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Israel's War against Palestine on Fishing Rights

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Israel persecutes Palestinians many ways. Collective punishment is prohibited. Fourth Geneva's Article 33 states:

> "No protected person may be punished for an offense he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited."
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> "Pillage is prohibited."
>
> "Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited."

Restricted fishing impedes Palestinians' ability to earn a livelihood. It deprives 1.7 million Gazans of enough fish. It reflects years of slow-motion genocide.

Israel reduced fishing rights from six to three miles offshore. It did so punitively.

Egypt's brokered November ceasefire extended them to 11km. The Convention on the Law of the Sea affirms them up to 12 nautical miles (14 statute ones).

Oslo guaranteed 20 nautical miles. Israel broke earlier promises made. Doing so compromises an important national resource. More on this below.

It's the occupation, stupid. It's Gaza's siege. It's lawlessness with impunity. Six years ago this June it began. Harsh restrictions remain. Blockade created the world's largest open-air prison.

Human rights are compromised. They include free movement, proper nutrition, healthcare, education, fuel and electricity, normal family life, and the ability to survive and live in peace.

Around 80% of Gazans need humanitarian aid. What's gotten isn't enough. Blockade lawlessness persists. Impunity permits it.

Israel maintains total control. Much of Gaza's arable land is off limits. Farmers are shot in their fields. So are children. Israeli border guards use them for target practice. Investigations and prosecutions don't follow.

Palestine includes Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They're almost entirely separated. Travel restrictions prevent free movement.

Gazans can't enter Israel. Family members can't visit each other. Imports and exports are

limited. Whatever Israel calls duel use is prohibited. Included are common items people take for granted.

Poverty and unemployment are extremely high. So is human misery. Nearly two-thirds of Gazans are refugees. Going abroad for medical treatment entails bureaucratic hurdles.

Long waits are commonplace. Many requests are denied. Needless deaths occur. Human rights are spurned. Israel considers Palestinian lives cheap.

Occupying powers are responsible for people they control. Article 43 of the Hague Regulations obligates them for health, education, quality of life, public works, other essential infrastructure, and overall material conditions.

Fourth Geneva Articles 55 and 56 require them to provide food and health care. Under Article 69 of Additional Protocol I, provision for clothing, bedding and shelter must be provided.

So must education, health systems, infrastructure, power, telecommunications capability, and other vital services.

Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right to work. It does so under just and favorable conditions.

Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognizes "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions."

Israel spurns its obligations. It does so with impunity. It wages economic warfare. It says doing so is legitimate.

"(D)amaging the enemy's economy is in and of itself a legitimate means in warfare and a relevant consideration even while deciding to allow the entry of relief consignments," it claims.

It's done for political, not security reasons. Israel admits it. Palestinians pose no threat. They're punished for not being Jews.

Israel's 2005 disengagement left Gaza occupied. Borders, air and offshore waters are controlled. Hamas won January 2006 elections. It defeated Fatah decisively. It's Palestine's legitimate government.

Washington calls it a terrorist organization. It did so at Israel's request. It designated Hamas illegitimately. It recognizes Palestine's coup d'etat government.

Abbas heads it. Israel rigged his 2005 election. His term expired in January 2009. He's still there. He's Israel's enforcer. He's no friend of Palestine.

Israel considers Gaza a "hostile entity." It does so illegitimately. Collective punishment is imposed. Vital necessities are inadequate. Most factories and most businesses closed.

Siege remains policy. Israel promised easing. No meaningful change followed. Blockade's

ruthlessly enforced.

Air, ground and sea attacks occur often. So do targeted assassinations. State terror is policy. International laws are spurned.

Control is suffocating. Humanitarian needs go begging. World leaders turn a blind eye. They've done so for decades. They shame themselves in the process.

Newly imposed fishing restrictions reinstated pre-Operation Pillar of Cloud policy. Kerem Shalom crossing was closed. It operates at Israel's discretion. It's in southern Gaza. It's for commercial use. It's greatly restricted.

Doing so is illegal. So is Gaza's siege. Fishing restrictions have no legitimacy. Palestinians have a right to eat. Coastal waters are sovereign territory. Israel pays them no heed.

Mahmoud Mohammed Jarboa risks his life to fish. He's got no other choice. He has seven sons and three daughters. Fishing income supports 21 dependents.

Israeli restrictions gravely impact him. Collective punishment harms all Palestinian fishermen. Since 1999, their numbers dropped from 10,000 to less than 3,200 today.

Inability to fish well offshore greatly diminishes yields. Israel attacks fishermen within imposed limits. Exceeding them risks imprisonment or death.

From November 22, 2012 – February 28, 2013 alone, 41 shooting incidents occurred. Injuries followed. Dozens of fishermen were detained. At least eight vessels were damaged. Another eight were confiscated.

On February 21, 2013, Israel attacked Mahmoud's son, Abdel Raziq. Four others were with him. They were within Israel's three nautical mile limit.

Gunboats surrounded them. Shooting began. It happened without warning. Bullets struck the boat. Shrapnel hit Abdel. His right shin was wounded. His cousin Abdullah was hurt. "We were both in a lot of pain," he said.

Abdel began fishing five months ago. He did so with family members. Up to now, he's been lucky. He avoided Israeli attacks. He knew it was too good to last. He wasn't surprised to be accosted.

His father and brothers were attacked many times. They "were forced to jump naked into the sea in the middle of winter, when it was cold and raining. They have suffered a lot."

Other fishermen did the same way. It's commonplace Israeli practice. Fishermen are ordered to undress at gunpoint. They're told to swim to a navy craft. Weather conditions don't matter.

Boats are seized. Fishermen are blindfolded and handcuffed. They're taken to Ashdod. They're brutally interrogation. Some are tortured. They committed no crime.

In January 2009, Israeli forces killed Abdel's older brother, Mohammed, at sea. He was aged 22. He was struck in his head and both legs.

He was hospitalized for eight days. He was too severely wounded to survive. Israel never

admits responsibility. Apologies aren't forthcoming.

Whether Israel's limit is three or six miles doesn't matter. Shallow waters have lots of sand. They're overfished. Future reserves are endangered.

Big yields depend on deep water fishing. It requires operating 15 or 16 miles offshore.

Mahmoud remembers pre-blockade days. Fishermen could make a good living, he said. They even fished for fun. They ate some of their catch. Now it's barely enough to sell.

It provides too little income. He can barely feed his family. "I can stand going without food, but the children cannot," he says. He feels helpless to do better. Israel bears full responsibility.

Abdel hasn't fished since attacked. His boat is badly damaged. It's too costly to repair. He's got no other work. He loves fishing.

Mahmoud's afraid when his sons fish. He fears they won't return. He asks little. He hopes only for a secure good life. All Palestinians deserve it, he says.

Israel denies it. Thousands of livelihoods are affected. So are fundamental human rights. Waging war on Palestine is longstanding Israeli policy. It persists with no end.

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