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Gaza NGO Safety Office



GANSO Special Report: Erez Terminal Crossing Guide

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I. Introduction

The Erez Terminal is the primary point of entry into the Gaza Strip for humanitarian aid workers, diplomats, and United Nations employees. The terminal also controls the access of international journalists, a small number of Palestinian political leaders and businessmen, and of Palestinian patients seeking treatment in Israeli and West Bank medical facilities. The Erez Terminal is located on Gaza's northern border with Israel, immediately north of the Gazan town of Beit Hanoun and south of the Israeli town of Yad Mordekhay.

The Erez Terminal is a complicated system with multiple Israeli agencies at work at any given time, to include Police, Shin Bet, private security, and military units from COGAT and the Southern Command. You may receive conflicting information from different organs of the Erez security system, and you may experience delays due to the complexity of the operation. Remember that Erez is a military zone; intensive surveillance and security measures are in place at all times.

NB: In the event that you are seriously delayed by what you perceive to be a miscommunication between the diverse organs of Erez security, contact the CLA Liaison Officer and the UN Access Support Team immediately (contact info. on final page).

EREZ TERMINAL NORMAL OPERATING HOURS: 0800–1530 Sun.- Fri. / Closed Sat.

NB: Operating hours are frequently subject to temporary change; be sure to contact GANSO before traveling to Erez for up-to-date information on operating hours. Personnel entering or exiting the Gaza Strip should arrive at the initial permit validation point on the Israeli side or Khamsa-Khamsa on the Palestinian side NLT 30 min. before Erez Terminal closure.

Internationals who wish to pass into Gaza via Erez must coordinate in advance with the Israeli Civil Liaison Authority (CLA, see contact info. on final page), under the authority of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT). The permit approval process can take several weeks, so it is best to begin the application as far in advance of the desired entry date as possible.

Once a permit has been issued, the bearer may cross into and out of the Gaza Strip during the time period described on the permit. GANSO recommends that NGOs contact the CLA Erez officials at least 24 hrs. in advance of specific movements to the Erez Terminal in order avoid complications. If you know your expected departure date from Gaza in advance, it is best to inform the CLA when you call to notify them of your intended entry into Gaza.

Entering and exiting Gaza through the Erez Terminal can be a complicated and lengthy process due to the intensive security measures in place at the crossing. If all goes smoothly, the entire crossing process takes approximately 45 minutes; however, in the event of any complications owing to technical difficulties or security incidents, the process can take several hours.

NB: When crossing Erez, you should plan for inconsistency and allow time for delays and unexpected temporary closures. You should also know that you may be delayed at points where there is no access to water, bathrooms, or shade. A high degree of patience is an invaluable asset when traveling to Erez.



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II. Entering Gaza

NB: Only the UN, ICRC, and diplomatic missions are permitted to cross the Erez Terminal with vehicles; all other permit holders and Palestinian patients must cross on foot.

A) Initial Security & Permit Validation

NB: Personnel are not permitted to carry any weapons, to include knives, into the Gaza Strip. The transport of large amounts of cash into Gaza may also cause problems with the Israeli authorities. If you intend to transport a high volume of cash into Gaza, or if you are carrying any items you think might be considered contraband, contact the CLA Liaison Officer ahead of time.

When you arrive on the Israeli side of the Terminal you will leave your car in a dedicated parking lot and proceed on foot with your baggage to the first security checkpoint, adjacent to the parking lot. You will present your passport to the private security officer at the first checkpoint and wait for acknowledgment that your permit is valid. An Israeli soldier will bring a stamped piece of paper with your permit details to the first checkpoint after your permit has been validated; the private security officer will give you this sheet of paper when he or she returns your passport, and you will take this paper to Passport Control.

Luggage carts are available at the first security checkpoint for those with heavy baggage, though the private security officer may not allow you to access one until you have already been cleared to proceed to Passport Control.

NB: The validation process at the first checkpoint can take anywhere from 5 minutes to over 1 hour. If you are required to wait for more than 30 minutes, you should get in touch with the CLA Liaison via your organization's dedicated liaison to confirm that there are no unexpected complications. In the event of a significant delay, you should also contact the UN Access Support Team.

B) Passport Control

When the validity of your permit has been confirmed and you have your stamped permit details in hand, the private security officer at the first checkpoint will open a gate in the security fence and you will proceed to Passport Control. You will cross a small internal parking lot before reaching the Terminal building, at which point you will find two sets of Passport Control booths divided by a high glass barrier.

