



المكتب الإعلامي الحكومي
GOVERNMENT MEDIA OFFICE

Fact Sheet on the Disastrous Effects of the Israeli Occupation Siege on the Gaza Strip

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Government Media Office
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Preamble:

Sixteen years have passed since the Israeli occupation authorities imposed the siege and closure on the Gaza Strip, where 2,375,259 people live until the end of 2022 in a population area of 360 km. They represent 71% of the Palestinian refugees who were expelled by Israeli occupation from their cities, villages, neighborhoods, and homes during the Nakba in 1948 and during the Naksa in 1967.

The Israeli occupation has imposed severe restrictions on all aspects of life in Gaza Strip since 2006 - 2007. These restrictions have had catastrophic effects and serious repercussions on the reality in the Gaza Strip in various areas of life.

In addition to imposing the policies of siege and closure, the Israeli occupation authorities deliberately deepened the various crises in more than one way. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed and injured during the continuous aggression of the Israeli occupation with military aircraft and vehicles on a large scale targeting all cities, villages, and neighborhoods in the Gaza Strip without exception.

The Israeli occupation tried to destabilize societal security in various ways through the continuous bombing of cities and different densely populated neighborhoods. In addition, they destroyed hundreds of thousands of housing units, industrial and commercial facilities, schools, mosques, churches, various institutions, roads, and infrastructure facilities such as electricity, water, and sanitation networks. This destruction caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

This report aimed to highlight the extent of the siege crime imposed on the Gaza Strip which is directly applied by the occupation and indirectly shared by other parties. It aimed also to call for an immediate and urgent end to this unjustified siege and to hold all parties involved in this crime accountable.



Summary of the indicators of the disastrous siege on the Gaza Strip:

Following the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council election results, Israeli occupation along with several political regimes has launched a new phase to cope with those election results. The blockade was the most notable and intolerable measure that left behind a bitter Palestinian reality in the Gaza Strip.

In December 2008, Israeli occupation authorities were sharply criticized at the United Nations Forum on Human Rights held in Geneva, where several western countries, including France, Germany, Australia, Britain and Canada, urged Israel to lift its blockade on the Gaza Strip. They said, “The blockade against the Gaza Strip has exacerbated the humanitarian conditions of the citizens; however, the occupation paid no attention to these calls and continued its inhumane blockade which has disastrous effects on all walks of life in the strip.

Below are the most top 10 indicators that are badly affected by the blockade against the Gaza Strip:

1. Political and diplomatic reality:

The core goal of the Israeli blockade against the Gaza Strip was to overthrow the new-elected government even though it came as a natural result of the democratic Palestinian Legislative Council election that took place in January 2006. However, the Israeli occupation and its backers failed repeatedly to achieve their goal. The government has made several attempts to break the siege on Gaza, dispatching convoys and ships to the coastal enclave, but did not end in success. Moreover, dozens of countries around the world rejected the Israeli siege on Gaza, since it violates international law and all international and legal covenants.

2. Health and psychological reality:

The blockade has severely aggravated the health situation in Gaza Strip. ‘Israel’ banned the entry of at least 320 medical devices, including dialysis devices, incubators, heart devices, x-rays, diagnostic devices, laboratory



devices, and ICU-related medical devices. It also prevented the entry of hundreds of spare parts necessary to fix the broken equipment. In addition, 'Israel' banned the entry of essential medicines and medical consumables, where the number of zero stock items is estimated at 390, with a deficit rate reaching 36.1%.

The Israeli blockade also hit hard the Gaza Strip's overall health infrastructure, and deepened the suffering of the patients with chronic and serious diseases, including the kidney, cancer and heart patients.

At the psychological level, the blockade tried to directly target the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip and shake their self-confidence in a bid to break their will and determination. It created a very bad living conditions for them and constituted a major source of their psychological and social stress.

3. Poverty and Food Security:

The Israeli siege has deeply affected the Palestinian reality regarding poverty and food security in the Gaza Strip. It has managed to increase the poverty rate and exacerbated the overall living conditions, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, and it has posed a clear threat to food security. According to government statistics in the Gaza Strip, the poverty rate has exceeded 59%, affecting more than one and a third million Palestinians. The siege has also hindered the delivery of aid to 80% of the population in Gaza, who depend on fluctuating international assistance, as confirmed by a report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) released in October 2020. Additionally, the siege has suspended the funding of major relief and cash programs relied upon by tens of thousands of Palestinian families in need. It has also hindered assistance and services received by 50% of poor families. Meanwhile, approximately 330,000 citizens remain on waiting lists for halted aid.

4. Unemployment and Graduates:

In terms of unemployment, the siege has caused a rise in the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip, reaching 44.1%, which means around 220,000 individuals are jobless. Most of them are graduates, numbering over 200,000 individuals with various university degrees. This has contributed to the mentioned unemployment rate. It is worth noting that 60,165

graduates applied for employment in the government sector in Gaza during 2022, according to official government statistics.

