



Fishermen in Gaza pull up an empty net. The 2010 annual fishing catch in Gaza decreased by 45 % as compared to the 2008 fishing catch before fishing space was restricted to 3 nautical miles. Photo: David Levene/Oxfam

The Big Uneasy

Israel's easing of the Gaza land, air and sea blockade: promises and realities

Oxfam Gaza Blockade Factsheet
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“For the vast majority of people in Gaza, life has not become any easier, despite pledges by the Government of Israel in June and December 2010 to ease the ongoing blockade. Not only have certain commitments gone unfulfilled, but the unacceptably high levels of poverty and unemployment show that a token number of trucks cannot deliver what people need to rebuild their shattered lives. Karni crossing has been locked down, exports over the last year have all but ceased, and the entry of materials needed to kick start the economy remain hopelessly delayed. Residents of Gaza do not need more broken promises, they need meaningful change brought through an end to the blockade. The International Community can help make this a reality by living up to its responsibility to Palestinians in Gaza and working with the government of Israel to ensure the opening of all crossings in accordance with International Law. The crossings can be equipped with the technology necessary to handle the free flow of people and goods while addressing Israel’s security concerns.”

-Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director, Oxfam



Easing measures announced on 20 June 2010	Summary of implementation and results in the past year (December 2010- November 2011)
Imports	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publish a list of items restricted into Gaza ('negative list') - All items absent from the list will be permitted to enter Gaza, subject only to coordination with the crossings' authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 average of imports at 34 percent of pre-blockade levels.ⁱ This is 1 percent lower than 2010 average.ⁱⁱ • The published negative list continues to extend far beyond the international definition of dual-use items.ⁱⁱⁱ • Many items not on the list still require special approval and many of them have not received it. Approved items also face serious delays. For example, entry for more than 80% of the approved materials needed to repair the failing water system is still delayed.^{iv} • Only 1 out of 4 crossings equipped for the movement of goods is open. The closure of Karni crossing has increased the cost of importing and exporting approved goods for both the private sector and humanitarian agencies. In addition to adding fuel costs because of the longer distance, Kerem Shalom crossing has forced the private sector and humanitarian agencies to palletize goods (as opposed to bulk transfers via conveyor belts.) Fuel costs, along with the added costs of palletization, storage, and demurrage associated with using Kerem Shalom have increased import and export costs by 30%, having an impact on commodity prices.^v • April 2011 saw an 11 month low of only 2,605 trucks entering Gaza. Since the 'easing' the volume of trucks entering Gaza in 2011 has also not surpassed the highest monthly figure in 2010 of 5021.^{vi}
Construction materials	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow the entry of restricted construction materials for international projects in Gaza approved by the Palestinian Authority - Expand and accelerate their inflow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban on cement, steel, and aggregates for private companies remains in place. Only 154 truckloads of these materials have recently entered Gaza for a select 10 out of about 210 factories documented as destroyed or damaged during Israeli military operation Cast Lead.^{vii} • Import of construction materials for humanitarian agencies and PA approved projects continues to face serious delays. Due to delays in processing approved materials,

