

Israel's Slow-Motion Genocide in Occupied Palestine

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Imagine life under these conditions:

Living in limbo under a foreign occupier. Having no self-determination, no right of return, and no power over your daily life. Being in constant fear, economically strangled, and collectively punished.

Having your free movement denied by enclosed population centers, closed borders, regular curfews, roadblocks, checkpoints, electric fences, and separation walls. Having your homes regularly demolished and land systematically stolen to build settlements for encroachers in violation of international law prohibiting an occupier from settling its population on conquered land.

Having your right to essential services denied - to emergency health care, education, employment, and enough food and clean water. Being forced into extreme poverty, having your crops destroyed, and being victimized by punitive taxes. Having no right for redress in the occupier's courts under laws only protecting the occupier.

Being regularly targeted by incursions and attacks on the ground and from the air. Being willfully harassed, ethnically cleansed, arrested, incarcerated, tortured, and slaughtered on any pretext, including for your right of self-defense. Having no rights on your own land in your own country for over six decades and counting. Vilified for being Muslims and called terrorists, Jihadists, crazed Arabs, and fundamentalist extremists. Victimized by a slow-motion genocide to destroy you.

According to Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, Israel has conducted state-sponsored genocide against the Palestinians for decades and intensively in Gaza. In a September 2006 Electronic Intifada article titled "Genocide in Gaza" he wrote:

"A genocide is taking place in Gaza....An average of eight Palestinians die daily in the Israeli attacks on the Strip. Most of them are children. Hundreds are maimed, wounded and paralyzed. (It's become) a daily business, now reported (only) in the internal pages of the local press, quite often in microscopic fonts. The chief culprits are the Israeli pilots who have a field day," like shooting fish in a barrel. Why not, they're only Muslims, so who'll notice or care.

International law expert Francis Boyle does and in March 1998 proposed that "the Provisional Government of (Palestine) and its President institute legal proceedings against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Hague for violating the" Genocide Convention. He stated that "Israel has indeed perpetrated the international crime of genocide against the Palestinian people (and the) lawsuit would....demonstrate that

undeniable fact to the entire world.”

Israel is a serial human rights international law abuser. The UN Human Rights Commission affirms that it violates nearly all 149 articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention that governs the treatment of civilians in war and under occupation and is guilty of grievous war crimes. The Commission also determined that as an occupying power Israel has committed crimes against humanity as defined under the 1945 Nuremberg Charter.

Geneva, Nuremberg and other international human rights laws guarantee what Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: that everyone “has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” Article 6 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also affirms it in saying that every “human being has the inherent right to life.” Official Israeli policy is to deny it to Palestinians under occupation, especially Gazans under siege.

On November 5, it was egregiously tightened after Israel closed all commercial crossings and banned virtually all permissible items – previously severely restricted and in limited amounts.

On November 21, Haaretz reported that Karen AbuZayd, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) commissioner-general said Gaza faces a humanitarian “catastrophe” if Israel maintains its blockade. She called the current closure the gravest since the early days of the Second Intifada eight years ago. “It’s been closed for so much longer than ever before....and we have nothing in our warehouses....It will be a catastrophe if this persists, a disaster.”

Out of Gaza’s 1.5 million population, UNRWA provides vitally needed rations for 820,000 of its refugees, and the UN World Food Program aids another 200,000 people. They supply about 60% of daily needs, now effectively shut off and nearly exhausted – including food, medicines, fuel, and other basic essentials.

On November 17, 31 containers of foods and medicines were allowed in through Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing, southeast of Rafah. It was closed, along with other border crossings, for the previous two weeks. These amounts are hugely deficient and amount to less than 10% of what entered Gaza before Israel’s June 2007 imposed siege.

Also allowed in was 427,000 liters of fuel or barely enough to operate Gaza’s power plant for a day. It’s effectively shut down, and at least 30% of the population is without electricity and around 70% experiences lengthy power outages for days or weeks.

On November 20, AP reported that Israeli officials “stood by (their) decision to shut cargo crossings into the Gaza Strip, brushing off pleas to ease the blockade from United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon.” Of course, the Strip has been mostly isolated since Israel’s imposed siege 18 months ago that created a humanitarian crisis now intensified.

Why so was stated to the Jerusalem Post by senior IDF General Amos Gilad: Because “ Hamas is committed to the destruction of the state....It (also) wants to take over the PLO.” Unmentioned are the facts that refute this assertion. After Ismail Haniyeh became Hamas prime minister in 2006, he offered the Bush administration peace and a long-term truce in return for an end to Israel’s (illegal) occupation. He was rebuffed the way he is from Israel for the same offer.

