

Gaza blockade stands in the way of students' right to education

On Eid Al Fitr, which brings to an end the month of Ramadan, six-year-old Ahmed from Jabalya (see picture) joined hundreds of Muslims praying in the Sheikh Zayed neighbourhood. Despite the hardships brought by the blockade, Ahmed said he was thankful for the lovely atmosphere brought about by Eid, when for three days he played with his friends outdoors before they went back to school.



The Gaza school year opened this week with a severe shortage of classrooms. While for the first time in three years Israeli authorities have allowed the import of school supplies for government schools in Gaza, the almost absolute ban on the import of construction materials has left students without enough classrooms. UNRWA was not able to meet enrolment demand because of ban on construction materials: the UN agency needs to build 100 schools, but has not been able to build any since the beginning of the Israeli blockade in 2007. As a result, UNRWA had to turn away 40,000 children eligible to enroll in its schools for the academic year. To deal with the shortage of classroom space, students in most of Gaza's schools already study in two shifts, in classrooms with up to 50 students. Sometimes oversized metal containers are used as classrooms, with three children seated at desks designed for two.

Students also face difficulties accessing universities because of the blockade. Ahmed's older brother got excellent grades in high school, but he cannot study medicine at Birzeit University in Ramallah, together with his cousins living in the West Bank. The blockade makes it impossible for Palestinians from Gaza to travel to the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. Oxfam partner Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights has published a report on Israel's blanket ban on students from Gaza studying at West Bank universities – a policy which targets youth and students indiscriminately. "Israel's policy is arbitrary because it rejects Gazan students' requests for permits without even running a security check on the applicants," the Gaza-based human rights centre said. "Students are rejected as a category of persons, even if the students as individuals are not found to constitute a danger when security checks are carried out." The human rights organisation warned that "by preventing Gaza students from studying at West Bank universities, students are being deprived of their right to pursue their education within the available Palestinian universities".

Karl Schembri/Oxfam

1. Headlines

- **Mortars/rockets/casualties/incursions:** According to reports, 9 rockets and 3 mortars were directed by Palestinian armed groups towards Israel or Israeli forces this week, while 3 rockets, 1 mortar, 1 improvised explosive device (IED) and 1 rocket propelled grenade (RPG) were reportedly directed by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza at Israel the previous week. One rocket reportedly landed in the vicinity of Kibbutz Nahal Oz, inflicting damages in the area of a nursery school which was vacant due to the Jewish holiday; no injuries were reported.

There were reports this week of 5 airstrikes, 6 shells and 2 incursions by Israeli forces, as compared to 1 shell and 7 incursions reported last week. An Israeli aircraft reportedly fired missiles targeting a small airstrip near Gaza City, tunnels in the area near the Gaza-Egypt border and a Hamas base in northern Gaza. No firefights were reported this week, while 1 firefight was reported last week.

There were no reports of Palestinians killed and or injured this week as a result of IDF fire. Last week, 3 Palestinian civilians were reported killed and 4 Palestinian civilians were reported injured as a result of IDF fire. There were no reports of Israeli casualties this week or last week.

- **Fishermen:** There were 2 incidents of Israeli naval vessels firing at Palestinian fisherman reported this week. In one incident, Israeli naval forces reportedly fired five shells targeting Palestinian fishing boats, forcing them to return towards the shore; no injuries were reported. There were 3 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:** A 25 year-old Palestinian reportedly died as a result of electric shock in a tunnel this week. An Israeli aircraft reportedly fired three missiles in the tunnel area this week, destroying several tunnels; no injuries were reported. Last week, a 19 year-old Palestinian was reportedly found dead in a collapsed tunnel, and there were reports of 2 Palestinians killed and 3 injured during an Israeli airstrike targeting the tunnels.
- **Palestinians in the “buffer zone”:** There were no reports of Israeli military fire in the so-called “buffer zone”, along the perimeter of Gaza this week. Last week, there were reports of 3 incidents involving Israeli military fire in the buffer zone, resulting in the injury of 1 Palestinian civilian.
- **Rafah border crossing:** The Rafah border crossing with Egypt was officially open four days this week for medical cases, students and those with visas to third countries. It was closed on 10 and 11 September due to Muslim holidays. This week, there were reports of 1,936 people entering Gaza, 2,059 people leaving, and 104 who were denied entry to Egypt through Rafah.

Last week, Rafah was opened seven days with 2,074 people entering Gaza, 2,547 people leaving, and 184 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:** 2.1 million litres of industrial fuel were delivered this week for Gaza’s power plant, which is 60% of the 3.5 million litres of fuel needed weekly at the current maximum capacity of 80Mw. Deliveries were cancelled on 9 September because the crossings were closed for the Jewish holidays. 1.9 million litres of industrial fuel were transferred the week prior.
- **Cooking gas:** 784 tons of cooking gas reportedly entered Gaza this week, 45% of the normal weekly level of need of 1,750 tons. 674 tons of cooking gas were reported to have entered Gaza last week. Deliveries were cancelled on 9 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 were 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 763 truckloads of supplies were permitted entry this week (675 through Kerem Shalom crossing and the equivalent of 88 through the Karni conveyer). This is the equivalent of 27% of the pre-blockade weekly average of all trucks entering Gaza*. Deliveries were

cancelled on 9 September because the crossings were closed for the Jewish holidays. 1,160.5 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:** Two Palestinian policemen were reported injured, one of them critically, after unknown militants reportedly detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) near a container which belonged to the traffic police in Deir Al Balah, central Gaza. 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):

Truck originator	Total for week 5-11 September
UNRWA	11
WHO	4
PA	27
Donations	6
Other	4
Commercial	623
Karni Crossing (wheat, chickpeas and animal feed)	88
Total trucks for the week	763
Percentage of weekly average before the blockade (first five months of 2007)	27%

3. Fuel deliveries (week)

		Diesel	Petrol	Cooking Gas
5-11 September		0		784 tons
	Percentage of need *	0		45%
Previous week		0		674 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	5-11 September
	1.9 million litres	2.1 million litres
Percentage of amount required to operate at maximum supply capacity of 80 MW		60%

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5. Trend Charts

