

POEM: “What Is Not Allowed”

By [Richard Tillinghast](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [FLOTILLA TO GAZA, PALESTINE](#)

POEM

No tinned meat is allowed, no tomato paste,

no clothing, no shoes, no notebooks.

These will be stored in our warehouses at Kerem Shalom
until further notice.

Bananas, apples, and persimmons are allowed into Gaza,

peaches and dates, and now macaroni

(after the American Senator’s visit).

These are vital for daily sustenance.

But no apricots, no plums, no grapes, no avocados, no jam.

These are luxuries and are not allowed.

Paper for textbooks is not allowed.

The terrorists could use it to print seditious material.

And why do you need textbooks

now that your schools are rubble?

No steel is allowed, no building supplies, no plastic pipe.

These the terrorists could use to launch rockets
against us.

Pumpkins and carrots you may have,

but no delicacies,

no cherries, no pomegranates, no watermelon, no onions,

no chocolate.

We have a list of three dozen items that are allowed,
but we are not obliged to disclose its contents.

This is the decision arrived at
by Colonel Levi, Colonel Rosenzweig, and Colonel Segal.

Our motto:

'No prosperity, no development, no humanitarian crisis.'

You may fish in the Mediterranean,
but only as far as three km from shore.

Beyond that and we open fire.

It is a great pity the waters are polluted –
twenty million gallons of raw sewage dumped into the sea every day
is the figure given.

Our rockets struck the sewage treatments plants,
and at this point spare parts to repair them are not allowed.

As long as Hamas threatens us,
no cement is allowed, no glass, no medical equipment.

We are watching you from our pilotless drones
as you cook your sparse meals over open fires
and bed down

in the ruins of houses destroyed by tank shells.

And if your children can't sleep,
missing the ones who were killed in our incursion,
or cry out in the night, or wet their beds

in your makeshift refugee tents,
or scream, feeling pain in their amputated limbs –
that's the price you pay for harbouring terrorists.

God gave us this land.

A land without a people for a people without a land.

Richard Tillinghast is an American poet who lives in Co Tipperary. He is the author of eight books of poetry, the latest of which is Selected Poems (Dedalus Press, 2010), as well as several works of non-fiction

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