

Israel allows only food, medicine and detergent into the Gaza Strip. Thousands of items, including vital products for everyday activity, are forbidden.

Altogether only 30 to 40 select commercial items are now allowed into the Gaza Strip, compared to 4,000 that had been approved before the closure Israel imposed on Gaza following the abduction of Gilad Shalit, according to merchants and human rights activists.

Everything else is forbidden - including building materials (which are necessary to rehabilitate Gaza's ruins and rebuild its infrastructure), electric appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines, spare machine and car parts, fabrics, threads, needles, light bulbs, candles, matches, books, musical instruments, crayons, clothing, shoes, mattresses, sheets, blankets, cutlery, crockery, cups, glasses and animals. Many of the banned products are imported through the tunnels and can be found in Gaza's markets.

Pasta, which had been forbidden in the past, is now allowed, after U.S. Senator John Kerry expressed his astonishment at the ban during a visit to Gaza in February. But tea, coffee, sausages, semolina, milk products in large packages and most baking products are forbidden. So are industrial commodities for manufacturing food products, chocolate, sesame seeds and nuts. Israel does allow importing fruit, milk products in small packages and frozen food products as well as limited amounts of industrial fuel.

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