

# GAZA

opportunity, a March 2008 report by the World Bank asserts that Gaza has been transformed into a “consumer economy driven by public sector salaries and humanitarian assistance only.”<sup>15</sup>

About 80% of the Gazan population relies on some form of UN humanitarian assistance, and according to the Palestinian Federation of Industries, approximately 95% of Gaza’s industrial operations have been suspended due to Israeli restrictions.



Drivers are forced to run their cars on cooking oil

## **What key recommendations does the World Bank suggest for Palestinian economic recovery?**<sup>16</sup>

### *For the Government of Israel:*

- Removal of checkpoints and barriers.
- Developing Gaza-West Bank transport links.
- Improving the management of border passages and facilities.
- Increase short-term access of Palestinian labor to Israel.
- Strengthen implementation of the 1994 Paris Protocol governing economic relations between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

### *For the Palestinian Authority:*

- Establish civilian authority of security services.
- Undertake judicial reforms.
- Efficiently manage public recurrent expenditure.
- Develop a proactive anti-corruption strategy.
- Ensure transparent management and disposal of settlement assets that are handed over.

“As conflict and economic crisis feed one another in a malevolent cycle, a generation of young men and women is growing up in an environment of curfews, movement restrictions and urban decay. Their experience is reflected in declining grades, high levels of dysfunctional stress and, as frequently shown in credible opinion polls, widespread support for violence against Israelis.”

*The World Bank, Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements, June 2004.*

## **HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

### **How has Israel’s siege affected the people of Gaza?**

Israel’s actions resulted in the worst humanitarian crisis in Gaza since at least 1967. It is a man-made plight, not one brought on by a natural disaster, as the crisis faced by Gazans is rooted in Israeli measures of collective punishment. International calls for restraint on the part of the Israelis have gone unheeded, and the siege continues with no end in sight. The impact is felt in almost every part of life:

### **Food and Nutrition**

The situation in Gaza has devolved to the point that civilians face a day-to-day struggle to feed themselves and their families. Over 80% of Gazans now rely on humanitarian assistance from international sources, with over 1.1 million people getting their daily nourishment from food aid.<sup>17</sup> There are ten times more people dependant on UNRWA food aid alone than there were just ten years ago.<sup>18</sup>

Israeli restrictions on what crops can be farmed and the lack of an export market have made it impossible for Gazans to grow their own food. Making matters worse, Israeli embargoes have created a situation in which there is little affordable food left in Gaza. As a result, food prices have risen as supply has dwindled.



Gazans are dependent on external food aid

Limited access to fresh food and water (chronic power cuts affecting electric water pumps have left 50% of Gaza households short of fresh drinking water) has furthermore led to unprecedented levels of malnutrition. It is estimated that about half the children are mildly malnourished, while 32% are suffering second-degree and 16% third-degree malnutrition.<sup>19</sup> According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 10.7% of Gazan children under five are suffering stunted growth due to chronic malnutrition.

### **Health & Sanitation**

Israeli policy of limiting the daily amount of fuel and electricity to Gaza has not only made healthcare unreliable and inadequate but leaves entire hospitals without electricity for 8 to 12 hours per day. They are dependent on backup generators, which in turn depend on fuel. Water and sewage plants cannot function without power, leaving an estimated 25-30% of Gazans without running water, while 40-50 million liters of sewage floods untreated into the sea each day.<sup>20</sup> In general, Gaza lacks the tools and cement to make any significant repairs to its infrastructure.



Clean drinking water is sparse in Gaza

Additionally, the needs of the sick and injured are ignored by the Israeli authorities. From October to December 2007 alone, WHO reported that 20 patients, including five children, died because they were not allowed to cross the border into Israel in order to receive medical treatment. In December 2007, over one-third of patients who applied for a temporary permit to leave the Strip via Israel were denied. Moreover, WHO figures suggested that in January 2008, 19% of necessary medicines and 31% of vital medical equipment were lacking in Gaza, and many departments in emergency medical centers and ambulances ceased operation due to lack of fuel.<sup>21</sup>

### **Education**

If Gaza ever gets the chance to develop, it will need bright and open minds to lead the way forward. In Gaza, however, providing children with an education under the stranglehold of Israeli occupation is next to impossible. Even the students who are lucky enough to still be able to attend school have been forced to make due with a crippled educational system. Shortages of power, inadequate textbooks, and a lack of safety have rendered the educational system almost completely broken. UNRWA reported in late 2007 that nearly 80% of children in grades four through nine failed to pass their classes. Over 2,000 children dropped out of school during the

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> World Bank. “Questions and Answers”. <http://go.worldbank.org/KST8HJ6CT0>.

<sup>17</sup> BBC News Online. “Fuel Crisis halts Gaza food aid.” 24 April 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Oxfam, et al. *The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion*. (Joint Agency Report) March 2008.

<sup>19</sup> PCHR Report, 15 February 2008.

<sup>20</sup> *The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion*, op.cit. .

<sup>21</sup> B’Tselem. *The Gaza Strip - Grave dearth of medical supplies and lifesaving treatments*, 15 May 2008. (See: [http://www.btselem.org/english/Gaza\\_Strip/20080515\\_Medical\\_System.asp](http://www.btselem.org/english/Gaza_Strip/20080515_Medical_System.asp).)