NB: Private security officers occasionally stop people in the parking lot between the initial security and permit validation post and Passport Control in order to search bags and check identification.

Passport Control for those entering Gaza is on the right-hand side of the glass barrier. You will queue before a yellow line until the Israeli Border and Customs Officer calls you forward. Upon entering the booth, you will present your passport and your stamped permit details to the Border and Customs Officer. You are permitted to bring your luggage cart into the booth. Once in the booth, the door will lock behind you.

The Border and Customs Officer may ask a series of questions about your employer, the nature of your work in Gaza, and the expected duration of your trip. You may also be required to show



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proof of employment or proof of contractual agreement by the organization that arranged your permit. It is a good idea to have a business card or ID badge ready. When the Border and Customs Officer has finished verifying your permit and visa, he or she will stamp your passport with an Israeli exit visa from the Erez Terminal and open the gate so that you may proceed toward the long walkway to Gaza, referred to by many as “the tunnel.”

NB: If you do not wish to have your passport stamped you may request a stamp on an additional piece of paper that you will be required to carry with you at all times, and which you will need to present when you exit Gaza through Erez. Do not lose this paper—if you do, you will create major complications for yourself when you try to leave Gaza.

C) “The Tunnel”

When you exit Passport Control, you will follow signs to a door marked “Gaza.” You will proceed through this door into a narrow corridor within the Terminal building, at the end of which you will find a spherical turnstile through which you will have to pass with your baggage. You will immediately recognize the advantages of packing light! If your baggage is too large to fit through the turnstile, or if you are using a luggage cart, you may press an intercom button located on the wall next to the turnstile and request the Terminal employees to open a larger gate so that you may pass.

After crossing this turnstile, you will be out of the Terminal building itself. You will proceed a short distance to a second turnstile, where there is also an intercom available if you are unable to pass through the turnstile with your luggage. If you use a luggage cart, you will need to leave the cart before this second turnstile.

After you have crossed the second turnstile, you will come immediately to a sliding steel door. The Erez Terminal employees will open this terminal automatically, though you may need to wait a few minutes. When the door opens, you will find yourself on a long covered walkway fenced in by wire on both sides. At this point, you are officially on Palestinian Territory inside the Gaza Strip.

As soon as you cross the sliding steel door into Gaza, a blue-vested porter with a luggage cart will offer to take your baggage for you. While the porter’s rates may vary depending on how many people are with you, you can expect to pay 10 NIS per person. You are under no obligation to hire the porter.

You will walk through the covered walkway for approximately 250 meters, at which point you will enter a second covered area flanked on both sides by concrete barriers. If you have hired the first porter, he will leave you here and expect payment. A second group of orange-vested porters is available to carry your luggage for the remaining 500 meters before you reach the Khamsa-Khamsa post, where you will meet your transportation. Like the blue-vested porters, the orange-vested porters charge varying rates depending on how many bags you ask them to carry; in general, you can expect to pay 20 NIS to each orange-vested porter you hire. Again, you are under no obligation to hire the porters.



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D) “The Long Walk”

After leaving “the tunnel,” you will emerge onto a road linking the Erez Terminal with the Gaza Strip. You will walk 500 meters to the Khamsa-Khamsa post, where you will find refreshments available for purchase and taxis for hire. If you have arranged for transportation ahead of time, your driver will meet you at Khamsa-Khamsa.

The road between “the tunnel” and Khamsa-Khamsa is in poor condition, causing minor difficulties for people who require wheelchairs. The poor road condition also makes the use of rolling suitcases unpleasant, but not impossible.

Do not stop or linger between “the tunnel” and Khamsa-Khamsa — you will be under surveillance the entire time and it is important to avoid arousing suspicion from observation towers in this sensitive security area.

As with any Israeli military area, photography and video are explicitly prohibited.

NB: 500m is a long distance to cover, especially in extreme heat and exposed to the sun. If you have difficulties walking long distances or other health considerations, wheelchairs are available at the end of “the tunnel” upon request.

E) Khamsa-Khamsa

Khamsa-Khamsa is the northernmost point Palestinians and internationals are allowed to reach without coordination with the Israeli authorities. Khamsa-Khamsa is the end of the road for Gazan vehicles, and it is where you will meet your transportation into Gaza. While GANSO advises you to arrange transportation ahead of time with your Gaza office, private taxis are available for hire. Refreshments are also available for purchase.

