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Movement in and out of Gaza: update covering January 2022

01 Mar 2022

Highlights

- More Palestinians were allowed by the Israeli authorities to exit Gaza with “trader” permits and work in Israel as daily laborers.
- The movement of people to and from Egypt slightly declined compared with the previous month.
- More building materials entered via Israel and Egypt than in previous months.

Background: Longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza have undermined the living conditions of the approximately two million Palestinian residents. Many of the current restrictions, originally imposed by the Israeli authorities in the early 1990s, were intensified after June 2007, following the Hamas takeover Gaza when the Israeli authorities imposed a blockade. These restrictions continue to reduce access to livelihoods, essential services and housing, disrupt family life, and undermine people’s hopes for a secure and prosperous future. The situation has been compounded by the restrictions imposed by the Egyptian authorities at the Rafah Crossing.



A Palestinian ambulance transporting a child with cancer to the Israeli-controlled Erez crossing, to seek treatment that is not available in the Gaza Strip.

Photo by OCHA, 17 February 2022



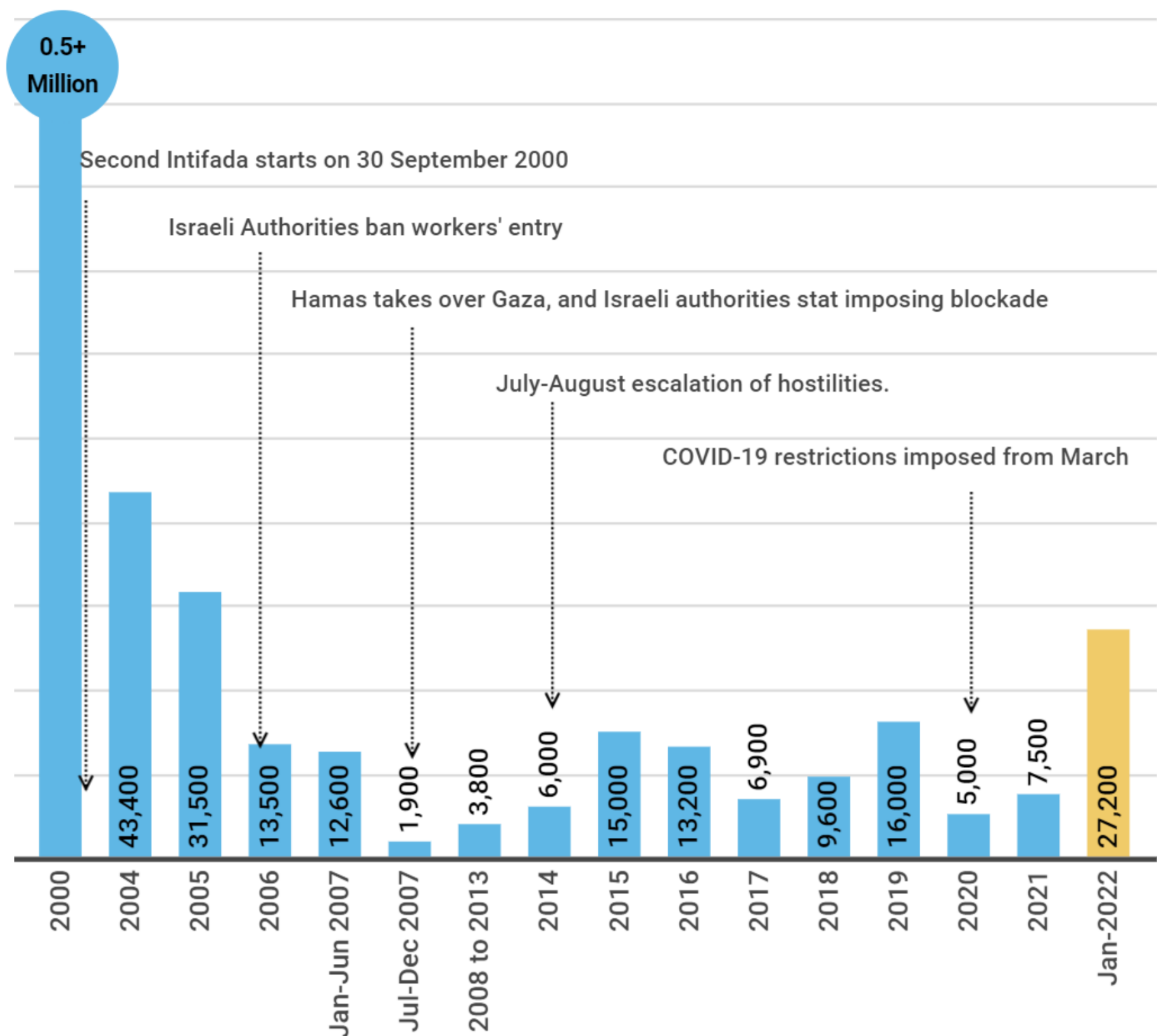
Movement of people to Israel and the West Bank

