

Gaza is 365sq km, 45 km long and 5-12km wide, entirely sealed off from the outside world by an Israeli fence, guarded by watchtowers, snipers and tanks.

Most of the Palestinians in Gaza live in breeze-block refugee camps such as Jabalya, Beach Camp in Gaza City, Khan Younis and Nusseirat and Rafah

www.timesonline.co.uk

Save the Children has learnt from the Ministry of Education in Gaza that from September 2007 to 1 February 2008 an estimated 1,890 children have been forced out of the classroom to look for a job and help provide financial support to their families.

www.savethechildren.org.uk

The closure and checkpoints made it extremely difficult and dangerous for the children and teachers in the rest of the Palestinian territories to reach their schools.

Palestinian school children must have one of the most dangerous routes to school in the world; in Palestine it is not traffic and cars that parents worry about when they send their children to school, but whether they will make it across the checkpoints without being shot or tear gassed by Israeli soldiers.

www.gush-shalom.org

An adviser to the Israeli prime minister said in 2006: 'The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.'

The Israeli prime minister told his cabinet that he wanted "no-one to be able to sleep tonight in Gaza."

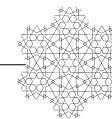
Quotes from Israeli politicians—can be easily found on-line

Most children in the Gaza Strip have been tear gassed, have had their homes searched and damaged, and have witnessed shooting, fighting and explosions. Many have been injured or tortured as a result of chronic war that spans generations, says a recent Queen's University study.

<http://news.bio-medicine.org/>

A child in Gaza who has had a severe head injury has 4 times the risk of emotional disorder. A child who has been severely beaten has 3.9 times the risk of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. A child who has witnessed friends injured or killed has 13 times the risk of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. A child in a refugee camp has 5 times a greater chance of witnessing traumatic events and 4 times a greater chance of direct physical trauma.

<http://news.bio-medicine.org/>



Research shows that exposure to long-term trauma could have detrimental physical effects on the brain, 'especially in children whose brains are still developing and therefore more malleable,' says David Trickey, clinical psychologist at the traumatic stress clinic at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. Emotion and learning become affected. 'The brain is now organised around threats and doesn't want to pay attention to what's happening in the classroom, but to what's happening outside,' says Trickey.

www.guardian.co.uk

Unemployment in Gaza is close to 40% and is set to rise to 50%. A growing number of Palestinian children are roaming the streets of Gaza looking for a meagre wage to help support their families in the impoverished territory. Instead of going to school, Ahmed, 13, dodges vehicles in one of Gaza City's busiest streets trying desperately to sell candy to motorists on the move. The boy said. "I work every day, all week, and I get about 20 shekels a day. At home, we almost never eat meat, maybe once a month."

<http://uk.reuters.com>

There is a 20% electricity deficit in Gaza that is already having serious implications for the functioning of hospitals, sewage works and other public institutions. This is set to get much worse as Israel started to cut electricity supplies to Gaza as well as fuel in February 2008

Source: Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion - joint report from leading human rights organisations

Almost 2,000 children have dropped out of school in Gaza in the last five months because families can no longer send their children to school, while across Gaza, the electricity cuts are disrupting teaching hours and shortening the school day. The new school year started with shortages of textbooks and other crucial resources due to the blockade.

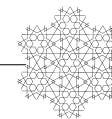
Source: Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion - joint report from leading human rights organisations

The ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children by Israeli authorities is widespread, systematic and institutionalised. From the moment of arrest, Palestinian children encounter ill-treatment and in some cases torture. Children are commonly arrested from the family home in the hours before dawn by heavily armed soldiers, without any indication as to why or where they are being taken. These children will generally not be permitted to see a lawyer until after they have provided a confession to the interrogator.

<http://www.dci-pal.org/>

The Ministry of Education has had to transfer 915 students from private schools to government schools in Gaza because parents can no longer afford school fees. Overcrowding in classrooms has increased which has a negative impact on teaching standards. Most schools in Gaza already operate in three shifts to accommodate the number of children in classrooms.

www.savethechildren.org.uk



For most young men born and raised in Gaza City, in the heart of the apparently intractable conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, going to university might seem an impossible dream. No university in Gaza offers any degree above undergraduate level and only the strip's top university, the Islamic University, runs an electrical engineering course.

www.guardian.co.uk

Health officials in the Gaza Strip say they are concerned about hundreds of patients unable to travel to Israel or other countries for vital treatment, and that local hospitals lack essential medical equipment, drugs and fuel. Supplies of 91 out of 416 essential drugs have run out, as have about a third of essential medical supplies, according to the Gaza ministry of health and the WHO. For example, most children's antibiotics have run out.

www.alertnet.org

The number of people living in absolute poverty in Gaza has increased sharply. Today, 80% of families in Gaza currently rely on humanitarian aid compared to 63% in 2006. This decline exposes unprecedented levels of poverty and the inability of a large majority of the population to afford basic food. In 2008, there are over 1.1 million people – some three-quarters of Gaza's population – who are dependent on food aid.

Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion – joint report from leading human rights organisations

The Israeli government prevents the repair and maintenance of the electricity and water service infrastructure in Gaza by prohibiting the import of spare parts. In January 2008, UNICEF reported that schools in Gaza had been cancelling classes that were high on energy consumption, such as IT, science labs and extra curricular activities.

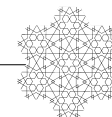
Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion – joint report from leading human rights organisations

Across Gaza, the electricity shortage is disrupting teaching hours and shortening the school day. Its winter and lighting is not good especially in the mornings. Many school windows are missing glass panels because there is a shortage of material so teachers are being forced to teach in very cold classrooms with no heaters.

www.savethechildren.org.uk

"I cannot study well when I use the chargeable light. The lighting is weak and it affects my eyes. I cannot concentrate on my studies because all my family members sit around the light as it's the only light we have" Assma, 15 year old student in Gaza. (Assma's family uses the chargeable light because of electricity shortages.)

www.savethechildren.org.uk



Save the Children workers in Gaza have noticed anxiety levels among children increasing as military attacks and incursions into Gaza continue. Teachers report that many children are finding it hard to concentrate on their studies and appear withdrawn and agitated.

www.savethechildren.org.uk

Children exhibit symptoms of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, stuttering, bed-wetting, insomnia, aggression, diminished concentration, regressive clinging behaviour and more. Those worst affected were the children whose homes were demolished by the Israeli army. Second were the children who had witnessed the beating and humiliation of their fathers.

www.pij.org

Over 900 children have been killed in Gaza by the Israeli army since 2000, and several thousand wounded. 335 Palestinian children were killed in 22 days during the Israeli army's offensive on the Gaza strip, 'Operation Cast Lead.'

www.btselem.org

Reeham is a beautiful 7-year-old with glossy hair. She takes out one of her eyes. Reeham was shot in the eye and lost a finger during an Israeli raid. The other children call her 'one-eye'. She has lost her self-esteem and all interest in learning. She spends hours in front of a mirror, talking to herself and studying photos of herself before and after the incident. 'She feels inferior and this has become part of her personality,' says Dr Abu Hein. 'Even if her peers swear "We are not observing your eye", she won't believe them.'

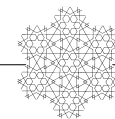
www.guardian.co.uk

According to our latest research, 27% of the children of Gaza dream of becoming martyrs. These children have been victimised by the humiliation and the helplessness of their fathers, by the destruction of their homes, by the shooting and killing of their loved ones. For them, life on earth has become equal to death, and they want to die in glory and to rest in heaven.

www.opendemocracy.net

About 10 percent of Palestinian children suffer permanent effects from malnutrition, according to a survey published Wednesday, a result of widespread poverty in the West Bank and Gaza. Khaled Abu Khaled, in a study for the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, reported that 13.2 percent of the children of Gaza suffer stunted growth – up three percent from two years ago.

www.haaretz.com



As reported by the World Health Organization, compared to last year, the number of children aged three years and less diagnosed in UNWRA Primary Health Care facilities in Gaza with diarrhea increased by 20%. The increase was attributed to the irregular collection of garbage by municipal workers, increased unemployment and increased poverty. (Note - Diarrhea is a leading cause of death in children, even more so when combined with malnutrition)

www.ochaopt.org

Talented students, even those with scholarships from universities abroad, find it almost impossible to get permission to leave.

www.guardian.co.uk

"These are strange ways of destroying the human body. In the burn unit you see patients suffering from white phosphorous. Some were sitting in their houses when a tank bomb hit them. They didn't know what happened. Survivors would reach the hospital after many relatives had been killed." Patients told him that an extended family of 25 had been attacked while in their home. When relatives came to help, Israeli snipers shot 8 of them. Many of the wounded were left to die. Ambulances and Red Cross relief workers weren't allowed into the area

<http://electronicintifada.net>

Injured civilians and children who could have been saved died needlessly as Israeli forces frequently denied access to ambulances and others to trying rescue the wounded, recover the dead and bring aid to those in need. Mental health workers are still treating hundreds of children who survived and are traumatised by the recent Israeli military operation in Gaza.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Four months after 8,000 homes were destroyed in the Gaza Strip, the families affected have no prospect of building new homes because the Israeli authorities continue to prevent construction materials from entering Gaza. Urgent repairs are needed for damaged housing for 33,767 families, 207 schools, 86 pre-schools, 15 hospitals and 43 primary health clinics. Repairs and rebuilding work is also needed for water, sewage and electrical facilities and agricultural infrastructure.

www.oxfam.org.uk

Zaheyya Al-Farra, a Palestinian psychologist, noted that many children in the Gaza Strip were killed, lost their limbs, lost their homes, or lost their relatives and loved ones during the monstrous Israeli war on Gaza that left very bad psychological scars on them. For example, Tawfik, a boy of 9, from the Zaitoun suburb, south of Gaza city, who saw his home bombarded by the Israeli warplanes and now loses his voice every time he experiences any problem.

<http://www.map-uk.org>