

Egypt at the Rafah Border and the Prospects for Gaza

Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
PO Box 9229 Grønland, NO-0134 Oslo, Norway
Visiting Address: Hausmanns gate 7



Centre for the Study of Civil War (CSCW)
Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
PO Box 9229 Grønland, NO-0134 Oslo, Norway
Visiting Address: Hausmanns gate 7

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Photo: Mareah Peoples

F. Mareah Peoples

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Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
Hausmanns gate 7
PO Box 9229 Oslo
NO-0134 Oslo, Norway
Tel. +47 22 54 77 00
www.prio.no

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Abbreviations

AMA	Agreement on Movement and Access
APRC	Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing
ECFA	Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs
EUBAM Rafah	European Union Border Assistance Mission Rafah
GIS	General Intelligence Service
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
NDP	National Democratic Party
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
RCP	Rafah Crossing Point

Glossary

Rafah Crossing Point authorities – The authorities are the persons, institutions, and state agencies that create, secure, and implement policies regarding the Rafah border and crossing point.

Demilitarization – A process which sought the provision of a ceasefire agreement between Egypt and Israel (1974), an armistice arrangement (1975), and a peace treaty (1979). The process entailed limiting, reducing, or prohibiting military activities and presence in the regions adjacent to the Rafah border. Zone A, the westernmost area situated between the Suez Canal and the east coast of the Gulf of Suez, has a presence of up to 22, 000 armed soldiers. Zone B, the central zone, has an Egyptian army presence of up to 4,000 personnel, but with no long-range weapons. Zone C, running parallel to the international border at Rafah, is occupied solely by a police force, not totaling more than 750 men. The fourth area, zone D, is located in the Gaza Strip and runs adjacent to the Rafah border with a demarcated width of three kilometers. This zone is subject to frequent bombardment by Israel as it is the principal location of tunnels connecting Egypt with Gaza.

Micro-level actors – These are civilian groups with relatives and/or social networks in Gaza, or the groups with personal concerns about the border management.

Palestinian authorities – Pertains to Palestinian political factions and includes the PA, PLO, and the political parties Fattah and Hamas.

Palestinian Authority (PA) – Pertains exclusively to the governing body in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, foreseen by the Oslo Accords (1993). A main outcome of the Accords was the establishment of Palestinian self-governance in the West Bank which allowed the Palestinians to conduct their own internal affairs under the auspices of the PA.

Rafah border – Denotes the legal boundary of Egyptian sovereignty in the northeast. It evolved in three phases. (1) In 1906 Britain determined the establishment of a ‘natural boundary’ stretching from Rafah to the Gulf of Aqaba. (2) Based on the military positions held by both Egypt and Israel after the 1948 Middle East war, the 1906 border was swerved in

order to leave the Gaza Strip under Egyptian rule. (3) After the signing of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in 1979, the Rafah border was defined as an '*inviolable*,' international boundary between Egypt, the OPT, and Israel. The border has three crossing points, Taba, Nitzana, and Rafah.

The Rafah Crossing Point – A civilian crossing point between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. With the conclusion of a bilateral peace process between Israel and Egypt in 1982, the Rafah Crossing Point was made an international passage subject to legal agreements for operation.

Rafah borderland – The term indicates an extension of the physical line demarcating Egypt from the Gaza Strip to encompass an area from Sheikh-Zowayed, Egypt (8 Kilometers south of Rafah) to Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip (7 kilometers north east of Rafah). The Rafah borderland is a military strategic site where both formal and informal movement of people, goods, and supplies transpire on a day-to-day basis between Egypt and Gaza.

Rafah Terminal - A passenger-only station where custom guards and other types of border officials carry out specific procedures for efficient information control and cross-border movement.

Stakeholders – The institutions, organizations, groups and/or persons that affect, are affected by, or are otherwise concerned with the way Egypt manages its side of the Rafah Crossing Point.

Stakeholder Elites – Groups with economic and/or political influence that provides moral and/ or legal support or opposition to the authorities' policies. Their power to influence border policy is limited, yet their rhetoric is explicit about how the border should be manage

Executive Summary

This project is motivated by the need to critically understand the prospective role of Egypt in providing Gaza with a functioning border. As the only sovereign country bordering Gaza aside from Israel, it is vital to understand the perspectives of key Egyptian stakeholders and how their different concerns and interests inform Egypt's management of the Rafah border. The report analyzes the views of Egyptian policy makers, political parties, and NGOs on the management of the Rafah border, investigates the multi-layered interests in the tunnel economy, the construction of the underground steel barrier along the Egypt-Gaza border, and identify key factors that impact on Egypt's operation of the Rafah border crossing. The report presents findings from a succession of 55 interviews conducted between January and April 2011. The interviews were carried out in the framework of understanding stakeholder agendas, interests, and concerns regarding the Rafah border and crossing, secondly, to determine the factors that impact on the regular operation of the Rafah Crossing Point (RCP), and thirdly, to anticipate strategies for securing effective border management at Rafah according to international standards.

The Context and the Main Issues

A number of issues frame the nature of Egypt's overarching position towards the permanent opening of the RCP. These issues include, the desolation of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) and the absence of a ratified agreement on the operation of the RCP; Egypt's official stance towards Hamas, that the movements' governance of the Gaza strip was unlawfully grounded, Egypt's diplomatic alliance with the Palestinian Authority (PA) in pursuing a peaceful and negotiated resolution to the occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and the blockade on Gaza; and Egypt's political stance in maintaining the vision of a two-state solution. These dimensions, though overlap, sheds light on the multilayered structure of Egypt's overarching passions, that the RCP is open and operating but on exceptional basis, on the basis of humanitarianism on the Egyptian side of the border crossing and in absence of an agreed arrangement between the Parties on the Palestinian side of border crossing.

Stakeholder Agendas

While existing international arrangements, notably the AMA protocols and the Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing (APRC), as well as the demilitarization arrangement between Egypt and Israel, are understood as working frameworks for the structure of a future collaborative management system at the Rafah border, the Egyptian authorities anticipate further negotiations with external actors on amending these arrangements. Such expectations are linked to the transforming political culture in Egypt and the declining monopoly of the authorities' decision making power. A plurality of voices is likely to determine state policy in this prospective. That the authorities will no longer act autonomously at forming, implementing, and securing state border policies is an impractical conjecture. However, legitimizing their agendas, especially at Rafah, will depend on maintaining a reciprocal relationship with lower level stakeholder groups. The state's comprehensive border policy will therefore result from an (inter)play and synthesis between various stakeholder groups' interests and concerns.

Stakeholder Interests and Concerns

Based on the research findings, the following have been determined as the key policy interests and concerns that will formulate Egypt's prospective comprehensive border policy at Rafah. The first substantive concern is how to enforce security in the borderland. The authorities are seeking to address the issue of security through the following means: (1) encouraging the formation of a cooperative border management apparatus on Gaza's side of the crossing; (2) (re)visiting/negotiating changes to the demilitarization clauses in the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in order to increase military presence in Zone C of the borderland; (3) and improving border control technology at Rafah. The second substantive issue is the tunnel industry. Eliminating transnational crime networks in the borderland is a primary objective in this regard. Collaboration between national, regional, and international actors underpins how the new government (set to take office sometime in 2012) will address this issue. Working closely with the Palestinian authorities as well as strengthening the relations with other regional actors such as Iran is a primary focus here. Keeping the RCP open for passengers and allowing specific transports to Gaza through the RCP, such as food and medical supplies, is perceived as the most effective means by which Egypt can contribute to eliminating the humanitarian dimension of the tunnels. There is also a parallel effort to increase economic productivity and provide greater access to employment in the borderland. How to increase and encourage greater communication between the authorities, national investors, and the local

populations in the borderland regarding development and increased employment opportunities is likely to comprise part of Egypt's future policy approach. Finally, the restricted nature of the opening of the RCP will have to be further developed, evaluated, and defined. Facilitating the regular opening of the RCP and relaxing the procedures for passengers wanting to pass through are of foremost importance here. While a new policy may permit the transport of particular goods, for example construction materials, Rafah will essentially remain a passenger-only terminal. Complete normalization is largely depending on a comprehensive settlement between the Palestinian authorities and Israel and the materialization of a two state-solution. How to move forward in assisting the Palestinian authorities in better operating RCP according to international standers as well as establishing control over Gaza's other corridors, including the six land crossing with Israel, the seaport, and airport is likely to form part of future border policy deliberations in Egypt. In this respect, Egypt's prospective comprehensive border policy at Rafah is likely to consider the significant role of the Rafah border as the only border in the OPT under exclusive Palestinians control.

Assessment of the Main Parties' Interests

There are three main issues decisive for border management at Rafah. The first issue is between the Palestinian and Egypt authorities regarding their roles in a prospective border agreement. There are currents on the Palestinian front that anticipate forming a bilateral agreement. Although Egyptian authorities do not strongly oppose this notion, they suggest that the system of blockade on Gaza and the occupation of the Palestinian Territories need thorough consideration, and that the current internal political transformations taking place in Egypt must first be resolved. The second issue is between Egypt and the EU regarding the nature of a cooperative management system. While the EU, particularly the EU BAM Rafah, is open to developing a formal relationship on the ground with Egyptian agencies involved in border management, Egyptian authorities do not want to instate a formal liaison with a third party on their side of the border. The third issue is between Egypt and Israel regarding borderland security. Israeli authorities indicate strong opposition to increasing military presences in the Sinai Peninsula. However, there are strong voices on the Egyptian front seeking to amend the demilitarization protocols in the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. Given the realties on the ground, that Rafah is a sight where these various transnational concerns are played out and acted upon, the continued opening of the RCP is contingent on establishing formal understanding and agreements with the main stakeholders.

1. Egypt at the Rafah Border and the Prospects for Gaza

1.1 Introduction

This report is motivated by the need to critically understand Egypt's role in providing Gaza with a functioning border. The aim is to provide a comprehensive outline of the perspectives of the key stakeholders who define, influence, or who are otherwise concerned with the way Egypt operates its side of the Rafah Crossing Point (RCP). In lieu of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, Egypt is an increasingly central actor in stabilizing the socio-political order in Gaza through the regular operation of the RCP.¹ The report discusses the different demands, concerns, interests, and agendas of Egyptian stakeholders who influence or shape the state's operation of the RCP. The principal focus is on the various stakeholders' perceptions of the key issues that define Egypt's administration of the RCP including: the Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA), the tunnel economy, counter-tunneling efforts, and other determining factors. In investigating stakeholders' stands on these issues, I lend attention to the interplay between what Susskind and Cruikshank (1987) identify as the main categories of stakeholders: those groups and organizations asserting political authority or legal pressure and have the strength to block negotiated agreements, as well as groups with moral claims about how the agreement should be practiced.² How Egypt's international agreements, policies, and diplomacy influences cross-border relations between Egypt and the Palestinian authorities forms the background and context for delineating the various layers of cooperation, conflict, and exchanges between these stakeholders.

Since May 2011, when the interim government announced that the RCP is permanently open, there have been some concerns raised among stakeholders about what the strategy of a new Egyptian government will be for managing and administering the operation of the RCP. Questions have been posed concerning what a new mechanism will entail for cross-border relations between Egypt, the Palestinian authorities, and Israel, respectively. Some apprehensive currents exist in the interim government in Egypt about the *'permanent*

¹ Restrictions on movement and access to and from the Gaza Strip dates back to 2006, when Palestinian militants captured an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit (released from captivity in 2011). Consequently, the Israeli Security Cabinet declared Gaza a *'hostile entity'* and organized constrictions on all passages in and out of Gaza. In 2007, Israel terminated access to its six land crossings with Gaza and blocked access to Gaza by air and sea, while Egypt officially closed its side of the RCP, operating it on an exclusively ad hoc basis. Hence a systematic blockade of Gaza was in effect.

² Susskind, Lawrence and Cruikshank, Jefery, 1987. *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual Approaches to Resolving Public Disputes* (New York: Basic Books).

opening’ of the Rafah border crossing in the face of the blockade on all other corridors leading in and out of the Gaza Strip. Reservations include the concern that without strict regulations on the opening of the RCP, Egypt may be perceived as asserting control over Gaza whereby risking a deeper split between the OPT. Apprehensive currents also exist on the Palestinian side that Egypt’s official opening of the RCP may not lead to the formation of a bilateral Egyptian-Palestinian border agreement. Concurrently, Israeli authorities are particularly concerned that Egypt’s opening of the RCP will lead to relaxed regulations at the Rafah terminal and increased smuggling of weapons into the OPT by way of the tunnels underneath the Egypt-Gaza border. The stakeholders’ ideologies, policies, and practices outlined herein will inevitably factor into an impending agreement between the main Parties, foregrounded herein as the nucleus for reaching the Palestinian authorities’ political desire to govern their own borders — including a Palestinian seaport, airport, and other land frontiers. An analysis of the concerns of different Egyptian policy-makers, political parties, NGOs, and civilians on the management of the RCP is therefore significant for outlining some of the key principles to consider in the framework of a prospective collaborative management arrangement regarding the RCP.

1.2 The Research Questions

Egypt, comprised of a range of state and non-state actors, is a significant core player in anticipating strategies for securing the regular operation of the RCP in the face of the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip. The focus of inquiry is on the weakening sovereignty of state actors as the sole authorities in creating, implementing, and securing Egypt’s border policies and the gradual emergence of non-state actors, such as civil society, private businesses, and investors (corporations and financial actors) as main agenda-setters for border policy issues at Rafah. That is not to suggest that non-state actors are replacing the authority of state actors, but that their interest and concerns are gaining ground, moving from the background to the foreground of national political debates. The research questions are thus based on an analysis of the relationship between state and non-state actors and their impact on border policy at Rafah. The following main question and related sub-question is considered: **Who are the Egyptian stakeholders and how do their agendas, interests, and concerns inform Egypt’s operation of the Rafah border crossing? How do Egyptian stakeholder positions differ from the interests and concerns of other main parties at the Rafah border crossing, namely the Palestinian authorities, Israel, and the EU?**

1.3 The Actors

Egypt's operation and administration of the RCP is defined by a set of demands, concerns, and agendas, of a range of national and international stakeholders. The national Egyptian stakeholders are the *authorities*; the political and/or economic *elites*; and the *micro-level* actors. The primary stakeholders include the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the Office of the Presidency, National Security, General Intelligence Service (GIS), and the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Together these groups coordinate, create, implement, and secure Egypt's principle guidelines for operating the RCP. The elites are the secondary stakeholder category and include the leading political parties, the northern Sinai governor's office, and business owners in the Rafah borderland. These groups infer legal, ideational, or moral claims to support, oppose, or sway policies. The third group of stakeholders is the micro-level actors such as the Bedouin population in the borderland who have relatives on both sides of the border, tunnel owners, NGOs, syndicates, and other groups with concerns about the way the RCP is operated. Micro-level actors' influence on policy is peripheral, yet they are involved in formal and informal activities connected to the RCP and they participate in the construction and formation of public opinion about the authorities' policies. The fourth category of stakeholders is *external* and comprises the Palestinian authorities (the PA, the PLO, Hamas, and Fatah), the government of Israel, the EU (EU BAM Rafah), and Gazian and Israeli civilians.

