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The Blockade - a timeline

1947

The UN approves a plan of ethnic separation of the British mandate of Palestine where Gaza is part of the Arab section. As such, Gaza becomes an enclave with a common border with Egypt but separated from the rest of Palestine by the new state of Israel. The separation results in a considerable amount of displaced persons and a stream of refugees to, among other places, Gaza, where the population is tripled in a short time. Two-third of the present inhabitants of Gaza is still classified as refugees by UNRWA. Half a million is living in UN-organised refugee camps.

1948

After the 1948 war between Israel and its Arab neighbours Gaza is governed by Egypt.

1956

During the Suez crisis Gaza is occupied by Israeli forces in four months. After the peace agreement it is returned to Egypt.

1967

During the Six-Day War Gaza, as Eastern Jerusalem, the West Bank, Sinai and the Golan Heights are occupied by Israel. The Israeli occupation results in people displacements and the establishing of Jewish settlements.

June 1983

Formal restrictions for movement in and out of Gaza are implemented. All travellers must have permission issued by Israeli authorities.

December 1987- 1993

During this period the first intifada is ongoing and the resistance against Israeli occupation escalates to a general uprising. Most of the Palestinian actions have a non-violent character as strikes, demonstrations, boycotts and refusal to pay taxes. The intifada started in Gaza and is particularly intensive there. The Hamas movement is also established during this period.

20 August 1993-



The Oslo Agreement is signed - also called 'road map

to peace'. This map initially results in Israel accepting a successive withdrawal from parts of the West Bank and Gaza so that a Palestinian Authority can be established. Eventually, administrative control of a large part of Gaza is transferred to this authority.

However, Israel maintains control over the settlements and anything designated as important military areas and the roads and infrastructure connecting these. Also airspace and territorial waters. At the same time Israel reinforces its outer borders with buffer zones, a military zone and five crossing points where goods and travellers can be controlled and regulated. They also keep control of the border with Egypt. This is the first step in the Blockade policy.

September 2000-2005

Following the stagnation of the peace process during the end of the nineties the second intifada breaks out. During this period Hamas grows to become a stronger political force, foremost in opposition to Fatah, the leading political party of the PLO, and Fatah's responsibility for corruption and inefficiency within the Palestinian administration and the failure of the independence policy. The reaction of the Israeli regime, among many other things, results in a successive strangling of goods and travel in and out of Gaza and the West Bank. In repeated periods these are stopped completely. The consequences for quality of life and economical development under the new Palestinian Authority becomes difficult. In 2000 Gaza's international airport is closed. During the winter of 2001-2002 it is destroyed by the Israeli Air force.

2005

In February 2005 the Israeli government announces that all settlements and occupation zones within Gaza are to be evacuated before September 12th. At the same time the border fortifications against Egypt is reinforced and completed. A border crossing to Egypt is opened in Rafah but only for persons having approved passes. Movement across the border to Egypt is regulated in an agreement initiated by the US. The movement of goods between Gaza and Egypt is channeled through the Israeli border crossing Kerem Shalom (Karm Abu Salem).

After the withdrawal comes a period of low-intensity warfare by different Palestinian organisations against Israel and from the Israeli military against Gaza. During 2005-2007 approximately 2700 locally manufactured rockets are fired from Gaza into Israel, resulting in 4 dead and 75 wounded Israelis. During the same period the IDF fires approximately 14600 shells into Gaza, killing 57 and wounding 270. There were also raids performed by both parties and repeated Israeli air attacks. Israeli blockades of commerce and travel is a repeatedly used instrument.

2006-

In January this year Palestinians held elections to a constitutional congregation. The winners were the Hamas, getting 42% of the votes and a majority of mandates. Fatah keeps the presidential post and in reality the control of the police force and administrative functions. The Israeli reactions are harsh. Commerce in Gaza and the West Bank is blocked and custom fees and tax revenues which the Israelis collect for the Palestinian authorities are withheld. Under such pressure Fatah, Hamas and other parties within PLO try to establish a unity government in 2007 but the contradictions remain too great.

Summer 2006

June 25th, 2006 the Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit is taken prisoner by the Hamas during a raid into Israel and is taken back to Gaza. He is the first Israeli captive Israeli soldier since 1994. During the following Summer the conflict escalates to a full-scale Israeli operation into Gaza. 400 Palestinians and 7 Israelis are killed. Important parts of Gaza infrastructure, the central power plant and the new-building seaport South of Gaza city, is destroyed.