Again why so? Israel and Washington are allied in a joint enterprise and need enemies, aka "terrorists." While maintaining an illusory "peace process," none whatever exists nor is any effort made to address equity for the Palestinians. What matters is joint-control of the region. Israel as the local hegemon. America as part of its world empire and all vital resources in it, especially oil, of course.

In the 1980s, former prime minister Yitzhak Shamir admitted that Israel waged war against Lebanon in 1982 because there was "a terrible danger....not so much a military one as a political one." So a pretext was arranged the way it always is to invent threats and avoid resolution.

In January 2006, it was policy again after Hamas won a resounding democratic majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). As a result, they and the Palestinians paid dearly. Israel, America and the West ended all outside aid, imposed a crippling economic embargo and sanctions, and politically isolated the ruling Hamas government. An intensive crackdown followed that continues to this day - regular interventions, attacks, ruthless repression, and the imposition of a medieval siege on Gaza, now intensified.

On November 19, the Territory's largest flour mill shut down for a lack of wheat, and the UN suspended cash grants to 98,000 poor Gazans because of a shortage of Israeli currency.

The world community has been silent. Conditions continue to deteriorate, and Christian Aid is speaking out. It accused Israel of collective punishment in violation of international law. Under Fourth Geneva's Article 33:

"No protected person (under occupation) may be punished for an offense he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measure of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited (as well as) Reprisals against protected persons and their property."

Costa Dabbagh from the Near East Council of Churches (a Christian Aid partner) says "Simply letting food into Gaza is not enough," and precious little is arriving. Its people "are fed and kept alive without dignity and the international community should be blamed for it." It's "not acceptable to be waiting for food to come. (Gazans) want to live freely with Israel and other countries in peace. (They're) not against any individual or government (but) are against imprisonment."

They're also against starving, extreme deprivation, no effective outside aid, and no support from world or other Arab leaders in their behalf. At the moment, three of five mills have stopped operating, and the two others are about to for lack of wheat. Several bakeries are closed for lack of flour, fuel, cooking gas and electricity.

Of Gaza's 72 bakeries, 47 produce Syrian bread (the most popular kind); 29 of them stopped operating; eight others are at partial capacity; 10 bake Iraqi bread, and 15 others different varieties and pastries. None are in full operation, and all may have to close for lack of supplies and power. Gazans are being strangled and starved.

Health facilities are also in crisis and their patients endangered because of their limited ability to provide services. In addition, 45 vital medicines are embargoed and unavailable. Another unconscionable act.

Shifa Hospital is Gaza's largest and seriously hampered. Besides a lack of power, medicines

and other supplies, its equipment needs repair and has no readily available spare parts. Its main generator is in disrepair. Its MRI machine can't operate without electricity. It's short on gas for disinfection and to prepare food for patients. Concern is growing that much other essential equipment may also stop working or have to shut down for lack of power.

Shifa's director, Hassan Khalaf, and the Red Cross describe the situation as critical. Lives are at risk. The intensive care unit can't operate. Electronic equipment in the newborn baby unit doesn't function, and the staff has to manually pump oxygen to all infants. In addition, stocks of about 160 essential medicines have run out and another 120 are running low. Shifa can't run very long under these conditions.

Nor can Gaza's other hospitals and all other operations in the Territory - an intolerable situation barely reported on in the dominant US media. Inverting the truth, they portray Israel heroically as a democratic island in a hostile Arab sea.

They won't explain that Israel is obligated to provide essentials under Fourth Geneva's Article 55. It states:

"To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population; it should, in particular, bring in the necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other (essential) articles if the resources of the occupied territory are inadequate." Israel continues to violate this law and all others.

As Andrea Becker of the UK-based Medical Aid for Palestinians states: For Israelis, "international law was tossed aside long ago." The result for Gazans is "exhaustion gripping hold of (them) all. Survival leaves (them) little if no room for political engagement - and beyond exhaustion, anger and frustration are all that is left."

A Partial Border Reopening

On November 24, Haaretz reported that "Israel partially (opened) its border crossings with the Gaza Strip (today) to allow the transfer of humanitarian aid (after) all but completely (keeping them) shut for (the past) 19 days." Defense officials let in "44 trucks with basic goods....through Kerem Shalom crossings" in the South.

According to the Ma'an News Agency, another 200 truckloads of UN humanitarian aid and 25 more containing food will also be allowed through Kerem Shalom. This is helpful but woefully short of what the Strip needs regularly to care for its 1.5 million people, most of whom rely solely or mainly on outside aid.

