



UNITED NATIONS

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

FIVE YEARS OF BLOCKADE: THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN THE GAZA STRIP

JUNE 2012

FAST FACTS

- ▣ The intensified blockade on the Gaza Strip imposed on June 2007 is beginning its sixth year.
- ▣ Gaza is one of the most densely populated regions in the world (over 4,500 people per sq. km).
- ▣ 34% of Gaza's workforce, including over half its youth, is unemployed.
- ▣ 44% of Gazans are food insecure and about 80% are aid recipients.
- ▣ In 2011, the GDP per capita was almost 17% below the equivalent figure in 2005, before the last Palestinian elections.
- ▣ In 2011 less than one truckload of goods per day exited Gaza, less than 3% the average amount of exports during the first half of 2007.
- ▣ 35% of Gaza's farmland and 85% of its fishing waters are totally or partially inaccessible due to Israeli imposed restrictions.
- ▣ Since June 2010, 73% of UN reconstruction projects submitted to the Israeli authorities have been approved; dozens of other projects have been pending approval for an average of 18 months.
- ▣ A severe fuel and electricity shortage results in outages of up to 12 hours a day.
- ▣ Some 90 million litres of untreated and partially treated sewage are dumped in the sea each day.
- ▣ Over 90% of the water from the Gaza aquifer is unsafe for human consumption without treatment.
- ▣ 85% of schools in Gaza run on double shifts.
- ▣ Some 71,000 new housing units are required to cover current housing needs.
- ▣ Since the intensification of the blockade in 2007, at least 172 Palestinian civilians have been killed and 318 injured while working in tunnels between Gaza and Egypt.
- ▣ During this period, nearly 2,300 Palestinians have been killed and 7,700 injured by Israeli forces, about two thirds of them during the "Cast Lead" offensive. Over a quarter (27%) of all Palestinian fatalities were women and children.
- ▣ Since June 2007, 37 Israelis have been killed and 380 injured in attacks launched from Gaza, 40% of whom were civilians.

1. The land, air and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip is still ongoing. The blockade, imposed by Israel following the Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007, intensified the closure applied since the early 1990s. It is a denial of basic human rights in contravention of international law and amounts to collective punishment.

2. The productive capacity of Gaza's economy has shown almost no recovery, rendering recent economic growth unsustainable. The increased level of economic activity during 2011 resulted largely from inflow of funds from abroad and was concentrated in the services and construction sectors. The continued ban on the transfer of goods from Gaza to its traditional markets in the West Bank and Israel, along with the severe restrictions on access to agricultural land and fishing waters, prevents sustainable growth and perpetuates the high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and aid dependency.

3. Import restrictions, including of basic building materials, have led to the proliferation of tunnels under the border with Egypt. These restrictions, combined with the lack of employment opportunities and the huge reconstruction needs, have pushed thousands of workers, some of them children, to risk their lives every day in the "tunnels industry".

4. The quality of infrastructure and vital services, including in the areas of health, education and water and sanitation, have significantly declined as a result of the import restrictions and the rapid population growth. A failure to address existing gaps would increase the humanitarian vulnerability of the people. Despite the June 2010 measures to ease the blockade, international organisations continue to face challenges in responding to the most urgent humanitarian needs in these fields, due to the complex approval system for projects put in place by the Israeli authorities.

5. The "policy of separation" between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which includes severe restrictions on the movement of goods and people between the two areas, is a central component of the blockade. It prevents people's access to services (including higher education) and livelihoods, disrupts family life, and undermines the viability of the two-state solution.

6. Lack of compliance by all sides with international humanitarian law during escalations continues to result in civilian deaths and injuries. The use by armed groups of civilian built-up areas to launch indiscriminate attacks on southern Israel, as well as the methods employed by the Israeli military to enforce access restrictions to border areas, raise serious protection concerns.



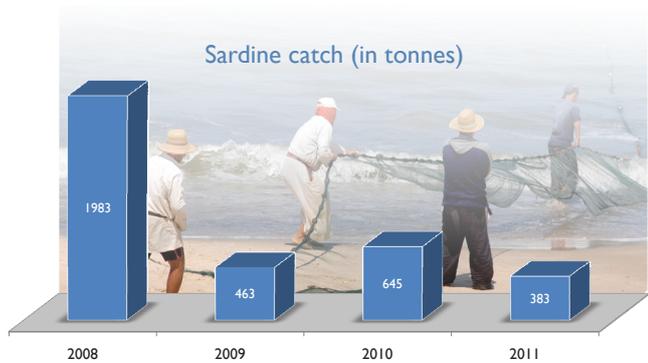


FIVE YEARS OF BLOCKADE: THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN THE GAZA STRIP

June 2012

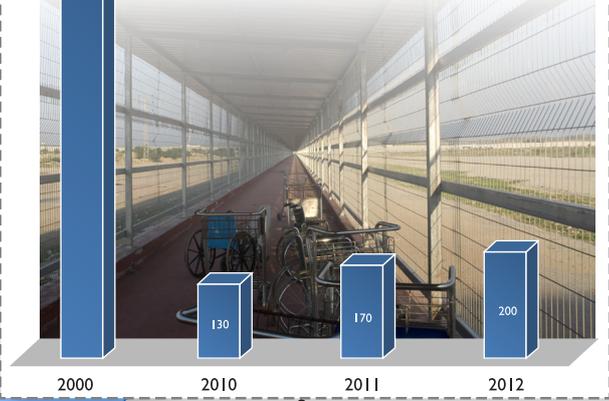
ACCESS TO FISHING AREAS

Since 2009, the Israeli naval forces have prevented fishermen from accessing sea areas beyond three nautical miles from Gaza's coast, where the main sardine shoals are found. This has severely undermined the livelihoods of 35,000 people.



MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE: EREZ CROSSING

Daily average of travelers out of Gaza



SEWAGE

The import restrictions have impeded the expansion and upgrading of Gaza's sewage infrastructure. Nearly 90 million litres of untreated or partially treated sewage are discharged into the sea every day. The contamination of seawater poses a serious health hazard.



ACCESS TO FARMING LAND

Farmland located within 500 meters from the perimeter fence is totally inaccessible, while access to areas up to 1500 meters is risky due to frequent 'warning shots' by the Israeli army. An estimated 75,000 metric tonnes of produce are lost each year as result of limited access.



TUNNELS

The blockade has led to a proliferation of tunnels, where thousands of workers risk their lives every day smuggling restricted goods. The volume of construction materials entering through tunnels is four times larger than through the official crossings.



EXPORTS: KEREM SHALOM (SINGLE) CROSSING

Number of truckloads (January – May)

