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## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		29 June 2009
About the Board	<b>ZZZ103184.E</b>	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Palestine and Israel: Movement between Gaza and the West Bank; permits to exit Gaza; legal and other impediments to a resident of Gaza relocating to live in the West Bank (2007-2009)	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy References		
Publications	Human rights organizations indicate that freedom of movement between Gaza and the West Bank is nearly "non-existent" (BADIL June 2007, 121; AI 2009; ICHR 31 Dec. 2008, 17). Sources indicate that Israeli authorities have closed or partially closed all borders to and from Gaza since June 2007, when Hamas seized control of Gaza (AP 27 Oct. 2007; B'tselem Dec. 2008, 9; PCHR 2008, 46; <i>The Washington Post</i> 24 Jan. 2008). Amnesty International (AI), the commissioner general of the United Nations (UN) Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), an independent human rights organization based in Gaza City, described the Israeli blockade as a near imprisonment of the 1.5 million people of Gaza (AI 2009; <i>The Sunday Tribune</i> 27 Jan. 2008; PCHR 2008, 48). According to the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , a spokesperson for the Israeli military indicated that it was Israel's policy to "allow a minimum" of people to leave Gaza, such as in "cases of extreme humanitarian need" ( <i>Los Angeles Times</i> 31 Aug. 2008).	
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division		
Immigration Division		
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Research Program	In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), a joint Palestinian-Israeli public policy think-tank based in Jerusalem (IPCRI n.d.), reported that "almost no one" can obtain an exit permit to leave Gaza; those that can include people with serious health issues, a small number of business people, individuals requested specifically by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas or Prime Minister Fayyad, or individuals connected to the Israeli security services (IPCRI 17 Jun. 2009). Associated Press (AP) reports that "the very sick, employees of international organizations, journalists, and humanitarian hardship cases" are among the few who can leave Gaza (AP 27 Oct. 2007). B'tselem, an Israeli human rights organization, explains that the Rafah crossing was open for 30 days in 2008 so that "the ill, pilgrims, members of Hamas, and others could enter and leave" (B'tselem Dec. 2008, 9).	
National Documentation Packages		
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Information Sheets	According to the PCHR, in 2008 Israel allowed 5,839 patients (an average of 16 patients daily) to cross the Beit Hanoun (Erez) border from Gaza to Israel for medical treatment at hospitals in Israel or the West Bank, whereas before June 2007, an average of 50 patients daily were permitted (PCHR 2008, 49). Physicians for Human Rights - Israel (PHR - Israel) reported similar figures for the first ten months of 2008 (PHR - Israel 2008, 32) and also reported that the proportion of	
Media Relations		
Proactive Disclosure		

patients denied exit permits increased from 10 percent in the first half of 2007 to 35 percent in the first half of 2008 (PHR - Israel Aug. 2008, 6). Sources indicate that seriously ill patients have been denied permission to exit Gaza for medical treatment (PHR - Israel 2008, 32-36, 39; AI 2009; PCHR 2008, 49). According to PCHR, 29 patients died in 2008 after they were denied access to medical treatment outside Gaza (ibid.; see also ICHR 31 Dec. 2008, 17 and AI 2009). A July 2008 report by AI provides details on individuals denied access to medical treatment.

AI, PCHR and the *Los Angeles Times* report that "hundreds" of students have been denied permits to exit Gaza to study abroad (AI 2009; PCHR 2008, 47; *Los Angeles Times* 31 Aug. 2008), including Fulbright scholars (ibid.), those who won scholarships for post-graduate studies (AI July 2008, 4; PCHR 5 Feb. 2008, 5), and students who began their studies but returned to Gaza to visit family (ibid., 6). According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), in December 2007, Israel allowed 900 Palestinians with work or study permits to exit Gaza after "lengthy delays" (USCRI 2008; see also PCHR 5 Feb. 2008, 4). According to the Ministry of Civilian Affairs, as reported by PCHR in February 2008, there were more than 2,722 students in Gaza, including 722 university students, waiting to exit Gaza to study abroad (PCHR 5 Feb. 2008, 3-4).

USCRI reports that Israeli authorities can deny travel permits for "any or no reason without meaningful appeal" (USCRI 2008). According to a position paper produced by two Israeli human rights organizations, HaMoked and B'tselem, in July 2008 the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that Palestinians "do not have a vested right to enter Israel for any purpose whatsoever, including transit to the Judea and Samaria area" (West Bank) (B'tselem/HaMoked Sept. 2008, 7). Furthermore, they report that Palestinians in the West Bank whose registered address is in the Gaza Strip must hold a three-month permit to be present in the West Bank and that Israel has taken measures to remove those who do not have valid permits (ibid., 2, 5). Applicants for permits must have lived in the West Bank continuously for eight years, must be married, with children, must obtain security and police clearance, and must provide "humanitarian" grounds to justify the permit (ibid., 2). B'tselem and HaMoked also report that Israel does not allow a resident of Gaza to move to the West Bank to join his or her spouse and does not allow Palestinians to return to the West Bank if they visit Gaza (ibid., 3; B'tselem Dec. 2008, 10). The B'tselem/HaMoked report states "a registered address in Gaza effectively means a prohibition to enter the West Bank and loss of the right to live there" (B'tselem/HaMoked Sept. 2008, 5).

The IPCRI Representative stated that it is "almost impossible" to move from Gaza to the West Bank, but that after the Hamas takeover, "several thousand" Gazans, whose names were submitted to the Israeli authorities by Abbas, were allowed to relocate to the West Bank (IPCRI 17 June 2009). This information could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, media sources indicate that in June 2007, after Hamas defeated the Fatah-allied security forces in Gaza, over 50 Fatah leaders and top commanders immediately escaped to Ramallah in the West Bank (AP 16 June 2007); many more Fatah officials and security officers fled from Gaza to Egypt (Dow Jones 15 June 2007; Reuters 15 June 2007; MENA 18 June 2007) and arrangements were made to repatriate 340 of these officers to the West Bank (AP 18 June 2007). Media sources report that over 100 additional security officers and their families went to the Israeli border seeking Israel's permission to cross to the West Bank (AP 16 June 2007). Israeli authorities arranged for over 50 Palestinians at their border to be evacuated to Egypt (*The Advertiser* 22 June 2007; *Newsweek* 21 June 2007).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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**Internet sites, including:** Haaretz, International Crisis Group, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, *Middle East Quarterly*, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre, Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (PHRMG), Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), United Nations (UN) Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

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