

PAPER 7 BREAKING GAZA

A CRASH COURSE ON THE TRUTH
collective punishment and incarceration of an entire population



photo credit: Zoriah / www.zoriah.com

THE VERITAS PAPERS

A 12 PART SERIES BROUGHT TO YOU BY
WWW.VERITASHANDBOOK.ORG

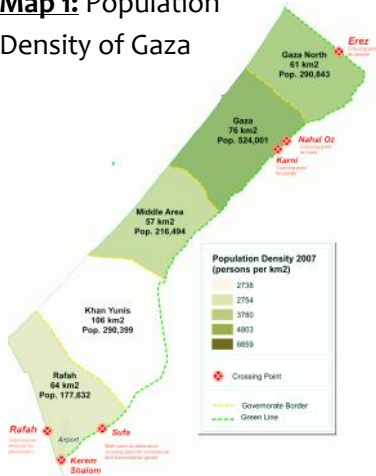
THE GAZA STRIP



GAZA IS ONE OF THE MOST DENSELY POPULATED AREAS IN THE WORLD: 1.6 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN AN AREA ONLY 360 SQ KM LARGE.

1948 REFUGEES

Map 1: Population Density of Gaza



With the mass expulsion of Palestinians in 1948, many refugee camps were established. 8 of these refugee camps are in the Gaza strip, where refugees make up two-thirds of Gaza's population, and number over 1 million.

MILITARY RULE 1967-2005

After 1967, over 8000 settlers illegally moved into the Gaza Strip in 21 settlements, while the rest of the Palestinian population suffered under Israeli military rule. Israel agreed to withdraw its settlers from the Gaza Strip in the Oslo Accords, and in 2005, it

destroyed its settlements inside the Gaza Strip.

2005 ISRAELI "DISENGAGEMENT"

Although Israel made a huge show of how difficult it was for them to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, all settlers were compensated and taken care of. The infrastructure of these settlements (including thousands of houses, water infrastructure and resources) was destroyed. Many settlers were actually relocated (temporarily or otherwise) to other settlements in the Occupied West Bank. The settlement population in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) grew 25% from 2005-2010, a population increase of almost 64 000, almost eight times the amount of settlers that existed in the Gaza Strip. This was not a big concession for Israel to make, considering the settlements were illegal at their inception. After the disengagement, Israel still maintains a security zone within Gaza borders, shooting at anyone within range. It also maintains control of Gaza's borders, airspace, and waters. These measures mean that Gaza is still occupied. Further, the blockade has led to the plummeting of Gaza's economy and has created a grim humanitarian situation.

ELECTION OF HAMAS GOVERNMENT

In 2006, Palestinians held free and fair elections that were monitored by the UN, in which Hamas won a majority of seats. Western nations then sanctioned the

administration due to the presence of Hamas. After extensive fighting, Fatah left the national unity government and both Egypt and Israel imposed a blockade onto Gaza. Israel has refused to work with Hamas as the representative of the Palestinian people, even if they were elected fairly. In 2011, Hamas and Fatah agreed to co-operate and organize elections for 2012.

OPERATION CAST LEAD

In 2008, an Egypt-brokered cease-fire was negotiated between Hamas and Israel. Israel broke the truce in November, when it invaded Gaza and killed six members of Hamas. On December 27th 2008 (after dropping leaflets of 'warnings'), Israel began an onslaught on Gaza it called "Operation Cast Lead" that was to last 22 days. Its stated aim was to end rocket-fire (that began after Israel broke its ceasefire) and to put a stop to the import of arms in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of bombs were dropped, and white phosphorus was used on the civilian population. The warfare resulted in the absolute crushing of Gaza's economy and infrastructure. Thousands of homes were demolished, and tens of thousands are in need of repair. Public infrastructure like hospitals and schools were also bombed and Gaza, an already starving region, was literally crushed. The hostilities resulted in the death of 345 Palestinian children, and a total of 1397 Palestinian casualties, the vast majority of them civilian. 9 Israelis were killed, 3 of whom were civilians, with little damage. Inquiries into the war have resulted in numerous human rights organizations and bodies finding Israel guilty of war-crimes and/or crimes against humanity, due to the fact that it purposefully aimed at innocent civilians. Such organizations include (but are not limited to), the United Nations (see: Goldstone Report), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and B'Tselem.

