



OCHA Closure Update

occupied Palestinian territory

Movement within and in and out of the West Bank is controlled by numerous checkpoints, roadblocks, earthmounds and gates. These manned and unmanned physical barriers combined with the Barrier and complex permit regime, restrict the movement of around 2.4 million Palestinians to basic services, jobs, places of worship and even to their families in the West Bank.

The Israeli authorities state that these measures are necessary for the security of Israeli citizens, both in Israel and those living in settlements in the West Bank. The function of most physical obstacles is to control Palestinian movement onto roads that are used primarily for Israeli settlers.

This paper summarizes the main changes to Palestinian movement over the past four months (January – April 2007).

Closure Count (total number of roadblocks and checkpoints)

Since January, the number of closures has increased. In April, the number of closures was 537, following a peak in March of 549, compared to 528 in January.

Closure Count--Monthly Average (Oct 06 - April 07)

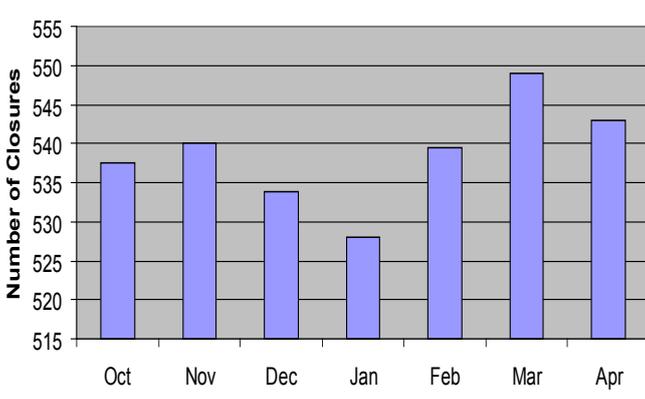


Figure 1 Data available to 17 April 2007- OCHA

Flying Checkpoints

The number of flying checkpoints increased to close to 200 each week in March and April compared to an average of 100 to 120 in January .

Number of Flying Checkpoints per week (Oct 06- April 07)

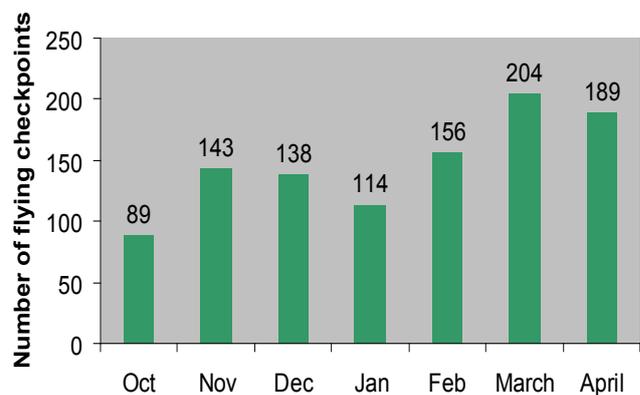


Figure 2- Data available until 28 April, 2007-OCHA

Movement through Checkpoints

Movement through checkpoints ('Anabta, Za'atara, 'Atara, Wadi Nar (Container), Jab'a) improved slightly in January, people and cars were only checked on a random basis. By March, the number of people and cars that were being searched and checked at checkpoints and the delays experienced were comparable to those experienced in December, 2006.

Flying (Random) Checkpoints compared to Search and Arrest Campaigns

In the month of March, 634 search campaigns took place in the West Bank and 682 people arrested.