	<p>only 11 % of construction materials needed for aid agencies and PA approved projects have entered. This means people do not benefit as they should from humanitarian organizations' reconstruction and development projects.^{viii}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date, only 28% of the building plan for UNRWA projects in Gaza has been approved. Approved projects are still facing serious delays. Only a fraction of the construction materials UNRWA needs to provide refugees and some of the poorest people in Gaza with new homes, schools, and health centres has been allowed in.^{ix} • The ban on the import of building materials has prevented the reconstruction of most of the 3,540 homes destroyed and the 2,870 homes damaged during Cast Lead. The housing shortage means extended families are often squeezed into one house, or in some cases, one room, with cramped living conditions. • With an annual population growth rate in Gaza of 3.3% (as compared to global average of 1.4%) the population of Gaza is expected to reach 2 million by 2020.^x With 1.6 million people currently living on 147 square miles, Gaza already has one of the highest population densities in the world.
Crossings operation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand operations and capacity of crossings to Gaza, enabling the processing of a significantly greater volume of goods. (Further elaborated as following: 250 trucks per day at Kerem Shalom crossing, to be increased to 400 in the first half of 2011; and allowing 360 truckloads per week through a conveyor at Karni crossing.) - Open additional crossings "as more processing capacity becomes necessary and when security concerns are fully addressed". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 4 crossings equipped for commercial purposes, only 1 is open for the movement of goods. • Nazal Oz crossing (facility for transfer of fuel) remains closed. • Sufa crossing (capacity 250 trucks) remains closed.^{xi} • Karni crossing (with capacity to process over 750 trucks daily) was permanently closed in March 2011, leaving Kerem Shalom crossing as the only crossing open for the movement of goods. • Delays and insufficient capacity still reported at Kerem Shalom crossing. On average 136 trucks entered per day in 2011, which is 34 % of pre-blockade needs as compared to 401 trucks entering per day prior to the blockade. Kerem Shalom crossing is only capable of transferring around 300 truckloads per day,

	<p>about 20 percent of pre 2007 crossings capacity.^{xii}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic projections suggest Gaza needs to import 10,400 truckloads per month based on the 2005 requirements. As the population continues to grow, imports and exports will naturally need to expand to meet population needs.^{xiii}
Movement of people	
<p>- Streamline permits for entry and exit for humanitarian and medical reasons and for aid workers.</p> <p>- “As conditions improve”, consider additional ways to facilitate the movement of people to and from Gaza.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are only 2 crossings for the movement of people, one between Gaza and Israel, and one between Gaza and Egypt. Israeli security clearance is still required to use either crossing. • Erez crossing (to Israel) crossing remains open, but most movement of people has been moved to Rafah crossing (to Egypt), blocking natural movement between Gaza and the West Bank. • Overall ban on exit and entry still in place. No expansion of the few exceptional categories of Palestinians allowed to travel through Israeli controlled crossings. Number of exits below 1 % of 2000 levels. • Over the past few months, Israel has issued approximately 3,000 permits to Palestinians per month to travel via Erez crossing to Israel and into the West Bank (most were patients and their companions, and nearly half were merchants).^{xiv} • 73.5% of AIDA members (a coordination body for INGOs with more than 80 members) report difficulties of getting coordination from the Israeli military authorities to enter Gaza, including the denial of permits.^{xv} • Fewer permits approved for UN local humanitarian staff than before “easing”. Permit policy for aid workers and medical patients still arbitrary, unpredictable and time consuming.
Easing measures announced in December 2010	
Export	
<p><i>Although not part of the June 2010 easing announcement, in December 2010 the government of Israel declared it would allow more exports from Gaza through the Kerem Shalom Crossing. A further agreement was made with the Quartet Representatives in February 2011 to relax export restrictions.</i></p>	

- Near total ban on exports continues. Annual average of exports for 2011 is less than 1% of pre-blockade levels.^{xvi}
- In 2011 to date, only 196 trucks of exports have left Gaza. This is only 14 more trucks than in 2010 and far below the 25,480 truckloads of goods needed annually to meet pre blockade export levels. It is also significantly less than the 400 trucks of exports promised each day under the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA).^{xvii}
- 4 truckloads of strawberries recently left Gaza between the 27- 29 November 2011. Before that, there have been no exports since May 2011 when 1 truckload of flowers was allowed to be exported to the Netherlands.^{xviii}
- Exports remain entirely agricultural in nature and destined for the Netherlands as part of an agreement with the Dutch government, whereas their natural, competitive market is historically the West Bank and Israel. 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.^{xix}

Annual protection and development indicators (not mentioned in the easing announcements)

Fuel imports

Although fuel was not included in any of the easing agreements, the ban on fuel import is an essential component of the blockade.