1.4 Table of Stakeholders Included in the Study³

Authorities			Political/Economic Elites			Micro-Level Actors		
The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces	President's office	General Intelligence Service	Northern Sinai Governor's Office	Leading Political Parties	Business elitist	Tunnel Owners	Bedouin Families	Gaza civilians
National Security	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Hamas	EUBAM Rafah	Israel Gov.		Workers Unions	NGOs	Egyptian civilians
PA	PLO					Israeli Civilian		

1.5 Categorization of the Interview Subjects

2	President Office	2	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
1	National Security	1	General intelligence
3	Egyptian MFA	4	Leading Political Parties in Egypt
1	Business owners in northern Sinai	2	Tunnel owners in Rafah-Egypt
2	Egyptian workers unions	2	NGOs
5	Egyptian civilians in northern Sinai	10	Egyptian civilians in Cairo/Alexandria
2	Bedouin families in northern Sinai	3	Hamas affiliates in Gaza
2	PLO	2	Tunnel owners in Rafah-Gaza
2	Civilians in Gaza	7	Gaza passengers at the Rafah terminal
1	EUBAM Rafah	1	Israeli civilian

1.6 Total interviewed by Category

Egyptian authorities	9
Political/economic elites	5
Micro-level actors in Egypt	23
Palestinian authorities	5
Micro-level actors in Gaza	11
EU	1
Israel	1
Total interviewed	55

³ The stakeholders are categorized as primary (the authorities), secondary (the elites), and tertiary (the micro-level actors). The various groups comprising these categories are not listed or ranked in any order of importance.

2. The Context and the Main Issues

2.1 Introduction

Beginning in November 2005, Egypt's operation of the RCP followed the Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing (APRC) outlined as part of the AMA. Egypt, while not party to the AMA, agreed to its protocols which states that the PA and Egypt are responsible for managing and securing the Rafah terminal on their respective sides of the Rafah border. According to the APRC, Israel, although not physically present at the Rafah terminal, is granted the opportunity to monitor the day-to-day activities through state of the art fiber optic cables transmitting real time video feed through 36 cameras from the Rafah terminal to the Karm Abu Salem terminal.⁴ The APRC also determined that a third party is present as a monitoring agency at the Rafah terminal and the European Border Assistance Mission Rafah (EU BAM Rafah) assumed this role under the auspices of the EU.⁵ This mechanism for operating the RCP was in full effect from 2005 to 2007, during which time the Rafah terminal was open for 24 hours-a-day and more than 400,000 individuals passed the RCP.⁶

In 2007, when Hamas forcefully took over the Gaza Strip and with it the administration of the Rafah border crossing, the party replaced the PA-appointed staff at the Rafah terminal with Hamas affiliates, and appointed a new director for the Rafah Crossing. While Hamas proceeded to operate its side of the RCP, the Egyptian government under the rule of Hosni Mubarak and former intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman regarded Hamas' takeover as complicating the legal status of the RCP and consequently issued the official closure of the Egyptian side of the crossing point. Notwithstanding, Egyptian authorities devised a distinct strategy for continued operation of the RCP despite its official closure. Between 2007 and 2010, Egypt opened the RCP on an *ad hoc* basis, a measure which meant that the formal arrangement outlined in the APRC was considered although supplemented by an informal understanding among Egyptian stakeholders (top-down) to open the RCP according to the humanitarian needs and demands of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. This *ad hoc* interpretation allowed for back-and-forth movement between Egypt and Gaza which further worked to relatively stabilize Gaza in the face of the blockade.

⁴ Phone interview: 31 January 2011; Head of Mission, Colonel Alain Faugeras; EUBAM Rafah.

⁵ *Ibid.* EU BAM Rafah's main mandate is to help build confidence between the main parties by ensuring the freedom of movement for Palestinians, balanced with taking the security concerns of the state of Israel into consideration.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Following Israel's interception of international activists attempting to break the naval blockade on the Gaza Strip on May 31, 2010, Egypt came under pressure to officially open the RCP on a regular basis. Some members of the Egyptian authorities, internal pressure groups, political parties, syndicates, NGOs, and the civilian population at large rallied to force former President Hosni Mubarak to permanently open the RCP. In June 2010, Hosni Mubarak issued a decree stating two important statements: that the RCP would operate for the movement of people and aid supplies, and that this would be Egypt's policy '*indefinitely.*' After the collapse of Egypt's 'single party' regime in February 2011, the interim government proposed that Egypt ought to '*permanently*' open the RCP, a move which indicated that Egyptian stakeholders were taking measures to further ease the restrictions on the Rafah border crossing. However, the authorities reflected on a number of concerns that infringed on Egypt's capacity to '*open up to Gaza.*' The following section provides an overview of the core Egyptian apprehensions regarding the opening of the Rafah border crossing. The section is based on excerpts from interviews intended to provide a deeper contextualization of the four main issues presented by Egyptian authorities regarding the permanent opening of the RCP.

2.2 The Main Issues: Egypt's Official Policy and International Commitments

The first issue among Egyptian stakeholders regarding the opening of the RCP is based on the dissolution of a legal agreement. When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, the PA, who was responsible for administering Gaza's side of the Rafah terminal, retreated to Ramallah and was replaced by Hamas-appointed personnel. The EU BAM Rafah, as third party monitors, went on reserve in Ashkelon, Israel, where the mission is currently on standby.⁷ Consequently, the legal protocols for operating the RCP, the AMA and APRC arrangement, dissolved. To date, there is an absence of an established arrangement between stakeholders for administering the crossing point. On the part of Egypt there is a commitment to open its side of the RCP based on humanitarian principles, while on the part of the Palestinian authorities, the 2005 AMA implies the need for an agreed agreement between the international primary stakeholders for operating the RCP. As the following citation by Egypt's Ambassador to Israel from 1986 to 2001, Mohamed Bassiouni indicates, Egyptian authorities are concerned about legally (or officially) opening the RCP in the absence of formal arrangements between

⁷ Phone interview: 31 January 2011. Head of Mission EU BAM Rafah, Colonel Alain Faugeras emphasize the mission continues to uphold an operational capacity and is ready to be redeployed at the earliest notice should political circumstance allow.

the international stakeholders regarding the elements of security, management, and monitoring.⁸

*[At the outset of the negotiations which resulted in the AMA protocols] Sharon said: 'I do not want to leave this area [the Rafah border] because if I do, Hamas will smuggle arms.' Nevertheless, the parties met and agreed upon a specific mechanism for managing the crossing which included three elements. The first and most important element was the security of the Rafah terminal. It was agreed that security should be in the hands of the Presidential guards of Abu Mazin himself. This was to ensure there were no arms smuggling operations. The second element was the management of the crossing point. It was agreed that the PA was to manage the terminal on its side of the border. Third, it was also agreed that there was a need for the element of monitoring, that there should be 45 people monitoring this area. When Hamas occupied Gaza by force, all three elements were absent. So of course we [Egypt] closed our side of the terminal, because there was no mechanism for control.'*⁹

The second problem is related to the Egyptian authorities' position towards the Hamas government. The authorities perceive Hamas' conquest of the Gaza Strip by force as unlawful.¹⁰ While Egyptian authorities emphasize their support for the Palestinian resistance movement and further stress opposition toward the Israeli system of blockade and the occupation of the OPT, they simultaneously stress Egypt's historical position; that such resistance should necessarily be united and peaceful. In this sense, the Egyptian authorities deem Hamas' rule of Gaza as aiding what is referred to as the fractionalization of the Palestinian resistance movement, where Gaza is increasingly detached and removed from the West Bank and the Palestinian leadership is fragmented. As the following statement by the

⁸ Personal interview: 28 March 2011. Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA), Maadi, Cairo. When the personal interview was conducted, Ambassador Bassiouni was well and showed no signs of illness, although he has since passed away in September, 2011. Prior to the interview, the research team received a briefing from Bassiouni's secretary stating that Bassiouni was known and recognized for his promptness. For further information on Bassiouni's professional career, see Kessler, Oren; 'Egypt's longest-serving envoy to Israel dies.' *Jpost*. 9. 18. 2011.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The internal fighting in the Gaza Strip between Hamas and Fattah's armed wings in 2007 claimed the lives of 161 Palestinians in a single week. The figure includes 41 civilians, 7 children and 11 women. Another 700 Palestinians were wounded. See 'Black Pages in the Absence of Justice: Report on Bloody Fighting in the Gaza Strip from 7 to 14 June 2007,' Palestinian Center for Human Rights, 9 Oct. 2007 at http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/Reports/English/pdf_spec/Gaza%20Conflict%20-%20Eng%209%20october..pdf

Head of Palestine Department at the Egyptian MFA, Bahaa Dessouki, alludes, Egyptian authorities formally consider Hamas' political platform as illegal.¹¹

*When Hamas took over the Gaza strip by force all of the parties left on the other side. Hamas took over the crossing point, so it was opened. However, we decided to close the crossing point from our side because there was no legitimate power on the other side. We exercised our sovereign right to do so. But we had to consider the humanitarian case. So we decided to deal with this illegitimate power, but only by considering the humanitarian situation.*¹²

The third obstacle regarding the permanent opening of the RCP is linked to Egypt-PA diplomatic relations. Egypt and the PA both express reservations regarding some regional disputes between two provincial camps, each having their own political platform towards the Israeli occupation. On the one hand Hamas is allied with Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria in the perspective of supporting armed resistance, while on the other hand Egypt and the PA is allied with Saudi Arabia and Jordan in supporting peaceful means for working towards the materialization of the vision of a two-state solution. As implied in the following reference by former Egyptian Ambassador to Jordan and former Assistant Foreign Minister, Ihab Wahba, on the basis of Hamas' support for armed resistance, both Egypt and the PA object/distrust Hamas' exclusive handling of the RCP.¹³

Egypt was not at all committed or party to this agreement [AMA]. So we could very well let Hamas control their side of the border. Since the PA withdrew, why did we not let Hamas control their side of the border? The PA objected. They said, in fact if you deal with Hamas without us being there, you are recognizing the unlawful situation that Hamas created in the Gaza Strip. Also, from our side we did not want to recognize Hamas' takeover, but we still wanted Palestinians to be able to go and come. So that is why we had this problem: one day we close the crossing point, the next day we open it to let people with certain missions come through. But officially the border was not open, because there was no mechanism, and the presence of a

¹¹ Personal interview: 19 April 2011. MFA headquarters, Cairo, Egypt.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Personal interview: 22 March 2011. ECFA, Cairo.

*mechanism would suggest that we recognized Hamas' takeover and forgot about the PA.*¹⁴

The fourth obstacle is related to the maintenance of the vision of a two-state solution which includes a united West Bank and Gaza Strip. Egypt does not want to normalize relations with the Palestinian authorities in absence of a comprehensive peace settlement; as such a move would imply restating Egyptian administrative authority over the Gaza Strip. On the part of Egypt, it does not want to assume full responsibility over an additional 1.5 million people and fairly rejects inheriting the social, political, and economic problems in Gaza. Egypt also supports the PA's interest in incorporating Gaza into a future Palestinian state. The following citation by Hassan Essa, the former Council General in Eilat and Director of the Israel Department in the Egyptian MFA, defines the Egyptian apprehension that Israel is covertly attempting to sway the Egyptian-Palestinian vision of a two-state solution by suggesting that Egypt ought to inherit the Gaza Strip on moral grounds or release part of the Sinai for the construction of a Palestinian State on pragmatic grounds.¹⁵ The citation also expands on the importance of the Gaza Strip in the PA-Egyptian vision of a two-state solution.

You have no idea about the number of times I met Israelis at conferences and they would say, ya akhi (Oh brother), Gaza is yours, take it, go head, please take it. It's like offering you a piece of cake. And I would reply, ya akhi, why are you offering me Gaza as if it is yours? We would never do this for Egyptian reasons and for Palestinian reasons. We separate Gaza, and we separate the Palestinians from God's will of them having a state. We would be preventing them from having their heart, their core. There are 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza. The Israelis want to push them on our lap. Of course, not to mention what other ulterior motives they have. They believe that part of the Sinai must be a set aside for the Palestinians, and that will solve all of the Palestinian problems. There were even studies done by Israeli professors to suggest that we can swap territories. Let the Egyptians give a piece of territory in the Sinai to their Palestinian brothers, and we will give them an equal part in the Negev, and so Egypt will have direct access to Jordan and Saudi Arabia; and why not use this as a tax free area. So we replied by saying, we will not swap territories! Sinai is Egyptian land, was since the Pharos, still is, and will remain Egyptian. So this is the Israeli

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Personal interview: 21 March 2011. The interview took place at his home in Cairo, Egypt.

*ulterior motive. They want the Palestinians to live in the Sinai, and they want the Egyptians to give them a part of the Sinai.*¹⁶

These four concerns, although overlapping, shed light on the notion that there are different dimensions constructing Egypt's overarching position. These dimensions include the absence of a ratified agreement on the operation of the RCP, Egypt's official stance towards Hamas, that the movement's governance of the Gaza strip was unlawfully grounded, that Egypt is allied with the PA in pursuing a peaceful and negotiated resolution to the occupation of the OPT and blockade on Gaza, and that the structure of Egypt's opening of the RCP directly effects the maintenance of the vision of a two-state solution.

2.3 The Overarching Egyptian Position

These above mentioned apprehensions have determined and shaped an overarching Egyptian position, that the RCP is open on exceptional basis — in absence of legal agreements and understandings between international stakeholders on the one hand, and on the basis of Egyptian stakeholders' adherence to humanitarian principles on the other hand. Dessouki, the Head of the Palestine Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt, Barakat Al-Farrah, both mentioned some additional shortcomings. Dessouki stressed that: *'The Rafah crossing point is open for humanitarian causes, which is the only basis we are opening the Rafah crossing point.'*¹⁷ While Ambassador Barakat Al-Farrah stated: *'If Palestinians or civilians with international passports want to go to the Gaza Strip there are no restrictions. But daily, only 300 people can pass from Gaza to Egypt. So of course the crossing point is open, but there are some constraints.'*¹⁸ In this sense, the term *'open'* deserves further analysis as it de-emphasizes these restraints. For one, the RCP is not open to Egyptian citizens. The crossing point operates almost exclusively for Palestinians and

¹⁶ Ibid. The basic premise for this plan is that since Egypt took part in the 1948 war, which brought about the issue of Palestinian refugees, and since Egypt governed the Gaza Strip for 19 years, it should take on part of the responsibility for the Palestinian problem by relinquishing part of the Sinai. See for example Yehoshua Ben-Arish, 'Trilateral land Exchange between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt: a Solution for Promoting Peace between Israel and the PA,' Also see the Jerusalem based research institute, The Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace conducted a project entitled, 'Trilateral Land Exchange between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt: a Solution for Promoting Peace between Israel and the PA.'

¹⁷ Personal interview: 19 April 2011, Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, Egypt. Egyptian authorities define the Israeli naval blockade; the closure of Gaza's other five land crossings, and the severe restrictions on the movement of civilians in Gaza as generating a humanitarian cause to open the RCP.

¹⁸ Personal interview: 28 March 2011 at the Palestinian Embassy in Cairo, Egypt. Since the interview has taken place, the number of Palestinians allowed to leave Gaza daily has increased to 600. It is believed that the number will increase in the coming months to over 1000.

foreign nationals wanting to enter or leave the Gaza Strip.¹⁹ Second, as indicated by Ambassador Al-Farrah, while Egypt is committed to operate the RCP, there are restrictions on the amount of days, hours, and persons allowed through on a daily basis.²⁰ Third, the RCP is open in the absence of a bilateral agreement between Egypt and the Palestinian authorities.²¹ Considering these limitations, the term ‘*open*’ is restricted in practice. Notwithstanding, a ‘*consultation committee*’ has been formed with the purpose of strategizing Egypt’s specific procedures for efficiently facilitating cross-border movement of a broad range of civilian categories and humanitarian supplies.²² The following citation by the Chairmen of Al-Ahram, Dr. Abdul Monem Said Aly, indicates the restrictiveness of Egypt’s opening of the RCP, and further provides some insight into what a prospective Egyptian government will consider when constructing a comprehensive border policy for Rafah.²³

*There are two kinds of open gate policy. There is an open gate policy where there is a normal relation between the states, which enables free passage for any person carrying proper identification and adhering to the rules of both the countries from which they come and the countries to which they enter. And there is also the type of open gate policy which lets people come and go, but with a closer look, checks, making intelligence, and keeping a watchful eye on what is going on. This is what we have at Rafah because Egyptian security is what matters, and we are very worried about smuggling of arms.*²⁴

¹⁹ A limited number of Egyptians citizens with specific diplomatic or humanitarian missions may enter the Gaza Strip through the RCP. In the case of the Wadi Halfa border crossing between Egypt and Sudan, and the Salloum land port between Egypt and Libya, ordinary Egyptian citizens are free to use these crossing as long as they have legitimate identifications and respect the laws of Egypt as well as the country of entrance.

