



Why Israel's Blockade on Gaza Must End

Israel's blockade of Gaza is counterproductive, immoral and illegal. Our government's position on this flawed and tragic policy must change. We ask policymakers to consider the facts and work with our allies to end this policy. Doing so is in the best interest of the Palestinians, the Israelis, and our own national security interests.

In addition to the moral reasons, the blockade should be lifted for four reasons:

The Blockade is Unlawful

The Fourth Geneva Convention, which Israel ratified, explicitly prohibits the collective punishment of civilian populations. As such, a consensus exists among credible institutions, legal experts, and international human rights organizations that Israel's blockade on Gaza is unlawful, as it clearly constitutes collective punishment. That consensus includes the International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, and Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem.

As Amnesty International correctly noted, Israel's easing of access to humanitarian aid while maintaining the strangulation of the economy and the virtual imprisonment of the civilian population does not constitute 'compliance' with its legal obligations. The blockade must be lifted entirely.

The Blockade is a Failed Policy

Israel's declared aims for the blockade include the weakening of Hamas, and the disruption of weapons-smuggling into Gaza. However, as acknowledged in the Jerusalem Post by Gershon Baskin, the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, the blockade strengthened Hamas and solidified its exclusive reign by restricting the population's access to goods to Hamas-run tunnels. As for the smuggling of weapons, that can be inspected and scrutinized more effectively if Gaza's trade and in/out movement of people weren't entirely dependent on secret underground channels, which can be achieved by the opening of all border crossings and the deployment of international monitors on such crossings.

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The Humanitarian Consequences are Unacceptable

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon described the suffering inflicted on the people of Gaza by the blockade as “unacceptable.” Nearly 1.5 million Palestinians are effectively trapped in Gaza, with 4 out of 5 depending on humanitarian aid agencies for basic necessities. The blockade also led to skyrocketing malnutrition and hundreds of deaths due to lack of access to medical care.

Under tremendous international pressure, Israel recently announced that the blockade would be “eased” by allowing exclusively humanitarian goods into Gaza unrestricted. However, the continuing strangulation of Gaza’s economy, through restricting trade with the outside world, and the inability of locals or international visitors to enter or leave Gaza freely preclude the possibility for a decent or dignified life for Gazans. The blockade must be lifted entirely to allow for the revitalization of the local economy and the free movement of people.

The Blockade is Harmful to Israeli, Palestinian, and American Strategic Interests

Palestinians suffer the most immediate consequences of the blockade. However, secondary consequences negatively impact Israeli, Palestinian, and American interests alike.

- As Israel insists on the effective unlawful imprisonment of 1.5 million Palestinians, it increases its isolation amid global criticism and condemnation
- Backtracking on the blockade from explicit opposition to tacit endorsement of Netanyahu’s current policies erodes US standing in the region
- The blockade deepens the sense of antagonism many Palestinians feel toward Israel, and undercuts the prospects for a peace agreement, which is now recognized as a central Israeli, Palestinian, and American strategic and national security interest