Whether this additional aid will even arrive is now open to question, according to Haaretz (on November 25). It reported that Israel "closed its crossings with Gaza again," supposedly after two Qassam rockets were fired on Sunday, one on Monday, and another on Tuesday. Unmentioned are the regular and devastating IDF attacks against Palestinian civilians who have little more than crude weapons for self-defense and are no match against Israel's overpowering force.

According to Haaretz on November 26, some aid may be forthcoming and surprisingly from Libya. It "sent a ship carrying 3000 tons of humanitarian aid to Gaza" to break Israel's blockade. The International Middle East Media Center called on other Arab states to do the same - flout the blockade and send aid even with no assurance Israel will allow it in. It's been very effective preventing most everything so far and shows no signs of relenting.

A Shocking Red Cross Report

On November 15, the London Independent headlined an article titled; "Chronic malnutrition in Gaza blamed on Israel." Writer Donald Macintyre referred to a leaked Red Cross report he called "explosive."

It chronicled "the devastating effect of the siege that Israel imposed after Hamas (took control of Gaza) in June 2007 and notes that the dramatic fall in living standards triggered a shift in diet that will damage the long-term health of (Gaza's population). Alarming deficiencies (showed up) in iron, vitamin A and vitamin D."

The report goes on to say that "heavy restrictions on all major sectors of Gaza's economy, compounded by a cost of living increase of at least 40%, is causing progressive deterioration in food security for up to 70 per cent of (the) population. That in turn is forcing people to cut household expenditures down to survival levels."

Chronic malnutrition is rising steadily, and "micronutrient deficiencies are of great concern." Since 2007, the reported cited a switch to "low cost/high energy" cereals, sugar and oil and away from higher-cost animal products, fresh fruits and vegetables. This type diet assures long-term harmful consequences for people on it.

The Red Cross said that "the (18 month) embargo has had a devastating effect for a large proportion of households who have had to make major changes on the composition of their food basket." They now rely 80% on cereals, sugar and oil. In addition, people are selling assets, cutting back on clothing and children's education, scavenging for discarded items, and doing virtually anything to survive.

The report refers to economic disintegration and that prolonging the current situation risks permanently damaging households and their capacity to recover. The study was conducted from May to July 2008.

Mark Regev, spokesman for Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, had little response except to say that the people of Gaza were being "held hostage" to Hamas' "extremist and nihilist" ideology. In fact, Hamas wants peace, has repeatedly been conciliatory, and its founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, said earlier that armed struggle would cease "if the Zionists ended (their) occupation of Palestinian territories and stopped killing Palestinian women, children and innocent civilians."

That offer is repeatedly rejected. More recently, Hamas offered to maintain peace and recognize Israel in return for a Palestinian state inside pre-1967 borders, its Occupied Territories. That, as well, is a non-starter for Israel. It conflicts with its West Bank plan to colonize the Territory and ethnically cleanse its rightful inhabitants in violation of international law.

Israeli Clampdown on Human Rights Organizations and the Media

Over 20 human rights organizations sought entry to Gaza but were denied to prevent them from seeing and reporting on conditions on the ground. A delegation representing the Coordination Forum of The Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) arrived at Erez Crossing with the required permit and were still prevented from entering.

International journalists are also banned. The AP head and Israeli Foreign Press Association

chairman, Steven Gutkin, said journalists called and complained. In response, the association appealed to the government without success. "We consider it a serious problem for freedom of the press. We think that journalists have to be placed in a special category. A blanket ban on people going into Gaza should not apply to journalists," Gutkin explained.

"We are hoping that this is not the start of a policy of banning journalists from Gaza. We would like to point out that when times are tough, and when things heat up, it is important for journalists to be able to enter" and report on it.

A BBC media crew was also refused entry along with Conny Mus from Dutch television station RTL after being told he and his crew had permission.

Even Haaretz objected in a recent editorial titled: "Open Gaza to media coverage." It stated: "To serve their function sufficiently, representatives of the Israeli and international press must be in Gaza, just like in any other conflict region around the world. There is no way to cover (events there) without free access...."

Haaretz called on the Israel Press Council, journalist associations, editors, writers, and the public to "raise their voices in protest." It also asked the defense establishment "to immediately lift the media closure."

The Israeli press has been banned from entering Gaza for the past two years. Only Haaretz correspondent Amira Hass has been there. She then left and could only get back in by sea, and not easily or safely.

Orwell would appreciate how Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Peter Lerner responded: "There is no decision not to allow journalists in." The Israeli foreign ministry said no restrictive order was issued in spite of clear evidence it's being enforced.

