



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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ISRAELI ASSISTANCE STEPS AND HUMANITARIAN MEASURES TOWARDS THE PALESTINIANS

**Following the Palestinian Elections and the
Sharm el-Sheikh Summit**

May 2005



Israeli Assistance Steps and Humanitarian Measures towards the Palestinians

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A. Background

Following the Palestinian elections (January 9, 2005) and the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit (February 8, 2005), Israel has taken a series of measures with the purpose of easing the everyday life of the Palestinian population. These measures are part of a policy aimed at utilizing the "window of opportunity" that was opened after the establishment of the new Palestinian government and renewed cooperation between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel. Their implementation was possible due to the decrease in the number of terrorist attacks against Israelis and the improvement in cooperation between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Palestinian security forces.

The main areas in which measures were taken:

- Transfer of cities to PA responsibility
- Initial prisoner release
- Opening crossing points between Israel and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip
- Increasing work permits in Israel for Palestinians
- Easing restrictions over the entrance of Palestinians into Israel
- Lifting roadblocks and easing movement within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

These measures have been implemented in parallel to Israel's preparations for the implementation of the Disengagement Plan, which will result in the removal of Israeli settlements and military presence from the Gaza Strip and areas of the Northern West Bank.

In addition, Israel has decided to employ a new security system based on the concept of "minimal friction" between the Palestinian population and Israeli security forces. Israel is examining a new approach for managing the movement of people and goods from Palestinian controlled areas into Israel and vice-versa. To this end, Israel has started constructing new terminals that would enable smooth passage with minimal friction between civilians and security personnel.



B. The Disengagement Plan: a humanitarian perspective

Israel's implementation of the Disengagement Plan carries with it the potential for improvement of the Palestinians' everyday lives. When he first outlined the Disengagement Plan (April 18, 2004) Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has stated that

...The relocation from the Gaza Strip and from Northern Samaria will reduce friction with the Palestinian population, and carries with it the potential for improvement in the Palestinian economy and living conditions.

Israel sees the Disengagement Plan as an opportunity for the Palestinians to rebuild their economic and social infrastructures and is willing to assist the PA in achieving these ends. Israel is also seeking the collaboration of the international community on these issues.

On May 3, 2005, Vice Premier Shimon Peres met with Quartet special envoy on disengagement, James Wolfensohn, along with the heads and members of the inter-ministerial teams for economic and civilian coordination of the disengagement. Peres emphasized that coordination of the disengagement between the Israelis and the Palestinians is important to facilitate the disengagement's success, as well as to leverage the economic potential embedded in the process. He also stressed the importance of focusing on projects that provide concrete, tangible economic benefits in Gaza in the short term, such as the issue of the crossing points. Peres noted that "preserving the residential structures in the Gaza settlements is in our mutual interest."

Israel offers the PA a concrete dialogue related to trade relations, economic development, transfer of assets, passages and access, as well as the Gaza seaport.

C. Transfer of security responsibility to the PA

The transfer of security responsibility over certain areas to the Palestinian Authority is part of Israel's policy aimed at reducing the friction between Israeli security forces and the Palestinian population. Following the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, Israel agreed to gradually hand over security control in the towns of Jericho, Tul Karm, Qalqilyah, Bethlehem and Ramallah, even before completing the implementation of the Disengagement Plan. Israel's view is that this process should be coordinated and implemented on a gradual basis, serving as a mutual confidence-building measure.

Accordingly, Israel has initiated a gradual process of transferring security responsibility for Palestinian cities to the Palestinian Authority, starting with Jericho (March 15, 2005) and Tulkarm (March 21, 2005). Consequently, all military checkpoints, closures and curfews in these areas were removed.

The success of the process depends on the commitment of the PA and the Palestinian security forces to implement their obligations to combat terrorism, to maintain public order and to promote security for both Palestinians and Israelis.



D. Minimal Friction: A new security system in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

As part of the preparations for implementing the Disengagement Plan and in the wake of the improving cooperation between the IDF and the Palestinian security forces, Israel has decided to adopt a new security system in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, based on the concept of "minimal friction" between the Palestinian population and Israeli security forces.

Accordingly, Israeli security forces will transfer the bulk of their monitoring and control efforts from checkpoints inside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to crossing points along the revised route of the security fence. This will mean a sharp reduction in the number of roadblocks and barriers within the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, alongside the construction of new terminals and crossing points between Palestinian-controlled areas and Israel (see below, paragraph E).