- Only 36% of the cooking gas needed annually has entered Gaza in the past year.^{xx}
- The near total ban on fuel imports for public sale, put in place by the Government of Israel in October 2008, remains in place. Fuel for home heating, running cars and private industry is only available through the black market.^{xxi}

Civilian Casualties and fatalities

- Injured in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 372 vs. 248 (OCHA)
- Killed in 2011 vs. same period in 2010: 42 vs. 24

Buffer Zone

- There has been no change to improve the status of the unilaterally imposed access restricted area around Gaza's perimeter with Israel, known as the 'buffer zone.' The buffer zone includes a land buffer all along Gaza's perimeter that extends in places up to 1,500 metres and restricts access to the sea to 3 nautical miles.
- Access to around 35 percent of Gaza's farmland and 85 percent of maritime areas for fishing remains restricted by the unilaterally imposed Israeli buffer zone, with devastating impact on the economy.^{xxii}
- The lives and livelihoods of an estimated 178,000 people are directly affected. Boundaries of the restricted areas are highly arbitrary and enforced by live fire.^{xxiii}
- Since January, 2011, there have been 73 reports of the Israeli military opening fire on civilians in the buffer zone, with 9 civilians reportedly killed and 37 others reportedly injured. There have

also been 72 reports of fire against fishermen, with reports of 1 fisherman lost at sea and 4 additional fishermen injured by Israeli naval fire.^{xxiv}

Unemployment

- The lack of essential imports, including raw materials, coupled with the ban on exports, has decimated economic activity in the private sector resulting in the loss of approximately 120,000 jobs.^{xxv}
- 26% of the Gazan workforce, including 38% of youths, is still unemployed.^{xxvi}
- The average wage in the Gaza Strip has declined by 20% in the past 6 years.^{xxvii}
- Given the status of import and exports, 1,580 registered businesses (or 60%) have stopped activities and 25% are working at less than 20% capacity with 5 staff or less.^{xxviii}

Food Security

- Due to lack of purchasing power, the type of food consumed by households worsened post June 2010 due to increased consumption of products made mostly of oils/fats and sugar, leading to poorer diet and nutrition.^{xxix}
- 56 % of household expenditure in Gaza is spent on food. This means households have less money to spend elsewhere, such as on healthcare and education.^{xxx}

Aid dependency

- About than 75 percent of the population currently receives humanitarian aid.^{xxxi}
- Approximately 1.1 million people are currently receiving food aid from humanitarian organizations, primarily UNWRA and the WFP.^{xxxii}

Access to water and sanitation

- Materials for 17 water and sanitation projects are still awaiting approval from the Israeli authorities to improve or repair Gaza's deteriorated water and sanitation infrastructure.^{xxxiii}
- Between 90- 95 percent of water from Gaza's only water source, the underground aquifer, is undrinkable.^{xxxiv}
- At the current rate of depletion, the aquifer is estimated to become unusable by 2016, and the damage will be totally irreversible by 2020 according to water experts.^{xxxv}
- Due to an intermittent water supply, Gaza residents use an average of 91 litres of water per day compared to 280 litres used by Israeli residents. The World Health Organization says 100-150 litres a day is required meet all health needs.^{xxxvi}
- 34 percent of the Gaza Strip's population do not have their houses connected to the sewage network.^{xxxvii}

Access to education

- Due to the ban on construction materials and delays getting approved materials in, there is a shortage of 250 schools in Gaza.^{xxxviii}
- 85% of schools in Gaza run on double shifts leading to a reduction in class time and the elimination of extracurricular activities.^{xxxix}

For media inquiries or interviews please contact:

Willow Heske

Oxfam Media Lead for the OPTI

willow.heske@oxfamnovib.nl

or + 972 (0) 597133646

or + 972 (0) 546395002

End- Notes

ⁱ Oxfam, Gaza Update, 2011. Based on the average of the actual weekly number of incoming trucks during a 49 week period from December 2010- November 2011.