2007

The fragile coalition between Fatah and Hamas lasts only for a short while. In 2007 Hamas takes over control of the Gaza Strip, followed by Mahmoud Abbas declaring a Fatah-regime, without Hamas participation, on the Western Bank. Israel and Egypt immediately reacts by imposing strict restrictions. From this date Gaza can be said to be under a full-scale blockade, covering land, sea and air. Internationally this is usually called the siege of Gaza. Import of goods and relief aid decrease by 80%. Much supplies and raw materials become impossible to get through the border crossings. The export from Gaza is completely stopped and the possibility for Palestinians to travel are, in principle, restricted to certain serious medical cases which can be treated on the West Bank and in Jerusalem, only following intricate application procedures. In accordance with an agreement between Egypt and Israel the border crossing at Rafah is closed. Except special cases all transport of goods and persons is channelled through the Israeli border crossings.

2008

In connection with a truce between Hamas and Israel, signed in June 2008, Israel promises easings and, eventually, a lifting of the Blockade. No important relief was ever effected and the truce remained fragile.

27 December 2008 - 18 January 2009



November 4th, 2008 six Hamas soldiers are killed in an Israeli raid

into Gaza territory. Hamas considers the truce to be broken and reciprocates by firing rockets into Israel. This escalates into the Israeli operation called "Cast Lead" - an invasion of Gaza. It starts on December 27th. During three weeks, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human rights, 1417 Gaza citizens, are killed, inklusive of 926 civilians. (IDF reports 1166 killed, 295 civilians). 13 Israelis are killed, among these three civilians. More than 5000 persons are wounded and more than 4000 properties are destroyed. Schools, hospitals and infrastructure, such as electricity and water supplies, are damaged.

2009

In spite of the difficult humanitarian situation after the war the import stays on the same low level. Building materials and spare parts needed for rebuilding are practically forbidden by the Israeli authorities to import through the border crossings. Protests from relief organisations and the world society, condemning the Blockade as inhuman, illegal and counter-productive, are increasing.

May 2010



By the end of May 2010 the first Freedom Flotilla

leaves Turkish and Greek ports with the aim of breaking the Blockade and transport supplies and passengers to Gaza. The Flotilla is boarded in international waters and forced to proceed to Israel. On the Turkish passenger Ship Mavi Marmara nine people are killed by Israeli military. This action and the brutal assault draws the world attention to the Blockade and its dire consequences. Israel and Egypt is put under severe international pressure.

June 2010-

On June 1st 2010 Egyptian authorities inform that the border crossing at Rafah is reopened. However, traffic remains restricted, not allowing men aged 18-40 to cross. In the end of the same month Israel announces a 'new' blockade policy. Their purpose is said to only concern military equipment and so-called 'dual goods', that is civilian materials which, according to an Israeli view can be used militarily. Among 'dual goods' are counted building materials and much industrial raw material. In reality the Israeli border control continue to limit or delay the import of a variety of goods. The effect is, however, not only cosmetic. The import of goods is almost doubled and reaches the level of 40% of pre-June 2007. The export from Gaza remains virtually non-existent.

Summer 2011

In the end of June more than ten vessels, representing organisations from about 20 nations, are gathered in Greek ports to establish the second Freedom Flotilla. All except one are held back by a Greek governmental decree. The French yacht Dignité is boarded in international water by the Israeli military and taken to Ashdod in Israel.

2012



[1]

In 2012, Ship to Gaza is closer than ever to reaching the Gaza Strip. The vessel Estelle sails around Europe, meanwhile promoting awareness of the situation in Gaza in the ports it visits. In the morning of the 20th of October Israeli military seize the Estelle on international water outside of Gaza. A journey of solidarity over 5 000 nautical miles thus ends in a clear violations of human rights and international law.

On board the Estelle are passengers from Canada, Finland, Greece, Israel, Norway, Spain and Sweden. They represent four different european parliments, as well as different organizations within the Freedom Flotilla Coalition. Among the passengers there are also independent activists and a journalist.

November 2012

A new war erupts in Gaza when the Israeli Defence Forces launch Operation Pillar of Defence. According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, 158 palestinians are killed, 102 of them civilians. Hamas estimates the damages to 1.2 billion dollars. Six Israelis, four of them civilians, are killed in rocket attacks from Gaza.

On the 29th of November, the UN grants Palestine the status of Observer State, meaning they are considered a sovereign state, although they cannot vote in the General Assembly.

[2] [3]

Links

[1] <http://shiptogaza.se/sites/default/files/bildarkiv/2012/Estelle-7.jpeg>

[2] <https://shiptogaza.se/print/1240>

[3] <https://shiptogaza.se/printpdf/1240>