



Gaza Overview Mid-December 2018

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Glossary

INGO	International Non-Government Agency
PA	Palestinian Authority
GDP	Gross Domestic Product – used to determine the economic performance of a whole country or region, and to make international comparisons.
WFP	World Food Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

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Locations	Risk Level	Comment	Forecast
Gaza	High	<i>There are numerous drivers of insecurity in Gaza at a local and geopolitical level. INGOs continue to operate in Gaza, but they have a strong footprint and good situation awareness – both essential when operating in a High Risk environment.</i>	<i>There are no indicators that would suggest an improvement in the Gaza security situation. The Great Return March protests will continue and periodic spikes in violence as seen in Nov will occur. An ever-present threat is another large-scale military incursion by Israel. Economically Gaza will continue to exist on the brink of a collapse.</i>

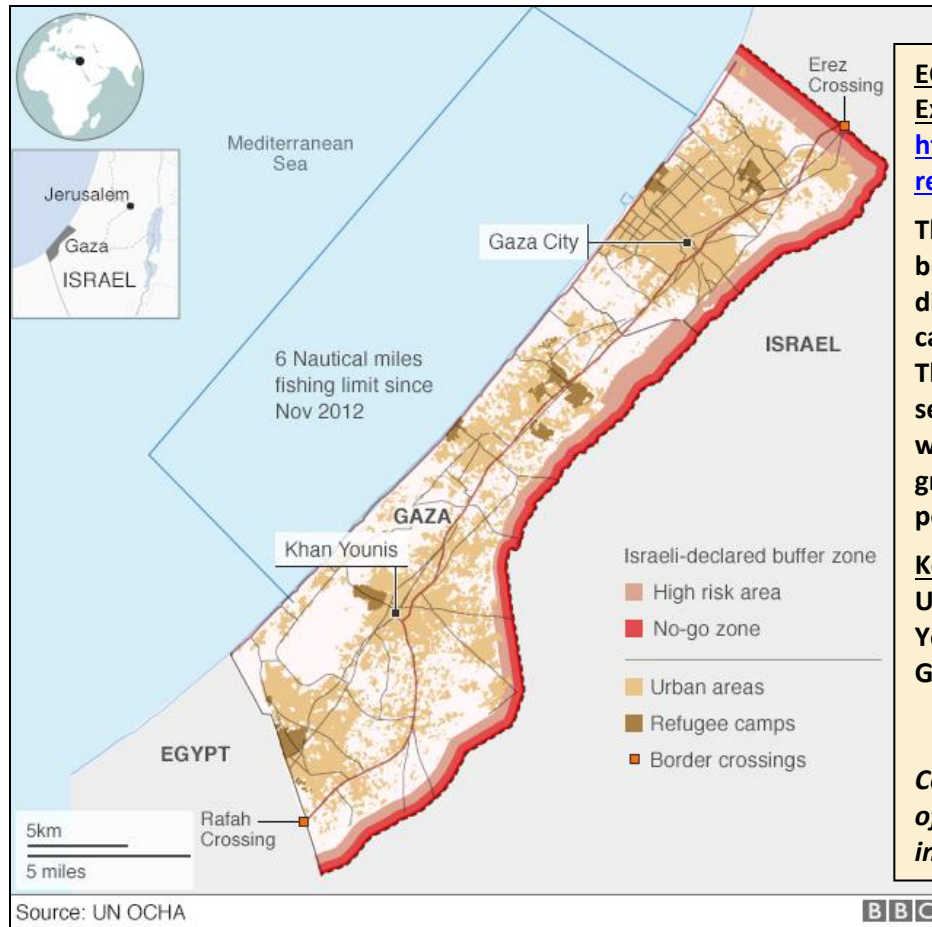
EXTRACT FROM “HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORT – ISRAEL AND PALESTINE EVENTS 2018”

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/israel/palestine>

Israel continues to maintain its decade-long effective closure of Gaza, exacerbated by Egypt’s keeping its own border with Gaza largely sealed, and to impose restrictions that limit supply of electricity and water, restrict access to medical care and educational and economic opportunity, and perpetuate poverty. Approximately 70 percent of Gaza’s 1.9 million people rely on humanitarian assistance.

Periodic shutdowns of Gaza’s only power plant, a result of a dispute between Fatah and Hamas over who should pay for fuel needed to operate the plant, and the decision by the Israeli government in June to accede to a Palestinian Authority (PA) request to cut the electricity it sells for use in Gaza, significantly reduced electricity available in Gaza, leaving households for stretches with four hours or less of electricity a day. Power outages jeopardize water supply, interfere with sewage treatment, and cripple hospital operations.

1. Economic News and Humanitarian Funding



ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Extract from International Monetary Fund – West Bank and Gaza Report Sept 2018
<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2018/09/17/west-bank-gaza-report-to-the-ad-hoc-liaison-committee>

The outlook is increasingly untenable. Longstanding constraints continue to act as a brake on growth, aggravated by large aid cuts and revenue losses. Gaza is suffering disproportionately, with its economy shrinking and unfolding humanitarian catastrophe. Overall GDP growth is projected to languish below 2 percent per year. The intended withholding of clearance revenues under new Israeli legislation will seriously undermine the already fragile fiscal situation. Large external imbalances will persist as restrictions impede development and add to vulnerabilities. Weaker growth and demographic pressures will substantially worsen unemployment, poverty, and per capita incomes.

Key Figures

Unemployment: 55%

Youth unemployment: 70%

GDP annual percentage change:	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
	-0.3	-4.0	-1.5
		Projection	Projection

Comment: An economic collapse of Gaza could bring an end to Hamas governance of the strip. This would be to the benefit of Israel and the PA. However, it will also increase the risk of fighting between Hamas and Fatah.

