



## Gaza Blockade in Numbers *Continued Denial and Deprivation*

Israel's strangling blockade of Gaza is now entering its ninth year, with a devastating and growing impact on the lives of 1.8 million Palestinians. The Gaza blockade has created a fragile humanitarian situation that has been aggravated by the closure of the Egyptian-controlled Rafah crossing, the main gateway to the outside world. The numbers and figures below, alongside stories from ordinary Gazans, highlight some of the shocking effects of the blockade:

### Restrictions on movement of people:

- 535 Palestinian patients, including 86 children, were denied permits to receive medical treatment outside Gaza in 2014. Another 160 patients, including 16 children, have been denied permits in 2015.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 550 students have been denied permits to cross Erez to pursue their studies in universities abroad since 2014.<sup>2</sup>
- The Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt was open 122 days in 2014. In the first four months of 2015, it has been open for a total of only five days.<sup>3</sup>
- Around 30,000 Palestinians, including patients and students, are waiting to cross into Egypt. Of these, 17,000 are registered at the Palestinian Ministry of Interior in Gaza as having priority to travel.<sup>4</sup>

### Impediments to entry of materials:

- Israel severely restricts the import of aggregate, steel bars and cement, which are essential for construction, into Gaza.
- Around 800,000 truckloads of construction materials are essential to build homes, schools, health facilities and other infrastructure<sup>5</sup> that were destroyed or damaged: the current rate of entry of construction materials is only 0.2 per cent. At this rate, it could take more than a century to rebuild Gaza.<sup>6</sup>
- 17,600 families remain homeless as a result of the destruction of their homes in the 2014 Israeli assault.<sup>7</sup> Of these, 1,031 families are sheltering in UNRWA collective centers and another 481 in caravans<sup>8</sup> while they await the reconstruction of their homes.

### Economic collapse:

- Gaza's export sector has virtually disappeared and the manufacturing sector has shrunk by as much as 60 per cent.<sup>9</sup>
- Gaza's GDP losses since the blockade was imposed in 2007 are estimated at above 50 per cent.<sup>10</sup>
- The unemployment rate in Gaza is the highest in the world at 44 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

### Impact on agriculture and livelihoods:

- Farmers' access to their land in the Access Restricted Areas (ARA)<sup>12</sup>, particularly within 300m from the fence with Israel, is prohibited by the Israeli military and is prevented by lethal force.

<sup>1</sup> Information collected from World Health Organization on 24 May 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Information collected from the Palestinian Ministry of Civil Affairs on 2 June 2015.

<sup>3</sup> UN OCHA, Protection of Civilians Report, 24 February – 2 March 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See Shelter Cluster, *Construction Material Tracking for Gaza*, April 2015 and Oxfam, *Vital Building in Gaza Could Take a Century*, February 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Shelter Cluster, *Shelter Cluster Factsheet*, April 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, *Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee* (executive summary), May 2015, p 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



- The ARA takes up 17 per cent of Gaza's total land. In effect, 35 per cent of the available agricultural land in Gaza is unsafe for Palestinians to use. The areas nearest the border fence are the most access restricted.<sup>13</sup>
- Five Palestinian civilians were killed and 131 injured in the ARA in 2014. Another 17 people have been injured so far in 2015.
- Fishers are allowed to access up to six nautical miles of the 20 nautical mile fishing zone allocated to them under the Oslo Accords of 1993. This restriction denies fishers access to the richest fishing areas, which has depleted catches and revenues.
- The Israeli navy detained 58 fishermen within the six-mile limit in 2014 and another 13 in the first four months of 2015.<sup>14</sup>
- Israeli naval forces confiscated 27 boats and damaged another seven within the six-mile limit in 2014. In the first four months of 2015, four boats have been confiscated and six damaged.<sup>15</sup>
- Approximately 1,400 metric tons of catch are lost each year due to restrictions on the Gaza's fishing zone, costing the economy \$26m annually.<sup>16</sup>
- The number of fishers in Gaza is 3,500,<sup>17</sup> but in practice only 1,200 fishermen are able to do fishing.<sup>18</sup>
- 95 per cent of Gaza fishers receive international aid.<sup>19</sup>
- 57 per cent of Gaza's population are food insecure<sup>20</sup> and nearly 80 per cent are aid recipients.<sup>21</sup>

