

**Not yet out of the  
woodwork**

Gaza furniture makers are waiting for the Israeli government to live up to their pledge to allow export of their goods to Europe for the first time in four years of blockade.

In a statement widely reported in the media, the Israeli military announced last week that Gaza furniture makers will be allowed to ship their goods to Europe. The announcement was made almost a year after the Israeli government had



stated it would allow increased exports out of Gaza as part of measures to “ease” the blockade.

But despite the latest announcement, no exports have made it out thus far.

“We’ve been hearing promises for months, and we’re ready to ship our products abroad if only Israel allows us to,” the deputy manager of Al Issi Furniture Company, Abu Jamal (in picture), told Oxfam. The company is one of the Gaza Strip’s biggest furniture makers but since the blockade was imposed, its workforce was cut by 60%.

“We used to sell more than half of our products to Israel and the West Bank, where our prices would fetch 100% more than what the Palestinians in Gaza can afford to pay,” Abu Jamal said. “Since 2004 we’ve been denied access to the outside market and until today it’s still the same for us. If Israel opens the gates to export we can start shipping our goods from tomorrow.”

Even if Israel were to allow furniture exports, the benefit to Gaza would still be limited as the traditional market destinations – Israel and the West Bank – remain restricted. Before the blockade, 90 percent of garments, 76 percent of furniture products and 20 percent of food products produced in Gaza were marketed in the West Bank and Israel.

“This announcement means next to nothing for Gaza’s furniture industry,” said the Director of Oxfam partner PalTrade, Hanan Taha. “Businessmen need to establish new contacts in Europe while they are still under blockade. Israel – which was the traditional ‘middleman’ for Gaza’s export – remains banned, and so is the West Bank market, which used to provide the other bulk of Gaza’s traditional trading business. Gaza can provide high quality furniture, but finding the market in these conditions is very hard.”

Gaza has had no exports since last May, when one truckload of flowers was allowed out to the Netherlands, as part of a special agreement.

Taha said the situation remained still too unstable to provide any respite for Gaza’s businessmen.

“It’s all too risky for businessmen who have time and again invested in their businesses only to see the doors closed again,” PalTrade’s director said. “We can only start talking of exports once Gaza’s blockade is completely lifted.”

## **1. Headlines**

**Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** There were reports this week that the Israeli military carried out 3 airstrikes and 10 shellings, as compared to 2 airstrikes, 5 shellings, and 1 incursion across the perimeter into Gaza reported the week prior.

There were reports that Palestinian militants fired 3 home made rockets (HMR) both this week and last week towards Israel or Israeli troops.

3 civilians, including a representative of the French Consul in Gaza and his daughter, were reported injured this week as a result of Israeli military activity. 4 Palestinian civilians were reportedly injured the week before.

1 Hamas naval officer was reportedly killed and 4 other naval officers and 1 militant were reportedly injured this week. No members of armed Palestinian groups were reportedly injured or killed as a result of Israeli military activity last week.

No Israeli civilians or soldiers were reported injured or killed this week or last week.

Since January 23, 2011, Oxfam calculates there have been 37 Palestinian civilians reportedly killed, 373 Palestinian civilians reportedly injured, 56 Palestinian militants (including Hamas officers) reportedly killed and 64 militants reportedly injured as a result of Israeli military activity. There have also been reports of 3 Israeli civilians killed, 34 Israeli civilians injured and 4 Israeli soldiers injured as a result of Palestinian militant activity during the same reporting period.

- **Fishermen:** There were 2 reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fishermen both this week and last week, with no injuries reported either week.

Since January 23, 2011, Oxfam calculates there have been 72 reports of Israeli naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fishermen, with reports of 4 fishermen injured and 1 lost at sea. Since January 2009, Israeli naval forces have restricted the access of Palestinian fishing boats to three nautical miles from the coast; in practice, access is sometimes restricted to as little as one nautical mile, banning access to around 85% of Gaza's fishing water. In 2010, the annual fishing catch from Gaza decreased by 45% as compared to the 2008 fishing catch before fishing space was restricted to three nautical miles.

- **Tunnel related fatalities:** 1 Palestinian worker reportedly died as a result of electric shock while working in a tunnel beneath the border between Gaza and Egypt this week. Last week, there was 1 report of a tunnel beneath the border between Gaza and Egypt collapsing, resulting in the reported death of 1 Palestinian worker.

In 2010, 43 Palestinian workers, including 5 child labourers, reportedly died in tunnel related accidents and another 88, including 1 child labourer, were reportedly injured.