BLOCKADE

With all of the destruction of Operation Cast Lead, the UN estimated that \$1.2 billion would be required for reconstruction. However, Israel and Egypt continued to impose their blockade, restricting even imports of construction material and humanitarian aid. Thus, the people of Gaza continued to suffer. In 2010, Israel caved into some pressure and eased restrictions. However, **imports are less than 40% of their pre-2007 levels.** Exports are rare and limited to agricultural produce to Europe. (OCHA-OPT October 2011). The situation has become increasingly dire, as medical supplies are limited, as are necessary supplies. With the blockade, an extensive network of illegal



Palestinians killed (1397)

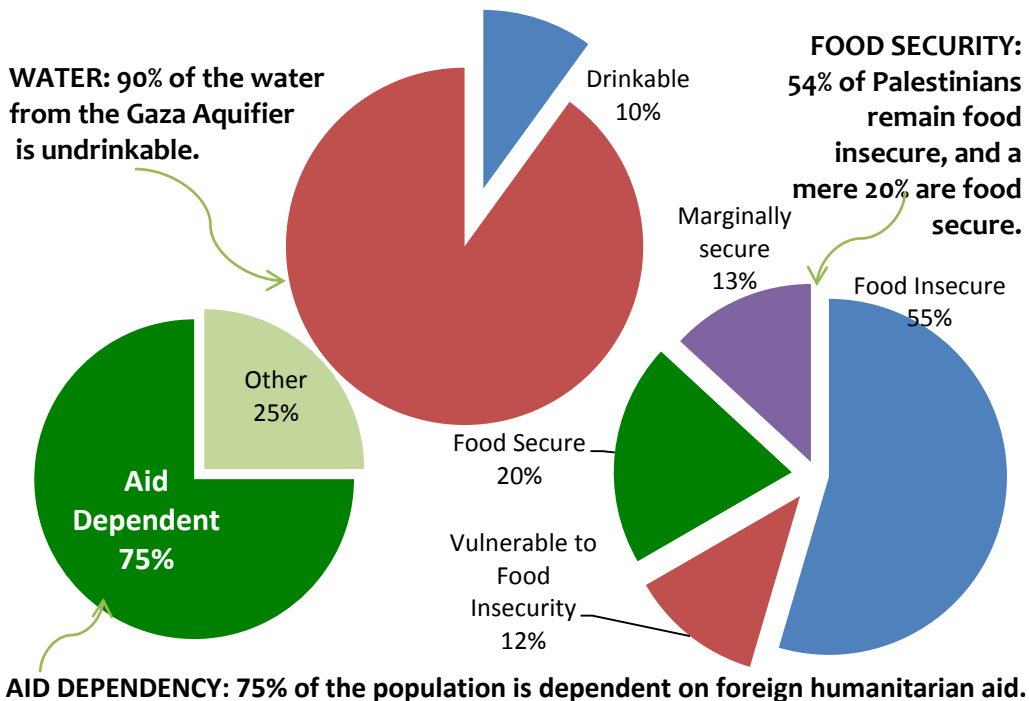
Israelis killed (9)

Graph 1: This shows the death toll of Palestinians and Israelis in Operation Cast Lead. The top portion denotes the number of children (under the age of 18) killed. **This graph is to scale and is not an exaggeration.**

tunnels into Egypt was created, in what is now a thriving industry. Gaza has not been able to recover from the destruction of Operation Cast Lead, and it will be unable to do so as long as the blockade continues.

THE COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT OF A CIVILIAN POPULATION IS ILLEGAL UNDER THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION. THIS IS ISRAEL'S STATED AIM IN THE BLOCKADE OF GAZA.

» THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA «



THIS IS JUST ONE PART OF A 12-PART SERIES. ALL OF THE VERITAS PAPERS CAN BE DOWNLOADED FOR FREE AT WWW.VERITASHANDBOOK.ORG

The Veritas Papers is a series of 12 pamphlets designed to shed light on some of the most pressing and controversial issues regarding the longest occupation in modern history. The Veritas Papers were released by *The Veritas Handbook: A Guide to Understanding the Struggle for Palestinian Human Rights*, which is available for a free PDF download on our website.

© 2012 *The Veritas Handbook*. These pamphlets can be distributed and printed freely, but cannot be sold or distributed for any form of profit and/or financial compensation.