²⁰ At the conclusion of the fieldwork in April 2011, the RCP was officially open five days a week, up to eight hours a day, and for a maximum of 300 passengers to exit the Gaza Strip daily. Since then, there crossing point was closed in June on both sides’ due to unclear administrative protocols at the Rafah terminal. Several sources inside Egypt have indicated that the RCP is now officially closed on Egypt’s side, however, is open and operating for the movement of passengers on Gaza’s side, while other sources have suggested that Hamas has closed the crossing point several times since Egypt regarded the RCP open.

²¹ Between Egypt and Sudan, and Egypt and Libya there are bilateral agreements to keep the crossing points open permanently, 24 hours daily.

²² The committee is made up of various Egyptian authorities including, the Ministry of Defense, the GIS, the MFA, and the National Security. Two main procedures are being considered by the conciliation committee, to relax visa stipulations for women, children under 16, and persons over 50 years, and to increase the operational time of the Rafah Terminal. The range of civilians allowed through the RCP include students, foreign nationals wanting to enter Gaza, international diplomats, medical patients, persons wanting to travel abroad for work, visa holders, and persons having professional business in Egypt or beyond. Humanitarian supplies include food, medical equipment and supplies, some humanitarian convoys, and some ambulances.

²³ Personal interview: 22 March, 2011; the Al-Aharm headquarters in Cairo, Egypt.

²⁴ Ibid.

In absence of an agreement for operating the RCP, Egypt is yet upholding some international principles and commitments that aim to restrict the illegal movement of people, goods and weapons on the one hand, and to help facilitate movement for the Palestinians under occupation on the other hand, while also taking into account the need to maintain domestic and regional security. Egypt is in this sense a main broker between international stakeholders. Its current guiding principles for managing the opening of the RCP is in part determined by its mediating role, its unique policy to cogitate the political positions, and the on-the-ground needs of the international stakeholders.

2.4 Guiding Principles

Egypt is operating the RCP in the absence of a comprehensive Egyptian policy, which is set to be determined by a new government, expected to take office at some point in 2012. Based on the information gathered from my field interviews, there are still five guiding principles for managing the opening of the RCP, including: (1) though Egypt is not a party to the AMA and has no obligation towards implementing a future international agreement, it encourages the enactment of an international agreement for operating Gaza's side of the RCP. (2) Smuggling is illegal, regardless of what is being trafficked through the tunnels. (3) Egypt is proceeding to find the best ways to counter smuggling. (4) While the transport of some humanitarian supplies is allowed, Rafah is a passenger-only terminal. (5) Egypt will continue to operate the RCP on the basis of these principles in spite of the political context.

2.5 Conclusion

After Mubarak's forced departure from the office of presidency in February, 2011, a large part of Egypt's guiding principles and overarching approach for operating the RCP is essentially based on stakeholders' previous agendas or the status quo. That is to say that the structure of Egypt's overarching approach and guidelines is determined by various levels of stakeholder agendas. The difference is that some stakeholder agendas have become more expressive and explicit, moving from the background to the foreground of national discussions. The clearest example of this trend is the changing status of the MB, which during Mubarak's rule had to express its agendas subversively, but has now become an accepted and normalized party, openly taking part in the general political public and national debates. Thus, the previous concern regarding Hamas, which shaped part of the authorities' reason to officially close the RCP as to control the contact between the MB and Hamas, has seemingly moved to the background of political discussions. Simultaneously, the agenda of the MB to

establish normalized relations between Egypt and the Hamas government is moving to the foreground of internal political discussions on border policy at Rafah. Such transformations are associated with a general shift in the political culture of Egypt. In the previous regime, the lower level stakeholders were suppressed by both physical and non-physical forms of state repression and coercive modes of activities, but are now allowed to participate. In this sense, there is significant structural change taking place in Egypt as the lower level stakeholder agendas may take frontal stage and have a greater impact on Egypt's approach to border policy as well as how the state relates to external actors. The following chapter outlines the various stratum of stakeholder agendas likely to determine the core components of Egyptian policy.

3. Stakeholder Agendas

3.1 Introduction

A combination of regional political tensions, internal social interests, and economic issues formulates the basis of cognizing Egyptian stakeholder agendas. The political tensions include that Gaza is regionally envisioned as part of a future state rather than being an autonomous country and thus Rafah is not approached as a *'normal'* border between two sovereign states. Moreover, this proves problematic for the establishment of a bilateral agreement on border operation between Egypt and the Palestinian authorities. Socially, Egyptian stakeholders are conscientious of the relational ties between Gazians and Egyptians, with numerous families, nuclear and extended, separated by the border and scattered between Sheikh Zayed and Khan Younis.²⁵ Micro-level actors in Egypt attempt to continue maintaining contact with family members by providing Gaza with almost every type of goods banned under the Israeli blockade through initiating aid campaigns and by transporting products via the tunnels underneath the Rafah border. Correspondingly, the authorities express interest in treating the RCP as an exceptional passageway for providing medical care and other philanthropic services. There are also some economic concerns regarding the limited operational capacity of the Rafah terminal. International stakeholders estimate that the PA is losing at least 400 million dollars annually from lost revenues due to the tunnel industry.²⁶ Though the Egyptian authorities regard the tunnel industry as illegal, they emphasize that according to the agreed arrangement under the APRC, commercial trading should transpire between the PA and Israel and not between Egyptian and the Palestinian authorities as the RCP is a passenger crossing. In this case, the lost revenues are not related to the presence of the tunnel industry but to the Israeli system of blockade. The following chapter outlines stakeholder agendas as shaped and materialized on the ground according to a combination of these political, social, and economic factors.

3.2 The Authorities

The security apparatus comprising the GIS, National Security, and the military have overlapping jurisdictions and agendas in the borderland. The GIS is under the direct authority

²⁵ Personal interview: 19 April 2011; Bahaa Dessouki. The former is a town in Egypt, 8 Kilometers south of Rafah, and the latter is a town in Gaza, 7 Kilometers north east of Rafah.

²⁶ The term tunnel industry denotes the expansion of a lucrative and illegal business in the Rafah borderland, involving the Hamas government as the official administrators of tunnel owners in Gaza, the local Bedouin tunnel owners in Egypt who organize the transport of shipments through over 600 tunnels underneath the Rafah border, and the local populations in the borderland who supply the human capital needed to dig and work the tunnels.

of the president's office and provides relevant intelligence on illegal and clandestine activities in the Rafah borderland. The agency is responsible for the '*Gaza files*,' which concerns among other matters, mediating between the Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas. The National Security is under the authority of the SCAF and carries out two main tasks: (1) securing the borderland against national threats, and (2) securing the borderland against terror networks.²⁷ The GIS and National Security are directly involved with managing the dilemma of the tunnels. Emphasis is placed on countering the transfer of criminals, illegal products, contrabands, and most importantly, weapons through the tunnels and not essentially on countering the transfer of communal and humanitarian activities, such as moving food, gas, construction material, or even persons with severe medical concerns through the tunnels.²⁸ In this sense, these agencies primary agenda is to be attentive to what is being transported through the tunnels and provide intelligence on transnational crime networks operating in the borderland rather than being responsible for terminating the tunnel industry.

Terminating the tunnel industry is a primary focus for the military, which is under the authority of the SCAF, and the northern Sinai governor's office (discussed under the elites). The main agenda of the military is to guard Egypt's national borders and combat transnational threats— which include closing down the tunnel industry. For example, the 2009 underground steel barrier project in Rafah is governed by the military and is intended to eliminate all types of underground movement between Egypt and Gaza. However, to date the military has a limited presence in the Rafah borderland due to the demilitarization arrangement in the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty (1978).²⁹ According to the treaty, the military is not permitted the appropriate means of manpower and equipment needed to combat the tunnel industry. The agreed number of 750 lightly armed military personal is not deemed sufficient by the Egyptian security apparatus to effectively combat clandestine activity and close down the tunnels. Seven out of nine informants in the authority category indicated that the demilitarization arrangement, specifically in area C of the borderland will need further consideration or renegotiation between stakeholders in the future. Research findings suggest

²⁷ The National Security is a newly formed agency previously under the auspices of Country Security, which had unlimited power to act in the areas of terrorism, discovering criminal networks, and suppressing political opposition deemed problematic for state security. The National Security's responsibility is restricted to two task: combating terrorism and national/country threats.

²⁸ According to the AMA, only Palestinians with ID issued by the PA are allowed through the RCP. This means that over 100,000 Gazians do not have legal access to the RCP.

²⁹ During outburst of violence in the Rafah borderland such as during the January-February 2011 uprising and during the August 2011 incident where a group of masked gunmen attacked a police station killing several security officials in El-Arish — the military increases its visibility and presence in the area.

that the demilitarization of Zone C will be discussed and negotiated in greater detail in 2012 by the new Egyptian government.

The Egyptian President's Office is the leading Arab actor in facilitating negotiations associated with the establishment of international arrangements involving, Israel, and the Palestinian authorities, respectively, and consequently is the main regional broker in the Middle East peace process. This position demands encouraging the parties to adhere to the APRC, irrespective of the fact that Egypt is not party to the AMA. Moreover, the Presidents' Office has several other parameters of concern when dealing with issues related to Gaza, namely that enforcing Egyptian national security and extending humanitarian support to the Palestinians are central concerns.³⁰ In congruence with the Egyptian Presidents' Office, the Egyptian MFA is also vested in preserving international agreements, diplomacy, and extending acts of humanitarianism towards Gaza. The following citation by an official in the Israel Department at the Egyptian MFA underscores this point:

The approach of the MFA is that whatever happens on the political front should not affect the humanitarian aspect of the Palestinian people. These people have no responsibility for the conditions in Gaza and are innocent people. There should be no excuse for not providing them with their daily life needs, and medical patients should not have to wait. But at the same time, we should continue to work towards a final settlement of the situation, [hence deal with the political issues].³¹

While the MFA is perceived by other authorities as having a marginal agenda regarding border operation and security — with no direct responsibility for managing any of Egypt's crossing points *per se* — it plays a distinctive role in working towards the establishment of normal 'state-like' border relations with both the Palestinian authorities and Israel. In pragmatic terms, this requires negotiating and organizing technical agreements and systems for effectively moving people, goods and supplies across the RCP as well as issuing advisories for specific procedures.

³⁰ Such parameters became evident in 2008, when Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip breached a hole through part of the Rafah barrier, allowing thousands of Palestinians to cross over into the Egyptian governed Sinai towns of Rafah, Shik Zowayed, and El-Arish. While the Egyptian government officially maintained that such an act by Hamas violated Egypt's sovereignty, former President Hosni Mubarak issued a statement firmly instructing Egyptian border and police guards not to shoot at the Palestinians, but '*to let them come in and let them eat and buy food and then return them later as long as they were not carrying weapons.*' See for example 'Gaza Residents Pour into Egypt.' *CBS News*, 1.23.2008.

³¹ Personal interview: 17 April 2011, Egyptian MFA headquarters, Cairo, Egypt. This particular interviewee spoke with me anonymously.

3.3 The Political/Economic Elite

The elites are characterized by three main groups of stakeholders: the leading political parties; the northern Sinai governor's office; and persons with businesses or other economic stakes in the Rafah borderland. At the elite level are groups having real agendas for the RCP as well as groups whose agendas are motivated by political, ideational, and/or economic objectives. Subsequently, there is conflict and little consensus among the elites. The political parties are represented by the former NDP, and two newcomers to the Egyptian political scene, the Reform and Development Party, and the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party. The respective interviewees representing these parties had no specific program addressing the RCP, but rather expressed support, opposition, or sought to modify the authorities' policies vis-à-vis Israel. In this sense, the political parties' main agenda is to place pressure on the authorities based on the parties' political position regarding Israel. The northern Sinai governor's office works closely with the authorities as well as cooperates with the micro-level actors in strategizing the best means for combating the tunnel industry.³² On the one hand, its agenda is to develop the borderland and increase economic opportunities for local inhabitants, and on the other hand, its approach is oriented towards security control. In combating the tunnel industry the northern Sinai governor's office is identified as a crucial liaison between stakeholders, top-down and bottom-up.³³

The agendas of business owners in the borderland are here represented by development tycoon and Chairman of the Sama Group Dr. Hassan Kamel Rateb.³⁴ Rateb is the most notorious business owner in northern Sinai, owning several establishments in the central and northern Sinai region, including the Sinai Cement Factory located about 15 kilometers to the south of El-Arish.³⁵ He is also the owner of the Sinai University in El-Arish. Rateb's investment projects in northern Sinai were part of the governments' 2003 'Northern Sinai Development Project'. The aim of this project was to turn 250,000 hectares of desert into productive farmland in order to attract investors as well as three million people from the Nile

³² Interviews with representatives and or personal in the northern Sinai governor's office was sought out, but not granted. The information provided here is secondary information collected from news reports, other documents, as well as from other interview informants.

³³ The governor's office coordinates between the security apparatus and the local borderland inhabitants, particularly the heads of the Bedouin tribes, Sheiks, and leading clansmen.

³⁴ Interviews were conducted with Rateb, his Deputy Chairman Esam Zahran, and Osmma Rateb, the Vice President of Northern Sinai University. Kamel Rateb is a prominent developer, and investor tycoon figure in the northern Sinai, referred to by micro-level actors in the borderland as '*a Sinai lover.*'

³⁵ The Sinai Cement Factory produces two types of gray cement, about two million tons each, and one type of white cement which has the capacity for producing one million tons, considered to be one of the world's largest production lines of white cement.

valley to resettle in the region. While business elites may have large economic stakes in the Rafah borderland with an agenda of increasing economic revenues through encouraging and supporting development in the borderland, they are relatively indifferent towards the state's administration practices at the RCP.

3.4 The Micro-Level Actors

At the micro-level are four identified groups of stakeholders: tunnel owners with large economic stakes, the Bedouin inhabitants of the borderland who seek to have greater access to the RCP, workers' unions and other syndicates with humanitarian and legal concerns regarding the border, and other Egyptian civilians with emotional investments in Israeli-Palestinian issue. Although micro-level actors are understood to have marginal or no influence over the states' operation and administration of the RCP, they effectively challenge the blockade on the Gaza Strip and Egypt's policies towards the external actors. They draw support to their particular dispositions through mobilizing, nationally, regionally, and internationally. The Egyptian MFA and the Office of Presidency—the leading authorities with humanitarian agendas at the Rafah border—are hence pressured and supported by micro-level stakeholders' in acting at the Rafah border according to humanitarian principles rather than mere political codes. In this regard, it is significant to draw attention to their main agendas.

