



Lacking water and sanitation in Gaza

Access to clean and safe water is a basic human right, but it is a right denied to Palestinians in Gaza under Israel's occupation and blockade.

Gaza has long faced a water crisis. Overexploitation of the Coastal Aquifer on which Gaza relies—combined with contamination from chemicals, wastewater, and other pollutants—has created a situation in which 96 percent of Gaza's water supply isn't fit for human consumption.¹

This situation is compounded, and in part caused, by repeated Israeli military attacks on Gaza that have damaged or destroyed key water and sanitation infrastructure, including desalination plants, wells, and waste management facilities. The blockade has prohibited the repair and replacement of this infrastructure as key materials are prohibited by Israel from entering Gaza.

More than one-third of Gaza's population receive only six to eight hours of running water every four days, and at least 100,000 people remain completely disconnected from the water network as a result of damaged infrastructure.

Twenty-eight percent of the population is not connected to the sewage network. Even where the sewage network is accessible, the energy crisis has forced wastewater treatment plants to shorten treatment cycles, causing backflow of sewage onto streets and the discharge of partially treated waste into the Mediterranean Sea.²

All of this leads to severe health impacts. High levels of nitrates impact infant health; pollutants contribute to chronic diseases including cancer, liver problems, and kidney failure; and waterborne diseases are rampant. Diarrheal infections and high-nitrate levels are contributing factors to nutritional deficiencies and anemia among young children.³

The situation is a disaster, but it is a manmade disaster, and ending the Gaza blockade is the key step to resolving many of these problems.

1 UNRWA, "Gaza in 2020: A Livable Place?" <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/publications/gaza/Gaza%20in%202020.pdf>

2 EWASH, "Let it Flow" <http://www.ewash.org/sites/default/files/inoptfiles/Infographic%20on%20the%20impact%20of%20the%20Israeli%20blockade%20on%20the%20water%20situation%20in%20Gaza.pdf>

3 EWASH Advocacy Task Force Fact Sheet 3 [http://www.ewash.org/sites/default/files/inoptfiles/Factsheet%203_Water%20Quality%20in%20the%20Gaza%20Strip%20\(Updated%20February%202021\).pdf](http://www.ewash.org/sites/default/files/inoptfiles/Factsheet%203_Water%20Quality%20in%20the%20Gaza%20Strip%20(Updated%20February%202021).pdf)

Quick Facts

- Over one-third of Gaza households have running water for only six to eight hours, once every four days.⁴
- 28 percent of Gaza's population isn't connected to the sewage system because of damaged infrastructure that can't be repaired due to the blockade.

4 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "The humanitarian impact of Gaza's electricity and fuel crisis" (March 2014).

- Fuel restrictions due to the blockade prevent regular functioning of 205 water wells, 42 sewage pumping stations, 15 districts sewage pumping stations, four wastewater treatment plants, 10 water desalination plants, and 15 water lifting stations with reservoirs—limiting access to water and leading to increased pollution from sewage overflow.⁵
- Israel siphons off more than 80 percent of Gaza’s groundwater through wells tapping Gaza aquifer sources—a key reason why the aquifer is not replenishing and is becoming increasingly contaminated.⁶
- 60 percent of Gaza’s population relies on private water supplies that are expensive, unregulated, and often have lower hygiene standards.⁷
- Pumps, concrete, welding supplies, pipes, water purification chemicals, and other items needed to maintain water and sewage infrastructure is blocked from entering Gaza by Israel.⁸
- Over 100,000 people across Gaza are disconnected from the water network due to unrepaired damage to infrastructure from Israeli assaults.⁹
- Up to 95 million liters of raw or partially treated sewage is discharged into the Mediterranean Sea daily.¹⁰

5 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Gaza: water and sanitation services severely disrupted due to the energy crisis (November 2015).

6 “Troubled Waters – Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water,” Amnesty International (2009), 15/0272009.

7 EWASH, “Advocacy Note on impact of power cuts on the WASH sector in Gaza” (2015).

8 “Gaza: List of Controlled Entry Items,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (04 July 2010).

9 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Gaza two years on: the impact of the 2014 hostilities on the health sector” (4 July 2016), The Monthly Humanitarian Bulletin: June 2016. <http://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-two-years-impact-2014-hostilities-health-sector>

10 Ibid

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 the power crisis. 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