

5 Fallacies in Gaza

and the Facts of Life 5 Years in to the Blockade: trapped by land, air and sea.ⁱ

1. There are always more fish in the sea. *Only if you have access to catch them.*

Since January 2009, Israeli naval forces have restricted the access of Palestinian fishing boats to three nautical miles from Gaza's coast, blocking off access to around 85 percent of Gaza's fishing water.ⁱⁱ In practice, access is sometimes restricted to as little as one nautical mile. Since 2008, the sea blockade has reduced the main fishing catch, sardines, by 90 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ Since the beginning of the blockade in June 2007, the Palestinian fishing yield has decreased by 7,000 metric tons – representing an overall loss of around US\$26.5 million.^{iv} Restrictions have reduced 90 percent of Gaza's fishermen to poverty.^v Fishing has also become physically dangerous. In 2011, there were at least 72 reported incidents of Israel naval vessels opening fire on Palestinian fishing boats, with 4 fishermen injured and 1 lost at sea^{vi}. In addition to incidents of live fire, fishing boats are often forced ashore, with 43 fishermen reportedly arrested and subjected to interrogation last year.^{vii}

2. An education is the best way to get ahead. *Unless there is no opportunity to put your education to work.*

34 percent of Gaza's workforce, including half its youth, is unemployed.^{viii} Since the blockade started in 2007, nearly 30 percent of Gaza's businesses have closed and an additional 15 percent have laid-off 80 percent of their staff.^{ix} Without opportunities to earn their own income, 80 percent of people in Gaza receive aid to get by.^x Primary and secondary education has also been hard hit by the blockade. Due to the ban on import of construction material and delays getting approved materials in there is a shortage of 230 schools in Gaza.^{xi} The shortage means that 85 percent of schools in Gaza run on half-day, double shifts- leading to a reduction in children's class time and the elimination of extracurricular activities, damaging the quality of children's education.^{xii}

3. Flowers can brighten your day. *But they alone can't rebuild the economy.*

The annual level of exports in 2011 was less than 3 percent of pre-blockade levels, with flowers being one of the few items allowed out.^{xiii} In 2012, 9 million stems of carnations were exported from Gaza during flower season, which is 2 million less than were exported in 2011 and 41 million less than were exported before the blockade started in 2007.^{xiv} Since the beginning of the blockade, exports from Gaza have been almost entirely limited to agricultural products destined for the Netherlands as part of a special agreement with the Dutch government. During this time, no exports from Gaza have entered Israel and just a few truckloads of date-bars were allowed to go to the West Bank. Before the blockade Israel and the West Bank accounted for more than 80 percent of Gaza's exports.^{xv} The near ban on other traditional export products (such as textiles, furniture, and processed foods) coupled with limitations on the import of raw materials needed for production, has all but devastated Gaza's economy. With access to 35 percent of Gaza's agricultural land restricted by the so-called 'buffer zone,'^{xvi} or Access Restricted Area, domestic production has also fallen. Due to the restrictions on cultivating land in this area the annual agricultural yield has reduced by 75,000 metric tons, representing a loss of US \$50.2 million each year for the farmers in Gaza.^{xvii} The lives and livelihoods of an estimated 178,000 people are directly affected, with boundaries of the Access Restricted Area often enforced by live fire.^{xviii} Since the beginning of 2012, there have been at least 41 incidents of the Israeli army opening fire on civilians in the Access Restricted Area with 1 civilian killed and 57 others injured.^{xix}

4. Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day. *Just not from the tap.*

90-95 percent of the water from Gaza's underground water aquifer is not safe to drink.^{xx} Without safe drinking water from their tap, most people in Gaza pay for water from private vendors. This water isn't much safer, however, as it was found to have 10 times more pollutants than is considered safe to drink.^{xxi} The blockade has banned or delayed construction materials and spare parts needed to repair Gaza's collapsing water and sanitation network. Without proper water and sanitation services, 90 million litres of untreated or partially treated sewage is dumped into Gaza's sea every day. As the sewage floats, it brings health implications extending beyond the entire accessible fishing zone.^{xxii} If you get sick from the water you can't count on a quick prescription cure. More than 202 out of 480 essential drugs in Gaza are currently out of stock.^{xxiii}