Emotional solidarity and the historical bond between Egyptians and Palestinians form the basis for micro-level actors' agenda at the Rafah border. Micro-level actors have two main agendas: challenging the blockade on the Gaza Strip and organizing on-the-ground campaigns as a means for extending humanitarian support to the Palestinians. For example, in February, 2009, a local NGO, located on the outskirts of the Rafah borderland, *The Rabaa Youth Association for the Environment and Tradition Protection*, initiated an aid campaign for Gaza. This campaign, entitled '*The Social Support Organization in Northern Sinai*', was in part sponsored by the local NDP chapter.³⁶ Over a span of 15 days, the NGO recruited over 500 local volunteers and raised over two million Egyptian pounds worth of funds, food, and other aid supplies to transport through the RCP — an amount which far exceeded what the NGO

³⁶ The NGO is located in the town of Rabba, about 150 kilometers south of Rafah, on the El-Arish road, the main road linking a stream of Bedouin communities in the northern Sinai Peninsula close to one another and to the main administrative center of El-Arish. Rabba is inhabited by approximately 15,000 members of the El-Byadeya tribe. *The Rabaa Youth Association*, comprising 11 members, nine men and two women, is involved in philanthropic activities. The members collect donations from the local population in order to provide poor families from eight borderland villages (Rabaa, Iqtiyah, Jibarah, Um Iqbah, Iligtah, Ilfath Ilkramh, Iljnayen, and Qaltiyah) with blankets during winter, school uniforms, and cooking supplies, such as oil, surgery, and gas.

raises annually for the locally disadvantaged Bedouin families. Nassir, a founding member of the NGO explained that: *'our relatives in Gaza call us and they say we do not have food and shelter, so they are starving, and it is not humane to allow them to starve.'*³⁷ The conviction that the *'Palestinians are starving'* was a reoccurring expression by micro-level actors. Notwithstanding the larger political issues, the agenda of micro-level actors is primarily centered on the concerns raised in the Kairos Palestine Documents (2009). These concerns are related to the Israeli occupation and its association to food shortages, destruction of property, increased poverty levels, and high rates of unemployment in the OPT.³⁸

3.5 Conclusion

While existing international arrangements, notably the AMA protocols and the demilitarization arrangement between Egypt and Israel, are understood as working frameworks for the structure of a future collaborative management system at the Rafah border, the Egyptian authorities anticipate further negotiations with external actors on amending these arrangements. Such expectations are linked to the transforming political culture in Egypt and the declining monopoly of the authorities' decision making power. A plurality of voices is likely to determine state policy in this prospective. That is to say that Egypt's prospective comprehensive border policy at Rafah is expected to be determined by a combination of these higher and lower level agendas. That the authorities will no longer act autonomously at forming, implementing, and securing state border policies is an impractical conjecture. However, legitimizing their guiding principles and approaches to border policy, especially at Rafah, will depend on maintaining a reciprocal relationship with the lower level stakeholders. What can therefore be said is that the state's comprehensive border policy will result from an (inter)play and synthesis between higher and lower level interests and concerns.

The following chapter defines the main interests and concerns organizing the authorities' legal positions; the party systems' political movements; and non-state actors' humanitarian and socioeconomic perceptions. The findings presented are based on interviews conducted with 37 Egyptians (67% of the total interviewed) categorized herein as expressing the

³⁷ Personal interview: April 15 2011; NGO headquarters; Rabaa, Egypt. Nassir is a local bank manager and former tourist guide in southern Sinai town of Dahab.

³⁸ See 'A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering,' World Council of Churches. <http://www.oikoumene.org/gr/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/kairos-palestine-document.html>

concerns and interests of the three main groups of internal stakeholders.

4. Stakeholder Interest and Concerns

4.1 Introduction

Between 1982 (when the Rafah border was made *'inviolable'*) and 2005 (when Israel dismantled its settlement blocks in the Gaza Strip) movement between Gaza and Egypt were based on a cumbersome system of coordination between Egypt, Israel as the occupying power, and the Palestinians as the inhabitants of this region.³⁹ Egyptian authorities notified Israeli authorities about prospective passengers wanting to cross the RCP, and an Israeli soldier stationed on Gaza's side of the RCP had ultimate power of decision as to whether a particular passenger was to be granted permission to cross.⁴⁰ Cross-border movement was in this sense controlled by the Israeli government, while other stakeholders had limited authority and power of assessment. While such an arrangement allowed for relative movement between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, it lacked formal protocols of coordination between stakeholders. An agreement between the stakeholders was first put in place in 2005, with the signing of the AMA.

The AMA, called *Itifaq ala Itifah al Maabir* in Arabic, Agreement on the Opening of the Crossings, was not merely about the Rafah border and crossing point but was about the larger issue of defining safe passages between Gaza and the West Bank.⁴¹ The agreement concerned the eight secure channels between the OPTs, each having specific functions. According to the agreement, the Rafah Crossing was to be opened for civilians with Palestinian ID cards, for other passengers by exception in agreed categories, and for the export of goods to Egypt. However, imports from Egypt would have to go via Israeli channels. There are four crossing points between Gaza and Israel intended for cargo shipments. Located in the north-eastern end of Gaza is the Qarni Crossing Point, which is designated as a commercial trading post for import and export of goods. The Nahal Oz Crossing in the northeast is for the transport of all types of fuel into Gaza. In the southeast is the Sufa Crossing for importing construction materials. Located on the Rafah border, a few kilometers to the east of the RCP, is the Karem Abu Salim Crossing, a three way crossing between Egypt, Gaza, and Israel, and is for shipping cargo and international humanitarian supplies.⁴² The Erez Crossing in the far north of Gaza is an additional civilian terminal for Arab residents under the jurisdiction of the

³⁹ Personal interview: 22 March 2011, Ambassador Ihab Wahba, former Egyptian Ambassador to Jordan and former assistant foreign minister; ECFA, Maadi, Cairo.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Personal interview: 28 March 2011, Cairo, Egypt with Ambassador Bassiouni.

⁴² Ibid.

Palestinian Authority and for international aid officials. Centrally located in the east is the Kissufim Crossing, previously used by Jewish settlers, but more recently used by Israel during military incursions in Gaza.⁴³ The agreement also spoke of opening Gaza's seaport and airport as two additional channels. When Israel instituted its systematic blockade in 2007, the construction of an airport and seaport were put on hold and the six crossings with Israel were closed, while national, regional, and international pressures were put on Egypt to operate the RCP beyond the stipulations of the AMA (for example to open the RCP for imports). Egyptian authorities maintained that this was in breach of the agreed arrangement, but felt morally compelled to relieve the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The deadlock, marked by Egypt's underscoring of Rafah as a passenger-only crossing combined with Israel's blockade on Gaza's other crossing points resulted in the growth of the tunnel industry. While some stakeholders insisted that the tunnels were used principally for illegal weapons and contraband transfer between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, other stakeholders argued that the tunnels were an important passage for treating the socioeconomic stresses in Gaza due to the blockade. Egyptian stakeholders acquired an on-the-ground paradoxical position on the tunnel industry. Whereas the negative impact of the tunnels on Egyptian as well as Palestinian society was diligently underlined by some, others were simultaneously of the opinion that the system of blockade encouraged a degree of tolerance towards the tunnels.⁴⁴ Egyptian stakeholders were in other words conscious of the inconsistent implications of the tunnel industry, where criminals seeking to transfer illegal products and ordinary civilians seeking to transfer daily necessities together exploited the tunnels. Notwithstanding this paradox, Egyptian authorities declared the tunnel industry illegal and instituted five steps to derail its growth: declaring the region between El-Arish and Rafah an off-limit military zone, several roadblocks were erected on the Sinai road, vehicles going in and out of the area were vehemently searched, Egyptian intelligence initiated direct communication with the tunnel owners warning them of severe punishment for illicit trading, and foremost the construction of an underground barrier.⁴⁵ What have been described here are

⁴³ Ibid. 21 Israeli settlements were located in Qatif, Gaza and were withdrawn in the 2005 Israeli disengagement plan.

⁴⁴ The tunnels industry resulted in high inflation in the Gaza Strip, and many young men employed by the industry were killed due to various problems such as the collapsing of tunnels. In Egypt, the tunnel industry resulted into a security risk, as it was difficult for the authorities to control what was being transported through. This led to accusations that Egypt was involved in illegal weapons transfer to non-state actors in the Gaza Strip.

⁴⁵ 'Egypt Acts to Block Hams Arms Smuggling.' 2009. <http://www.prio.no/nisat>.

the main issues for political deliberation regarding Egypt's border policy. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the various Egyptian stakeholders' positions on these issues.

4.2 Implementation of an International Mechanism at the RCP

Since the authorities announced the RCP officially open, a particular concern in the Egyptian government has been the need to secure the Rafah borderland against hostile or violent activities and the need to encourage ending Israel's systematic blockade on Gaza's other crossing points. Egyptian authorities emphasize the cross border infiltration of militant actors from Gaza carrying out violent attacks on Egyptian soil as a primary concern. This creates a need for an international mechanism at the RCP as implied during an interview with Ambassador Essa.⁴⁶

*There was an explosion in Taba that destroyed the hotel, an explosion in Dahab that was disastrous, and an explosion in Sharm el-Sheikh. It was proven beyond doubt that the perpetrators came out of the Gaza Strip [...] so for security purposes, we have to be very careful when dealing across our border with the Gaza Strip.*⁴⁷

The Egyptian authorities identify the need for an international agreement which builds on the principle objective of the AMA: *'to define safe passageways between Gaza and the West Bank.'*⁴⁸ That is to say that the formation of a new agreement on the operation of the RCP will need to incorporate strategies for securing the regular operation of the RCP as well as all other passageways between Gaza and the West Bank. Some external stakeholders, namely Israel, perceive the opening of the RCP as symbolic of the conclusion of the blockade on Gaza, as the following citation by Journalist and Middle East expert, Avi Issacharoff suggests, *'I do not think that opening the border would be such a bad move for Israelis, but the opposite, I*

⁴⁶ Personal interview: 21 March 2011; Cairo, Egypt. Ambassador Hassan Essa is categorized as embodying the perspectives and agendas of the security agencies, as he has taken part in reconciliation negotiations involving Hamas and Fatah and also indicated during the interview that he had contact with the former head of the GIS, Omar Suleiman. The field research team inquired about possibly setting up a personal interview with the former GIS head, and Essa responded that *'Suleiman is away and is not accepting phone calls or visits from anyone!'*

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Personal interview: 28 March 2011; with Ambassador Bassiouni, ECFA. Ambassador Bassiouni is here categorized as embodying the agendas of the Egyptian president's office. Several sources stated that Bassiouni was *'handpicked'* by President Mubarak for his position as Chairman of Arab, Foreign and National Security Affairs in the Shura Council. It is also widely believed among the general public in Egypt that *'the Shura Council is a place for the president's protégées.'*

guess no one could claim that there is a besiege on Gaza.⁴⁹ However, Egyptian authorities recognize the blockade as a continuing system of concern, which Rabab Hady, from the Egyptian Embassy in Oslo, emphasized: *‘Opening the Rafah Crossing does not imply that there is economic activity. The economic activity is still at a standstill in Gaza and this is not because of the closure or opening of the Rafah Crossing; it is because of Israel’s siege on these other passages.’*⁵⁰ That is to suggest that as the main civilian passage point, Egypt’s effective and continued operation of the RCP is fundamental. However, the opening of the other six crossing points and the construction of an airport and seaport, although frequently marginalized from the AMA, is essential. Based on these expectations, Egyptian authorities define three fundamentals with respect to a pending implementation of an international mechanism at the RCP: that Egypt supports the AMA as *‘a good framework’* for negotiating a future agreement between stakeholders, that an impending agreement should address and encourage the opening of all corridors from and to Gaza, and that Egyptian authorities support stationing an impartial monitoring body on Gaza’s side of the Rafah terminal, preferably the EUBAM Rafah, in order to ensure that all parties adhere to what is agreed upon.⁵¹

There are three noted movements among the political parties regarding the implementation of such a mechanism. The first is in opposition, the second is in support, and the third seeks to amend the authorities’ positions. The first trend is clearly identified among the MB and the Freedom and Justice Party. Dr. Esam El-Erian adamantly insisted that the AMA was *‘unjust!’*⁵² When asked to identify particularly problematic aspects of the agreement, El-Erian responded:

All of the agreement [is problematic]! There must be an exclusively Egyptian-Palestinian agreement. Israel is putting pressure so not to provide the Palestinians with a safe passageway for goods or individuals through the Rafah Crossing, via the EU monitors, via the cameras at Karm abu Salem. And Israel is also putting pressure

⁴⁹ Phone interview: 12 February 2011. Issacharoff is here categorized as representing the voice of the Israeli government, as he indicated that he could not speak on behalf of the Israeli people, but could more or less say the position of the Israeli leadership.

⁵⁰ Personal interview: 25 February 2011, Oslo, Norway.

⁵¹ Eight out of nine informants categorized as Egyptian authorities were of the opinion that the AMA was an effective arrangement and further expressed the need to implement a future arrangement. All nine informants were firm in the stance that Egypt should not take a direct role in a future agreement involving the operation of Gaza’s side of the RCP but they emphasized their support for such negotiations. Six informants explicitly spoke of the need for a monitoring body to be stationed on Gaza’s side of the crossing point to insure protocols are followed.

⁵² Personal Interview: March 27 2011; MB headquarters in Manial, Cairo. El-Erian is the Vice Chairman of Freedom and Justice Party and former executive bureau member and official spokesperson for the MB.

*on the Egyptian government, and of course bombarding Gaza and bombarding the Rafah border.*⁵³

The interview with El-Erian ended with him stating: *'Ask Oslo to change all of the Oslo Agreement!'*⁵⁴ The above citations indicate that the political parties with an Islamic platform oppose the implementation of an international arrangement at the RCP— based on the moral claim that international agreements involving Egypt, the Palestinian authorities, and Israel are part of a legitimizing scheme for the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories and the blockade of the Gaza Strip. The implication here is that the main interest of the MB and its proxy party, the Freedom and Justice Party, regarding border policy-issues at Rafah clashes with the authorities' foreign policy regarding Israel, which is based on negotiations and the conclusion of international agreements towards a comprehensive peace settlement.

The second trend is notably among former NDP members and/or supporters who are expected to reorient, adjust, and maintain a degree of influence and authority in the founding of a new government order. Former member of the NDP policy committee, Dr. Gehad Auda expressed his support for an international arrangement on the basis of the diplomatic claim that a combination of stakeholder interests ought to be accommodated — *'not solely those of the Palestinians and Egyptians, but also those of the Israelis, the Americans, the UN, and the Europeans.'*⁵⁵ Establishing an international agreement is according to this trend *'not a matter of good or bad,'* but rather an issue with legal and economic implications and concerns.⁵⁶ Such concerns were elaborated upon during an interview with Deputy Chairman of the Sama Group, Esam Zahran.⁵⁷ Zahran, suggest that while Egypt does not oppose the formation of a bilateral border agreement between Egyptian and Palestinian authorities, the concern is that this may lead to Egypt's administration over the Gaza Strip, an act which goes against both parties' legal positions regarding sovereignty. From an economic perspective, the borderland is in need of greater economic and institutional development. However, there are apprehensions with the authorities that greater development in the northern and central Sinai

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. This is El-Erian's response to the question of *'whether there were any other aspects that he thought I should look into?'*

⁵⁵ Personal interview: 28 March 2011, Café in Cairo Egypt. Dr. Auda also heads the Political Science Department

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Personal Interview: 21 March 2011; Sama Group headquarters, Cairo, Egypt. The interview was initially with Ratib who had to leave early due to some other priorities. Since the interview, it was reported that the attorney General froze Ratib's assets for 15 days, pending an investigation regarding accusations of involvement in inciting pro-Mubarak supporters to attack protesters in Tahrir Square during the 25th of January uprising. See *'Imprisonment, Good Salary, the Channel Axis in the Case of Signed Strings,' Sinai Today*, 14 April 2011. In Arabic.

area may lead to increased settlement of Palestinians from Gaza to the Sinai. As the following quotation by Zahran expresses, implementing an international agreement is required to protect the legal rights of both Egyptians and Palestinians, respectively.