Weekly Average of Search and Arrests Compared to Flying (Random) Checkpoints in the West Bank (Oct 06 to April 07)

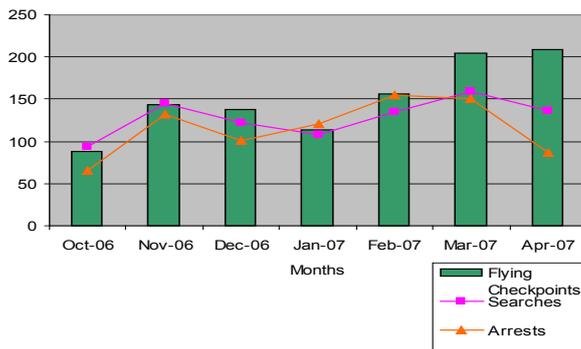


Figure 3- Data available until 28 April, 2007-OCHA

Northern Areas

Access for Palestinians

Following a slight, although mainly inconsistent easing of movement in January through some of the major checkpoints in the North, in February the checkpoints had returned to the status quo. In fact, between 7 and 20 February, age restrictions were re-imposed in Nablus, Tulkarem and Jenin. Men aged between 16 and 35 were not able to cross Huwwara, Bet Iba, Za'atara, Kafriat, Anabta, Deir Balut and Atara checkpoints. From 8 until 15 April, Palestinians from the Jenin governorate were prevented from entering Nablus city or moving south to other parts of the West Bank.

Humanitarian Access

Shave Shameron checkpoint was opened for international organisations for two weeks: between the 14 and 28 March 2007. During that period opening hours were intermittent and on several occasions the checkpoint was closed.

When open, the checkpoint significantly reduces delays in transportation of food and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Transportation of Goods

On 25 January, 'Awarta checkpoint was closed to trucks; however, a new back-to-back checkpoint for 120 export/import trucks was established by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) at Qusin checkpoint. According to the IDF, this was aimed at decreasing the delays and waiting times for trucks transporting goods to and from Nablus. The detour through Qusin meant additional traveling time for the trucks, but the transported goods were checked much more quickly.

On 10 March 2007, Qusin checkpoint was once again closed and trucks were redirected through Bet Iba checkpoint. Delays for trucks crossing the checkpoint have again increased, the time delays are similar to those experienced at 'Awarta, but this increase is offset by the reduced traveling time.

Jordan Valley

Access for Palestinians

On 28 April 2007, Palestinian access to the Jordan Valley improved dramatically. Movement from the West Bank continues to be controlled through four main checkpoints- Tayasir, Hamra, Ma'ale Efraim and Yitav, however a permit is no longer required to enter the Jordan Valley for West Bank residents. Access is only possible with public transportation as West Bank private vehicles continue to be prohibited from entering the Jordan Valley.

Transportation of Goods

In January, the opening of Bisan checkpoint in the north of the Jordan Valley allowed Palestinian farmers from the Jordan Valley, including Jericho, to transport agricultural goods to Israel via a back-to-back system.

Although a permit is still required for the goods, this is a significant improvement for the farmers in the Jordan Valley who previously had to cross two major checkpoints (Hamra and Al Jalama) and travel through Tubas, Nablus and Jenin for their goods to reach Israel. Farmers from other parts of the West Bank however, cannot use Bisan.

As of the end of 2006, permits are no longer required for Palestinians crossing the Container (Wadi Nar) checkpoint. This has improved access into Bethlehem, but has led to long queues of people traveling to and from Bethlehem; waiting times at the checkpoint have increased.

East Jerusalem

Access for Palestinians

Palestinian access into Jerusalem has not improved significantly since the beginning of the year. However, certain categories of people including 293 business card-holders and senior staff working in Jerusalem hospitals can now travel through A-Zayyem checkpoint.

Since January 2006, access to East Jerusalem for Palestinians with West Bank ID cards is only possible through four checkpoints (Ras Abu Sbeitan, Qalandiya, Shu'fat Camp and Gilo). To cross one of these four checkpoints a West Bank resident must first apply for a permit. Permits are only granted for specific reasons, such as a medical referral or proof of enrollment in a school. The number of Palestinians able to access the city has dropped dramatically- limiting access to jobs, markets, hospitals and schools.

Southern Areas

Access for Palestinians

Since December 2006, an increase in the number of earthmounds, roadblocks, and road gates in Hebron has led to the deterioration of movement in the southern West Bank. In addition, since January movement in the Gush Etzion area of Bethlehem and through Gush Etzion checkpoint has become more difficult for holders of West Bank ID cards.