- **In January, the Israeli authorities allowed nearly 27,200 exits from Gaza** (in most cases, travelers exited multiple times). This was over 3.6 times more than the monthly average in 2021, but only around 5 per cent of the volume of exits in the first half of 2000, before the imposition of the category-based restrictions.
- **About 85 per cent of the exits were by Palestinians allowed out under the ‘traders’ or ‘economic needs’ permit category, most of whom are de facto employed as daily laborers.** The crossing of traders into Israel was halted by the Israeli authorities in March 2020, in the context of COVID-19, and gradually resumed in the last quarter of 2021.
- **Some 7 per cent of the exits were by patients referred for medical treatment in the West Bank or Israel, and their companions.** A total of 1,550 exit-permit applications were submitted for medical appointments scheduled for January, but only 62 per cent of them were approved on time.

Background: Palestinians are banned from leaving Gaza via Israel, including for passage to the West Bank, unless they obtain an Israeli-issued exit permit. Only those belonging to certain categories, primarily “traders” (de facto daily labourers), patients and their companions, and aid workers, can apply for such permits. Other people are not eligible for a permit even if they do not pose a security risk, according to the Israeli authorities. In most cases, the Israeli authorities do not provide specific reasons for the rejection of an application. If an application is approved, the permit holder may travel through the Israeli-controlled Erez crossing, which operates during the daytime, from Sunday to Thursday, and on Fridays, for urgent cases and for foreign nationals only.