### Collapse of water and sanitation infrastructure:

- 90 million liters of raw and partially treated sewage is dumped daily into the Mediterranean Sea from Gaza due to electricity shortages and the lack of construction materials, including spare parts, for sewage treatment plants.
- 97 per cent of the water supplied through the municipal networks is unfit for human consumption.<sup>22</sup>

## Stories from ordinary Gazans



Mohammed Almlahi, 48, is an unemployed father of ten. He used to work as plasterer but stopped working following the ban on the entry of construction materials into Gaza. Ahmed now completely depends on humanitarian assistance from charity organizations to cover his family's basic needs. Ahmed's 21-year-old daughter could not pursue her secondary schooling because her father could not afford the school fees. "There is nothing I can give to my children. I feel helpless and I see no future for them under these circumstances," Ahmed said. "All I want is just decent work so I can have a dignified life."

<sup>12</sup> The Access Restricted Areas (ARA) extend along the entire northern and eastern perimeters of the Gaza Strip adjacent to the 1949 Armistice line, known as the "Green Line", with Israel.

<sup>13</sup> Information collected from UN OCHA on 6 June 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Information collected from the Protection Cluster on 28 May 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Protection Cluster, *Update on the Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip*, 1 January to 31 December 2014.

<sup>16</sup> AIDA, *Charting a New Course: Overcoming the Stalemate in Gaza*, 13 April 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Information collected from the Union of Agricultural Works Committees on 10 June 2015.

<sup>19</sup> AIDA, *Charting a New Course: Overcoming the Stalemate in Gaza*, 13 April 2015.

<sup>20</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, et al, *Press Release: Food security in Palestine Remains High*, 2014

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, *Economic monitoring report to the ad hoc liaison committee (executive summary)*, May 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Information collected from the PWA on 24 May 2015 .



Amal Rajab is 45 years old and a mother of nine. Her newly built two-story house was destroyed during the latest Israeli offensive against Gaza. Amal now lives with her family in a tent next to her destroyed house. Almost a year has passed without any improvement in the lives of Amal and her children, and the situation is worsening with the high temperatures of the summer. "I have no privacy in the tent and I have to keep myself veiled all day despite the heat inside the tent," Amal said. "We go to neighboring relatives if we want to release ourselves. I'm so devastated and I don't know how long I'll endure this situation. I feel I will collapse soon," Amal said.



Ahmed Abu Mo'amar, 75, owns 20 dunums of land located 500m from the fence with Israel in Al-Shawka area in the south of the Gaza Strip. The land is planted with peach and apricot trees, but he can't reach it most of the time. "We can't grow vegetables, which are more profitable, because they require daily care, which we can't provide under current restrictions," Ahmed said. The Israeli military leveled Ahmed's land three times, the last time in 2012. "We grow and the Israeli military destroys," he said.

Mes'ad Baker, 39, is a fisherman who was shot and severely injured in the leg by the Israeli navy when his boat was confiscated in 2012 while he was fishing within the six-mile limit. Mes'ad lost his only source of income and became overburdened with debt. Mes'ad goes fishing with other fishermen whenever there is a chance but the Israeli navy regularly obstructs and prevents them from fishing within the agreed limit. Mes'ad said that most of his profits from fishing come from sardines, but he missed the sardine season this year because of the Israeli restrictions. "I can't meet my debts because I can't even meet my family needs," he said.





## Recommendations:

Israel, as the occupying power, must abide by its obligations under international law and lift its blockade on Gaza, which imposes a collective punishment on 1.8 million Palestinians, in clear violation of international law. Israel bears a legal responsibility for the consequences of its actions concerning the residents of the Gaza Strip. MA'AN Development Center demands that:

- The international community, including the United Nations' human rights bodies, exert serious political pressure on Israel to end its occupation of the Palestinian territories; lift the Gaza blockade and allow for the unimpeded movement of goods and construction materials into Gaza; and hold Israel accountable for the violations of Palestinian human rights. If it fails in this duty, the international community becomes complicit in the suffering of people in Gaza.
- The European Union (EU) suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement unless Israel takes substantial and immediate steps to open Gaza's border crossings permanently and unconditionally. The EU has committed itself to the highest possible respect for human rights and if it fails to take action in light of Israel's continuing collective punishment of Palestinians in Gaza, its commitment to international human rights and international humanitarian law will be greatly undermined.