- **Palestinians in the access restricted area (the so-called "buffer zone"):** There was 1 report of the Israeli military opening fire on a group of farmers in the access restricted area this week, with no injuries reported. Last week, there were 2 reports of the Israeli military opening fire on civilians in the access restricted area, with no injuries reported.

Since January 23, 2011, Oxfam calculates there have been 72 reports of the Israeli military opening fire on civilians in the buffer zone, with 9 civilians reportedly killed and 37 others reportedly injured. In 2000, Israel first imposed a 150 metre-wide security 'buffer' within Gaza's perimeter. In certain areas along the northern and eastern perimeters, this official buffer extends up to 500 metres into Gaza. In practice, Israel restricts access to agricultural land up to 1,000-1,500 metres from the fence, which accounts for more than 30% of Gaza's agricultural land and a significant number of water wells. Most of the Gaza Strip's animal production is also concentrated in this area.

- **Rafah border crossing:** The Rafah border crossing was open 5 out of 7 days this week, with reports of 4,125 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 4,123 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 140 Palestinians denied entry to Egypt. Last week, the Rafah border crossing was only open 2 out of 7 days due to the Eid Al Adha holiday, with reports of 1,626 Palestinians entering Gaza from Egypt, 1,468 Palestinians leaving Gaza for Egypt, and 48 denied entry to Egypt.

On May 28, 2011, the Egyptian authorities announced that they had permanently opened Rafah border crossing for the movement of people between Gaza and Egypt. During the first official week of opening, Egyptian officials had reported being overwhelmed by the volume of Palestinians from Gaza attempting to use Rafah border crossing, which had resulted in some delays. Hamas officials had also reported that the Egyptian procedures for transferring travelers from one side to the other were not clear.

Although Rafah border crossing does not ease movement restrictions between Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank, a full and consistent opening of Rafah border crossing would offer Palestinians in Gaza an opportunity to travel abroad for higher education opportunities, medical treatment, or to take a personal holiday.

An estimated 500 people rely on the Rafah border crossing every month to reach scheduled or ongoing medical treatment in Egypt or abroad.

- **Power plant and electricity supply:** Since January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Gaza's power plant has not placed an order for industrial fuel to be transferred from Israel. The fuel for Gaza's power plant is now being supplied through the tunnels underneath the Gaza-Egypt border in the form of Egyptian diesel, at a much lower price than the industrial fuel supplied from Israel.

OCHA estimates that the power plant receives between 300,000 and 400,000 litres of diesel from the tunnels every day. In addition to what is procured daily from the tunnels, the power plant in Gaza now reportedly has a back up supply of fuel, capable of running the plant at an output of 60 Mw for one month.

- **Cooking gas:** 657 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week via the Kerem Shalom crossing, as compared to 330 tons of cooking gas reported to have entered Gaza the week before. The 657 tons of cooking gas entering Gaza this week represents 37 percent of the 1,750 tons of cooking gas needed weekly. The overall cooking gas shortage has been a main concern for humanitarian agencies since November 2009. Cooking gas cannot safely be transported through the tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border as it is highly combustible and requires a special pipeline to transport in bulk.
- **Diesel/petrol:** No diesel or benzine was reported to have been delivered to the private sector this week or last week. A near total ban on fuel imports for public sale was put in place by the Government of Israel in October 2008. Around 600,000 litres of diesel and 200,000 litres of

petrol for public sale are reported to enter Gaza every day through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border (OCHA, January 2011).

- **Exports:** No exports were reported to have left Gaza this week or the week before. The last truckload of exports to exit Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing was 1 truckload of flowers reported to be destined for the Netherlands on May 13, 2011.

Since 2007, and despite Israeli government promises this past December to make additional efforts to increase exports from Gaza, exports have to date been entirely agricultural in nature, contributing to the de-development of Gaza's private sector. According to UNRWA calculations, 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.

The limited exports which have left Gaza in the past year were allowed as a result of an agreement between Israel and the Netherlands permitting limited exports of seasonal agricultural items. The agreement resumed on 28 November 2010.

*\*Pre-blockade weekly average (490 truckloads) is calculated on the daily average of all truckloads that exited Gaza between January 2005 and mid June 2007, before Israel's imposition of the blockade.*

- **Truckloads of supplies:** Kerem Shalom crossing was open 5 out of 7 days this week, with reports of 1,317 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza, which represents 46 percent of the pre-blockade weekly average.\*\* Last week, Kerem Shalom crossing was open 2 out of 7 days with reports of 535 truckloads of supplies entering Gaza.