Monthly average of exits to/via Israel





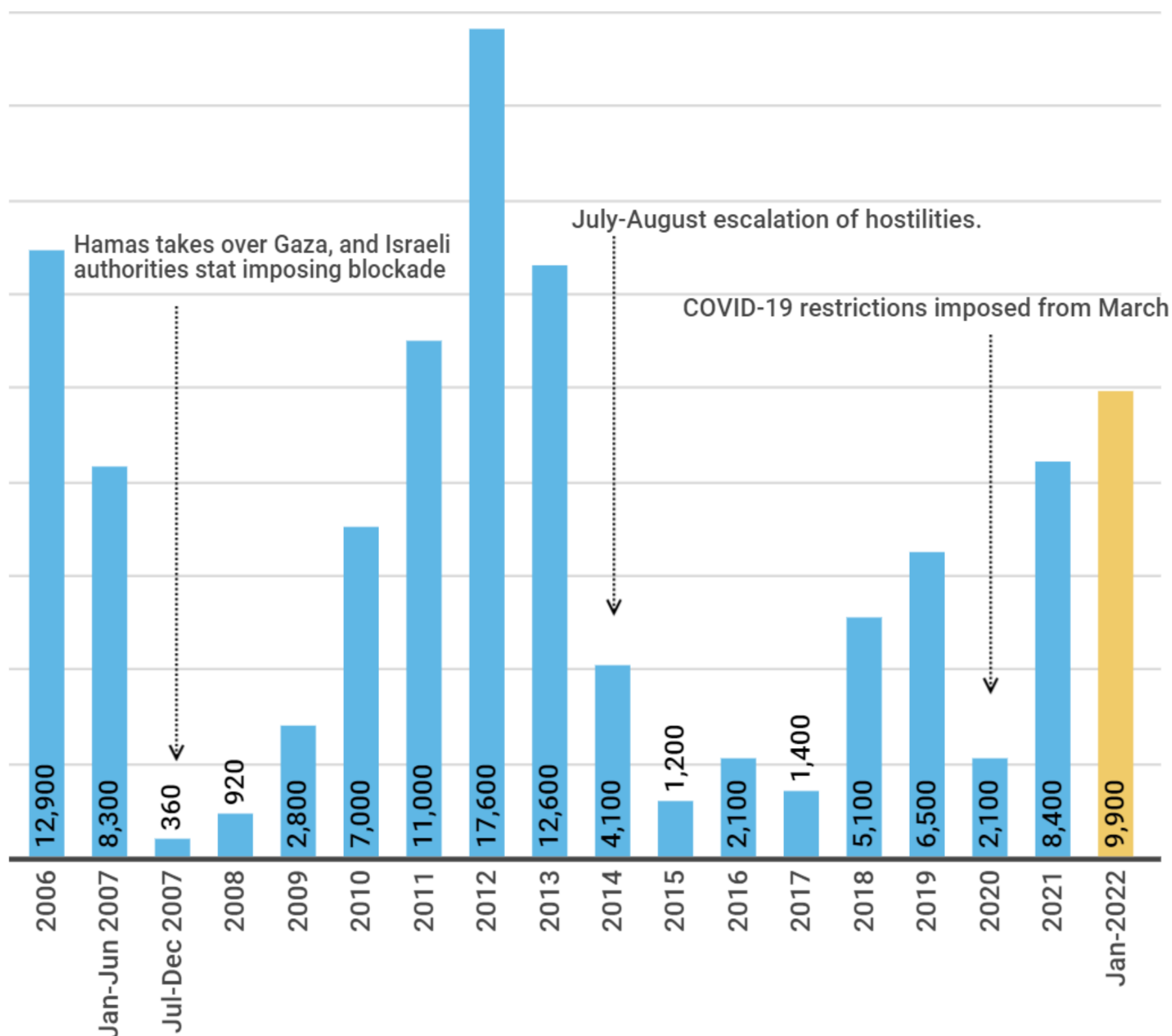
Movement of people to Egypt

- The Egyptian authorities allowed about 9,900 exits in **January** (some travelers may have exited multiple times). This was slightly less than in December, but over 18 per cent above the monthly average in 2021.
- Some 510 people were denied entry to Egypt by the Egyptian authorities, compared with 588 denials in December 2021.

Background: Palestinians wishing to leave Gaza via Egypt must register with the local Palestinian authorities two to four weeks in advance. People may also apply directly to the Egyptian authorities, using the services of a private company. The procedures and decisions by both authorities lack transparency. Those whose requests have been approved exit through the Rafah Crossing, controlled by the Egyptian authorities, which operates from Sundays to Thursdays. The journey to Cairo via the Sinai desert is often lengthy and includes multiple stops for checks by Egyptian forces.