*Egypt wants to support the development of the northern and central Sinai area. But this does not mean that the Palestinians should move to Egypt. The Palestinians should have their own state within the borders of Palestine. We stress the need to support the Palestinians to have their own state on Palestinian land, but not on the Egyptian land.*⁵⁸

The third trend is a rising current among some socialists and other oppositional parties including the Reform and Development Party, which seeks to amend rather than annul the authorities' position on the formation of an international agreement for operating Gaza's side of the crossing.⁵⁹ This position is based on the concern that the AMA protocols have not been honored by the main parties. Rana Farouk, a founding member of the Reform and Development Party and a member of the Revolutionary Youth Movement expressed that: *'Designated members of the party are beginning to take a closer look at the agreement [AMA]. The problem is not with the agreement, but how to implement the protocols.'*⁶⁰ This tendency is based on the view that international agreements are the principle foundation for maintaining Egypt's central regional and international influence. Therefore, particular focus is on how to reassure the full implementation of protocols and the further development and modification of existing agreements.

The majority of micro-level interviewees perceive the AMA as part of a political scheme which they *'do not understand, do not know about, or do not interfere with.'*⁶¹ In many interview situations, a summary of the AMA protocols was described before proceeding with a set of questions.⁶² Approximately half of the micro-level interviewees indicated a level of support for the AMA. However a number of weaknesses were raised. During a group

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ The Reform and Development Party was launched in January 2009 by a nephew of President Sadat, Anwar Tal'at Esmat'at Sadat.

⁶⁰ Personal Interview: 19 April 2011, Cairo, Egypt.

⁶¹ Personal interview: 23 March 2011; Dr. Mustafa Al Zogby, Head of the Aid Department at the Egyptian Medical Union. In other words, micro-level actors' epistemological understanding of the agreement is vague, basic, or they are not even aware of the AMA protocols.

⁶² The understanding and awareness about the AMA protocols of interviewees in this category were restricted. In most instances the interview team explained and outlined the protocols in the AMA before beginning the interview. The exceptions were the representatives of the worker's unions, NGOs and other syndicates, who had an overall awareness of the protocols.

interview with three youths in Cairo, insecurities regarding Egypt's capacity to enforce the international stakeholders to adhere to arrangements were expressed.⁶³ A second issue was that having EU representatives as monitors was 'good' in so far as they aided Egypt in facilitating movement for the Palestinians.⁶⁴ The concern that important AMA protocols had not been applied was highlighted by many interviewees, particularly by members of workers unions, NGOs, and other syndicates.⁶⁵ There were also questions regarding the expiration of the agreement. Some interviewees indicated that the arrangement was valid for one year and had expired as early as 2006. On the basis of these concerns, about half of the micro-level actors interviewed indicated a degree of support for instituting an exclusively Egyptian-Palestinian bilateral agreement instead of an international agreement.

The following interviews with two members of the Egyptian Council for foreign Affairs (ECFA), Ambassador Ehab Whaba and Cherifa Sirry, explicated how the agreement had not been followed and why they were in favor of formation a bilateral Egyptian-Palestinian agreement.

The Rafah Crossing was to be used for exporting goods from Gaza to Egypt but it did not open for that. Apart from that, the agreement also speaks about opening the Gaza seaport and the reconstruction of the airport, which has not started. So despite what the Israelis are saying about the AMA, they are crying what we call crocodile tears, but as a matter of fact, they have not honored the agreement [...] We were having many discussions here at the Council for Foreign Affairs regarding this mechanism which was there at the crossing point, which means the observers, the PA, and Israeli monitors at Karm Abu Salem. I was saying that this issue of not recognizing Hamas is nonsense. In international law you have de facto and de jure recognition. We can recognize Hamas as a de facto government. This does not mean we have to extend to Hamas the official rights to be at the crossing point, but it is just a de facto which accepts that we deal with them. - Ehab Whaba⁶⁶

⁶³ Personal interview: 23 April 2011. The research team briefly outlined the AMA and followed up with the question: what is your opinion of this arrangement?

⁶⁴ Nine of the micro-level actors interviewed explicitly stated support for the presence of the EUBAM Rafah

⁶⁵ The interviewees in the Lawyers Union, Doctor Union, human rights organizations and other syndicates and international NGO's were the micro-level actors with the most relevant, accurate, and extensive knowledge on the AMA.

⁶⁶ Personal interview: 22 March 2011; ECAF, Maadi, Cairo. While Whaba, as a former ambassador, is affiliated with the authority category of stakeholders; his perspectives were not widely expressed by the authorities, but were rather recurrently communicated by the interviewees in the micro-level category. Thus Whaba is

The agreement governing the Rafah Crossing Point has expired many years ago, in 2006. The Egyptian government knows that it is expired, but they do not want to acknowledge it because by doing so they would have to explain why in hell they let it expire and failed to produce another treaty? Because the international community told them, they are only allowed to speak with the PA, the EU, and Israel, and at the Rafah Crossing we have Hamas. – Cherifa Sirry⁶⁷

While micro-level actors indicate that the AMA is a practical arrangement, particularly due to the monitoring body which plays an important role in rebuilding confidence between stakeholders, they also view the agreement as expired and one that has not been followed through with nor fulfilled.

4.3 The Tunnel Industry and Counter Efforts

Most interviewees categorized as authorities stated that the tunnels posed a direct threat for Egyptian national interests. For instance, senior Hamas spokesman Sami Abu-Zuhri has stated that *'weapons are not sent from Gaza to Egypt, they are only sent from Egypt to Gaza.'*⁶⁸ However, Egyptian authorities' are not just worried about weapons smuggling per say. Equally precarious is the existence of an underground (sub)culture, which directly infringes upon Egypt's ability to control, monitor, and secure its state borders. Some interviewees in the authorities category indicated that the tunnel industry resulted in a loss of trust between Egypt and the Hamas government as illegal smuggling not only happened from Egypt into Gaza, but also from Gaza into Egypt.⁶⁹ In 2009, the Egyptian authorities reported that a Hezbollah network, comprising approximately 50 individuals was operating in the Rafah borderland. The head of the network, 26-year-old Sami Shihab, identified as a Hezbollah operative and an

categorized herein as a micro-level stakeholder as his perception gives a voice to the masses without the intellectual capacity and without access to hegemonic political publics, and allows them to be heard.

⁶⁷ Personal interview: 19 March 2011; ECFA; Maadi, Cairo. Sirry was viewed by various other interviewees as having different and rather radical but important perspectives.

⁶⁸ *' Hamas Denies Iran's Involvement in Arms Smuggling to Gaza,'* (12.01.2009), Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 2. Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfer (NISAT) www.prio.no/nisat.

⁶⁹ Egyptian security agencies link the 2004 explosion in Taba which left 35 people killed and 160 wounded; the 2005 Sharm-el-Sheikh attacks which left 88 killed (majority Egyptians); and the 2006 Dahab attacks which left 30 killed and 150 wounded (mostly Egyptians) to infiltrators from the Gaza Strip. After protesters stormed the Ministry of Interior headquarters during the recent Egyptian upheavals (in Jan-Feb 2009), it was reported that the 2005 Sharm-el-Sheikh attacks was carried out under the order of Gamal Mubarak and former Interior Minister, Habib al-Adli, in order to take revenge on the businessman Hussein Salem who allegedly reduced Gamal Mubarak's commission in a deal to export gas to Israel.

infiltrator from the Gaza Strip, was said to be involved in organizing weapons smuggling and the spread of '*Shi'i ideals*' in the borderland.⁷⁰

The certainty that the tunnel industry was entwined with Hamas' strategic alliance with Iran and Syria was a particular apprehension expressed by most interviewees associated with the security sectors. For example, retired Major General and leading military advisor, Mahmoud Khalaf, insisted that a primary threat posed by the tunnel industry is its connectivity to the regional interest of Iran and Hezbollah: *'If you have a neighbor that has connections with large powers like Iran with its own regional plans then you also get worried for regional stability and security. This larger strategic issue generates a lot of consequences.'*⁷¹ Retired Major General and Military Advisor at Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, Mohamad Kadry Said, also emphasized the political ties between various Palestinian factions in Gaza and Iran as amplifying the divisions between the two regional camps, each having a specific interest regarding the tunnels. The camp comprised of Hamas, Syria, Hezbollah, and Iran perceive the existence of the tunnels as necessary for furthering their support for armed resistance groups in Gaza, while Egypt, the PA/PLO, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia perceive the tunnel industry as counterproductive to their diplomatic efforts for ending the Israeli occupation and blockade.⁷² Notwithstanding that most authorities expressed sympathy for the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the official Egyptian consensus is that all products and persons transferred through the tunnels are illegal (whether organized as humanitarian aid or contraband). Thus, the Egyptian state is detriment to take effective measures to deter and counter the tunnel industry.

It is estimated that 600 tunnels are located along the 14 kilometer border. Most of the tunnels run along residential areas in the vicinity of Rafah. Tunnel owners buy houses or apartment buildings so that the exit and entry points can be hidden in private dwellings, making it problematic for security forces to detect underground transfers.⁷³ Launching an invasion sweep of residential units in Rafah could potentially result in a blood bath between the security forces, local Bedouins, and their extended family networks, which sometimes count

⁷⁰ *'Hizballah Secretary General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah, Speech on Egyptian Accusations of Hizballah Activities on Gaza Border with Egypt,'* Journal of Palestine Studies, 28 (4):212-215.

⁷¹ Personal interview: 26 March 2011. Khalaf is categorized herein as expressing the interests and concerns of the Armed Forces.

⁷² The evidence given for such allegations was vague. However, Iran has outwardly extended moral and financial support to Hamas. In 2006, Iran publicly pledged 50 million dollars in aid to Hamas. Furthermore, both Iran and Syria have taken a public position in support of freedom fighters or militant actors in the Gaza Strip.

⁷³ Personal Interview: 21 March 2011; Ambassador Hassan Essa.

up to 1500 people. Tribal alliances could also add to the difficulty of cracking down on the tunnel industry.⁷⁴

In 2009, Egypt began the construction of an underground steel barrier along the Rafah border.⁷⁵ The barrier starts at the Rafah terminal and runs for 10 kilometers westwards, extends 18 meters down, and is at least five centimeters thick.⁷⁶ The underground steel barrier is perceived as somewhat effective by some authorities while being perceived as impractical by others. According to a source in the Egyptian MFA Israel Department, the authorities are working with the United States on two other projects to counter the tunnels, involving the installation of surveillance devices and movement sensors underneath the border.⁷⁷ Furthermore, bettering the access to waged-labor in the borderland and easing social conditions are also seen as key strategies for combatting the tunnel industry. The local authority in the Rafah borderland, namely the Governors' Office is thus tackling the issue of the tunnel industry through the provision of social resources and by improving its communication with the local population.

There are conflicting interests among the political and economic elites regarding the tunnel industry, due to the groups various incentives at stake. El-Erian from the MB firmly asserted that as long as the blockade on Gaza continues, the *'tunnels are necessary.'*⁷⁸ While the majority of interviewees, 32 out of 55 related to the need to control or counter the tunnel industry, El-Erian was among the minority who negated the tunnels as a hindrance for Egyptian security.⁷⁹ El-Erian emphasized the humanitarian function of the tunnels and further contested the state's efforts at countering tunneling activity. The MB's stress on the humanitarian functions of the tunnel industry is apparently motivated by the party's friendly political tie with the Hamas government — identified by former NDP policy committee, Gehad Auda as the main beneficiaries of the tunnel industry.⁸⁰ This was also pointed out by other informants such as Hassan Essa, who argued that Hamas now has a department called the Tunnel Office, where permission to dig tunnels and officially extended electricity can be

⁷⁴ This dynamic was made clear by individuals with direct ties to tunnel owners.

⁷⁵ The project is sponsored by the United States and administrated by a *'special department'* in the Egyptian military.

⁷⁶ Personal interview: 28 March 2011; Ambassador Bassuni.

⁷⁷ Personal interview: 17 April 2011; Israel Department in the MFA. The source spoke with me on condition of anonymity.

⁷⁸ Personal interview: 27 March 2011; Cairo, Egypt.

⁷⁹ That the tunnels were harmful to Egyptian interest was even expressed by micro-level actors who were emotionally and personally vested in aiding the Palestinians and ending the blockade. Among the minorities which support the tunnel industry are those who were undecided or did not state a clear position.

⁸⁰ Personal interview: 28 March 2011.

obtained for 10,000 US dollars.⁸¹ In another interview, Ambassador Farrah also suggested that tunneling on Gaza's side is an exclusive industry, restricted to individuals with sufficient means and friendly communications with Hamas and with the Egyptian side.⁸²

In an official statement issued by the MB in January 2010, it was argued that the underground steel barrier was *'designed and implemented by Israelis and Americans [...] under the false pretext that the wall is for the national security of Egypt.'*⁸³ The statement goes on to express: *'The Palestinian cause is the cause of all Arabs and Muslims, and Jerusalem is one of the holiest places for us and the million and a half people living in Gaza are our brothers [...] and many Muslim scholars prohibited the construction of the deadly wall.'*⁸⁴ The reference indicates that the MB adopts sacred symbols and moral claims to negate the Egyptian states counter tunneling efforts as aiding the continued Israeli occupation of the OPT.

In the elite category are also stakeholders with large economic incentives. For example, Esam Zahran, (the Deputy Chairman of the Sama Cement Cooperation located approximately 15 kilometers south of El-Arish) underscored the paradoxical function of the tunnels, suggesting that *'the situation regarding the tunnels is that nobody likes it but unfortunately the complications of the situation is pushing everyone to let the tunnels go, something which is very harmful for everybody.'*⁸⁵ It can be expected that the goods from businesses operating close to the areas where the tunnel industry thrives, including gas stations, shops, and pharmacies finds its way through the tunnels on a daily basis. The Rafah border is not open for commercial trade; thus the economic elites represent a set of stakeholders with large economic stakes and consequently are tolerant towards the tunnel industry as a tactic for bolstering alternative economic growth in the borderland. Nevertheless, as a normal functioning border will also lead to increased revenues, the economic elites support the state's counter tunneling-efforts.

There are three large tribes (and numerous smaller tribes) inhabiting the borderland: al-Fawakhria tribe in El-Arish, the Elswarka in Shikh Zoyied, and the Ermalat tribe in Rafah.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Personal interview: 21 March 2011.

⁸² Personal interview: 28 March 2011; Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt.

⁸³ *'MB's Statement on the Construction of the Steel Wall between Egypt and Gaza: it is our Obligation to Stand by the Needy.'* 2010, Ikhwanweb: The Muslim Brotherhood Official English Website. <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22396>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Personal Interview: March 24 2011; Cairo, Egypt.

⁸⁶ Each tribe is comprised of 24-25 clans. Each clan is comprised of four to nine families, and each family has from 500 to 1500 members. Most married men have two to four wives and from six to 20 children.

Most Bedouins take part in the tunnel industry in some capacity, through association, by employment in the industry, by trading goods through the tunnels, or by using the tunnels to visit family on the other side.⁸⁷ The closer the tribes are to the Rafah border, the more involved the clans are in the tunnel industry, and the better the economic conditions are for the families. Bedouins' association to the tunnel industry tends to be economically rather than politically motivated. Historically, the Bedouins were merchants, heavily involved in trading with the Palestinians. Especially since the borderland is underdeveloped with little avenue and few opportunities for the locals to earn wages or to gain an education, trading with the Palestinians through the tunnels is perceived as a natural and customary way for earning an income.⁸⁸ In this sense, local involvement in the tunnel industry is not regarded as a criminal act but as an extension of the historical business communication and cross-border networking between the respective people on each side of the border. A local distinction is made between tunnel owners, workers, and users on the one hand, and tunnel lords involved in illegal weapons trade, human trafficking, and African migration into Israel on the other hand.

