

# The Gaza Cheat Sheet • Real Data on the Gaza Closure • May 2011

## Economic situation

There is no shortage of food in Gaza, but severe poverty has increased over years of closure and travel restrictions.

More than 70% of the population currently receives humanitarian aid • The official unemployment figure is 30.8% (compared to 18.7% in 2000).

There is a shortage of 250 schools in Gaza, among other things because of a ban on construction materials • Classes are taught in two and sometimes three shifts.

GDP in Gaza grew by 15% in 2010, but it is still 20% lower than it was in 2005.



## Access policy

**Entrance of goods into Gaza:** Kerem Shalom, connecting Gaza to Israel, is the only crossing open for the transfer of goods into and out of the Strip (apart from the tunnels) • Israel allows all goods into the Gaza Strip except for items it defines as dual use and basic construction materials (cement, steel and gravel) • A limited amount of construction materials have been allowed in for international organizations: each month since January 2011, approximately 7% of what entered monthly in the years prior to June 2007 has entered for specific projects.

**Export of goods from Gaza:** Export from Gaza is prohibited • Between November 2010 and April 2011, Israel exceptionally allowed export of a minimal amount of strawberries, flowers, peppers and tomatoes from Gaza to European markets • The average rate of export during that time was two truckloads per day, compared to Israel's commitment in 2005 to allow export of 400 truckloads per day (based on an assessment of Gaza's export potential before the closure).

**Travel between Gaza and the West Bank:** The only crossings through which people are allowed to travel to and from the Gaza Strip are Erez (to Israel) and Rafah (to Egypt) • Israel allows passage through Erez only "in exceptional humanitarian cases, with an emphasis on urgent medical cases" • In practice, over the past few months Israel has issued approximately 3,000 permits to Palestinians per month to travel via Erez to Israel and the West Bank • Most of these were patients and their companions, and nearly half were merchants.

**Travel from Gaza to the outside world:** Such travel takes place mostly through Egypt and is directly subject to its immigration policies • Through its control of the Palestinian population registry, Israel has indirect control over the issuance of Palestinian passports, which are required for travel through Rafah • Following the events surrounding the flotilla, Egypt began opening the crossing daily for travel of people • From June 2010 until the end of January 2011, an average of 19,000 people per month passed through Rafah in both directions (about half the monthly number in early 2006) • Since the revolution in Egypt, the number of people traveling through Rafah has been limited to approximately 300 per day.

**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 • Fishing is permitted up to three nautical miles from the shore • Israel prevents access to a 300-1500 meter "buffer zone" along the border fence.

## Gisha's position

By virtue of its substantial control of the Gaza Strip, Israel has the right, according to international law, to stop vessels making their way to the Gaza Strip, search them for weapons and demand they dock at the Ashdod port and transfer civilian goods to Gaza by land. This right is accompanied by an obligation to facilitate normal life in the Gaza Strip, including by allowing access for the civilian population and nonmilitary goods. Israel must lift the sweeping restrictions that remain and allow transfer of construction materials, export of goods and travel of people between Gaza and the West Bank, subject to individual security inspections.

Any easing of restrictions on travel of people and goods through the Rafah Crossing would be a welcome improvement in Gaza residents' access to the outside world. However, it would not detract from Israel's obligation to allow regular travel between Gaza and the West Bank. The Palestinian territory shares a single economy, a single education system, a single healthcare system and countless familial, cultural and social ties.