5. Water and Environmental Reality:

The siege has even affected the water sector and the environment, which are essential components of a safe life. While official reports indicate an increasing demand for water amid the scarcity of natural water sources, the siege prevents the implementation of necessary water projects. This has led to excessive depletion of the groundwater reservoir and increased salinity of water. The water budget deficit for the groundwater reservoir has reached approximately 120 million cubic meters annually. The average chloride ion concentration, an indicator of water salinity, has reached around 1035 mg/liter, compared to the World Health Organization's drinking water standard of 250 mg/liter, representing an increase of approximately 314% above the recommended limit for chloride concentration in drinking water. Furthermore, the phenomenon of seawater intrusion has expanded in coastal areas, leading to a continuous rise in groundwater salinity. Many municipal and agricultural wells have been closed, in addition to the desertification of coastal agricultural lands. Moreover, energy sources to operate water facilities such as water wells, desalination plants, and sewage treatment plants are no longer available. This has had a negative impact on the environmental situation in the Gaza Strip.

6. The reconstruction:

The reconstruction of Gaza remains a prominent issue that symbolizes the suffering and tragedy endured by Palestinians in the region. The ongoing blockade has resulted in a significant funding gap in the reconstruction process, estimated at \$200 million. This includes \$106 million for partial damages and \$94 million for complete damages. These financial challenges have accumulated since the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2014 and preceding years, culminating with the most recent aggression in 2022. The cessation of reconstruction, implies the halt of rebuilding hundreds of thousands of residential units, towers, hospitals, healthcare and social centers, economic institutions, civil and private establishments, factories, mosques, police and agricultural institutions, tourist, and various municipal and governmental entities.



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7. The local economy and financial impact:

- The blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip has had a severe impact on its economy, leading to substantial economic decline and a reduction in its ability to generate income. This has been mainly caused by various measures that violate international law, such as the suspension of numerous investments, especially in the private sector, and the termination of numerous projects.
- The blockade has led to a significant decline in the economic growth rate in the Gaza Strip, reducing it from 5.7% during the period of 1994-2005 to 1.1% during the period of 2006-2022. Furthermore, the blockade has weakened the role of the industrial sector in contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Gaza, with its average contribution not exceeding 10.7% of the GDP throughout the years of the blockade. Furthermore, the industrial sector's capacity to employ the workforce in the Gaza Strip has not exceeded 7.3% in the year 2020 during the years of the blockade.
- During the years of the blockade, the agricultural sector's contribution to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remained below 11.4% on average. The comprehensive blockade system has had a significant impact on the commercial sector, leading to a decline in both exports and imports. Prior to the blockade (1996-2006), Gaza's average exports amounted to \$42.5 million, but this decreased to \$7 million between 2007 and 2020. Similarly, the average quantity of imports dropped from \$621.3 million to \$559.3 million during the same period. Studies and research conducted by the government and private entities, as well as media reports, estimate that the cumulative losses resulting from the decline in exports and imports due to the blockade amount to approximately \$10 million per month.
- In addition, the blockade has hindered the provision of full salaries to tens of thousands of employees working in the public sector. It has also halted the allocation of budgets for incentives, development, and capacity-building of civil service employees, impeding their career advancement. These factors have significantly contributed to weakening the local economy and hindering its growth.



- The blockade intentionally imposed restrictions on the movement of funds to and from the Gaza Strip, resulting in a decline in the performance of commercial banks operating in Gaza compared to those in the West Bank. This was a deliberate aspect of the blockade policy aimed at diminishing the role of commercial banks in financing economic development in Gaza. Consequently, banks in Gaza adopted a cautious approach, leading to a decrease in economic activity and deliberately creating a liquidity crisis within the banking sector. These details have been substantiated by rigorous research studies and information obtained from both governmental and non-governmental sources.

8. The agricultural reality and fishing sector:

- The blockade halted the reconstruction of the agricultural sector in the Gaza Strip, which is considered one of the important sectors driving the Palestinian economy. It contributes to 12% of the total GDP and employs around 13% of the Palestinian workforce. The blockade caused significant damage to this vital sector by preventing the restoration of agricultural lands destroyed by the occupation, including uprooting, burning, and damaging hundreds of thousands of fruitful trees such as olive and citrus trees, as well as tens of thousands of agricultural hectares. Additionally, agricultural facilities like livestock and poultry farms were destroyed, and many farmers were prevented from accessing their farms, especially in buffer zones. They were also prohibited from exporting their various agricultural products. These restrictions had a negative impact on meeting the demands of the local market. The Ministry of Agriculture estimated the losses incurred by the agricultural sector due to the blockade and its repercussions to be over \$288 million.