According to local informants, the latter groups are few and are disliked members of the community. They are categorized locally as people, *'who are guilty of severe inhumane treatment and who are not different from criminals and mafias elsewhere that are involved in illegal trafficking.'*⁸⁹ Illegal African migrating was noted by several micro-level informants as a problem associated with the border region, an activity which according to local sources, does not actually transpire through the tunnels underneath the Egypt-Gaza border, but transpires at a specific point on the Egypt-Israel border, identified locally as kilometer 16.⁹⁰

14 out of 23 of the micro-level actors related to the state's counter-tunneling efforts, and perceived it as a means by which to *'simply make it difficult for the smugglers and not intended to harm Palestinians.'*⁹¹ This is especially true for the informants in Cairo and Alexandria; where most of the interviewees implied that the construction of the underground barrier was required under conditions of widespread illicit activity throughout the

⁸⁷ Most residents in Rafah particularly have nuclear or extended family members, or close friends residing in the Gaza Strip. It cost approximately 700 Egyptian Pounds for a *'round-trip'* to and from Gaza, about 6000 US dollars for a car to cross through the tunnels, and about 20 Egyptian Pounds is paid out to workers for loading one truck shipment of goods into the tunnels.

⁸⁸ Personal interview: 5 April 2011; member of the Ermalat tribe whose clan owns some tunnels.

⁸⁹ Personal interview: 3 April 2011; member of the Ermalat tribe. It was often related that severe violence was used against these Africans.

⁹⁰ Several informants in Cairo indicated that the relationship between the Bedouins and the Israelis was not clear and was a source of apprehension in the government. Local sources in the borderland indicated that illegal African immigration does not involve Hamas.

⁹¹ Personal interview: 25 April 2011; hotel owner; Alexander, Egypt.

borderland.⁹² However, micro-level actors were also disillusioned by its construction as the barrier was often identified as a foreign concept, *'beyond the logic of ordinary Egyptians who know that this is impractical because the Bedouins and the Palestinians have a long tradition of digging tunnels and would find a way to penetrate the barrier.'*⁹³ Notwithstanding that many micro-level interviewees did not essentially express strong opposition towards the authorities counter tunneling efforts; they focus on the ineffectiveness of some of their practices and the methods used. This was particularly the case in the borderland, where informants regularly suggested that the best way to counter the tunnel industry is by increasing opportunities for the Bedouins to get involved in waged labor and by aiding the locals in gaining various educational and/or technical skills.

4.4 Opening the RCP and Normalizing Cross-Border Relations

Most interviewees categorized as embodying the concerns and interests of the Egyptian authorities expressed strong opposition to developing the RCP as an alternative corridor for Palestinian trade. There are four reasons for this opposition: (1) Rafah is constructed as a passenger-only terminal. (2) It is the responsibility of Israel as the occupying force, not Egyptian authorities, to facilitate the revival of economic productivity and business development in the Gaza Strip. (3) Enabling trade with Hamas obstructs the restoration of PA presence at the Rafah terminal. (4) As the Gaza Strip is part of an enduring conflict region where local, regional and international tensions are acted out, traffic beyond a passengers-only at the Rafah terminal is perceived as posing a challenge for Egypt's capacity to effectively secure its borderland region.

According to some interviewees, the international suggestion to expand the function of Rafah from a passenger-only terminal to a commercial transit in order to reconstruct Gaza's

⁹² These statistics do not indicate that there is no strong opposition to the states' efforts in closing down the tunnels; however they represent my interview findings. Interviews with civilians often took place in a controlled setting, meaning I first described the overall context, political issues, and the concerns of the authorities before proceeding with questions. This method was intended to draw from the interviewees an analytical opinion rather than conjectures. Worth stating is the position of the two interviewees who expressed strong opposition to the underground barrier. One of them alleged that there were strikes by the workers building the barrier (no other interviewee could confirm the statement.) The other insisted that the barrier was totally unacceptable to the Egyptian people and that it was *'humiliating to have foreigners impose what to do in our own land.'* Such positions do exist among the wider populations in Egypt as indicated in several news sources; however they were not widely expressed to the research team during field interviews.

⁹³ Personal interview: 26 March 2011; ordinary civilian in coffee shop, Cairo

economy and stabilize Israeli security requires constructing a new terminal.⁹⁴ Since the Karm Abu Salem terminal, a few kilometers southeast of Rafah, as well as several other Gaza-Israel terminals, notably Qarni, are presently in condition to operate for receiving daily cargo shipments, constructing a new terminal at Rafah is an unwarranted expense for Egyptian authorities in the short term. In the long term, the authorities are alarmed that commercial trading at Rafah may lead to Egypt being pushed into the position of administering the Gaza Strip. This would serve the interest of Israel while undermining the Palestinian-Egyptian interest of incorporating Gaza into the future Palestinian state. Furthermore, the authorities are alarmed about Hamas' direct or indirect involvement in illegal trade through the tunnels and the negative impact it has on the operation of the Rafah border and ultimately of the RCP according to international standards. The Egyptian authorities use the operation and administration of the Rafah terminal as a pressure point to encourage Hamas to sit down at the table of negotiation with the PA. In view of these concerns, the authorities indicate some reservations about normalizing border relations at Rafah.

Since 2006, the beginning of the Israeli policy of blockade, Gaza has become increasingly unstable and subject to Israeli military campaigns. These campaigns of aggression have also affected the borderland region in Egypt. The three-kilometer region in Gaza, adjacent to the international boundary line towards Egypt, called Zone D, has been frequently bombarded because of tunneling and alleged weapons smuggling.⁹⁵ For example, in 2009, based on grounds of destroying the tunnels, Israel assaulted this region with various kinds of weapons, missiles, and bombs which caused destruction inside the Egyptian border, terrorized citizens, and caused various injuries.⁹⁶ Egyptian authorities indicate that until the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is resolved, normalizing cross border relations with the Palestinian authorities at Rafah poses a physical danger to the Egyptian population, particularly in the borderland. The following citation by Kadry Said underscores the problematic aspects encroaching on Egypt's capacity to normalize cross-border relations at Rafah.⁹⁷

It is important to network with neighbors, especially regarding trading, electricity, water, gas, and information sharing. For example, now in Europe, you do not know where the electricity or gas is coming from, perhaps from Oslo or England. Of course

⁹⁴ See 'Potential Alternatives for Palestinian Trade: Developing the Rafah Trade Corridor,' (2007). World Bank Technical Team <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/=BBC475552AB8CF22852572B3004F72AB>

⁹⁵ Ihab Wahba. 'Three Observations on what is Happening on the Border.' 2009. *Elshrok*. Arabic.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Personal interview: 20 March 2011; Khalaf is categorized herein as expressing the interests and concerns of the Armed Forces.

this is normal for countries that live close together and want to improve life standards, but in our region the instability in Gaza and the conflict between Hamas and Fatah, and between the Palestinians and Israel blocks regional networking in water, electricity, natural gas, and even information sharing. We [Egypt] have been networking with Jordan, Syria, and with Israel on generating these elements regionally, but Gaza is a problem for all of these projects. Our natural gas line to Israel for example has been exploded and this is connected to the immoral conditions in Gaza. Of course border security is a main topic in the Egyptian vision for security, not only in Egypt but also in Israel and other countries. So we must first solve the smaller problems, like securing normal conditions at the Rafah border and this will play a part in the bigger solution; because confidence between the stakeholders is low, and you can improve it by working on smaller projects like Rafah.

In spite of these stated pragmatic and political concerns, the authorities maintain their commitment to operate the RCP continuously based on the need to facilitate movement for the Palestinians who are under occupation. The authorities stress that since June 2010, the RCP has been open for civilians and for the movement of certain humanitarian supplies. Humanitarianism has in this sense been emphasized as the main motive for the opening of the RCP. There is, however, some oppositional political voice regarding the authorities' overarching position — that Rafah continues to be open for passengers-only. For instance, the MB insists that the RCP is not open. As stated by El-Erian: *'This is a closed point on the border. It is open sometimes, and closed all the time. Families separated on different sides of the border need an ordinary passage to sustain family networks.'*⁹⁸ Grounded in the motive of wanting to expand the term open to include the establishment of official cross-border collaboration between the Egyptian and the Hamas authorities, the MB opposes opening the RCP for civilians only. That is to say that the MB is vested in working towards *'normalizing'* cross-border relations between Egypt and the Hamas government. Political parties with an Islamic platform, including the MB and the Freedom and Justice Party are pushing to expand the expression *'open'* to comprise the materialization of formal cross-border relations at Rafah — converging among other things on: trade, tourism, economic and development programs, water, energy, transportation, information sharing, media, industry, social welfare issues, vocational training, and research. In light of the absence of these various links between Egypt and Gaza, these political parties do not identify the RCP as open. It should be noted

⁹⁸ Personal interview: 27 March 2011; Cairo, Egypt

that while the MB express strong support for establishing Egyptian business in Gaza, actual Egyptian corporations may have some reservations regarding extending business linkages to Gaza in the face of the fragile political context — understood to be an enduring conflict region, as the following quotation by the Deputy Chairman of Sama cement, Zahran implies:

*'Imagine our cement is being shipped to Jamaica but is not able to go the 15 kilometers to Gaza. In all actuality we are eager to hear that things are done through the gates [the terminal] but at present, we cannot ship our cement to Gaza. Not before finding a clear situation over there. Right now the current situation is not clear enough for business.'*⁹⁹

The main concern of micro-level actors is that Egypt should take no part in supporting or facilitating the system of blockade on Gaza. The main interest of the micro-level actors in this respect is that Egypt continues to open the RCP on a regular basis and further improves the operation of the crossing point, including decreasing the waiting time for passengers wanting to cross over, increasing/eliminating limitations on the number of passengers allowed through, and improving the operational time of the crossing point. While emphasis was placed on the regular flow of people by micro-level actors, it was also regularly suggested that importing certain materials and goods from Egypt into Gaza at the Rafah terminal, such as construction materials and food supplies, was essential. While micro-level actors displayed limited understanding for the complexity of the various political, economic, and security related concerns shaping the official guiding principle, they had deep-rooted emotional investments in the Palestinian issue. This emotional engagement, evident in public opinion, had little impact on the operation of the RCP during Mubarak's regime. However, it was an issue which came to contribute to Mubarak's forced abdication from the office of Presidency. As indicated in the following citation by Ramy, a 46-year-old taxi driver in Cairo, the ad hoc opening of the RCP from 2006-2010 contributed to the forced collapse of the former regime.

*What happened under Mubarak, when the Palestinians were suffering daily, and the Egyptian government refused to open this gate to allow them into Egypt, and many of them had severe medical conditions and others were starving; the Egyptian people felt that we were putting a helping hand on killing Palestinians which is one of the main irritations causing the current revolution.*¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Personal interview: 24 March 2011; Cairo, Egypt.

¹⁰⁰ Personal interview: 26 April 2011; Cairo, Egypt.

Some civilians suggest that the revolution may not have been so widespread and successful if the government kept the RCP open during the blockade, as the following quotation by Salim a university student in Cairo alludes: *'If the Egyptian government kept the gate at Rafah open, if the government had taken the side of the Palestinians and not the side of the occupier, Israel, this revolution may not have been so widespread or even as successful!'* *'Helping the Palestinians'* by opening the RCP is in this respect a main concern of micro-level actors, noting the common expression *'our little sister'* to emphasize the relational and historical connectivity between Egypt and Gaza — more often referred to merely as Palestine.

4.5 Conclusion

The pending new government's comprehensive border policy at Rafah will necessarily be outlined on the basis of an evaluation of the various stakeholders concerns and interests. The new government's representation of the main problems and key issues will continue to direct state policy deliberations, although the leading political parties, the economic elites, and the micro-level actors' interests and concerns will play a role in political decision-making regarding the main issues. Based on the research findings, the following have been determined as the key policy issues which will formulate Egypt's prospective border policy at Rafah. The first substantive concern is how to enforce security in the borderland. The authorities are seeking to address the issue of security through the following means: (1) encouraging the formation of a cooperative border management apparatus on Gaza's side of the crossing; (2) (re)visiting/negotiating changes to the demilitarization clauses in the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in order to increase military presence in Zone C of the borderland; (3) and improving border control at Rafah. The collection of concerns expressed by various political parties and micro-level actors regarding what a border agreement should entail indicates some impending changes will be made regarding authorities positions on the nature and structure of an international agreement regarding the Rafah border and crossing point.

The second substantive issue is the tunnel industry. Eliminating transnational crime networks in the borderland is a primary objective in this regard. Collaboration between national, regional, and international actors underpins how the new government will address this issue. Working closely with the PA/PLO as well as strengthening the relations with other regional actors such as Iran is a primary focus here. Keeping the RCP open for passengers and allowing specific transports to Gaza through the RCP, such as food and medical supplies, is perceived as the most effective means by which Egypt can contribute to eliminating the humanitarian dimension of the tunnels. There is also a parallel effort to increase economic

productivity and provide greater access to employment in the borderland. How to increase and encourage greater communication between the authorities, national investors, and the local populations in the borderland regarding development in the borderland will have to be addressed in Egypt's future policy approach.

Finally, the restricted nature of the opening of the RCP will have to be further developed, evaluated, and defined. Facilitating the regular opening of the RCP and relaxing the procedures for passengers wanting to pass through are of foremost importance here. While a new policy may permit the transport of particular goods, for example construction materials, Rafah will essentially remain a passenger-only terminal. Complete normalization is largely depending on a comprehensive settlement between the Palestinian authorities and Israel and the future materialization of a two state-solution. In this regard, Egypt's prospective border policy at Rafah will likely consider the significant role of the Rafah border as the only border in the OPT under exclusive Palestinians control. How to move forward in assisting the Palestinian authorities in establishing control over the other six crossing point and Gaza's sea and airport is likely to form part of future policy deliberations in Egypt.

The following chapter discusses the consistencies and dissimilarities between Egypt and the main Parties at the RCP: the Palestinians, the EU, and Israel. While a comprehensive Egyptian border policy at Rafah will be determined independent of these international stakeholders — with Egypt asserting its own official polices on its side of the crossing point, and the Palestinian authorities, the EU, and Israel determining their polices separately —there is considerable collaboration and coordination between Egyptian and external stakeholders. Hence, while the policies of each side are independently constructed, they are not in effect independently implemented on the ground. A consideration of the agendas of external stakeholders at the RCP is therefore fundamental for better contextualizing Egypt's perspective policies and political decisions on the management and operation of the Rafah border and crossing point.

5. Assessment of the Main Parties' Positions

5.1 Introduction

The Rafah border is fundamental in the context of the vision of a Palestinian state as it is the only international border under Palestinian control. According to Colonel Alain Faugeras, EU BAM Rafah head of mission, this is a point of agreement for all of the main Parties.¹⁰¹ It is significant then that the Rafah border operates as a regulated border so as to demonstrate that the Palestinian authorities can efficiently manage other prospective borders, Gaza's six crossing points, as well as a seaport and international airport. A regulated border means that corruption — such as preferential treatment, money laundering, *baksheesh*, illegal immigration, smuggling of people, drugs, weapons, and other contrabands — cannot be associated with the Palestinian authorities' border operation.¹⁰² In other words, an important aspect of improving the level of trust between Egypt and the main Parties is that the Rafah border and crossing point operates according to international standards. In this regard, the continued opening of the RCP is contingent on establishing formal understanding and agreements. It is significant then to draw attention to the central issues involved in border management, and how these issues are perceived by Egypt and how these issues are perceived by the main Parties, namely the Palestinian authorities, the EU, and Israel.

There are three main issues decisive for border management at Rafah. The first issue is between the Palestinian and Egypt authorities regarding their roles in a prospective border agreement. There are currents on the Palestinian front that anticipate forming a bilateral agreement. Although Egyptian authorities do not strongly oppose this notion, they suggest that the blockade on Gaza's other crossings with Israel needs thorough consideration, that a peace settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities and the current internal political transformations taking place in Egypt must first be resolved. The second issue is between Egypt and the EU BAM Rafah regarding the nature of a cooperative management system. While Colonel Alain Faugeras indicates that the EU BAM Rafah is open to developing a formal relationship on the ground with Egyptian agencies involved in border management, Egyptian authorities do not want to instate a formal liaison with a third party on

¹⁰¹ Phone interview: 31 January 2011.

