

### Car imports in low gear

Israeli authorities have just allowed the import of 40 cars together with some spare parts and tyres into Gaza for the first time since 2007, following last June's announcement that they would "ease" the blockade". It is not uncommon to see 20 or 30 year old cars driven in the Gaza Strip for lack of supply. The only official Mercedes car agent in Gaza has not been able to import cars or spare parts since the blockade was imposed on Gaza over three years ago. He says he



is spending thousands of dollars to keep the cars he has bought in storage at the border because they are not allowed into Gaza. The only car on display at the showroom in Gaza City is a Mercedes Benz six-door taxi which has been parked there since 2001, when the company was investing in large new taxis that could travel to Israel and the West Bank. "Gazan taxi drivers could drive you from here to Jordan, but car traffic through Erez crossing was stopped completely after the second Intifada in 2000" says Rami Kishawi, the company's after-sales manager who quips about his strange title given that nowadays there are no sales at all. "We have been present in Gaza since 1962, but business has never been this difficult. We keep the showroom open just to remain present, in the hope that the blockade will be lifted soon and business can soar again." According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the impact of the easing of the blockade remains limited. The restriction on entry of construction and other essential raw materials severely limits the potential of economic recovery, as does the ban on exports. Consumer goods, mainly food, still make up 66 % of the goods transferred to Gaza.

*Photo and text: Karl Schembri/Oxfam*

## 1. Headlines

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** According to reports, 7 rockets, 16 mortar shells and 1 rocket propelled grenade were directed by Palestinian armed groups towards Israel or Israeli forces this week. One rocket reportedly exploded in Ashkelon's southern industrial zone; no injuries were reported. 9 rockets and 3 mortars were reportedly directed by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza at Israel the previous week.

There were reports this week of 5 airstrikes, 11 shells and 11 incursions by Israeli forces, as compared to 5 airstrikes, 6 shells and 2 incursions reported last week. The airstrikes reportedly targeted the tunnel area at the Gaza-Egypt border, a Hamas military training base and a factory for water pipes. The incursions reportedly took place in the so-called buffer zone and involved search, clearing and levelling operations. No firefights were reported this week or last week.

There were reports of 3 Palestinian civilians killed, an old man aged 91 and two children aged 16 and 17, and of 1 Palestinian militant injured this week as a result of IDF fire. The three civilians were reportedly killed after Israeli forces fired four tank shells close to the so-called buffer zone, northeast of Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza. According to the Al-Mizan Center for Human Rights, the three victims were farmers herding sheep on their land which is located some 500 meters from the perimeter fence. The Israeli media reported that Israeli forces opened fire after Palestinian militants fired mortar shells from that area.

The Palestinian militant was reportedly seriously injured after Israeli forces fired three tank shells towards his group in response to the militants firing a rocket-propelled grenade. Last week, there were no reports of Palestinians killed or injured. There were no reports of Israeli casualties this week or last week.

So far in 2010, 46 Palestinians (including 19 civilians), three Israeli soldiers and one foreign national have been reported killed in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. Another 187 Palestinians (including 162 civilians) and eight Israeli soldiers have reportedly been injured (OCHA, 14 September 2010).

