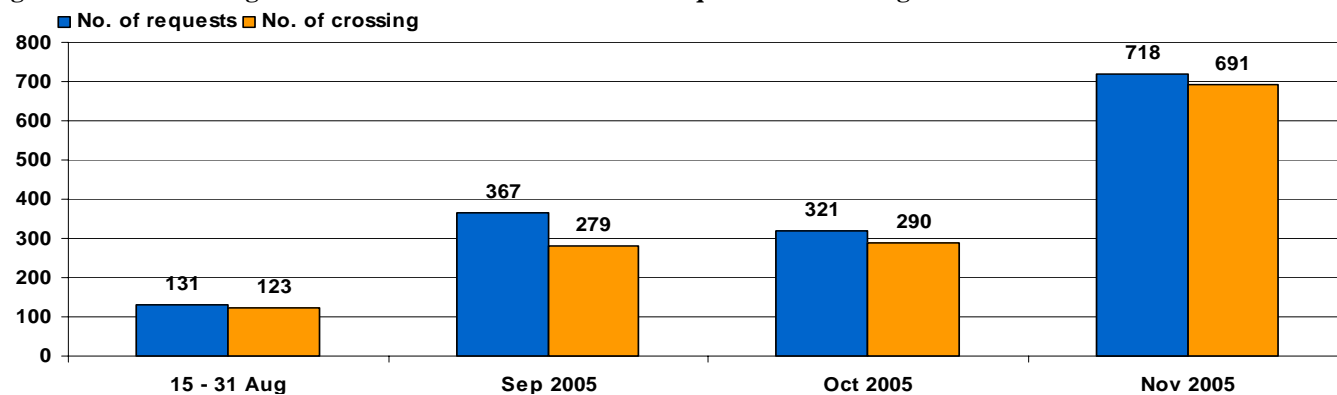
Source: UNRWA.

Figure 6: Rafah Passenger Crossing - Daily average crossing



Source: Palestinian Passport and Border police. Sep 2004 data obtained from UNSCO.

Figure 7: Erez Crossing - Total number of medical referral requests and crossing



Source: Palestinian Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation.

¹ Rafah crossing is no longer controlled by Israeli authorities. It was closed by Israel on 7 September. See below for developments on the crossing.

² The other three commercial crossings in the Gaza Strip are Rafah, Sufa and Nahal Oz.

³ Data for November is likely to increase since data for the last four days is not available. See coming December access report for updated numbers.

⁴ 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.