WFP CUT FOOD AID

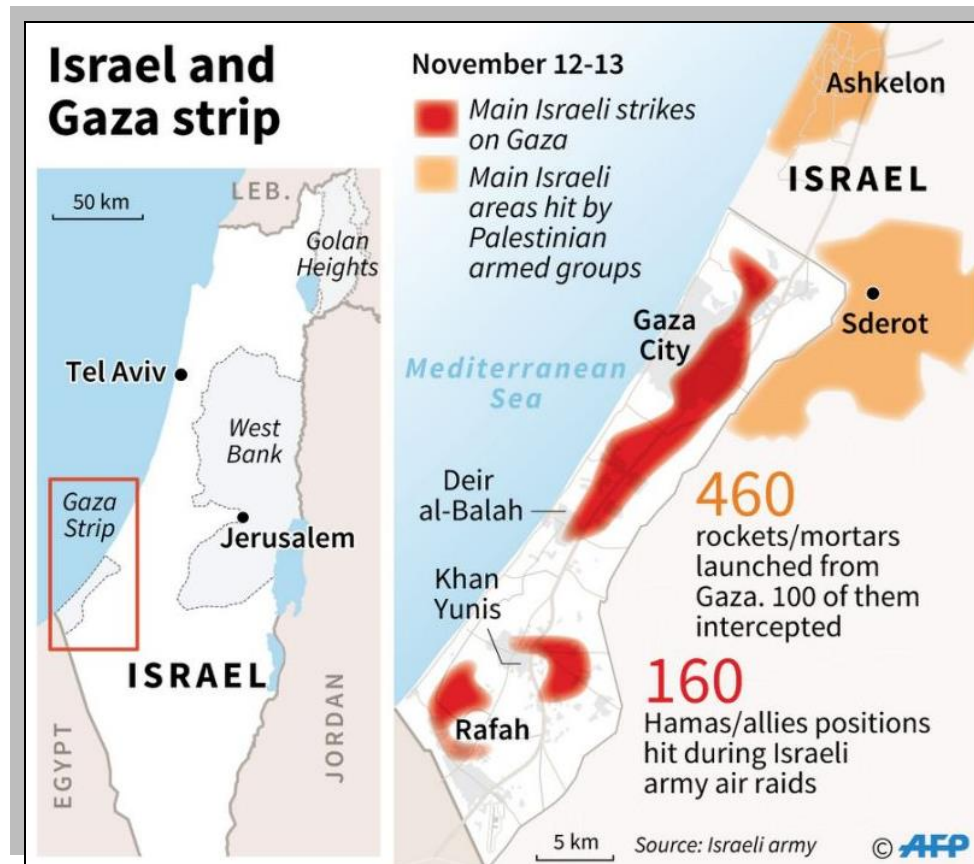
The World Food Programme (WFP) is to cut food aid next year to about 190,000 poor Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank due a shortage of funds, the WFP's Country Director for the Palestinian Territories said on 19 Dec 2018. This is due to U.S. funding cuts to humanitarian agencies working in the territories. From 1 Jan 2019, the WFP will suspend food assistance to 27,000 people in the West Bank. In addition, food aid to 165,000 people in the Israeli-occupied territory and in the Gaza Strip will be reduced by 20 percent from \$10 to \$8 per person each month. WFP assistance goes to the poorest and most food-insecure communities, who are classified as facing deep poverty. Most families in these communities live on less than \$1 a day and are unable to meet their basic food, clothing and housing needs. Most of the help provided by WFP is through electronic cards, which people use to buy food at a network of 185 shops. The UN agency needs another \$57m to continue providing for 360,000 Palestinians in 2019.

Earlier in the year the U.S. government cut a scheduled payment to UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from \$130m to \$65m, and then later stopped all future funding to UNRWA. It also withdrew \$200m from its main development agency, USAid, for programmes based largely in Gaza.

QATAR AID PACKAGE

In Oct 2018, a \$150 million aid package was pledged by the Qatar Development Fund for Gaza. The aid is until Apr 2019 and will be used to employ 10,000 graduates and workers for 6 months, to pay a portion of public employee's unpaid salaries (but not police or military), and provide cash assistance to 50,000 poor families, the families of those killed in the "Great Return March" protests and those injured in the protests. It is hoped the aid package will increase the spending power of thousands and put much needed cash into economy. *Comment: It is not clear to what extent the Qatar package will compensate for the WFP cuts. There are no reports that suggest the Gaza authorities and WFP are coordinating over the selection of the 'poor families'.*

2. Insecurity



GREAT RETURN MARCH

For nearly 9 months, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have protested along the fence with Israel demanding their right to return to the homes and land their families were expelled from 70 years ago. Since the protests began on 30 Mar 2018, more than 195 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli army, the youngest being 4 years old. Over 6,000 Palestinians have been shot with over 1,000 losing limbs. Two Israeli soldiers have been killed.

ESCALATION IN CROSS-BORDER CLASHES

On 11 Nov 2018 an Israeli special forces team was stopped by a Hamas checkpoint in the Gaza Strip. In the resulting firefight, that included Israeli tank and aircraft fire, 7 Palestinians and 1 Israeli soldier were killed. In the following 2 days the incident ignited the largest exchange of cross border fire between Israel and Hamas for 4 years. Hamas and other militants fired 460 rockets towards Israel and Israeli forces bombed 160 targets in Gaza, killing 8 people. Following negotiations by the Government of Egypt a ceasefire was agreed on 13 Nov. In protest to the ceasefire, the right-wing Israeli Defence Minister resigned.