Monthly average of exits to Egypt





Incoming goods

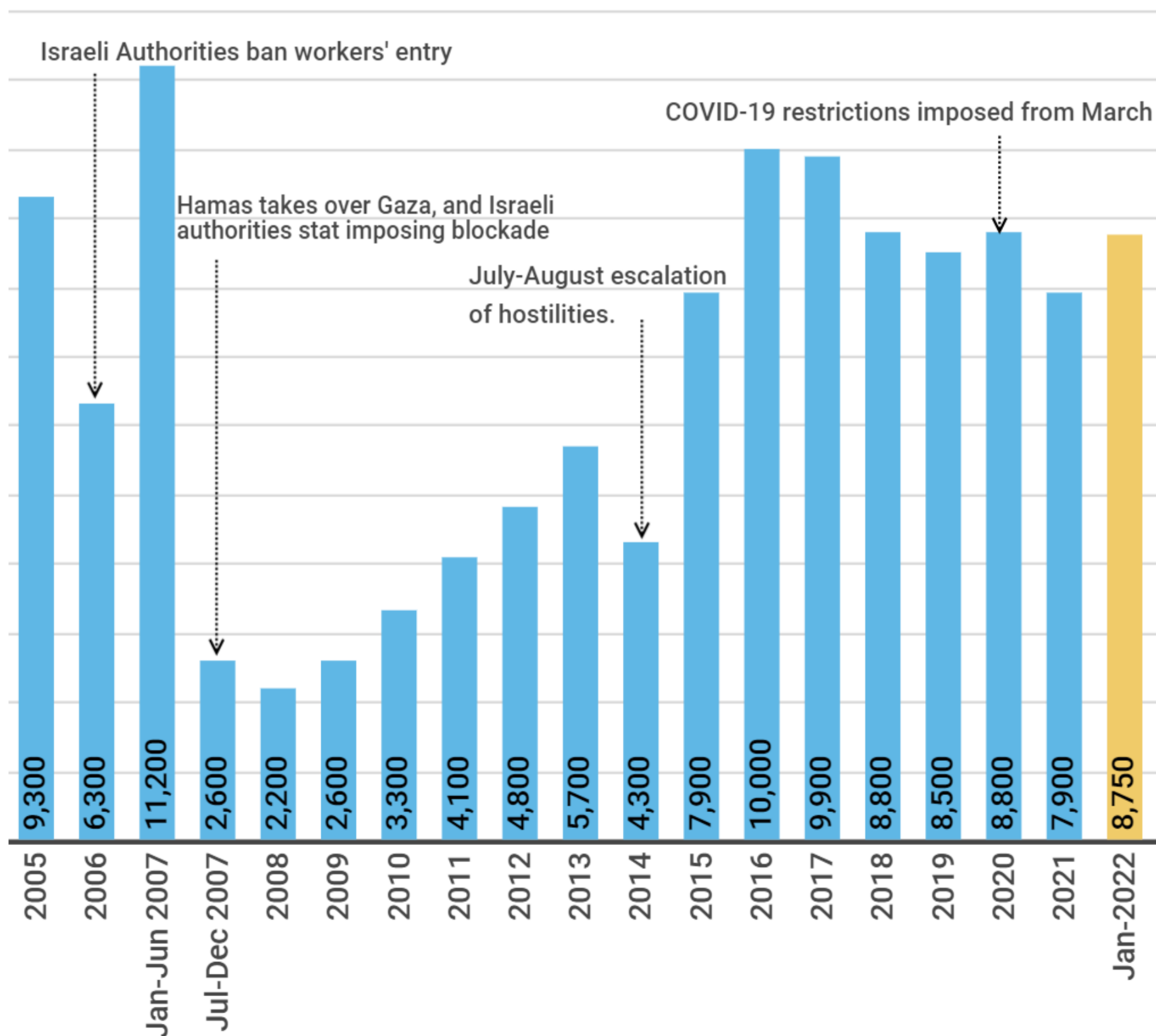
General goods (excluding fuel and gas)

- In January 2022, the volume of goods entering Gaza was some 10 per cent higher than the 2021 monthly average but 22 per cent lower than the monthly average on the eve of the blockade in 2007. This is despite the fact that Gaza's population is today more than 50 per cent larger than in 2007.
- Of the goods entering, 44 per cent were construction materials, and 31 per cent were food. About 4.5 per cent carried humanitarian aid facilitated by international organizations, including food and medical supplies.
- Some 83 per cent of the goods entered via Israel. The volume was roughly the same as in the previous month, and 9 per cent above the monthly average of incoming goods in 2021.

Background: Since the imposition of the blockade in 2007, the Israeli authorities have restricted the entry into Gaza of goods they consider having a dual (civilian and military) use, such as building materials, medical equipment, and certain agricultural items. Some of these goods may be allowed entry, following a lengthy application and review process. The entry of all goods from or via Israel (including non-restricted goods) is only possible via the Kerem Shalom crossing following prior coordination. Since 2018, goods have also entered Gaza regularly from Egypt, via the Rafah crossing, controlled by the Egyptian authorities, and then through the adjacent Salah Ad Din Gate, controlled by the local authorities.

- **Of the goods entering via Israel, over 41 per cent were construction materials** (mainly aggregates, cement, and steel bars); the volume was 31 per cent above the monthly average recorded in 2021, a trend attributable to higher reconstruction needs following the May 2021 hostilities.
- **Some 17 per cent of the overall goods entered via Egypt, from which imports took place on 13 days.** Their volume was 18 per cent higher compared with the monthly average recorded in 2021.
- **Of the goods entering via Egypt, more than half were construction materials** the process for entry of which via Israel is complex, citing security concerns, and are cheaper in Egypt; most of the remaining goods were food.

Monthly average of incoming goods to Gaza



- The volumes of fuel and gas that entered Gaza from Israel and Egypt during January 2022 increased compared with the monthly average in 2021: by 12 per cent higher regarding cooking gas, 20 per cent regarding petrol and diesel, and 23 per cent regarding industrial diesel for the power plant.

