

RESS RELEASES

# Lift the Gaza blockade

Sunday 30 May 2010, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 25 May 2010).

Israel's three year near-hermetic closure constitutes collective punishment of an occupied civilian population. This is explicitly prohibited under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as by the domestic laws of civilized nations.

Israel as the Occupying Power in the Gaza Strip has a duty to ensure that the population receives food and medical supplies, as well as a duty to maintain hospitals and other medical services, "to the fullest extent of the means available to it" (Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 55, 56). Israel is responsible for the maintenance of 'normal' life in the territory.

Israel has grossly abused its responsibilities as an Occupying Power, by neglecting to provide for the welfare of the Palestinian civilian population, and instituting policies designed to collectively punish it. The United Nations Fact finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, led by Justice Goldstone, stated that the closure of the Gaza Strip may amount to the crime against humanity of persecution.

According to the United Nations, Israel's Operation Cast Lead in January 2009, damaged or destroyed at least 11,000 houses, 105 factories, 20 hospitals and clinics, and 159 schools, universities, playschools and technical institutions. Some 51,800 people were displaced, while 20,000 remain homeless to this day. Israel has permitted virtually no reconstruction; in many ways the Gaza Strip remains as it did on 18 January 2009.

Israel has banned over 2000 items from entering Gaza, including cement, glass, paper, and iron, as well as cancer medicine, toys, chocolate, desks, fabrics, and fruit juice. Earlier this month, the BBC obtained a report by the Israeli government "Food Consumption in the Gaza Strip - Red Lines". It sets out the minimum caloric intake required to prevent the starvation of Gaza's million and a half inhabitants, according to their age and sex.

Karen Koning Abu Zayd, former head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), has asserted that "Gaza is on the threshold of becoming the first territory to be intentionally reduced to a state of abject destitution, with the knowledge, acquiescence and - some would say - encouragement of the international community."

## **It is time to end this preventable humanitarian and human rights crisis.**

Next week, a citizens' flotilla of eight ships, carrying reconstruction materials and medical supplies will head for Gaza. Israel has declared its intention to stop the ships by military force.

We the undersigned declare our full support for the Freedom Flotilla which is acting to uphold international law out of necessity to prevent the crime of collective punishment and uphold Gaza civilians right to human dignity.

We urge all states to uphold their obligation under the Fourth Geneva Conventions to ensure that Israel respects international humanitarian law, to end the lethal blockade on Gaza, and to refrain from attacking this peaceful convoy.

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\* <http://www.focusweb.org/content/lift-gaza-blockade>