The Khamsa-Khamsa post includes a temporary structure from which Palestinian National Authority employees coordinate passage for Palestinians and internationals between Khamsa-Khamsa and the Erez Terminal. Upon exiting Gaza, you will need to present your passport here in order to obtain permission from the Israelis to approach the Erez Terminal. There is no passport check at Khamsa-Khamsa for people entering Gaza.

Upon reaching Khamsa-Khamsa you will meet your transportation and proceed to the final checkpoint, referred to as Customs Junction.

F) Customs Junction

The Customs Junction is a checkpoint controlled by the authority in Gaza approximately 500 meters beyond Khamsa-Khamsa. At the Customs Junction you will be required to present your passport, at which point an officer will record your passport details on a PNA form as well as the name of your employer and the location at which you plan to stay while in Gaza. The attendant may also request contact information and a description of the nature of your work in Gaza.

After your passport details have been recorded, you will proceed immediately to a covered vehicle search area where officials from the authority in Gaza will examine your luggage. You will need to have a packing list from your office for materials carried into Gaza on behalf of your employer, and you will want to be especially careful to include bills of sale for technological equipment.



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NB: PNA invoices for items procured in the West Bank along with a packing list from your organization should be sufficient for clearing Customs Junction; however, officers at Customs Junction have reportedly caused problems for those entering Gaza with items procured in Israel, claiming that the Israeli invoices do not clear the items for entry into the PNA. In the event that you have items detained or confiscated at Customs Junction, be sure to obtain a detailed invoice on official PNA letterhead. Contact the OCHA Gaza Field Office immediately (contact info. on last page).

In order to prevent the proliferation of A/H1N1 Influenza in Gaza, on the orders of the Ministry of Health, the officials at Customs Junction have been instructed to spot survey personnel entering Gaza for symptoms and risk factors related to A/H1N1. The survey—which is *not* administered to everyone—includes a questionnaire and sometimes a temperature check.

You can expect the Customs Junction checkpoint to take between 5 and 30 minutes depending on how many people are queued ahead of you and how much baggage needs to be searched.

When you have finished at Customs Junction you will be free to enter the Gaza Strip.

NB: Though the name of the checkpoint is Customs Junction, you will not be required to pay any customs or other fees upon entering or exiting Gaza. Be aware that alcohol is currently prohibited in the Gaza Strip, and you may face difficulties at Customs Junction if you attempt to cross with alcoholic beverages. Prescription drugs have also been known to trigger the interest of Customs Junction officials, so be sure to carry your prescription info. with you.

It is expressly prohibited to transport PNA passports into or out of Gaza on behalf of Gazan residents; if you are found in possession of PNA passports, they will most likely be confiscated.

III. Exiting Gaza

NB: Exiting Gaza requires largely the same process as entering Gaza; however, due to the fact that you will be re-entering Israeli territory after visiting Gaza, the security measures required for departure are more intense and the process can take substantially longer.

A) Customs Junction

Upon exiting Gaza you will need to stop at Customs Junction and provide your passport details again. No baggage search is usually required for departure.

B) Khamsa-Khamsa, “The Long Walk,” “The Tunnel”

You will present your passport to the attendant in the temporary building at Khamsa-Khamsa. He will alert the Erez Terminal officials that you are waiting to cross. When Khamsa-Khamsa has received confirmation that you are permitted to approach the Terminal building you will proceed approximately 750 meters to the sliding metal door by way of “the long walk” and “the tunnel.” You will have the opportunity to hire porters if you require them, and costs are identical to those described above.



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NB: Temporary closures and other security measures often cause long delays of up to 3 hours at the sliding steel doors at the end of the tunnel. Contact the CLA Liaison Officer via your organization's dedicated liaison for a situation update if you find yourself stuck for more than 30 minutes.

At the end of “the tunnel,” before proceeding inside the Erez Terminal building, you will need to open your bags for inspection via camera. One of the blue-vested porters may assist you in this initial inspection. You are not required to pay for this task.

After you have opened your bags to the cameras, you will proceed directly to a set of turnstiles and wait for the Terminal employees to unlock them, at which point you will proceed inside. If the turnstiles automatically lock, press the intercom button and await instruction. You may need to return to the inspection table and open your bags a second time. Once through the turnstiles, restrooms are available in the corridor before you reach the inside of the Terminal building.