- **Fishermen:** There were no incidents of Israeli naval vessels firing at Palestinian fisherman reported this week. There were 2 reported incidents of Israeli naval vessels firing at Palestinian fishermen last week. 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.
- **Tunnel related fatalities:** 1 Palestinian reportedly died and 16 were reported injured in 4 separate incidents which took place this week in tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border. Three of the incidents involved tunnel collapses; in the fourth incident, a 23-year-old tunnel worker was killed after an Israeli aircraft reportedly fired two missiles targeting the tunnel area. Last week, a Palestinian reportedly died as a result of electric shock. Since the beginning of 2010, 39 Palestinians, including two children, have been reported killed and another 66 Palestinians have been reported injured in tunnel-related incidents, including air strikes, tunnel collapses, electrocution and the explosion of gas cylinders (OCHA, 14 September 2010).
- **Palestinians in the “buffer zone”:** There were 2 reports of Israeli military fire in the so-called “buffer zone,” along the perimeter of Gaza this week. In the first incident, Israeli soldiers fired warning shots in an apparent effort to disperse demonstrators who were protesting against the buffer zone northwest of Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza. In the second incident, Israeli forces reportedly shot towards farmers, killing three civilians (*see page 1*). Last week, there were no reports of incidents involving Israeli military fire in the buffer zone. Civilian casualties along the perimeter fence occur in the context of Israeli imposed restrictions on access to areas up to 1,000-1,500 meters from the fence. Restrictions are enforced by opening ‘warning’ fire towards people approaching or present in these areas.
- **Rafah border crossing:** The Rafah border crossing with Egypt was officially open six days this week for medical cases, students and those with visas to third countries. It was closed on 12 September due to Muslim holidays. This week, there were reports of 3,160 people entering Gaza, 3,003 people leaving, and 201 who were denied entry to Egypt through Rafah.

Last week, Rafah was opened four days with 1,936 people entering Gaza, 2,059 people leaving, and 104 refused entry to Egypt. In recent months, there has been a significant rise in the number of people crossing weekly through Rafah: the week before the attack on the Gaza flotilla and the opening of the Rafah border, 45 people left Gaza, 748 entered and 2 were refused entry to Egypt through Rafah.

- **Power plant and electricity supply:** 1.6 million litres of industrial fuel were delivered this week for Gaza’s power plant, which is 46% of the 3.5 million litres of fuel needed weekly at the current maximum capacity of 80Mw. Deliveries were cancelled on 12 September because the crossings were closed for the Jewish holidays. 2.1 million litres of industrial fuel were transferred the week prior. Even though quantities of industrial fuel delivered into Gaza have increased in the past weeks, the population continues to experience power outages of 4-6 hours per day - a relative improvement compared to the average of 8-12 hours of power outages which were common until late August 2010. However daily life as well as the provision of essential services, including regular

water supply, sewage treatment and removal, and the functioning of health services, continue to be affected by the chronic lack of electricity. The current daily supply of electricity stands at about 30% below the estimated demand (OCHA, 14 September 2010).

- **Cooking gas:** 707 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week, 40% of the normal weekly level of need of 1,750 tons. 784 tons of cooking gas were reported to have entered Gaza last week. Deliveries were cancelled on 12 September because the crossings were closed for the Jewish holidays. The overall cooking gas shortage has been a main concern for humanitarian agencies since November 2009.
- **Diesel/petrol:** No diesel or petrol was delivered this week to Gaza. Last week, no diesel or petrol was delivered to the private sector. A near total ban on fuel imports for public sale was put in place by the Government of Israel in October 2008. Around 100,000 litres of diesel and 100,000 litres of petrol are reported to enter Gaza every day through tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border (OCHA, 4 May 2010).
- **Truckloads of supplies:** Only 771 truckloads of supplies were permitted entry this week (678 through Kerem Shalom crossing and the equivalent of 93 through the Karni conveyor). This is the equivalent of 27% of the pre-blockade weekly average of all trucks entering Gaza\*. Deliveries were cancelled on 12 September because the crossings were closed for the Jewish holidays. Only 763 truckloads were allowed into Gaza during the previous week.

While imports remain limited, and raw materials severely restricted, exports remain banned entirely. 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 opened 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.*

- **Exports:** No exports have left Gaza since 18 April 2010. No change in the policy prohibiting exports implemented since June 2007 has been announced by the Israeli authorities so far.
- **Internal violence:** No incidents of internal violence were reported this week. Last week, 1 incident was reported, resulting in the injury of a Palestinian militant who was wounded by Hamas security as he attempted to launch a rocket.

