

Awarta Checkpoint - Entrance to Nablus

Awarta is the only commercial checkpoint used for entry into the city of Nablus and the vicinity. It is a back to back checkpoint only, and no trucks are allowed to enter or exit this checkpoint, with the exception of ones carrying petroleum products and bulk chemicals.



Awarta checkpoint is open from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM with regular movement of 170 to 200 trucks per day in both directions. Products that move in and out of the checkpoint range from cement, petroleum products and chemicals to food stuffs and agricultural produce.

The cost of transport from the checkpoint into the city of Nablus or visa-versa ranges between 200 to 250 NIS (48 to 58 Dollars) per truck, and the cost of a truck (Israeli – since they are the only ones that are allowed passage) from the port of Ashdod to Awarta is around 1400 to 1600 NIS. (325 to 375 Dollars).

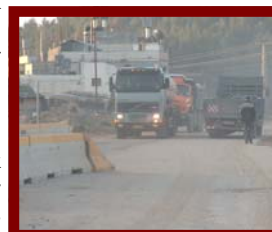
At the checkpoint, back to back expenses are 22 NIS (5 Dollars) per pallet for the use of a crane, not including the cost of labor, which is equal to 30 NIS (7 Dollars) per pallet. Due to size and quantity restrictions on the trucks, a regular truck carries 20 pallets, which is about 1/3 of its capacity.

The Israeli authorities provide a very limited number of permits (30 permits per month) for Palestinian trucks to get out of Nablus, and these permits are for specific trucks, carrying specific cargo, and limited to a specific time spot of 5AM to 5 PM.

The checkpoint faces some special problems in the movement of goods, such as the prolonged delays in queue, which ranges from 6 to 14 hours, depending on the level of security checks. Some trucks are forced to stay overnight at the checkpoint, thus causing a prolonged exposure of the goods on the truck to the elements.

Flour for baking, for example must be off-loaded from the truck and re-loaded onto another truck by hand, on the way into Nablus, thus exposing the flour to potential damage in the process of handling, as well as to damage from the weather. The same thing applies to bags of animal feed and any bulk products, including dairy.

The process of “getting a turn” to unload and reload products at the checkpoint is haphazard, dependent on the security officer in charge, and subject to potential corruption.



WAITING FOR BACK TO BACK

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NEGOTIATING ENTRY

Trade, Exports and Economic Recovery

The Palestinian economy has undergone a drastic change in the past four years. The strong yet nascent economic growth and development of the 1990s came to a standstill in September 2000. The unrest, Israeli invasions and destruction of property and infrastructure, Israeli-imposed restrictions on movement of people and goods, both internally and through borders, and deterioration of trade relations with Israel have intensified the de-development process resulting from years of occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Efforts to break out of this trend through political initiatives such as the Roadmap and attempts to restart final status negotiations have yet to show political or economic results. Despite some limited indications of economic stabilization in 2003, the burden of recovery has been too heavy to overcome under the current circumstances. Furthermore, aid efforts have been focused on relief and stabilization and have been unable to reverse this trend.

The past two years have brought new political realities with further economic implications. Despite the recent ruling by the International Court of Justice, the building of the ‘separation’ wall continues. While the impact of the wall on Palestinians’ productive capacity has yet to be fully studied, it is likely to cripple economic activity in Palestinian areas directly affected by the wall (on both sides) and have demographic impacts that further compound the pressures on the economy. Furthermore, the proposed Israeli ‘unilateral disengagement’ plan is sure to have economic implications, particularly on Palestinian employment and trade, which must be addressed.

The implication for policy-makers is that efforts to develop the Palestinian economy must address the political realities that have set this trend of de-development in motion, primarily the impacts of Israeli occupation and Palestinian dependence on the Israeli economy. In terms of immediate recovery, this translates into addressing the internal closures and restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza and restricted border access. The proposed disengagement plan, with its limited withdrawal from Gaza, will not provide an adequate impetus for economic recovery and has broader economic implications. On the other hand, a removal of internal closures within the West Bank and Gaza, the establishment of a territorial link between the West Bank and Gaza, and the establishment of a reformed border regime would provide an impetus for immediate recovery of the Palestinian economy in the short-term. Specifically, trade and more precisely export facilitation should not only be considered an essential part of a recovery package, but should be viewed as a necessary tool to achieve said recovery within the understanding that export of Palestinian goods and services is the major instrument for recovery and potential development.

Palestinian Dairy Farms and Production

Dairy production is a highly complicated issue in Palestine owing to three factors;

- (1) the high cost of maintenance of dairy farms and production facilities, which require tremendous capital investments
- (2) the existing Palestinian - Israeli customs envelope, that places high tariffs and non-tariff protection for the benefit of a highly developed Israeli dairy industry, and
- (3) existing impediments related to closure, movement restrictions, which negatively affect the Palestinian farmer's capacity to produce milk, increase transaction costs and minimize the potential marketability of products.