Following the permanent closure of Karni crossing in early March, Kerem Shalom is now the sole permanent crossing through which goods enter Gaza. Karni could accommodate up to 1,000 trucks a day. Kerem Shalom crossing can accommodate around 250 trucks per day. UNRWA has referred to the Kerem Shalom crossing, located in the deep south of Gaza, as an inefficient bottleneck that adds around 20 percent in transport and labour costs to the price of humanitarian goods. Kerem Shalom crossing is also not equipped to handle the bulk transfer of large quantities of wheat and animal feed, while Karni is.

While imports remain limited, and raw materials severely restricted, exports have remained banned almost entirely except for limited truckloads of strawberries, carnations and cherry tomatoes exported to the Netherlands until May this year. As a result, the scale of economic activity remains heavily dependent on local demand in Gaza, which in turn is constrained by the low purchasing power of the population and the relatively small size of the local market. Until crossings are fully open for export, the impact of the easing of the blockade on unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates remains limited.

*\*\*Pre-blockade weekly average (2,807 truckloads) is calculated based on the monthly average of all truckloads that entered during the first five months of 2007, before Israel's imposition of the blockade.*

This update is compiled by **Oxfam International** from the best available information drawn from reliable international sources. Some of the information is preliminary and may be updated in subsequent reports.

## 2. Humanitarian trucks (week):

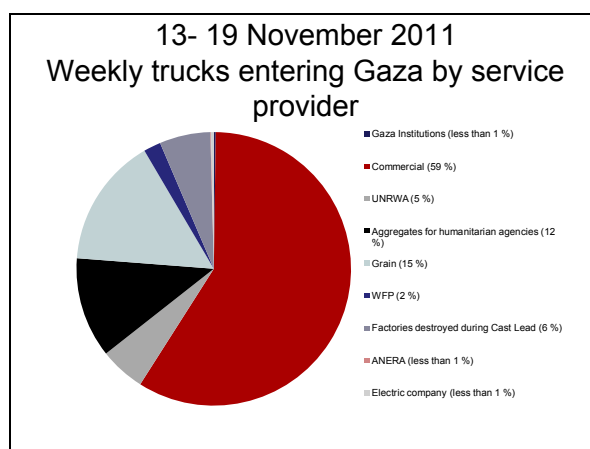
Truck originator	Total for week 13-19 November
Bulk grains (human and animal)	202
Aggregates (for humanitarian agencies)	156
UNRWA	71
Gaza institutions	3
WFP	27
ANERA	1
Electric company	4
Steel for factories destroyed in Cast Lead	10
Cement for factories destroyed in Cast Lead	30
Aggregates for factories destroyed in Cast Lead	39
Commercial	774
<b>Total trucks for the week</b>	<b>1317</b>
<b>Percentage of pre blockade average (first 5 months of 2007)</b>	<b>46 %</b>

## 3. Fuel deliveries (week)

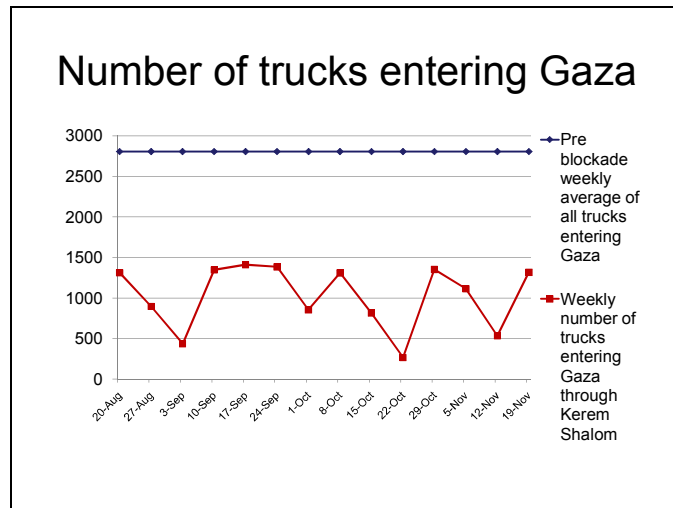
		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
13- 19 November		0	0	657MT
	Percentage of need *	0		37 %
Previous week		0	0	330MT

\* Fuel association 2006 estimates - \*\* Imports of diesel and petrol for the general public and public sector in Gaza were exceptionally authorized on 6 occasions since October 2008

