

**GAZA
UNLOCKED**



PHOTO: ANNE PAQ

Why Gaza can't count on electricity

In June 2006, following the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit by Hamas, the Israeli military bombed Gaza's only power plant, destroying its six transformers. It took five months for the plant to resume partial production, and today the power plant still can't function at full capacity.

Under the blockade, the power plant can't import parts to replace damaged components. Temporary fixes have allowed the plant to function at a minimal level, but those solutions were never made to last, and now—10 years later—Gaza's power system is at risk of collapse.

A number of factors have exacerbated the power crisis, including a halt in smuggled fuel from Egypt in 2013; the destruction of fuel storage tanks and other structures at the plant by Israeli airstrikes in 2014; and the destruction of infrastructure and distribution networks throughout Gaza.¹ Since April 2017, the Gaza power plant has been offline due to limited fuel imports, further limiting electricity in Gaza.²

While Gaza's electrical grid is linked with the Israeli system, Israel limits how much power it sells to Gaza, and power lines can only supply a fraction of Gaza's total needs.

Today less than one third of Gaza's electricity demand—470 megawatts—is being met. As a result, Gazans have access to electricity for less than four hours per day on a rolling basis—affecting the health and well-being of residents; jeopardizing critical services, such as hospitals, schools, and water sanitation systems; and making it impossible for businesses to function.

Ending the blockade is a crucial step to address the power crisis, but it will not improve the situation immediately. Even if new parts could be imported and additional infrastructure could be built, it would take up to five years for the system to reach a point where current needs can be met. Without change, this situation will continue to worsen—risking complete collapse of the Gaza power system.

Quick Facts

- Less than one-third of Gaza's power needs are now being met. Rolling blackouts last 18 to 21 hours per day, typically leaving residents with less than four hours of power each day.
- The Gaza power plant operates at less than one-third of its capacity and has regularly had to shut down, due to fuel shortages, caused by fuel costs and Israeli limitations on importing fuel.

1 UN OCHA, "Chronic Electricity Crisis in Gaza: Rolling power cuts increase from 12 to 20 hours daily" August 2016 <http://gaza.ochaopt.org/2015/08/chronic-electricity-crisis-in-gaza-rolling-power-cuts-increase-from-12-to-20-hours-daily/>

2 UN OCHA, "Gaza Plunges into Darkness: Severe deterioration in the energy situation", May 25, 2017 <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-plunges-darkness-severe-deterioration-energy-situation>

- Since 2010 at least 29 people—24 of them children—have died in Gaza from fires or suffocation directly linked to power outages.
- Water piped to over 70% of Gaza households only once every two to four days for 4 to 6 hours because the power supply is not sufficient to provide uninterrupted access to water. If homes do not have power during those periods to operate household pumps used to fill cisterns then they receive no water.
- Hospitals provide only limited services because they rely on generators, which produce insufficient and unstable electrical supplies that can damage sensitive equipment.
- Up to 90 million liters of untreated sewage are discharged into the Mediterranean Sea each day in part due to electrical and fuel shortages.
- Schools often function without electricity, leaving students in the dark, making many educational activities impossible, and negatively affecting students' learning environments.
- Businesses and industry cannot function without reliable electrical supplies, increasing unemployment and further destabilizing the Gaza economy.

What can you do?

Demand an immediate end to the blockade on Gaza.

U.S. government policy officially supports Israel's continued blockade on Gaza—and it is this blockade that has resulted in this crisis facing Gaza's population. The blockade is illegal and immoral and must end.

Contact your government representatives, and demand that they call for an immediate change in U.S. government policy and support the complete end to Israel's blockade on Gaza.

Take action: afsc.org/endtheblockade



**American Friends
Service Committee**

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the Quaker belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice. Since 1948, AFSC has worked in the U.S., Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territory with Palestinians, Israelis, and other committed activists to support nonviolence, challenge oppression, and—since 1970—to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory. This work is guided by our "Principles for a Just and Lasting Peace in Palestine and Israel." These principles support the implementation of international human rights and humanitarian law and call for an end to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory, implementation of refugees' right of return, equality, and justice for Palestinians and Israelis. More: afsc.org

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The following organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel address and challenge Israel's policies on Gaza:

Al-Mezan
www.mezan.org/en

Palestinian Center for Human Rights
www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en

Gaza Community and Mental Health Program
www.gcmhp.net/en

B'Tselem
www.btselem.org

Gisha
www.gisha.org

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
www.ochaopt.org