## **2. Humanitarian trucks (week):**

<b>Truck originator</b>	<b>Total for week 12-18 September</b>
UNRWA	17
WFP	4
PA	21
Water company	25
Donations	3
Commercial	608
Karni Crossing (wheat grain, animal feed)	93
<b>Total trucks for the week</b>	<b>771</b>
Percentage of weekly average before the blockade (first five months of 2007)	<b>27%</b>

### 3. Fuel deliveries (week)

		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
12-18 September		0		707 tons
	Percentage of need *	0		40%
Previous week		0		784 tons

\* 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

#### Delivery of Industrial Fuel to the Power Plant (week):

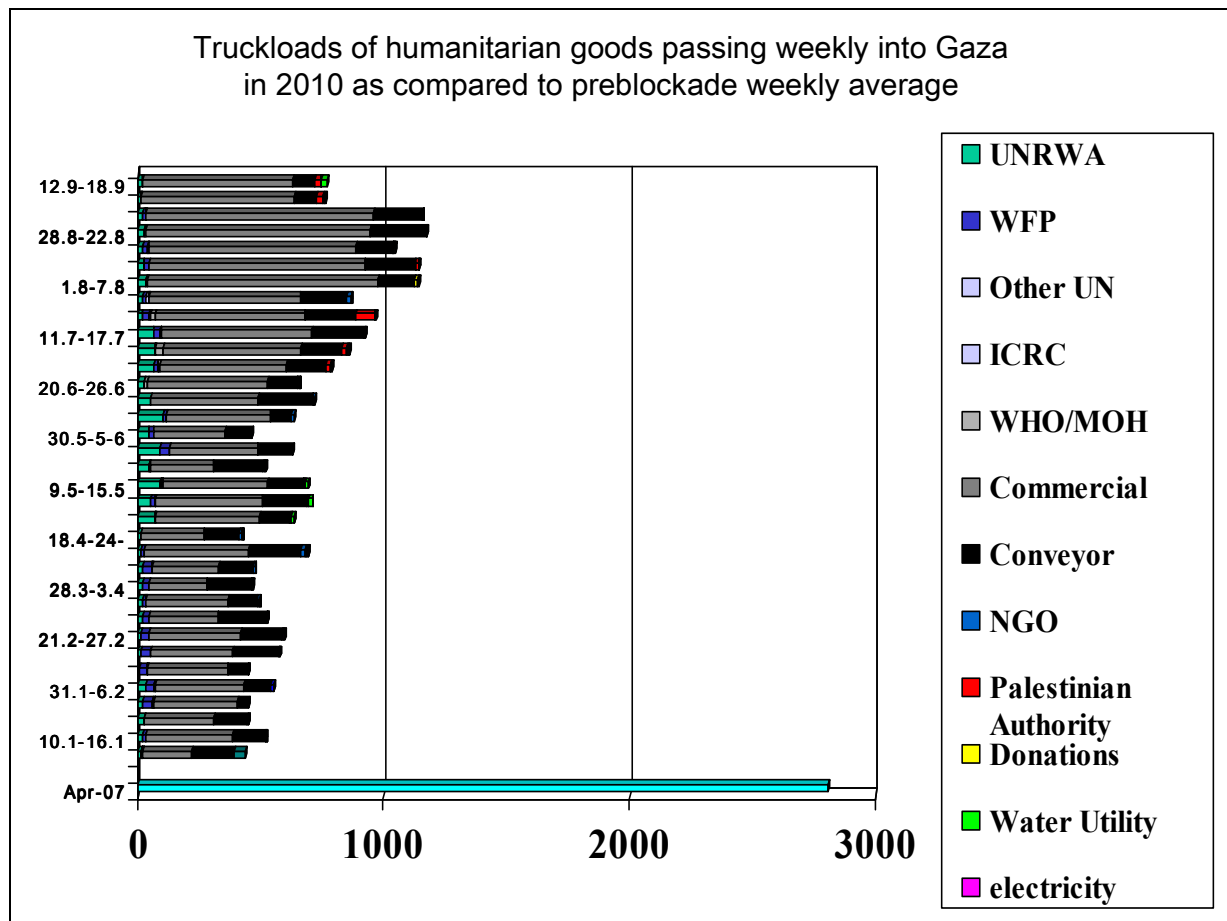
Industrial diesel	Previous week	12-18 September
	2.1 million litres	1.6 million litres
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply capacity of 80 MW		46%

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### 5. Trend Charts



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.