5. An open border means free movement. *The opening of Rafah doesn't mean free movement for people or goods.*

While an average of 920 people use the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt every day they still need to get security clearance from the government of Israel before they can cross.^{xxiv} Using the Rafah border crossing also doesn't help Palestinians in Gaza get everywhere they want to be. In 2012, on average, there are only 4,000 crossings made by Palestinians travelling through

Erez each month. This is compared to more than half a million departures through Erez in September 2000.^{xxv} The opening of Rafah border crossing also has little to no impact on the movement of goods, as it is not equipped for commercial purposes. Of the 4 crossings between Gaza and Israel that are equipped to handle imports and exports, 2 have been permanently closed and 1 was demolished. At the 1 remaining crossing (Kerem Shalom), the level of imports remains between 40 and 50 percent of pre-blockade levels, with limitations on vital goods, such as construction materials, agricultural inputs, spare parts and fuels in place.^{xxvi} While many of these items are available on the black market through the underground tunnels beneath Gaza and Egypt, supply and quality are not consistent- and without jobs, those most affected by the blockade are unable to afford them.

The Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) is a coordinating body of more than 80 international aid and development agencies working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. The above is for information only and not attributable to AIDA, but to the sources cited.

For media enquiries, please contact Willow Heske at willow.heske@oxfamnovib.nl or +972 (0) 597133646

ⁱ Following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, Israel has imposed an unprecedented blockade on all border crossings in and out of the Gaza Strip. A maritime blockade was also enforced, now at 3 nautical miles from the Gaza coast line.

ⁱⁱ Oxfam, Weekly Gaza Update, 20- 26 May 2012. Israel also enforces an air blockade.

ⁱⁱⁱ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'The Monthly Humanitarian Monitor,' November 2011.

^{iv} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Fragmented Lives. Humanitarian Overview 2011,' May 2012.

^v 90% of Gaza's 4000 fishermen are now considered either poor (with a monthly income of between 100 and 190 US dollars) or very poor (earning less than 100 dollars a month), up from 50% in 2008. International Committee for the Red Cross, 'Gaza closure: not another year!', June 2011.

^{vi} Oxfam, Gaza Update, 2011. Figures compiled from United Nations Relief Work Agency Daily Situation Reports for 2011.

^{vii} Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Update The Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip, January-December 2011.

^{viii} OCHA factsheet, June 2012.

^{ix} [Palestinian Federation of Industries, May 2012](#)

^x Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Refugee and Works Agency for Palestine Refugee and World Food Programme, 'Socio-Economic and Food Security (SEFSec survey, 2011).

^{xi} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Humanitarian Monitor, July 2011. Israel has approved the construction of approximately 40 new schools in the Gaza Strip, although these buildings have not started. There are often significant delays in material entering to begin projects.

^{xii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Monthly Humanitarian Monitor, June 2011.

^{xiii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Factsheet, June 2012.

^{xiv} Oxfam, Weekly Gaza Update, 29 April- 5 May 2012.

^{xv} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Fragmented Lives,' May 2012.

^{xvi} Initially unilaterally enforced up to 150-metre, Israel extended it to 300 metres in May 2009. The precise areas designated by Israel as the "buffer zone" are unknown and at times extend up to 1.5 kilometers inside the Gaza Strip, which is only 5-12 kilometers wide. Israel restricts Palestinians' access to the land located in the "buffer zone", sometimes through the use of live fire. From January to May 2011, at least 19 civilians have been killed, including seven children and 252 others were injured, including 73 children. (Diakonia, 2012)

^{xvii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Between the Fence and a Hard Place, 2010.

^{xviii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Between the Fence and a Hard Place, August 2010.

^{xix} Oxfam, Weekly Gaza Update, 20- 26 May 2012.

^{xx} EWASH, How Gaza's Blockade Impacts on Water and Sanitation, February 2011.

^{xxi} Save the Children and Medical Aid for Palestine, 'Gaza's Children: Falling Behind. The Effect of the Blockade on Child Health in Gaza,' June 2012.

^{xxii} Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, June 2012.

^{xxiii} Information received from the Gaza Central Drug Store, May 2012.

^{xxiv} Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2012: Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories' January 2012.

^{xxv} Gisha, A Guide to the Gaza Closure: In Israel's Own Words, September 2011.

^{xxvi} Oxfam, Weekly Gaza Update, 20-26 May 2012.