The new system will enable enhanced freedom of movement for residents of the areas in which it becomes operational.

The new system will be introduced first in the Jenin area, where some roadblocks have already been removed. It is expected that the shift to the new system in that area will be completed by the end of the summer of 2005. The plan is to implement the new system in the entire West Bank gradually, starting from the north and going southwards.

E. Passage between Israel and Palestinian controlled areas: a new approach

Israel is examining a new approach to managing the movement of people and goods from Palestinian controlled areas into Israel and vice-versa. The new approach is based on an "open concept", meaning that the interruption to the flow of people and goods caused by security considerations will be reduced to a minimum.

To this end, Israel has started constructing new terminals which will replace old crossing points between Israel and the Gaza Strip and between Israel and the West Bank. Unlike today, the new terminals will be run by civilian operators in order to reduce unnecessary friction between the military and civilians. Inside the terminal the use of sophisticated technology will reduce the inconvenience caused by long security checks. Thus, for example, passengers will get "smart cards", which will enable them to cross without any physical security check.

In the Gaza Strip, most interaction between Israelis and Palestinians is expected to take place within the two major terminals:

- Erez Terminal
- Karni Terminal (for the passage of goods)



Seven other terminals will be built in the West Bank and in the Jerusalem area:

- Bitunia Terminal
- Jalameh Terminal
- Kalandia Terminal
- Qalqilya Terminal
- Sha'ar Efrayim Terminal (Ma'ale Efrayim)
- Tarqumia Terminal
- Terminal 300 (near Bethlehem)

The cost of each new terminal is estimated at 120-170 million shekels (NIS). Altogether, Israel is expected to invest approximately 1.1-1.3 billion NIS in the project.



Overview look of the planned terminal in Erez, in the northern Gaza Strip



The entrance to the new terminal in Erez, in the northern Gaza Strip, April 2005



New biometric technology ("Smart Card") is already in use in the Bitunia crossing.



F. Chronological Overview: February 1– May 15, 2005

February 1, 2005

Full Reopening of Rafah Terminal

- The Rafah Terminal has fully reopened February 1, 2005 to allow both entry and exit of Palestinians across the boundary with Egypt.

* The Terminal had been closed since December 12, 2004, following an attack upon an IDF post by armed Palestinians that killed five IDF soldiers and wounded five others.

The initial reopening of the terminal on January 21, 2005 allowed the return to the Gaza Strip by thousands of Palestinian pilgrims who had traveled to Mecca. Despite the terrorist attack on December 12, 2004, a special humanitarian effort was made to allow for freedom of religious ritual for Muslim Palestinians who made their pilgrimage to Mecca.

The decision to reopen the Rafah Terminal followed the repair of the terminal, security assessments, and measures taken to ensure the protection of those passing through the terminal and the structure itself.

February 7, 2005

Karni Crossing Reopens

- Following security assessments and the rebuilding of the Karni crossing, the crossing was reopened February 7, 2005 for the passage of agricultural merchandise and humanitarian aid. The reopening of the crossing in the northern Gaza Strip was made possible after it was rebuilt incorporating security measures that would ensure the safety of the crossing and its workers.

* The crossing had been closed following an attack carried out by Palestinian terrorists on January 14, 2005, in which six Israeli civilians were murdered and five Israeli civilians were wounded.

February 9, 2005

Authorization for Palestinians to enter Israel

- 2,000 additional Palestinian workers from the West Bank have been authorized to enter to work in Israel. In addition, 1,000 Palestinian workers and 500 merchants from the Gaza Strip have been authorized to enter Israel via the Erez crossing to work in Israel. 500 Palestinian workers have been authorized to work in the Erez industrial zone.
- Family visits for Palestinians prisoners and detainees were authorized.

Opening of the Gush Katif junction

- The Gush Katif junction was opened to all vehicles including vehicles of the Palestinian security services.

February 15, 2005

Opening hours of the Karni crossing expanded

- The opening hours of the Karni crossing were expanded, so that the crossing will be open on weekdays from 8:00 A.M. until 11:30 P.M.



February 19, 2005

Additional permits for Palestinians to enter Israel

- Six hundred additional Palestinian workers and 300 additional merchants from the Gaza Strip have been authorized to enter Israel via the Erez crossing. Half of the merchants have been authorized to stay in Israel overnight.
- One hundred additional Palestinian workers have been authorized to work in the Erez industrial zone, bringing the total number to a maximum of 600.