ⁱⁱ Oxfam et al, 'Dashed Hopes. Continuation of the Gaza Blockade,' December 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ The 'negative list' was published on 4 July 2010. It contains two parts. A list of military and 'dual use' (civilian and military) items. (1) The dual use list. The dual use part extends significantly beyond the internationally recognized Wassenaar Arrangement list of dual use items, which is also incorporated into Israeli domestic legislation. (2) A list of construction items and materials to be allowed entry in to Gaza only for international projects approved by the PA.

^{iv} WASH Cluster Situation Report, September 2011.

^v World Food Programme, 'Gaza: Eased or Un-eased? Changes in the Gaza Market and Household Conditions following Israel's 20 June 2010 new access regime,' June 2011.

^{vi} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Monthly Humanitarian Monitor, October 2011.

^{vii} Al Mezan, 'Cast Lead Offensive in Numbers,' January, 2009.

^{viii} Report by the International Displacement Monitoring Centre to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. 'List of Issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the third periodic reports of Israel concerning articles 1 to 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,' August 2011.

^{ix} UNRWA, November 2011.

^x PCBS, Gaza Demographics, November 2011.

^{xi} World Food Programme, 'Gaza: Eased or Un-eased? Changes in the Gaza Market and Household Conditions following Israel's 20 June 2010 new access regime,' June 2011.

^{xii} Oxfam, Gaza Update, 2011. Based on the average of the actual weekly number of incoming trucks during a 49 week period from December 2010- November 2011. Calculated on 7 days in a week, though the crossing is usually open 4-5 days per week.

^{xiii} http://www.gisha.org/graph.asp?lang_id=en&p_id=901

^{xiv} Gisha, 'The Gaza Cheat Sheet. Real Data on the Gaza Closure,' 23 November 2011.

^{xv} Oxfam et al, 'Restricting Aid. The Challenges of Delivering Assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,' June 2011.

^{xvi} Oxfam Gaza Update, 2011. Based on average of actual weekly number of exports during a 49 week period from December 2010- November 2011.

^{xvii} Oxfam, Gaza Update, 2011. Based on the average of the actual weekly number of outgoing trucks during a 49 week period from December 2010- November 2011.

^{xviii} Gisha, http://www.gisha.org/graph.asp?lang_id=en&p_id=903.

^{xix} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Monthly Humanitarian Monitor, July 2011.

^{xx} Oxfam, Gaza Update, 2011.

^{xxi} Oxfam, Gaza Update, 2011.

^{xxii} http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_Gaza_FactSheet_October_2011_english.pdf

^{xxiii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Between the Fence and a Hard Place,' August 2010.

^{xxiv} Oxfam, Gaza Update, 2011.

^{xxv} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Locked In: The Humanitarian Impact of Two Years of Blockade on the Gaza Strip,' August 2009.

^{xxvi} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip,' October 2011.

^{xxvii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip,' October 2011.

^{xxviii} Paltrade, September 2011.

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^{xxix} World Food Programme, Gaza: Eased or Un-eased? Changes in the Gaza Market and Household Conditions following Israel's 20 June 2010 new access regime,' June 2011.

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxi} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Humanitarian Situation in the Gaza Strip,' October 2011.

^{xxxii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Locked In: The Humanitarian Impact of Two Years of Blockade on the Gaza Strip,' August 2009.

^{xxxiii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Monthly Humanitarian Monitor, June 2011.

^{xxxiv} EWASH, How Gaza's Blockade Impacts on Water and Sanitation, February 2011.

^{xxxv} Strategic Foresight Group, Report The Blue Peace: Rethinking Middle East Water, May 2011.

^{xxxvi} EWASH, How Gaza's Blockade Impacts on Water and Sanitation, February 2011.

^{xxxvii} Oxfam et al, 'The Gaza Strip. A Humanitarian Implosion,' March 2008.

^{xxxviii} http://www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/publications/Info_Gaza_Eng.pdf

^{xxxix} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Monthly Humanitarian Monitor, June 2011.