

A Critical Appeal to Lift the Israeli Siege on the Gaza Strip

For the seventeenth consecutive year, Israeli authorities have maintained a blockade on the Gaza Strip, in violation of international treaties, norms, and humanitarian principles. This blockade has placed the lives of Palestinian civilians in constant danger and subjected their dignity to repeated and blatant violations.

Since 2007, Israel has imposed a comprehensive and suffocating closure on the Gaza Strip, an area covering 360 square kilometers and currently home to over 2.3 million people, as per the latest local statistics. Israel exerts absolute control over the crossings connecting the Strip to the West Bank and other occupied Palestinian territories, commonly known as the 48 territories. This control restricts the movement of Palestinian citizens between these areas and imposes severe constraints on the importation of essential items such as medicines, medical equipment, food, building materials, and even currency, resulting in dire consequences, including escalating inflation across various humanitarian, health, educational, and economic fronts.

The Israeli authorities' prohibition of sick and injured Palestinians from leaving the Gaza Strip for medical treatment in the West Bank or abroad, coupled with their tight control over the entry of medicines, medical equipment, and food supplies, endangers civilian lives and constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. Such actions breach the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

The Gaza Strip's ongoing siege, the closure of crossings for the import and export of essential goods, restrictions on the Strip's residents' ability to work in the West Bank or abroad, and stringent financial controls have transformed Gaza into a realm of poverty and unemployment. The unemployment rate has increased to 48% for the workforce and 63% for youth, marking the highest unemployment rates globally. Furthermore, 34% of the Gaza Strip's population faces extreme poverty, with 65% grappling with overall poverty, all in clear violation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

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The Israeli authorities' refusal to allow entry to Palestinians and non-Palestinians into the Gaza Strip, coupled with their obstruction of funds entering the region, constitute significant obstacles to the advancement of the education system there. The prohibition of professors and educators from working in Gaza's schools and universities, along with insufficient funding for educational institutions and scientific research, impedes the educational progress and infringes upon the right of Gaza residents to education, a right guaranteed by international norms and treaties.

The successive Israeli aggressions on the Gaza Strip have destroyed its infrastructure, buildings, and roads. The continued denial of access to aid, including financial support and construction equipment, necessary for rehabilitating the infrastructure, renders Gaza uninhabitable, particularly in areas that have been completely ravaged, which contradicts all international norms and conventions.

Recognizing that the Gaza Strip is an integral part of the land occupied in 1967 and a component of the Palestinian state, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution No. 1860 dated 1/8/2009, and UN Security Council Resolution No. 1544 dated 5/19/2004, which stipulates Israel's strict adherence to its responsibilities and obligations in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/59/122 dated 12/10/2004, as well as the principles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the principles of international humanitarian law.

The Palestinian Watch for Human Rights urges the international community and active organizations, led by the United Nations under the leadership of Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres, to take decisive and immediate measures to end the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip. It is imperative to compel the Israeli government to lift the siege, adhere to international laws and treaties, and hold it fully accountable for the consequences of the ongoing blockade.

Palestinian Watch for Human Rights

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