

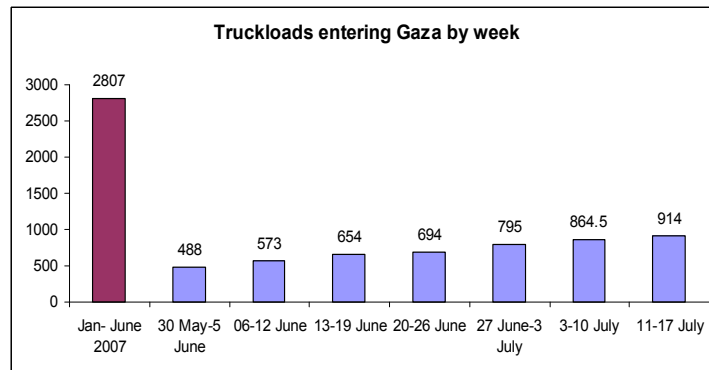


Gaza Access Situation

Weekly Update from the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for II -17 July

On 20 June, the Israeli government announced a package of measures aimed at easing the blockade on Gaza, which had been in place in its present form over the last three years. This weekly update provides information and analysis on the implementation of these measures, and their current and expected impact on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Since the announcement, the weekly volume of imported goods has steadily increased. This week, a total of 914 truckloads entered Gaza, including 90 truckloads designated for aid agencies, the highest number of truckloads recorded since Feb 2009. However, it's still only 33 percent of the weekly average of truckloads that entered Gaza (2,807) during the first five months of 2007, before the imposition of the blockade.



Although the amount of food items entering Gaza continues to increase, their proportion of the total volume of imports decreased from approximately 76 percent in the first five months of 2010 to 66 percent this week (603 truckloads). While food made up most of the new consumer goods that have entered Gaza since the announcement, a number of new 'productive items' entered this week for the commercial market, including water irrigation pipes, wood profile for green houses, cloth fabric, empty cans, and chicken incubators.

Local sources indicate that, with the increase in volume and variety of goods entering through the Israeli crossings, there has been a corresponding significant reduction in the level of imports through the commercial tunnels under the border with Egypt. There are also indications that goods entering through the underground tunnels are increasingly focused on construction materials and fuel.

Yet, there are only modest indications that the private sector economy is being revived. The likelihood of significant progress in this regard, which is key to addressing the high levels of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity, remains hampered by a number of factors, most notably the refusal so far of the Israeli authorities to lift the restrictions on exports from Gaza.

In addition, despite the lifting of the ban on most (non-construction-related) imports, the flow of goods remains affected by long delays due to the limited capacity of and cumbersome procedures at the Kerem Shalom Crossing. Although the Israeli authorities had initially announced that Kerem Shalom would be able to handle 250 truckloads per day by mid-July, this has been postponed until the end of the month. Due to Kerem Shalom's limited capacity, during the week, the commercial sector was given a quota ranging from 90 to 105 truckloads per day, less than half of current demand. In addition, while the number of requests for imports submitted to the PA Crossing Coordination

Committee almost tripled since the announcement, the number of employees handling requests has not increased.

Moreover, the import of a number of key items not considered by the Israeli authorities as 'dual-use' items can be delayed for weeks, due to lengthy security procedures still in place. The entry of telecommunications equipment, medicines and chemicals requires a security clearance from the Israeli authorities, while most industrial machinery requires the submission of multiple technical specification documents and photographs to the Palestinian authorities for approval.

Import of construction materials, most of which have been defined as 'dual-use items' continues to be restricted. With the exception of glass, wood and aluminum (allowed for the commercial sector during the past few months), only limited amounts of construction materials designated for three projects implemented by international organizations were allowed this week into Gaza. The entry of each truckload designated for these projects continues to be subject to extensive coordination and monitoring procedures required by the Israeli authorities to demonstrate that the items will be utilized in the manner intended. These requirements have increased administrative and operational costs and significantly slowed progress.

During the week the Israeli authorities announced the approval of 31 projects submitted by the UN and other international organizations, involving the construction and/or rehabilitation of schools and clinics, among others. Details regarding some of the announced projects remain unclear. The continuation of the present coordination and monitoring procedures required by the Israeli authorities for the import of the required construction materials could seriously undermine the implementation of these projects.