Continued easing of restrictions for the Palestinian population

- The age limit of those exiting the Gaza Strip via the Rafah Terminal has been lifted.

February 21, 2005

Release of 500 prisoners and administrative detainees

- The IDF, in conjunction with the Israeli Prison Service, released 500 security prisoners and administrative detainees, residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The released security prisoners and administrative detainees were transferred from Ktziot detention facility to a number of specified drop-off points in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

March 13, 2005

Additional permits for Palestinians to enter Israel

- Nine hundred additional Palestinian merchants and businessmen from the West Bank have been authorized to enter Israel. This brings the total number of Palestinian merchants and businessmen authorized to enter Israel from the West Bank to a total of 8,500.
- Five hundred additional merchants from the Gaza strip have been authorized to enter Israel via the Erez crossing. This brings the total number of Palestinian merchants from the Gaza Strip authorized to work in Israel to a total of 1,300.

Reopening of the Erez crossing

- The Erez crossing was reopened, following renovations over the past several months. The renovated crossing includes four lanes with advanced monitoring devices, to allow convenient passage for all those using it, including Palestinian workers, merchants and businessmen, Palestinian VIP's, employees of international organizations and aid organizations, diplomats and media.

The friction between the Palestinians and the IDF soldiers securing the crossing have been minimized as advanced technological equipment has been installed at the crossing, for the convenience of the travelers and the security of the soldiers.



Opening of the Abu Holi junction

- The Abu Holi junction (in the southern Gaza Strip) will be opened 24 hours a day for the passage of private vehicles, subject to security limitations. Since February 9, 2005, the junction is open 24 hours a day for the passage of public transportation and for the passage of the vehicles of the Palestinian Security Agencies.

March 15-21, 2005

Transfer of the security responsibility over the cities of Jericho and Tulkarm

- On March 15, 2005, IDF officers and representatives of the Palestinian Authority finalized an agreement concerning the transfer of the security responsibility over the city of Jericho to the Palestinian Authority.

On March 21, 2005, IDF officers and representatives of the Palestinian Authority finalized the agreement on the transfer of the security responsibility over the city of Tulkarm and eight surrounding villages to the Palestinian Authority.

Following this transfer all military checkpoints, closures, encirclements and curfews in these areas were lifted, as the Palestinian Authority was given the security responsibility in Jericho and Tulkarm.

March 25, 2005

Easing restrictions for the Palestinian population in the city of Nablus

In accordance with a directive by the political echelon, the following steps have been decided upon to ease restrictions for the Palestinian population in the city of Nablus:

- Expanding the hours of the security checkpoints activity:
Exiting through the Hawara checkpoint from 6:00 AM-11:00 PM; exiting through the checkpoint for residents of the surrounding villages around the clock. Entrance through the Biet Iba checkpoint from 6:00 AM-11:00 PM; exit until 6:00 PM.
- Enabling unrestricted access between Nablus and the village of Tel, east of Nablus with the relocation of roadblock 45.
- Placing a medical clinic at the Hawara checkpoint to grant immediate medical treatment to those crossing the checkpoint, and are in need of such treatment. Identical treatment will be introduced at the security checkpoint near Beit Iba in the near future.

* The easing of restrictions was made possible by the steady decrease of civilian involvement in terrorist activity in Nablus and the introduction of advanced security examination systems in the security checkpoints. These include computerized examination systems, metal detectors and x-ray baggage scanners, which have proved to significantly improve the quality and speed of the security examination.

March 28, 2005

Easing of restrictions on Palestinian Christians visiting holy sites in Israel

- On the occasion of the Catholic Easter holiday, Israel permitted Christian Palestinians to take part in religious ceremonies in Jerusalem and Nazareth, including special permits to allow freedom of movement for the purpose of family visits during the holiday. Some 8,000 permits were supplied by the District Civil Liaison offices.



- The entrance of worshipers who are Israeli citizens to Bethlehem was allowed, in order to facilitate visiting holy Christian sites, family visitations and freedom of worship.

April 7, 2005

Removal of an IDF barrier near Adam

- The IDF removed a barrier erected 2 years ago near Adam, southeast of Ramallah. The removal of the barrier enables unrestricted movement from Jasa to Chizma .

April 13, 2005

Removal of an IDF barrier near Yitmah

- A barrier near the village of Yitmah, south of Nablus was dismantled in order to enable free access to the Route 5 highway for the residents of the village.