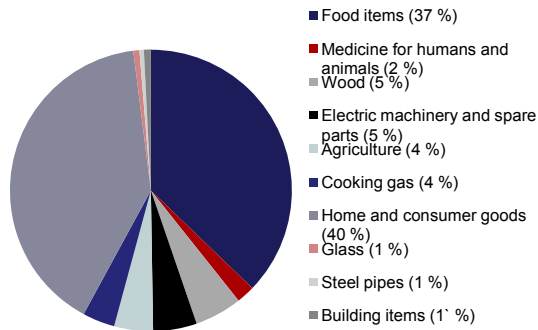
## 4. Weekly Charts



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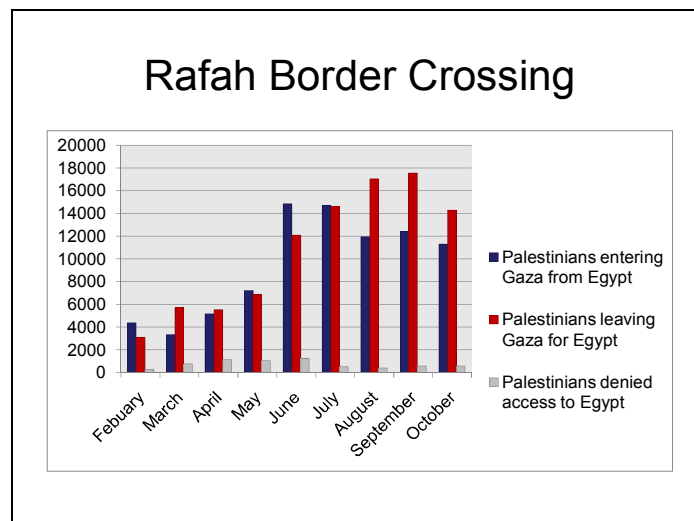
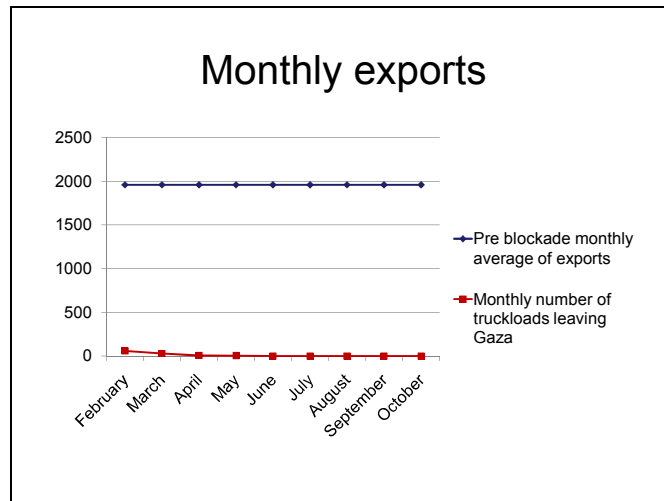


13- 19 November 2011  
Weekly breakdown of commercial items (for open market) entering Gaza via Kerem Shalom by item type

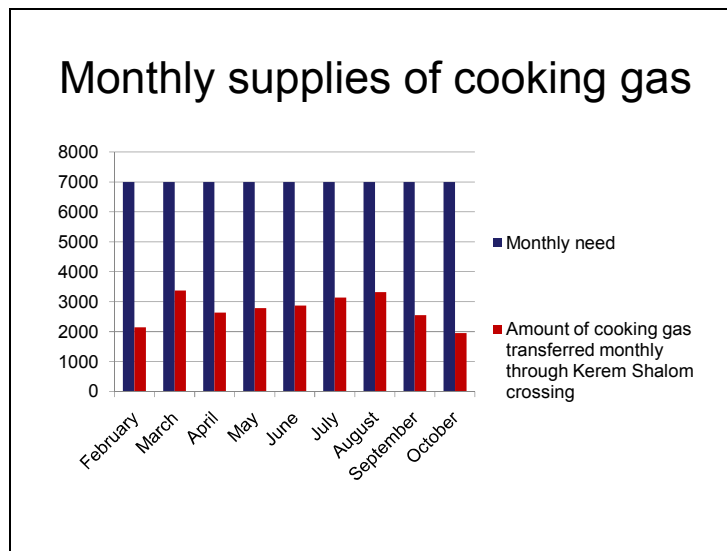


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## 5. Monthly Charts



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