Hostilities in Gazan Waters

The Israeli navy is also in action. It arrested three human rights activists: Darlene Wallach from America, Andrew Muncie from Britain, and Vittorio Arrigoni from Italy as they accompanied Gaza fishermen in waters nowhere near ones under Israeli control. The three were imprisoned, are on hunger strike in protest, and may face deportation or worse as Israeli justice is harsh and not forthcoming against opponents of its policies.

Under the Oslo Accords, Palestinians can fish as far out as 30 kilometers. Forty thousand fishermen and their dependents rely on their catch for their livelihoods and sustenance. Israel egregiously impedes them, and after Hamas took control of Gaza, it restricted fishing to within six kilometers of shore (in less productive shallow waters) and rigorously enforces it. Those exceeding the limit risk being shot or arrested and their boats confiscated or destroyed – another serious international law violation.

Saber Al-Hissie is one of them. He's been fishing in Gazan waters for 15 years, his father and grandfather before him. He spent half his life at sea, "but every day we face problems from Israeli gunboats," he explained. "They follow us, and then they start shooting at us because they want to force us to stop working."

Thousands of fishermen live in Gaza, mostly in and around Gaza City where the main harbor is located. Al-Hissie is one of them and describes the restrictions Israel imposes on him and others trying to earn a living from the sea.

“If we sail six miles out to sea, then maybe we will be safe. But if we go any further, the Israelis always harass us. They circle the boats, they shoot towards us, and recently they started using water cannon to attack us.” He won’t exceed the limit to protect his boat, but it’s scared with bullet holes anyway.

He and others aren’t safe wherever they fish. They’re harassed and attacked daily. “Unless you see it for yourself, you cannot believe the situation we are facing,” he explains. It decimated local fishing. Ten years ago, Gazan fishermen caught about 3000 tons a year. It’s now less than 500 and another part of the Gaza siege, Israel’s war on its people, and its ongoing slow-motion genocide. “We just want to fish and support our families,” says Saber. “We are not committing any crimes, but they are.”

End the Israeli Blockade and Stop the Genocide

On November 24, UN General Assembly president Miguel D’Escoto Brockmann said Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians was like “the apartheid of an earlier era.” His remarks were at an annual debate marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He added: “We must not be afraid to call something what it is” since the UN passed the International Convention against the crime of apartheid.

Israel’s response was familiar. Its UN ambassador, Gabriela Shalev, called Brockmann an “Israel hater.” He’s a 75-year old Catholic priest. If he were Jewish, she’d have accused him of being “self-hating.”

On November 20, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, called for an immediate end to Israel’s blockade. In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) audaciously expressed shock at what it called a one-sided statement.

The High Commissioner’s call came after mounting reports of human rights and humanitarian concerns. For its part, Israel claims its siege is a necessary response to mortar and rocket attacks on Israeli towns and military posts. They’re little more than pin pricks and only occur in response to sustained and brutal Israeli attacks against Gazan civilians, including men, women and children – a long-standing practice for decades with overwhelming force against light arms and homemade weapons as well as children throwing rocks. It hardly justifies a medieval siege against 1.5 million people and the horrific fallout it causes. And for what?

For five months through November 3, Hamas and Israel were at peace as a result of an agreed on Egyptian-brokered hudna (or truce). On November 4 it ended when the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) entered Gaza (without cause) and killed six Hamas officers supposedly because of tunnels close to the Kisufim roadblock. Thereafter, and in spite of both sides calling for peace, IDF hostilities continued.

Israel is a serial aggressor. Hamas responds in self-defense (as do West Bank Palestinians). Reality is turned on its head. Lightly-armed Gazans are called terrorists, and the world’s fourth most powerful military its victims.

In fact, Gazans are grievously harmed, impoverished, slaughtered and now starved. Israel claims it as a right. International law is a non-starter, and a state of war exists against innocent men, women and children with no world efforts made to stop it.

The Washington – Israeli axis believes strife, instability, and a “war on terror” can remake

the Middle East and place it firmly under their control. No matter that it failed hugely in Iraq, the same in Afghanistan, and for over six decades in Occupied Palestine.

Today starving Gazans won't be silenced. They keep protesting, and according to Hamazah Mansur, head of the Jordanian-based Islamic Action Front's six-member parliamentary bloc: If conditions in the Territory worsens, "Arab rulers should expect an earthquake that would shake their countries and regimes." It's high time something shook them out of their silent complicity with decades of slow-motion genocide, now worse than ever in Gaza under siege.

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