**The Gaza Blockade: 11 years of persecution**

Friends of Al-Aqsa

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<https://www.foa.org.uk/20180820-the-gaza-blockade-11-years-of-persecution/>

August 22 marks the thirteenth anniversary of Israel’s supposed disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The withdrawal of Israeli military personnel and Jewish settlers seemingly brought to an end a 38-year illegal occupation of Gaza. Any sense of reprieve for the Palestinians however, was short-lived.

After forcing an occupied people to hold an election, resulting in the victory of Hamas, Israel imposed a siege around Gaza. An enforced blockade by land, sea and air, which has now existed for eleven years, has yielded nothing but starvation, misery, basic human rights and bloodshed. It is an occupation within an occupation, a living hell, a misery witnessed yet ignored by the global elite.

Uninhabitable enclave

Israel controls Gaza’s airspace, territorial waters, and land borders. Further, the small exit via Egypt, Rafah crossing is de facto under Israeli say that has held over 2 million people locked inside a land mass equivalent of Sheffield, a UK mid-sized city. The severity of the Israeli blockade has meant there is minimal access to essential medical treatment, dangerous food shortages, diminishing water supplies, crippling unemployment, and no way out. Six in ten of Gazans are living under poverty and 80 percent of the population are reliant on hand-outs for survival. Worse still, the Foreign Aid directed to the people of Gaza is often intercepted, restricted, at occasions confiscated, and denied entry by the Israeli regime manning its besieged borders.

Psychological scars and structural ruins, born out of numerous devastating military operations led by Israel, penetrate deep within the hearts and minds of the civilian population in Gaza and the grounds of rubble, remnants of its infrastructure. A UN report published in 2015 suggested that Gaza would be inhabitable within five years – due to the sheer devastation of its infrastructure and de-development – three years on and that nightmarish prediction seems somewhat to becoming a reality.

The unrelenting choke applied by the Israeli regime, which controls and limits Gaza’s power supplies to barely a few hours per day, and severe restriction of the movement of goods and humans makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to leave Gaza. Those who wonder close to the border, either in peaceful protest or to farm their land, risk being shot from the IDF officers afforded the right to kill unarmed civilians .

A tale of unrelenting devastation and civilian casualties

Over the course of last eleven years a swathe of aerial bombardments and large-scale ground-level operations by Israelis have ripped the heart out of this Mediterranean enclave.

* The deadly ‘Cast Lead Operation’ in 2008, resulted in approaching 1,000 civilian fatalities
* ‘Operation Pillar of Defense’ in November 2012 caused over 100 civilian deaths in Gaza and large-scale infrastructure devastation
* At least 2,104 Palestinian died, including 1,462 civilians, of whom 495 were children and 253 women during ‘Operation Protective Edge’ in the summer of 2014
* Hundreds of schools, numerous hospitals, and much of Gaza’s civic and social establishments, including its only power station, have been completely destroyed or severely damaged since the blockade was enforced in 2007

Israel’s regime seeks to justify the Gaza blockade that has kept Gazan civilians in an inhumane condition for the security of its citizens. An illegal occupation which punishes the Gazan’s under a claim to security is like a thief demanding immunity for stealing property while beating the rightful heirs and confining them to a dungeon.

Eleven years on however, the Palestinians continue to defy Israel’s objective and continue to demand their right. It appears Israel is involved in a process of dehumanising the Gazans to a point where their brutality and murders remain outside the register of the world’s moral consciousness.

The siege has been described as a ‘grass-cutting exercise’ whereby Israel seeks to manage the Gaza blockade. It is time to end the siege before the UN prediction materialises and the world sheds crocodile tears. The time to act is now.