C) Baggage Scan, Walk-through Personnel Scan

You will enter the Terminal building and find a long row of gates and turnstiles. You will proceed to the last gate and wait for the Erez employees to unlock the turnstile so that you can enter the baggage scan point. Waiting times at this baggage scan point can be long—upwards of 1 hour—depending on how many people are ahead of you.

You will need to remove all of your electronic equipment, including chargers and batteries, from your baggage and place it in a separate bin. Also remove any large books or stacks of documents and place them apart from your luggage. You will also need to remove your belt and empty all items from your pockets before entering the personnel scanner. After your baggage has been loaded onto the conveyor belt, you will not see it again until you exit the personnel scanner and emerge into the internal baggage search station.

NB: You may choose to carry your passport and your paper money in your hand while crossing through the walk-through personnel scanner.

When the light on the door leading out of the baggage scan area to the personnel scanner turns from red to green, you will enter the waiting area for the walk-through personnel scanner. You will proceed individually into the scanner, place your feet on the yellow marks on the floor, and raise your hands above your head. The Terminal employees may communicate instructions to you or ask questions over intercom at this point.

After the scanner rotates around your body, you will proceed out of the scanner into a small holding area and wait for a green light to indicate which booth you should proceed into. Once inside a booth, you will wait for another green light. When you have received the green light, you will proceed around the conveyor to the final turnstile on the far end of the room and pass through the turnstile to the baggage inspection point.

You may see your electronic equipment or other baggage on the conveyor after exiting the personnel scanner. If so, collect your equipment before proceeding to the final turnstile and the final baggage inspection point.

NB: After leaving the personnel scanner, you may be directed to enter a room behind a door to the right of the scanner for additional screening. Instructions will be communicated to you via intercom.



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D) Final Baggage Inspection Point

NB: In the unlikely event that all of your baggage is returned to you on the conveyor belt before the turnstile, you may collect it and proceed directly to passport control.

After exiting through the turnstile, a private security officer will place any baggage not yet returned to you in the inspection area. You will be required to identify your baggage and wait while a private security guard searches it exhaustively. You may be asked to explain the nature and purpose of certain items in your baggage. The private security officers reserve the right to confiscate anything resembling a weapon, to include small knives. Food items have also been confiscated, though not consistently.

NB: You can expect the private security officers to open any sealed envelopes and containers.

The final baggage inspection process will take between 5 minutes and 1 hour depending on how many people are ahead of you and how much baggage they have. You may also face delays if the private security officers responsible for searching baggage fail to appear in a timely manner. After the private security guard has finished inspecting your baggage, you will proceed to Passport Control.

E) Passport Control

There are normally two separate lines at Passport Control for people exiting Gaza, one for Palestinian ID holders and one for international passport holders. You will queue in the appropriate line and present your passport to the Border and Customs Official when called into the booth. You may be required to show proof of your employment or contractual relationship with the organization that arranged your Gaza permit. You may also be required to describe the nature of your work inside Gaza, your travel plans within Israel, and other personal information.

Occasionally, the Border and Customs Officers at Passport Control instruct personnel to return temporarily to the waiting area before Passport Control while certain "security issues" are resolved.

NB: In the event that you are returned to the waiting area for more than 30 minutes, call the liaison within your organization responsible for CLA coordination and request them to call the CLA Liaison Officer. You may also seek the assistance of the UN Access Support Team.

When you have been approved to exit Gaza and enter Israel, the Border and Customs Officer will stamp your passport with an Erez entry stamp and you are free to go meet your transportation or pick up your car in the parking lot. If you have large suitcases that will not fit through the turnstiles adjacent to the parking lot, the private security officer at the initial security check will open the gate for you upon request; however, you will *not* be allowed to take a luggage cart beyond the security fence.