¹⁰² Baksheesh means different things in the Middle East. It usually pertains to tipping or informal payment for service. When baksheesh is paid to achieve or get something done, this form of tipping is regarded as back-pay or under-the-table pay (a problem which Faugeras insinuated had been associated with the RCP). The RCP is open for Palestinian ID holders and for others in specific categories. Those falling outside these categories sometimes paid up to 1000 US dollars in back-pay or baksheesh to cross the RCP, an activity which can be identified as cross-border smuggling.

their side of the border.¹⁰³ The third issue is between Egypt and Israel regarding borderland security. Israeli authorities, both right and left wing, indicate strong opposition to the notion of increasing military presences in the Sinai Peninsula. However, there are strong voices on the Egyptian front seeking to amend the demilitarization protocols in the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. Given the realities on the ground, that Rafah is a sight where these various transnational concerns are played out and acted upon, this chapter analyzes the interplay between these issues.

5.2 Instituting Egyptian-Palestinian Bilateral Agreement

The Palestinian authorities as a main Party at the RCP are comprised of a multilateral governing body including the PLO, the PA, Fatah and Hamas.¹⁰⁴ The Egyptian and the Palestinian authorities agree on a number of points regarding border management. For one, that each side should manage their borders and crossing points according to their defined guidelines, procedures, and practices. For example, while some voices in the Palestinian leadership, namely Hamas, regard the construction of the underground steel wall as a symbol of foreign interference in Egyptian border polices, the Palestinian authorities in unison refrain from taking an official oppositional position on its construction, as it is understood to be Egypt's sovereign right to secure its side of the border according to the measures it sees fit. Second, the main focus of both Egypt and the Palestinian authorities is to facilitate movement at the RCP. Both parties agree that the procedures regulating cross-border activities and traffic flow could be improved. For instance, the parties want to increase the daily amount of persons allowed through the RCP, ease visa restrictions, decrease the transit time for passengers, and extend the operational time of the crossing point. Third, although the regular operation of the RCP is perceived as vital, especially for easing movement and the effects of the systematic blockade, both the Egyptian and Palestinian authorities emphasize the need to end the Israeli occupation of the OPT and the blockade on Gaza as the core issue. Yet, the Egyptian and Palestinian authorities correspondingly diverge on a number of issues.

The Palestinian authorities perceive Egypt as an '*excluded*' but important Party in the 2005 AMA and further indicate a desire to establish a border agreement at Rafah involving Egypt a main Party. Such a desire is contrary to the Egyptian stand. Egyptian authorities insist on not

¹⁰³ Phone interview: 31 January 2011. It is important to state that Colonel Faugeras specified this point as his personal opinion.

¹⁰⁴ The PLO is the federal or national leadership of the Palestinians living both within and outside of the OPT, the PA governs the West Bank and is responsible for the population, Fatah is the leading political party in the West Bank, and Hamas rules the Gaza Strip.

taking a direct role in any agreement involving the management of the crossing points and/or borders to a prospective Palestinian state. Egypt's position is in part grounded in the understanding that a border agreement for Rafah should not take focus away from Gaza's other corridors. That is to suggest that on the part of Egypt, the formation of a bilateral agreement in the face of the Israeli occupation and blockade is understood to obstruct the vision of a two state-solution. Furthermore, Egyptian authorities insist reinstating the PA presences at the Rafah terminal is a prerequisite for negotiations on a bilateral agreement. As suggested by Dessouki: *'Of course, [if PA presence was reinstated at the crossing point] we then would be dealing with a legitimate government, and we would maybe even look to develop the border itself. Until we have this, we must work according to our policies and procedures.'*¹⁰⁵ The policies and procedures alluded to here are that Egypt primarily deals with Hamas in light of the humanitarian context and on matters related to issues of reconciliation and negotiation between Hamas and Fatah and between Hamas and Israel.

While the Palestinian authorities desire the formation of a border agreement involving Egypt, they diverge in how to proceed. The PA/PLO suggests further developing and modifying the AMA protocols, for example: by including Egypt, reinstating PA presence in Gaza, the EU BAM Rafah as monitories at the Rafah terminal, and conceivably enabling certain imports and exports to transpire at the RCP. However, as suggested by Ambassador Farrah, the latter is problematic since Gaza is not part of a country but part of an occupied land.¹⁰⁶

*Of course, as Palestinians we want goods to pass through to our people in Gaza. However, it is the responsibility of Israel as an occupying power to provide Gaza with all its needs through the other six crossings. Also, Gaza is not a country but is part of the Palestinian occupied land or territories. Therefore, Egypt deals with Gaza differently from other countries.*¹⁰⁷

Hamas on the other hand, desires the conclusion of the AMA and the establishment of a new bilateral agreement between Egypt and the Palestinians, which may also include adopting particular AMA protocols, for example, instating the presence of the PA and possibly a third party. The following citation by Naser Al-Hoar, a major in the Hamas government's police

¹⁰⁵ Personal interview: 19 April 2011; Head of Palestine Department Egyptian MFA.

¹⁰⁶ Personal interview: 28 March 2011; Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

and Director of the Passport Department at the RCP, suggests that a third Party mandate should be even more limited than the limitations assigned to the EU BAM Rafah.¹⁰⁸

*Since there is no Israeli existence in the Gaza Strip, there is no need for any international agreement. There should be an agreement between Egypt and the PA. Management of the Rafah Crossing is a domestic matter between Egypt and Palestinians. The latter has the ability to run the crossing. However, should matters necessitate the presence of the Europeans; such a presence shall not exceed the role of monitoring the working of the crossing. They should neither intervene in the daily working of the crossing, nor should they have the power to close the crossing as happened earlier.*¹⁰⁹

The distinction here is that in the face of the Israeli occupation and continued blockade, Hamas desires to instate a bilateral agreement, while the PA/PLO perceives such a move as politically complex. In other words, ironically the AMA is viewed by the Palestinian authorities as a valuable policy which provides a mechanism for monitoring and for coordination between the Parties, but also symbolizes the Palestinian authorities' inability to independently manage their border and crossing point. On the part of the Egyptian authorities, implementing and further developing the AMA, particularly the APRC is perceived as an essential requirement for moving forward in expanding and further improving the operation of the RCP.

5.3 Formal Cooperation between Egypt and the EU

Egypt and the EU mutually encourage a full implementation of the AMA and APRC. The former's approach is to mediate and encourage negotiations between Hamas and Fatah, while the latter's approach is to maintain an operational capability in the region through the continued extension of the EU BAM Rafah's mandate.¹¹⁰ Both Egypt and the EU are committed to ensuring the freedom of movement for the Palestinians. Egypt shows this commitment through its regular operation of the RCP, while the EU reiterates this commitment through offering a comprehensive package of support, which includes providing a third party presence, helping to improve the crossing infrastructure, equipment, and training

¹⁰⁸ Interview facilitated through the Gaza based institute, The House of Wisdom (HOW): June 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Phone interview: 31 January 2011; Colonel Alain Faugeras Head of Mission. The EU has extended EU BAM Rafah's mission yearly since 2007. The Mission has been extended until 31 December, 2011, and is ready to be redeployed at short notice should political situation and circumstances on the ground demand.

for the PA border and crossing personnel.¹¹¹ Egypt and the EU also agree that the overarching aim should be to remain committed to the Peace Process and a two-state solution, as the following citation by Faugeras indicates.¹¹²

On the one hand the Rafah border is fundamental for the freedom of movement, the reconstruction of Gaza and the revival of its economy [...]. On the other hand, the Rafah border is the only international border under Palestinian control (that is an agreed point). Further, full and regular access via land crossings, and possibly by sea should be granted. In this regard, it is to be noticed that it was originally supposed to build also a seaport and an international airport which could have contributed to the creation of a Palestinian state. In those circumstances the EU presence could be extended to other international border points.

Border management issues — including the degree of cooperation and collaboration between parties involved in border management and security — are however, perceived differently by Egypt and the EU. Egyptian authorities generally perceive border management as an autonomous issue, which should be developed independently on both sides. The EU's general approach, as indicated in the following citation by Faugeras is that ensuring a regulated border demands formal cooperation between the authorities on both sides of the border.¹¹³

From my personal point of view, the border should not be seen only from one side. If both Palestinians and the Egyptian sides are doing correctly their work at the border crossing, with the assistance of the EU, the border will function well and the tunnels will be more useless (as in normal countries, because smuggling is not allowed in parts of Europe for example).¹¹⁴

Faugeras further suggests: *'It would be interesting [for the EU BAM Rafah] to develop a formal relationship with Egyptian border and customs officials especially through the existing mechanism, the liaison Office in Karam Abu Salim [led by European Liaison Officers] foreseen by the AMA.¹¹⁵* Such a proposition is linked to the EU BAM Rafah's essentially

¹¹¹ Ibid. The EU BAM Rafah provide a third party presence at the RCP in order to contribute to Palestinian capacity building in all aspects of border control and customs operation at the RCP, to contribute to the liaison between the Palestinians, Israeli, and Egyptian authorities in all aspects regarding the management of the RCP, and to contribute to rebuilding confidence between the parties.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

pragmatic interest at the Rafah border, to assist in operating the RCP according to international standards, human rights, and procedures. In this respect, border management issues— especially in the areas of information sharing, law enforcement, border security, and in coordinating the procedures for moving goods, services, and people across borders— is best approached through forging liaisons on the federal/international level between the various agencies on both sides of the border.

Egyptian authorities do not welcome formal involvement of the EU BAM Rafah in Egyptian affairs. This position is linked to Egypt's multilayered and dynamic interests at the Rafah border. As discussed throughout the report, Egypt is comprised of various layers of stakeholders who have different interests and concerns regarding the facilitation and nature of movement at the RCP. Various Egyptian stakeholders highlight the humanitarian, moral, social, historical and emotional context while others prioritize the political factors. The Egyptian authorities will likely be pressured to consider the various internal interests at stake. Formal involvement of the EU BAM Rafah is perceived as potentially enabling external parties (such as Israel, the EU, and the Middle East Quartet, the mediating body involved in facilitating the negotiations on the AMA and other agreements with respect to the Peace Process) to interfere with Egypt's border management guidelines, policies, and procedures. This would in turn influence how the Egyptian authorities deal with internal stakeholder interests and other domestic matters. Safeguarding Egyptian sovereignty is in this sense a primary concern. The following quotation by Dessouki explains the principal issue enforcing Egyptian authorities' reluctance to form an official working relationship with foreign parties involved in border management on Gaza's side of the Rafah border and crossing point.¹¹⁶

We do not want to deal with foreign elements on our side of the border. The PA has to deal with the EU BAM Rafah on their side. We [Egypt] would never allow foreign parties to put cameras on our side for example. We would never allow this! We have our cameras for ourselves and for our people. This [officially partaking in the AMA] would obligate us [Egypt] of things that would affect our sovereignty.¹¹⁷

While the EU generally views border management as a cooperative issue which ought to be approached and enforced through liaison groups that meet frequently and officially, the Egyptian authorities generally perceive border management as a matter of sovereignty and

¹¹⁶ Personal interview: 19 April 2011

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

formal collaboration and cooperation with a third party is understood to be a method for interfering in homeland affairs.

5.4 Borderland Security

The Egyptian and the Israeli authorities are alarmed about network-based transnational crime group's operating from the Rafah borderland. As Issacharoff points out, the problem here *'is not the Rafah border, but what goes on underneath the Rafah border.'*¹¹⁸ A concern for both Egyptian and Israeli authorities is that the Rafah borderland is a site where smuggling activities take place. There has been some rising concerns in Egypt as well as in Israel that increased movement of people through the borderland following the permanent opening of the RCP may strengthen the political objectives, supplies used to carry out operations, or resources used to finance militant resistance groups operating from Gaza, whereby undermining the capacity of both parties to guard their borderlands effectively. A focal point for discussion between the Egyptian and the Israeli Ministries of Defense is in this sense is the methods used to secure the Rafah borderland against transnational networks, facilitating the smuggling of weapons and other contrabands into Gaza.

Israel and Egypt are both bound in agreements regarding the borderland region. Israel, though no longer stationed on the Egypt-Gaza border, continues to have a degree of influence over the strategies Egypt uses to secure the borderland region. This is primarily based on the demilitarization protocols in the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, which limits the presences of military forces in the Sinai Peninsula. Both right and left wing Israeli authorities are in principle against changing the demilitarization protocols, stating the fear that amendments may lead to increased hostilities between the two sides. The following citation by Issacharoff expresses that there is apprehension about permitting increased militarization in the Sinai region.¹¹⁹

The first thing that bothers Israeli citizens is what would be the future of the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel and what the relationship between the two states would look like. Will it be a cold peace or warm peace, or if we go to the worst case scenario, some sort of deterioration of relations and to bring some sort of acts of hostility between the two sides [...] I imagine Egyptians feel the same way and share

¹¹⁸ Phone interview: 12 February 2011.

¹¹⁹ Phone interview: 12 February 2011.

*the same concern; they are concerned with what types of implications the current situation will have on the peace process and peace agreements.*¹²⁰

Though Egypt is not officially part of the AMA, Egypt is a primary Party in the larger Middle East Peace Process, in which the security of Israel is a principle factor. Egypt is therefore required to take necessary actions to ensure that Israeli security concerns are taken into account.¹²¹ A main concern of Israel, as indicated by Issacharoff, is not ‘*opening the check point in Rafah, but what will happen with the arms, explosives, and missiles that are being smuggled through the Sinai each and every day.*’¹²² Some Egyptian stakeholder groups consider increasing the military in the borderland as an effective strategy for combating smuggling networks, and insuring that acts of hostility are not carried out from Egyptian soil. The following excerpt taken from an interview with Kadry, explains that since the cross-border movement of people and goods have increased with globalization trends, Egypt’s general approach to border management policies has included expanding military presences along its borders.¹²³

*If you look to the Libyan border, in the past security forces were perhaps moving with camels along the border to make sure criminal activity was not going on. In the past 20 years, Egyptian security along our borders to the West and to the South has changed. We now have military presence in the West, along the border with Libya. This policy has also been extended from Cairo to Sudan. In the past, the road extending from Cairo to Sudan was old and was not heavily trafficked. But now in the past 25 years, the road has been developed and you can now drive from Cairo to Sudan. So now we have military presences toward the Sudan-Egypt border. But along our border with Gaza and Israel it is demilitarized. Although we do not support this, we agreed to it. It is a very complicated issue.*¹²⁴

Research findings suggest that in light of the increased movement of people and goods and with it illegal criminal networks, some Egyptian stakeholder groups are considering the need to enhance the states’ capacity to physically control the Rafah border through increased military presences in the borderland. Nevertheless, Israel’s government has not indicated an

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ See for example, Camp David Accords, Framework 1/c i. 17. September.1978, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <http://.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Camp+David+Accords>.

¹²² Personal interview: 26 March 2011; leading Egyptian military advisor.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

openness or willingness to amend the demilitarization protocols. These opposing views will inevitably shape part of negotiations between the two sides on the political level, which may involve the Middle East Quartet.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

The opposing views discussed here are expected to shape part of the political negotiations regarding securing an effective management apparatus at the Egyptian-Palestinian border. In light of primary stakeholders' various positions, coming to a consensus will require sincere political will with respect to the following three conditions: renegotiating and further developing the AMA protocols; effectively eliminating the humanitarian aspect of the tunnel industry; and further combating crime networks and securing order in the Rafah borderland.

The revolutionary spring of 2011 initiated a process of structural transformations and political change in Egypt as well as in a number of other Arab states. In the wake of the Mubarak regime topple and in awaiting a democratic political reshuffle, Egypt has permanently opened the RCP. Notwithstanding, the socioeconomic situation in the Gaza Strip continues to be desolate and demands increased attention. Yet, there appears to be few political parties in Egypt with a clearly defined platform regarding the Rafah border and crossing point. What is clear is that Egyptian authorities are in a paradoxical position — somewhat bound by the previous international AMA agreements while, on the other hand, Egypt is considering the possibility of participating in a bilateral force with the Palestinian authorities.