The raising of cattle in Palestine started in 1955, whereby 3 farms were established around that time (Khadouri Agricultural Studies School, Arab Development Project in Jericho and Wahid Al-Masri Farm in Nablus. Each of these farms started with around 50 heads of cattle. Today, based on Ministry of Agriculture statistics, there are approximately 700 thousand Ruminants (Goats and sheep) and no more than 5000 cows. The growth in dairy farms has been stunted by two major issues:



First, the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture prevents the import of cows from anywhere in the world, to Palestinian Farms, and only gives this permission to Israeli farmers. Since 1967, there has been no monitoring of the health and quality of cows imported by Palestinian farmers from Israeli farmers, being the only de-facto source of cattle. Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture cannot enforce health requirements as a result of the closure regime. This led to the degradation of the quality of cattle being produced, and hence the quality of milk and dairy products.

Second, the movement restrictions, closures and curfews on villages with dairy farms within Palestine have resulted in the increase in the delivery price of animal feed. The inability of veterinary services from reaching the farms has resulted in the death of many of this cattle due to lack of treatment. The lack of inspection services has resulted in lower quality production. And, most importantly, the inability to move the milk itself to the dairy factories has resulted in loss of markets for the farmers, thereby reducing the feasibility of owning or investing in dairy farms.

These impediments resulted in a rapid rise in the transaction costs of dairy products, as well as the inaccessibility of these products both in raw and processed form to the end user.

The Separation Wall and Agricultural Assets

The Israeli separation wall tends to closely hug Palestinian built-up areas, preventing not only future expansion of cities and towns but also restricting the access of farmers to agricultural lands surrounding built-up areas. An estimated 8.9% of the population has been separated from their cultivated lands by the wall. A total of 9.5% of the West Bank has been trapped between the Green Line and the (west) wall, all of which is either inaccessible or restricted and faces the direct threat of annexation. Groundwater resources in these areas are also at risk.



The planned "eastern wall" which was to be built through the Jordan Valley has not materialized on the ground, but Jordan Valley farmers also face restrictions on access to their land. Jordan Valley areas designated as being under "settlement jurisdiction" and thus not accessible to Palestinians represent 28% of the area of the West Bank. The Jordan Valley is designated as "Area C", and is controlled through a complex system of permits, settler-only roads, and checkpoints. Deepening Palestinian farmer's concern are the heavy restrictions on access to water, continued settlement expansion, and ongoing investment in agricultural infrastructure within and around settlements.



Source: Negotiations Support Unit – Negotiations Administration Department

The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture prevents the import of cows to Palestinian Farms



Israeli Cows waiting to cross Jalameh Checkpoint coming from Israel



Dairy Farm in Hebron

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QALQILIA GATE - THE WALL

Checkpoint Watch

OCHA Weekly Briefing Notes 20 - 26 April 2005

Tulkarm Qalqiliya/Salfit

- **Taybeh**
The checkpoint has been open for commercial trucks using the back-to-back system between 7.30 am and 5pm. The checkpoint remains closed every Saturday.
- **Qalqiliya DCO**
The checkpoint has been un-manned. The back-to-back system has not been in use since all trucks have had full access to Qalqiliya City.
- **Anabta**
The gate has been removed following handover of Tulkarem to Palestinian Authority. Palestinians are now able to travel east, including commercial traffic.

Nablus: Opening hours: 6am to 6pm.

- **Awarta checkpoint**
Main commercial checkpoint into Nablus since July 2003. Open from 6:00am to 5:00pm, based on the back-to-back system.
- **Beit Iba**
Open for humanitarian organisations and Palestinians. Israeli citizens, Palestinian holders of Jerusalem IDs and holders of international passports are subjected to prior liaison with IDF before access can be granted. Incoming movement is allowed from 6am until 11pm. Outgoing movement is allowed from 6am until 6pm. Age restrictions on movement through Nablus checkpoints were lifted 25 April; Palestinian males aged between 14 and 20 years previously needed permits.
- **Hamra**
East, before closure regime main road to Jordan, Tubas, Jenin Closed for Palestinians unless having permits, or coming from these villages: Frush Beit Dajjan, Al Jiftlik, Bardala, Kardala, Ein Shibli, Al Nassaria and Al Aqrabania (from which villagers occasionally are let through). Major delays.
- **Zaatara (Tappouah)**
South, main road to Ramallah Permanently manned. Major delays.

Jenin

- **Al Jalameh**
Main Northern entrance to Israel Open 24 hours for permit holders. Open from 8am to 4pm. Transit of trucks need liaison with Palestinian DCL..



Tubas

- **Bisan**
Main entrance to Israel Open 24 hours for permit holders.
- **Tayasir Gate**
Gate to the Tubas eastern agricultural lands in the Jordan Valley Closed for Palestinians, except for those residing in these villages: Bardala, Kardala, 'Ein el Beida, Al Farisiya, Al Malih and Khirbet Tell el Himma. No agricultural permits have been issued for Palestinian farmers from Tayasir, Al 'Aqaba and Ath Thaghra to reach their land on the eastern side of the checkpoint since 18 December 2004. Lengthy delays were again experienced throughout the week.