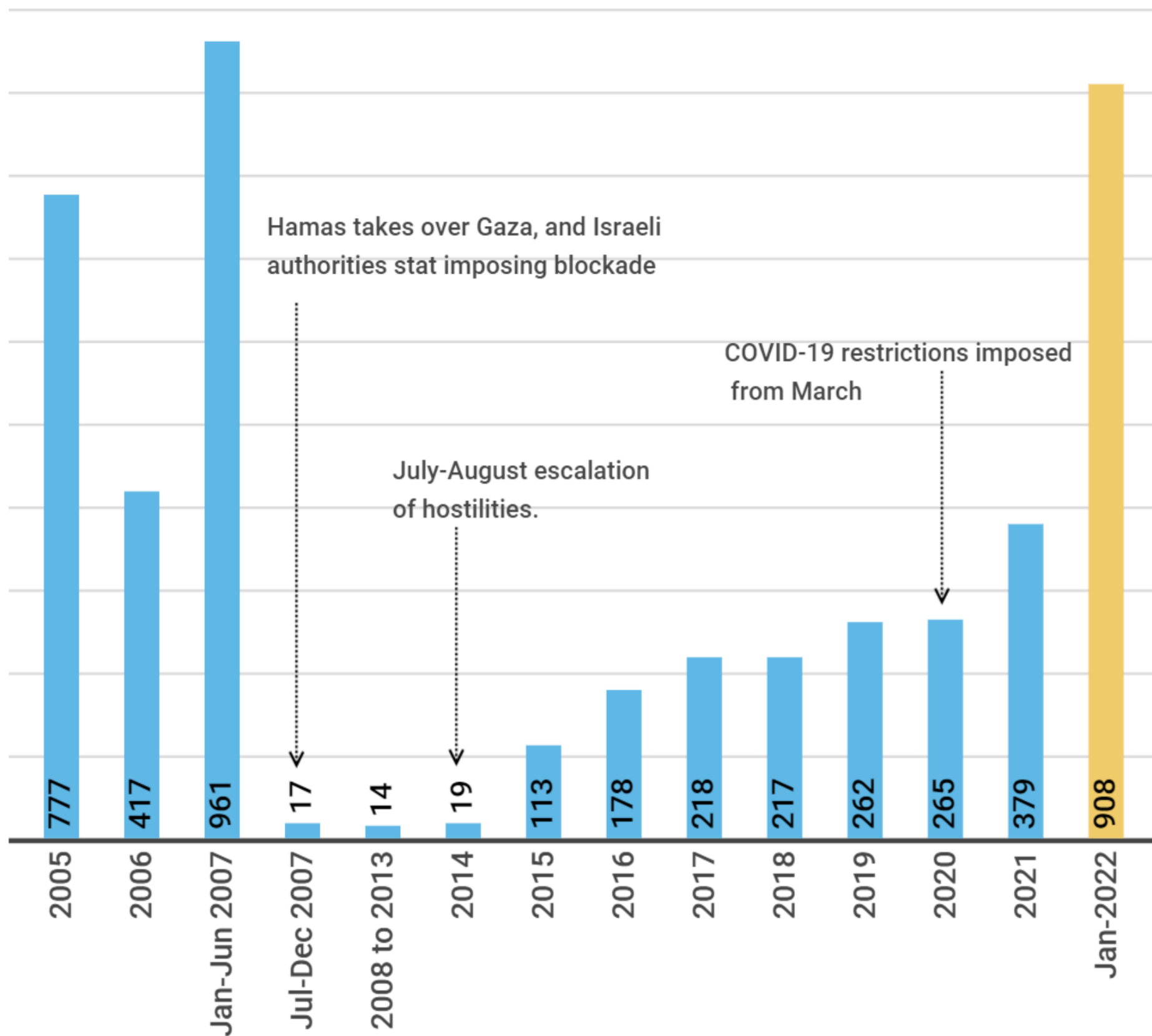
Outgoing goods

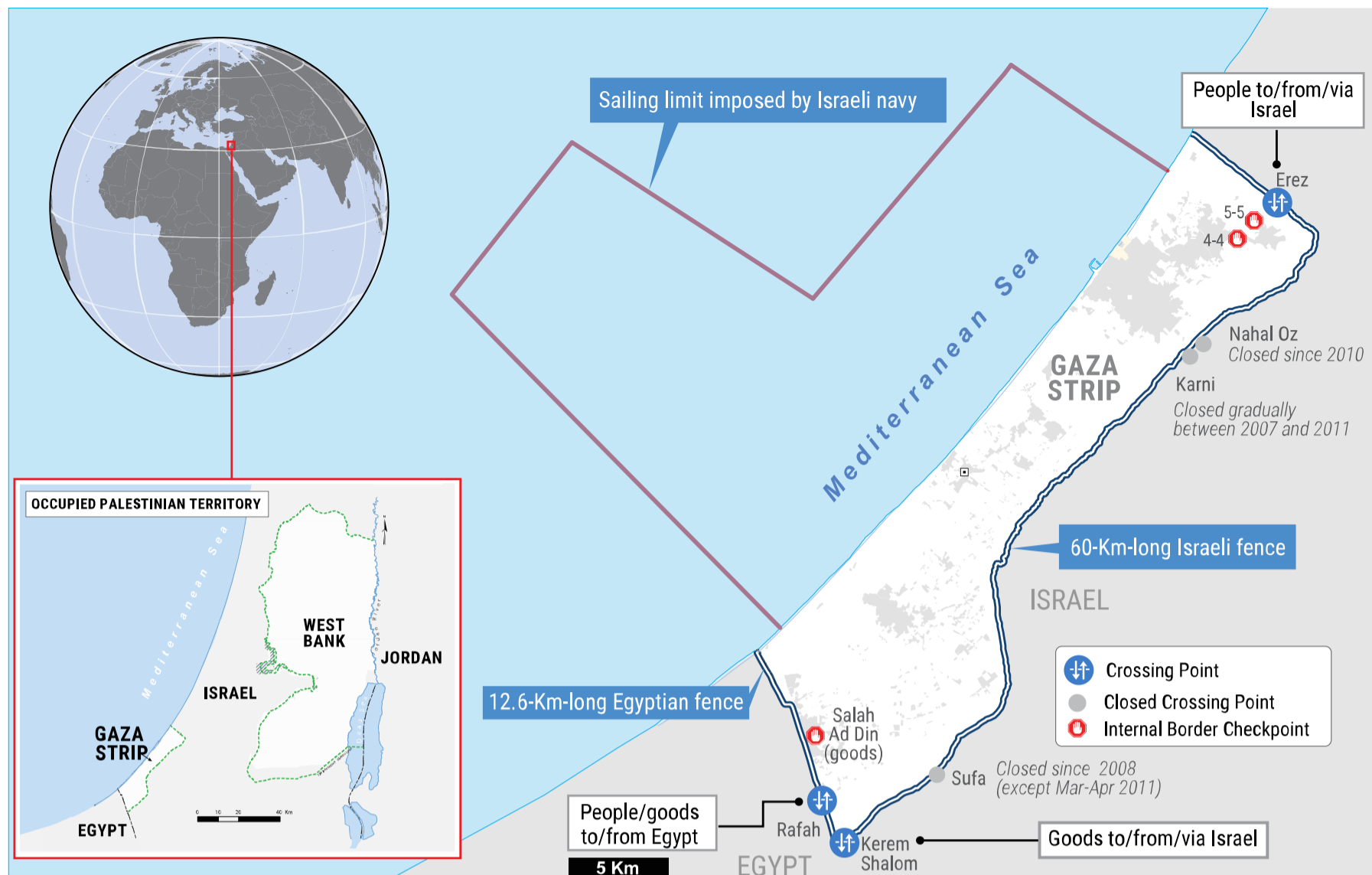
- **In January, the Israeli authorities allowed 812 truckloads out of Gaza:** 59 per cent more than in January 2021 but still slightly less than on the eve of the blockade in 2007. The recent uptrend is partially attributable to an increased demand for vegetables in Israel.
- **Of the exiting goods, 68 per cent went to the West Bank, 29 per cent went to Israel, and 3 per cent went to international markets.** Of the total amount, 76 per cent was vegetables, 15 per cent was scrap iron, and the rest was textile, fish, aluminum, furniture and plastic pipes.
- **Another 96 truckloads carrying scrap iron and used batteries exited Gaza to Egypt.** Used batteries were shipped from Gaza to Egypt for the first time.

Background: Most products traded outside Gaza are transported to markets via the Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing, where various restrictions apply. The exit of goods to the West Bank and Israel, the main markets, was largely banned by the Israeli authorities between 2007 and 2014, and then gradually reinstated. Since August 2021, certain goods have been exported to Egypt, via the Salah Ad Din gate and Rafah crossing.

Monthly average of outgoing goods from Gaza







Data source: Ministry of National Economy in Gaza. More data: ochaopt.org/data/crossings