The security agencies, particularly the military, have maintained the strongest watch over the Rafah border crossing point, the smuggling of contraband, and human trafficking in the Rafah borderland and will possibly support a continuation of the status quo. However, the political relationship between Egypt and Israel is likely to transform as the gap between the two authorities may broaden with the instatement of a new Egyptian government, particularly in lieu of the inclusion of parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party. Though the various Egyptian stakeholders have some diverging interests, they act cohesively in the enactment of humanitarian principles and view it as the epitome of political deliberations concerning the Rafah border. Hence, the Egyptian stakeholders, military and otherwise, are collectively vested in prioritizing the humanitarian needs of Palestinian civilians despite the political complexities they currently face.

It is noteworthy that Hamas' border operation is not linked to Bedouin crime networks facilitating human trafficking in the borderland (illegal African immigration into Israel), nor do such activities involve any fraction of the Palestinian authorities. However, there is an urgent need to combat tunneling where Hamas is a key party. In 2009, Egypt accepted around \$23 million from the US with the resolve of combating tunneling networks (through the construction of the underground steel barrier), though Egyptian authorities indicate that the project has been ineffective as a measure for closing down the tunnel industry. Egyptian stakeholders also indicate that ending the tunnel economy will require the dissolution of Israel's system of occupation and blockade. Furthermore, Egypt emphasizes the need for a swift establishment of a unified Palestinian government capable of taking on a leadership role in building a formal economy. While Egypt's humanitarian efforts target areas of immediate needs, a unified Palestinian government's perspective must focus on a more inclusive approach involving the stimulation of economic growth, state building, and international relations.

At present the Palestinians are a nation with an internationally, regionally, and domestically dispersed population. As long as Rafah, the only border under exclusive control of the Palestinian authorities, is properly managed and operated according to international standards, it is feasible to move forward in establishing autonomous Palestinian rule also over other borders and crossing points with Israel and Jordan. This will require the continued support of a third party, notably the EU, combined with genuine political good will from Israeli and Palestinian authorities as well as the Middle East Quartet. A fundamental issue is the political environment of inequalities and power imbalances which stifles negotiations between regional stakeholders and the development of practical strategies in furthering the materialization of a two-state solution. In the words of Yael Dayan, former Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv and daughter of former defense minister, Mosha Dayan:

*Equality makes us better, if Palestinians can have what Israel has, in legal terms: infrastructure, legal systems, and autonomy, own budget, education, and welfare system [...]. Borders are only part of it, it is what is inside the borders [...] a two-state solution is equality, the family of nations and not one occupying the other; this will make for good neighborhoods.*¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Al-Jazeera, 'Walls of Shame: West Bank.' Nov. 19.2007

Appendix

A. Fieldwork Methods

The report presents findings from a succession of 55 interviews conducted between January and April 2011. The interviews were carried out in the framework of understanding stakeholder agendas, interests, and concerns regarding the RCP, and secondly, to further anticipate strategies for securing the regular operation of the RCP according to international standards. The majority of the interviews took place in Cairo, Alexandria, Rafah, El-Arish, and Rabah. Some of the interviews were conducted by phone with external stakeholders, including with Colonel Alain Faugeras, head of the Mission for the EU BAM RAFAH. Eight interviews were carried out in the Gaza Strip through collaboration with the Gaza-based think tank, The House of Wisdom (HOW). I use the name of interviewees categorized as authorities or political and economic elites, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the interviewees in the micro-level category.

The research is based on the following qualitative research methods: (1) I worked closely with an Egyptian informant who played a key role in organizing interviews with relevant sources as well as provided information that helped clarify the meaning of what was being observed or discussed.¹²⁶ (2) Formal interviews were carried out which involved asking a structured and prepared set of questions. (3) In some cases informal interviews were conducted, which involved asking open-ended questions and having casual conversations about the issues at hand. Such exchanges were essential in Rafah and El-Arish where sources were sometimes hesitant to speak freely on controversial issues, such as the tunnels, and the construction of the underground steel barrier. (4) Participatory observation was also carried out. I spent two weeks in El-Arish and the Rafah area where I spent several days observing movement and activity at the Rafah border. I also spent three days participating in the daily life of an Ermleat family in Rafah, and one day with tribal family in Rabaa, a town about 70 kilometers south of Rafah. Here I carefully watched, asked questions, and listened in order to better understand my informants' agendas, ideas, and concerns about the RCP. The focus here was on investigating the various layers of interests in the tunnel economy and the construction of the underground steel barrier running along the border. (5) I collaborated with The House of Wisdom (HoW), a Gaza-based institute, which conducted a set of eight interviews with Hamas border officials, civilians, and tunnel owners in Gaza. (6) I focused on content analysis

¹²⁶ My fieldwork and research assistant, Mena Abdulrahman, is a 26-year-old Egyptian Coptic and a graduate of Ain Shums University with a BA in Economics.

of secondary sources, such as news reports, agreements that have had a bearing on Egypt's activities at the Rafah Crossing, including the AMA and the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, and other types of documents (in English and Arabic).

B. Identifying the Stakeholders

The following key questions were used to identify the main stakeholders: (a) who creates, secures, and implements border policy? (b) Who determines when the border opens and closes? (c) Who will potentially benefit or be harmed by the construction of the underground steel barrier and the closing of tunnels? (d) Who has investments which may be effected by changes in the border policy? (e) Who has activities linked to the Rafah border and crossing point? (f) And which groups are mobilized for or against the state's approach toward the border operation?

C. Verification Method

Once the stakeholders were identified, only stakeholders verified through two or more of the following criteria were included in the report: (a) verification by knowledgeable individuals including statesmen and academics; (b) verification through written records; (c) stakeholder self-verification; and (d) verification by other identified stakeholders.

D. Interview Questions

The interview questions varied depending on the nature of the person's work, the organization to which the persons belonged, as well as the knowledge level of the persons regarding the specific political and operational capacity of the RCP. However, an *Interview Template* was used during all the interviews which outlined the main issues covered in the report: (a) position regarding AMA; (b) position on opening/closing the crossing point; (c) perception of the tunnels; (d) perception of the counter-tunneling efforts; (e) identifying the stakeholders; (f) identifying stakeholder interests; (g) network analysis, (h) relevance of the Rafah border/crossing point.

E. Locating the Interviewees

Several interviews were conducted with official representatives or affiliates of particular stakeholder groups; however setting up interviews with some stakeholders proved difficult, particularly with the SCAF, the Office of the Presidency (recently dissolved), General Intelligence, and the authority in northern Sinai. In order to deal with this problem, I sought out interviews with persons having direct ties and/or personal relationships with officials in

these stakeholder groups. Interviews were also carried out with representatives of the most affluent and powerful workers' unions in Egypt, namely the Medical Union and the Lawyers Union, which take part in organizing cross-border transport of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Several former diplomats and officials cited throughout the report are members of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA), an NGO comprised of many former authorities. The NGO can therefore be seen as a hybrid governmental organization which has a degree of influence on governmental processes. ECFA proved to be a central site for locating relevant interviewees as the members has connections to state agencies like the SCAF, the National Security, the General Intelligence, and the former President's Office. I also interviewed four representatives of leading political parties, the former NDP, the MB, and the Reform and Development Party. Interviews with civilians were conducted in Egypt with passengers at the RCP, taxi drivers, custom guards, border guards, and other workers at the RCP.

F. Description of the Interviewees and Informants

Number	Full Name	Age Group** *	Categorized as Affiliated with	Current Position	Previous Positions/Background	Stakeholder Categorization
1	Alain Faugas	Middle aged	EU	Head of Mission EU BAM Rafah	Colonel	EU BAM Rafah
2	Abdel Monem Said Aly	Middle aged	National Security	Chairman of Al-Ahram	Egyptian government strategic thinker and writer	Authorities
3	Ahmed Haggag	Aged	President's Office	National Coordinator for Human Rights Capacity Building Project	Acted as President Mubarak's special envoy to Africa	Authorities
4	Avi Issacharoff	Youth	Israeli civilian	Journalist for Haaretz newspaper Israel	Middle East expert	Government of Israel
5	Ayoub Abu Shaaer	Middle aged	Hamas Affiliate	Director of the Rafah Crossing	N/A	Palestinian authorities
6	Bahaa Dessouki	Middle aged	Egyptian MFA	Head of Palestine Department	Egyptian MFA	Authorities
7	Barakat Al Farrah	Middle aged	PLO	Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt	Palestinian MFA	Palestinian authorities
8	Cherifa Sirry	Middle aged	Civilian in Cairo	Member of Egyptian Council on Foreign Affairs	Media personality	Micro-level actor
9	Esam El-Erian	Middle aged	Leading political party	Deputy head of the Freedom and Just Party	Official spokesperson for MB	Political elite
10	Essam Mohamaed Aly	Youth	NGO	Political Research at Ibn	Researcher/ Activist	Micro-level actor

				Khaldoum Center for Development Studies		
11	Essam Zahran	Middle aged	Business owner in northern Sinai	Deputy Chairman of Sama Group	Business owner and developer in northern Sinai	Economic elite
12	Gehad Auda	Middle aged	Leading political party	Head of Political Science Department at Helwaan University	Member of NDP Policy Committee	Political elite
13	Ghazi Hamad	Middle aged	Hamas Affiliate	Deputy Foreign Minister	Chairman of the Border Crossing	Palestinian authorities
14	Hassan Essa	Aged	General Intelligence Service	Member of Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs	Assistant Foreign Minister; Head of Israel Department in MFA; Council General to Israel	Authorities
15	Ihab Whaba	Aged	Civilian in Cairo	Member of Egyptian Council on Foreign Affairs	Diplomat	Micro-level actor
16	Mahmoud Khalaf	Aged	SCAF	Consultant at Nasser Military Academy	Major General in Military-Former governor in Aswan	Authorities
17	Mohammed Abu Tale Abdul Ghaffar	Middle aged	Syndicate	Egyptian Lawyers Union Secretary General	Lawyer	Micro-level actor
18	Mohamed Bassiouni	Aged	President's Office	Chairman of the Arab and Foreign Affairs in the Shura Council (recently deceased)	Ambassador to Israel	Authorities
19	Mohamaed Kadry Said	Aged	SCAF	Military Advisor at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies	Major General in Military	Authorities
20	Mohamed Ibrahim Shaker	Aged	NGO	Chairman of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs	Diplomat	Micro-level actor
21	Mustafa Alzugby	Middle aged	Syndicate	Medical Union Director of Aid Department	Medical Dr.	Micro-level actor
22	Nadia al Shizly	Aged	Civilian in Alexandria	Working to raise political awareness and democratic principles among the youth	Wife to former Commander and Chief of the Egyptian Navy	Micro-level actor
23	Naser al-Hour	Middle aged	Hamas Affiliate	Director of passport Department at	N/A	Palestinian authorities

				the Rafah Terminal		
24	Rabab Al Hady	Youth	Egyptian MFA	Second in command Egyptian Embassy in Norway	Egyptian MFA	Authorities
25	Ranya Hakim	Youth	Leading political party	Member of Reform and Development Party	Founding Member, Revolutionary Youth Movement, in Shadow Government	Political elite
26	Yasser Al Najjar	Middle aged	PLO	Palestinian Ambassador to Norway	Palestinian MFA	Palestinian authorities
27	Anonymous	Youth	Egyptian MFA	Deputy in Israel Department	Egyptian MFA	Authorities
28	Anonymous	Middle aged	Leading political party	Member of Freedom and Just Party	MB	Political elite
29	Anonymous	Middle Aged	Tunnel owner	Tunnel owner	Bedouin Sheikh	Micro-level actor
30	Anonymous	Middle aged	Tunnel owner	Tunnel owner	Bedouin Sheikh	Micro-level actor
31	Anonymous	Middle aged	Ermalat tribal family	Elementary Teacher	Elementary Teacher	Micro-level actor
32	Anonymous	Middle aged	El-Badiah tribal family	Bank teller	Tour guide in southern Sinai	Micro-level actor
33	Anonymous	Middle aged	Civilian in northern Sinai	Coffee shop keeper	Member of al-Fawakhria tribe in El-Arish	Micro-level actor
34	Anonymous	Youth	Civilian in northern Sinai	Works as taxi driver at border	Member of Ermalat	Micro-level actor
35	Anonymous	Youth	Civilian in northern Sinai	House wife	Member of Ermalat tribe	Micro-level actor
36	Anonymous	Middle aged	Civilian in northern Sinai	House wife	Member of Ermalat tribe	Micro-level actor
37	Anonymous	Middle aged	Civilian in northern Sinai	Costumes guard		Micro-level actor
38	Anonymous/female	Aged	Civilian in Cairo	Coffee shop owner	Business women	Micro-level actor
39	Anonymous/ female	Youth	Civilian in Cairo	Student	Economics	Micro-level actor
40	Anonymous	Youth	Civilian in Cairo	Student	Engineering	Micro-level actor
41	Anonymous	Youth	Civilian in Cairo	Member of Medical Union	Medical school	Micro-level actor
42	Anonymous	Youth	Civilian in Alexandria	Student	N/A	Micro-level actor
43	Anonymous	Youth	Civilian in Alexandria	Unemployed	Graduate of American University in Cairo	Micro-level actor
44	Anonymous	Youth	Civilian in Alexandria	Unemployed	Shop keeper/ MB	Micro-level actor
45	Anonymous	N/A	Gaza tunnel owner	Tunnel owner	N/A	Micro-level actor
46	Anonymous	N/A	Gaza tunnel owner	Tunnel owner	N/A	Micro-level actor
47	Anonymous	Middle aged	Civilian in Gaza	Researcher	Student	Micro-level actor
48	Anonymous	Middle	Civilian in Gaza	Teacher	Teacher	Micro-level actor

		aged				
49	Anonymous	Youth	Passenger at Terminal	Traveler	N/A	Micro-level actor
50	Anonymous	Youth	Passenger at Terminal	Visiting Gaza	Foreign national of Palestinian descent	Micro-level actor
51	Anonymous/female	Youth	Passenger at Terminal	Student from Gaza	Student at Sinai University	Micro-level actor
52	Anonymous/female	Youth	Passenger at Terminal	Student from Gaza	American University in Cairo	Micro-level actor
53	Anonymous	Middle aged	Passenger at Terminal	Traveler from Gaza	N/A	Micro-level actor
54	Anonymous/ female	Middle aged	Passenger at Terminal	Traveler from Gaza	Married to Egyptian	Micro-level actor
55	Anonymous	Middle aged	Passenger at Terminal	Business man from Gaza	Entrepreneur	Micro-level actor

Aged/ 60- over

Middle aged / 40- 60

Youth/ 40- bellow

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Egypt at the Rafah Border and the Prospects for Gaza

This project is motivated by the need to critically understand the prospective role of Egypt in providing Gaza with a functioning border. As the only sovereign country bordering Gaza aside from Israel, it is vital to understand the perspectives of key Egyptian stakeholders and how their different concerns and interests inform Egypt's management of the Rafah border. The report analyzes the views of Egyptian policy makers, political parties, and NGOs on the management of the Rafah border, investigates the multi-layered interests in the tunnel economy, the construction of

the underground steel barrier along the Egypt-Gaza border, and identify key factors that impact on Egypt's operation of the Rafah border crossing. The report presents findings from a succession of 55 interviews conducted between January and April 2011. The interviews were carried out in the framework of understanding stakeholder agendas, interests, and concerns regarding the Rafah border and crossing, secondly, to determine the factors that impact on the regular operation of the Rafah Crossing Point (RCP), and thirdly, to anticipate strategies for securing effective

border management at Rafah according to international standards.