Ramallah/AI Bireh

- **Beituniya**
New back-to-back checkpoint is now in operation. Officially open 7am to 5pm Sunday to Thursday, 7am to 1pm on Fridays and closed Saturdays. Open for commercial goods and a back-to-back system is in operation. Only Palestinians from Kafr 'Aqab and Sameeramees holding Jerusalem IDs and driving Israeli yellow-plated trucks are allowed to pass through this checkpoint without using the back-to-back system. This checkpoint is not open for private cars or pedestrians.
- **Qalandiya**
Open daily from 4am to 11.30-12pm for vehicles and 24 hours for pedestrians. Ramallah/AI Bireh residents, Jerusalem ID holders, and foreign passport holders have access without permits. Since 12 February, Palestinians with West Bank permits are allowed to cross without permits. Israelis citizens and Arabs from the Golan are prohibited from crossing into Ramallah. Vehicles with West Bank registrations cannot pass unless they have a special permit. Ambulances and trucks with food products are permitted to cross. On 11 March the ISRAELI ARMY restricted the movement at the checkpoint for several hours in the morning due to a high security alert around Jerusalem.
- **Atara Bridge (partial)**
Open. Delays were reported.



Bethlehem

- **Beit Jala DCO**
Entrance to Beit Jala Open from 6am to 12am for all traffic. Palestinian public and private vehicles are allowed to pass. All commercial traffic is re-routed to Eastern side of Bethlehem.

Hebron

- **Tarqumiya**
Entrance for commercial goods (back-to-back), west of Hebron on Road 35 for both Hebron and Bethlehem districts The checkpoint was closed for Passover Holidays for workers and traders with valid permits. The back-to-back entrance is open from 6am to 5pm, every day except Saturday and Jewish holidays and the entrance of goods is relatively smooth.

Gaza

- **Karni**
Karni remains open (with exception of April 24 and 25 for Passover Holiday) from 7am to 11pm.
- **Sufa**
Sufa crossing remained closed for laborers, but was open for construction materials (with the exception of April 24 and 25 for Passover Holiday).
- **Erez**
Since 13 February, the crossing has been open; some three to four thousand Palestinian workers and traders have been permitted through on a daily basis (with the exception of 25 and 26 April for Passover Holidays). Erez Industrial zone The Industrial Zone was closed on 22 to 26 April for Passover Holidays.



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In an attempt to identify the ongoing impediments to Palestinian Trade, the Palestine Trade Center-PALTRADE has embarked on a 6 month pilot project to produce a monthly bulletin which highlights these impediments.

The bulletin will attempt to inform traders, the Palestinian government and the International community on the impact of these impediments caused by closures, checkpoints and security procedures on Palestinian trade.

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The Closure Regime in Motion

The West Bank closure system comprises over 600 physical barriers placed by the Israeli Occupation Army on roads to control and restrict Palestinian vehicular traffic, which the Israeli Government claims is designed to protect Israeli citizens from Palestinian attacks.

The closures are the primary cause of poverty and the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza and have restricted Palestinian access to health and education services, employment, markets and social and religious networks. The types of barriers include full-time and partially manned checkpoints, roadblocks (consisting of rows of one meter concrete blocks), metal gates, earth mounds, earth walls (a long series of earth mounds) and trenches.

As of 12th of April 2005, 605 closure barriers were recorded in the West Bank compared to 680 in November 2004. The 605 figure indicates a net decline of 75 closure barriers (in certain governorates the Israeli Army installed additional closure barriers). The bulk of the 75 net decrease occurred in selected areas:

- 34 were removed from the Bethlehem Governorate,
- 16 barriers from the Hebron Governorate and
- 12 from the Jenin Governorate.

Most of the closure barriers removed were earth mounds (92) which mostly benefited movement between individual Palestinian villages. An increase of flying checkpoints (random stop and searches), however, has been observed at locations where earth mounds were removed.

It has been observed that movement between governorates improved with the easing of two checkpoints:

- The Shave Shomeron checkpoint between Jenin, Nablus and Qalqiliya; and
- The Ein-ad-Duyuk checkpoint, between Jericho and Ramallah, which was relocated following the handover of security of Jericho City to the Palestinian Authority.

It should be indicated, however, that in areas where the changes in closures occurred, the removal of closure barriers is consistent with the shifting of Palestinian vehicular traffic away from routes used by Israeli settlers and from the Barrier (or its planned route). Thus, it becomes clear that the closure regime, with all the suffering and damage it has caused to the Palestinian economy aims first and foremost at changing the movement patterns of the Palestinian Population in the West Bank in order to forcibly accommodate the illegal settlements and to prevent Palestinians from using the roads network which has been dedicated to settlers.

Movement into the closed areas between the Wall and the Green Line has been restricted through the irregular opening and closing of the gates along the wall, and the issuance as well as manipulation of the green permits (permits to move in and out of the walled area).