April 14, 2005

Removal of an IDF barrier near Dir Amar

- A barrier was removed near the village of Dir Amar, northwest of Ramallah in order to ease the movement to and from the city of Ramallah.

April 17, 2005

Removal of an IDF barrier near Abud

- The IDF removed a roadblock north of the village of Abud, northwest of Ramallah, to allow free northern bound passage of vehicles from the village.

May 14, 2005

Removal of a roadblock near Ein Bidan

- The IDF has removed a roadblock near the village of Ein Bidan, northeast of Nablus. The removal of the roadblock allows free access for Palestinians and merchandise between Nablus and Palestinian villages in the Jordan Valley.

Since the beginning of March 2005, 25 roadblocks have been removed in the West Bank.

May 15, 2005

Additional permits for Palestinians to enter Israel

- 4,500 additional authorizations were given out to Palestinian workers wishing to enter Israel from the Gaza Strip. This brings the total of authorizations for Palestinian workers from the Gaza Strip to enter Israel to 10,000.

1,500 additional Palestinian workers were given authorizations to spend the night in Israel, bringing the total number of these to 3,000.



G. Status of Assistance Steps Implementation \ May 2005

1. Palestinian workers authorized to enter Israel

From the West Bank:	18,500
From the Gaza Strip:	10,000
Total	28,500

• Actual entry to Israel:

March 22, 2005	March 27, 2005	April 3, 2005	April 6, 2005
18,063 15,667 from the WB 2,396 from the GS	19,141 15,728 from the WB 3,413 from the GS	20,048 15,566 from the WB 4,482 from the GS	19,679 15,220 from the WB 4,459 from the GS
April 25, 2005	May 1, 2005	May 8, 2005	May 15, 2005
19,875 14,675 from the WB 5,200 from the GS	~20,000 ~15,000 from the WB ~5,000 from the GS	16,892 15,267 from the WB 1,625 from the GS	18,531 14,829 from the WB 3,702 from the GS

2. Employment in Settlements and Industrial Estates

March 22, 2005	March 27, 2005	April 3, 2005	April 6, 2005
15,531 11,134 from the WB 4,397 from the GS	15,667 11,304 from the WB 4,363 from the GS	14,670 11,104 from the WB 3,566 from the GS	14,830 11,271 from the WB 3,559 from the GS
April 25, 2005	May 1, 2005	May 8, 2005	May 15, 2005
15,545 11,350 from the WB 4,195 from the GS	15,570	15,960 11,631 from the WB 4,329 from the GS	15,920 11,601 from the WB 4,319 from the GS

3. Palestinian merchants authorized to enter Israel

From the West Bank:	8,500
From the Gaza Strip:	1,300
Total	9,800

4. Permits for workers at Erez Industrial Estate

Total	800
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5. International Organizations' Workers

From the West Bank:	1,120
From the Gaza Strip:	400
Total	1,520

+ 120 East-Jerusalemite project contractors are authorized to enter the West Bank.

6. PA employee movement

Authorization for 100 PA employees to travel between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (50 from the WB and 50 from the GS).

7. Special populations – religious rights

- 550 church employees are authorized entry to Israel.
- Enabling access for Christian worshipers to participate in religious rites.
- Palestinian Muslims are authorized to worship on the Temple Mount.

8. Other special populations

- Hospital employees from East Jerusalem, lawyers and residents of J'abel Mukater, Biraune and Beit Tzafa are authorized unlimited movement.
- Prisoner's families visits in Israeli prisons are enabled.
- Family visits authorized from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for humanitarian reasons.



Entry into Israel of humanitarian and medical cases: Unlimited

9. Passages

- **Abu Holi Junction** – Open 24 hours a day, also for private vehicles.
- **Erez Crossing** – Open for workers, merchants and senior businessmen, humanitarian passage, diplomat movement and expatriate and Palestinian international organizations' staff movement.
- **Magen 12** – Authorized entry of Palestinian entrepreneurs and 800 workers to Erez Industrial Estate.
- **Karni Passage** – Open 08:00-22:00 for merchandise and agricultural products transport. Expansion of activity hours until 23:00.
- **Sufa Passage** – Open 07:00-16:00.
- **Mawassi Crossings, Northern Section** – Open.
- **Raffah Border Passage** – Open 09:00-17:00 for merchandise transport and passengers. Authorization for expansion of operational hours until 21:00.
- **Allenby Bridge** – Open 08:00-20:00 for passengers and commercial activity.
- **Back to Back Platforms** – Open for merchandise transport.