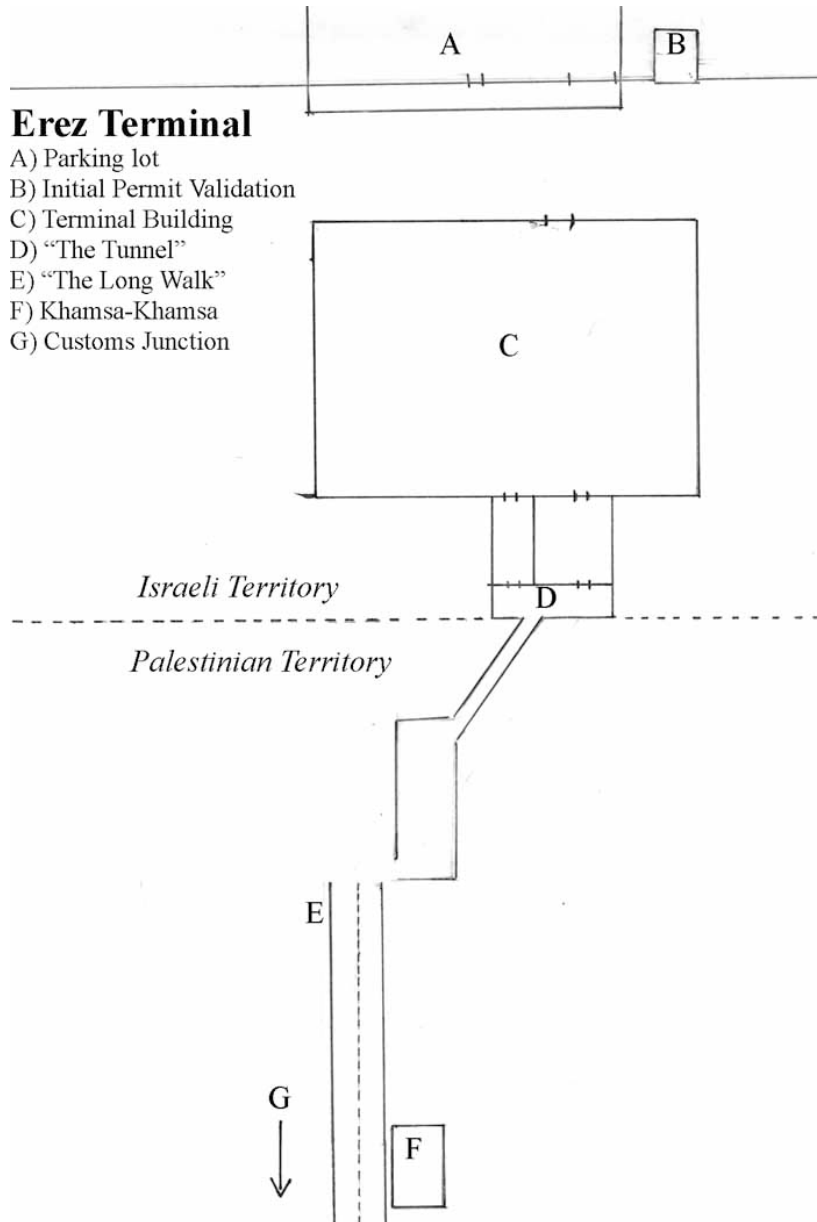


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IV. Diagram





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V. Important Contacts

Israeli Civil Liaison Authority (CLA)

- Call CLA for all issues related to the Gaza permit process and for general information regarding the Erez Terminal. Call the appropriate number below depending on whether you are seeking a permit for an international, a West Bank or Jerusalem ID holder, or a Gaza ID holder.
 - **Internationals**, Tel: +972 (0)8 622 7411, +972 (0)8 622 7439
 - **W. Bank & Jerusalem ID**, Tel: +972 (0)50 623 5746
 - **Gaza ID**, Tel: +972 (0)50 624 6509
- Call **CLA Gaza Liaison Officer LT Amiram Shukrun** in the event that no Palestinian personnel are available at Khamsa-Khamsa during Erez working hours. Your organization's dedicated CLA liaison should also call LT Amiram Shukrun in the event that you face any unexpected delays or problems at Erez.
 - Tel: +972 (0)50 624 6624

United Nations Access Support Team

- Call the UN Access Team in the event that you face long delays or other complications while attempting to cross in and out of Erez. The Access Team records data regarding difficulties faced by INGO, diplomatic, and UN personnel crossing in and out of Erez, and they are also available to help resolve immediate crossing incidents.
 - Tel: +972 (0)54 331 1850, Email: jmoc.ast@unops.org

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

- Call OCHA Gaza Field Office in the event that you need assistance negotiating with the local authority in the Gaza Strip or if you face confiscations or other complications at Customs Junction.
 - Tel: +972 (08)288 7067

Gaza NGO Safety Office (GANSO) Team

- Call GANSO for updates on the status of the Erez Terminal and for all issues pertaining to organizational safety in the Gaza Strip. In the event that you do not already receive GANSO SMS & email reports, call or email GANSO to register for the service. Also call or email GANSO for information about monthly safety briefings and training opportunities. You may also visit the GANSO website (www.gaza-nso.org)
 - Tel: +972 (0)8 282 1481, Email: info@gaza-nso.org