- The blockade has severely restricted fishing activities and limited fishermen to a narrow range. The fishing area has been reduced to only 3-6 nautical miles out of the original 20 nautical miles. The fishing port has been rendered inoperative, resulting in a significant decrease in fishing movements and causing annual losses estimated at \$2 million in fishery resources.

- The limitation on fishing distance has resulted in fishermen abstaining from their regular work. Merely half of the fishermen (2000 individuals) engage in sporadic fishing, causing adverse effects on the living conditions



of 4,160 fishermen and 700 individuals employed in fishery-related occupations. These individuals support around 27,700 family members who are currently unable to fulfill their essential needs, including food, medication, clothing, and education.

- The ongoing blockade still imposes limitations on the delivery of crucial equipment and supplies to fishermen. Items like mobility conveyors, fiberglass, steel cables, and maintenance spare parts are subject to restrictions due to their classification as "dual-use" materials. Moreover, the blockade has resulted in the discontinuation of importing necessary spare parts for boat manufacturing and maintenance, causing the closure of numerous workshops engaged in boat production and repair.
- The actions of the blockade against fishermen and other groups in Gaza are grave infringements on various international agreements and conventions that uphold the right to work. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which specifically recognizes this right. Moreover, these practices violate fundamental principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration on the Progress and Development of Social Affairs, both of which guarantee individuals in society the right to engage in meaningful and productive work. Additionally, these actions run contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which aims to protect civilians during times of occupation and highlights the importance of safeguarding the rights of workers.

9. Border crossings:

The Israeli occupation has maintained a tight blockade on the Gaza Strip by closing all border crossings that are considered the tiny strip's outlets to the outside world.

Gaza's primary crossings include Al-Muntar crossing, referred to as the "Karni" crossing by the Israeli occupation authorities, Al-Awada crossing, referred to as the "Sufa" crossing, Shuja'iyya crossing, referred to as the "Nahal Oz" crossing, Al-Qarara crossing, referred to as the "Kissufim" crossing, Beit Hanon crossing, referred to as the "Erez" crossing, which is operated partially for the movement of people only, and Karm Abu Salem crossing, referred to as the "Kerm Shalom" crossing, which is operated partially for goods, and Rafah crossing, the coastal enclave's only crossing



with an Arab country that is operated partially for the movement of people and goods.

This policy has caused severe disruption to the movement of people and goods. It has also severally affected Palestinian trade with the outside world by banning all exports from the blockaded enclave, particularly to the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948, and other neighboring countries.

Exports from the Gaza Strip comprise over 80 % of the Palestinian total exports – estimated to represent 16 % of the Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP).

As for imports and trade exchange with the outside world, the Palestinian treasury has lost an income of approximately \$190 million as a result of the Israeli siege, leading the deficit in the general budget to increase. Trading losses have been estimated at over \$402 million per year due to the Israeli blockade, according to reports issued by government bodies and NGOs.

Added to that, tens of thousands of Gaza's workers have been banned from accessing their workplaces abroad, leaving them jobless or partially unemployed. In addition, strict restrictions were imposed on imports and exports.

The Israeli siege has barred tens of thousands of lecturers and graduates from travelling abroad for work and academic exchange with educational institutions around the world. Many students also have been unable to pursue their higher studies abroad as a result of the closure of Gaza's crossings, as well as the travel bans and restrictions imposed due to the Israeli blockade.

As part of its inhumane policy against the Palestinian people, the Israeli occupation blocks nearly 6,000 patients, most of whom suffer from serious diseases, including cancer, or are in dire need of urgent and advanced surgeries, from accessing medical treatment abroad per year.

10. Infrastructure and power:

The Israeli siege has brought municipal, street, and wastewater treatment projects to a halt and led to a shortage in equipment and machinery.

The Israeli occupation has bombed Gaza's sole power plant with the aim of aggravating the humanitarian situation in the impoverished enclave.



While its population of two million needs over 600 megawatts to allow for constant access to electricity, Gaza is only able to produce 200 megawatts at best.

The Israeli siege prevented Gaza's municipalities from carrying out projects worth around \$300 million to improve the infrastructure. Meanwhile, the losses incurred by the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government were estimated at \$270 million as a result of the Israeli siege and repeated attacks. The ministry also suffered around \$30 million in indirect losses due to the Israeli blockade.

Conclusion:

The Israeli siege has had seriously catastrophic and inhumane repercussions on all sectors of life in the Gaza Strip. It has created a grim reality that prompted millions of free people worldwide to condemn the blockade and call for an immediate end to it.

The Palestinian citizens of the Gaza Strip are paying a heavy price for this inhumane siege with their lives and blood, which cannot be compensated. That requires all world powers, governments, peoples, and international organizations to truly work on putting an end to the Israeli siege with all means possible.

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