



PHOTO: ANNE PAQ

## The Gaza Blockade

For over 10 years, the people of Gaza have lived under an Israeli-imposed blockade that severely limits travel, trade, and everyday life for its 1.8 million residents.

The blockade was first imposed on Gaza by Israel in 2006 after Hamas won the Palestinian elections. It was tightened in 2007 after Hamas took control of Gaza and split from the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. The blockade effectively bans nearly all exports from Gaza, severely limits imports to Gaza, and closes the Gaza border for exit by Gaza residents and entrance by others.

The impact of the blockade has been devastating. Today, Gazans don't have reliable access to clean water,

electricity, and many other services. Construction is limited, hospitals are under resourced, school systems have degraded, and the economy has been destroyed. Gaza's unemployment rate stands at 43 percent—one of the highest unemployment rates in the world—and over 80 percent of the population depends on international assistance to survive.

The United Nations and International Committee of the Red Cross have both declared the blockade to be an illegal form of collective punishment against the Gaza population. The blockade must end, but change will only come through political action.

## Quick Facts

The blockade has devastated the people of Gaza, affecting all aspects of life. According to the U.N.:

- 57 percent of Gaza households are food insecure, and approximately 80 percent receive some form of food assistance.
- Gaza's unemployment rate is over 40 percent—the highest unemployment rate in the world. Youth unemployment is over 60 percent.
- In January 2016, only 352 Gazans exited Erez to Allenby Bridge, compared to an average of 20,000 exits via Rafah monthly when the crossing operated more regularly.
- The monthly average of truckloads of goods exiting Gaza in 2015 through Kerem Shalom was just 10.6 percent of what exited monthly on the eve of the closure in 2007.
- In the first half of 2016, just 175 trucks left Gaza on average each month. This is just 16 percent of the total allowed out of Gaza prior to the blockade.
- Due to fuel shortages and damaged or destroyed electrical infrastructure, there are power outages for up to 18 hours per day in most areas of Gaza.<sup>1</sup>
- 70 percent of households in Gaza have running water for only 6 to 8 hours once every two to four days.<sup>2</sup>
- Over 96 percent of the water extracted from the Gaza aquifer is unsafe for human consumption, while needed filtration equipment cannot be imported to Gaza.<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly 95 million liters of untreated or partially treated sewage is dumped into the sea off of Gaza every day. Equipment needed to build new or maintain existing treatment facilities is banned from entering Gaza.<sup>4</sup>
- Two years after the end of Operation Protective Edge, over 65,000 Palestinians remained homeless with only 30 percent of homes destroyed during the attack rebuilt.<sup>5</sup>

1 UN OCHA, "Gaza: Two Years After" August 2016, [http://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/gaza\\_war\\_2\\_years\\_after\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/gaza_war_2_years_after_english.pdf)

2 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "The humanitarian impact of Gaza's electricity and fuel crisis" (March 2014).

3 UNRWA, "Gaza in 2020: A Livable Place?" <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/publications/gaza/Gaza%20in%202020.pdf>

4 Ibid.

5 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Infographic: Gaza two years after the 2014 hostilities" (August 2016). <http://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-two-years-infographic>



## The Blockade: Failed Policy

In 2006, Dov Weisglass, advisor to then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said that the goal of the blockade was to “put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.” The logic of the Israeli government was that if the Palestinian population suffered enough, they would turn on Hamas and force it to capitulate to Israeli demands. Today, Israel, with support from the U.S. government, claims that the blockade is in place to pressure the people of Gaza to rise up against Hamas as well as to stop Hamas from arming itself and to provide security for Israelis.

This targeting of the Gaza population is what led the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to declare the blockade an illegal form of collective punishment under international law.

After a decade it should be clear that the blockade is a failure. It has not stopped violence, it has not weakened Hamas, and it has not brought Israelis or Palestinians security. All that it has brought is suffering to the civilian population in Gaza, but despite failure, the blockade remains firmly in place with international support.



## What can you do?

### **Demand an immediate end to the blockade on Gaza.**

U.S. government policy officially supports Israel's continued blockade on Gaza—and it is this blockade that has resulted in this crisis facing Gaza's population. The blockade is illegal and immoral and must end.

Contact your government representatives, and demand that they call for an immediate change in U.S. government policy and support the complete end to Israel's blockade on Gaza.

Take action: [afsc.org/endtheblockade](https://www.afsc.org/endtheblockade)



PHOTO: ANNE PAO



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**American Friends  
Service Committee**

**The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)** is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the Quaker belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice. Since 1948, AFSC has worked in the U.S., Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territory with Palestinians, Israelis, and other committed activists to support nonviolence, challenge oppression, and—since 1970—to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory. This work is guided by our "Principles for a Just and Lasting Peace in Palestine and Israel." These principles support the implementation of international human rights and humanitarian law and call for an end to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory, implementation of refugees' right of return, equality, and justice for Palestinians and Israelis. More: [afsc.org](https://www.afsc.org)

### LEARN MORE

The following organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel address and challenge Israel's policies on Gaza:

**Al-Mezan**  
[www.mezan.org/en](https://www.mezan.org/en)

**Palestinian Center for Human Rights**  
[www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en](https://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en)

**Gaza Community and Mental Health Program**  
[www.gcmhp.net/en](https://www.gcmhp.net/en)

**B'Tselem**  
[www.btselem.org](https://www.btselem.org)

**Gisha**  
[www.gisha.org](https://www.gisha.org)

**The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**  
[www.ochaopt.org](https://www.ochaopt.org)