

Gaza Up Close

High unemployment, severe shortages of electricity and clean water; a young, educated population with immense potential, and deliberate policy choices by Israel that deny movement, violate basic rights and block economic development.

Everything you need to know about the closure on Gaza

Updated June 2023

The Gaza Strip is a narrow sliver of land, spanning 365 square kilometers (141 square miles), bordered by Israel, Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea. Its 2.2 million residents, half of them under the age of 19, live in one of the world's most densely populated territories. Electricity is only available for about half the day and many people do not have sufficient access to [clean water](#). More than [80% of Gaza's population](#) relies on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs. The vast majority of residents do not meet Israel's [narrow criteria](#) for travel permits, and are therefore denied travel, including for employment and education, or to visit or reunite with family members living in Israel, the West Bank, and abroad.

Many Israelis believe that in implementing the [Disengagement Plan](#) in 2005, Israel unburdened itself of Gaza and no longer bears influence, let alone responsibility, for what happens in the Strip. In reality, Israel still denies sea and air access to and from Gaza and continues to control its land border crossings, with the exception of Rafah and Salah a-Din Gate, which are controlled by Egypt. Israel restricts the entry of goods coming into Gaza via [Kerem Shalom Crossing](#), and demands to know what the goods are intended for, who will be receiving them, and who has paid for them. Israel decides what goods produced in Gaza can be sold outside the Strip, how much of them, when and where. Israel repeatedly closes Gaza's crossings and denies access to its sea space, in illegal acts punishing and pressuring the population. Even in "[ordinary](#)" times, between its [repeated military offensives](#) in the Strip, sweeping restrictions on the movement of people and goods undermine basic living conditions in Gaza and violate human rights. [This is not disengagement; this is remote control.](#)

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement: How did we get here?

When Israel occupied the Golan Heights, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip in 1967, it began restricting the movement of the population that had come under its control in various ways. With regard to the Palestinian territory, in 1991, Israel canceled the "general exit permit" it had instituted in the 1970s, which had allowed relatively free

movement by Palestinians between Israel and the occupied territory, and began requiring individual permits for travel between the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and abroad. Since then, Israel has enforced a stringent [permit regime](#) that subjects millions of people to decisions made by the Israeli military and other authorities in Israel.

On September 11, 2005, Israel completed the implementation of its Disengagement Plan, removing the last of its troops and settlements from inside Gaza. In June 2007, after Hamas took control of the Strip, Israel severely tightened restrictions on movement to the point of closure: Entry of goods was reduced to Israel's restrictive definition of a "humanitarian minimum;" exit of goods to be sold outside Gaza was banned; entry of fuel was reduced, and travel between Gaza and the West Bank and Israel, already limited, was virtually stopped. In September 2007, Israel's Security Cabinet [declared](#) Gaza a "hostile entity."

Over the years, a doctrine Israeli authorities refer to as the "[Separation Policy](#)" was developed. The idea of the policy is to isolate Gaza, sever it from the West Bank and Israel, and obstruct contact between the parts of the occupied Palestinian territory. Gaza and the West Bank share not only a national identity, a language, culture, and [economy](#), as well as [family ties](#), they were also meant to make up a Palestinian state according to previous resolutions and agreements. Israeli security officials have stated in the past that the purpose of the separation policy is to put pressure on Hamas (in Gaza) and help the Palestinian Authority (in the West Bank), but in practice, the policy has been used by Israel to advance political and demographic goals that cannot be justified on security grounds alone: Reducing the number of Palestinians living in the West Bank, weakening Palestinian institutions that would underpin a state, and advancing *de facto* annexation in the West Bank at the expense of fundamental human rights. As a result of the policy, the Palestinian economy is effectively split between Gaza and the West Bank, students from Gaza are blocked from studying in West Bank universities; medical teams, academics, [employees of civil society organizations](#), academics and professional in all fields cannot travel between the two areas, not even for meetings or training, and families split between Gaza and the West Bank cannot reunite except in the most exigent circumstances.

Starting in March 2020 and throughout most of 2021, Israel leveraged the coronavirus pandemic and tightened the closure of Gaza to [unprecedented levels](#). Israel [kept travel to and from Gaza to a minimum](#) long after movement restrictions introduced inside its own territory had been removed, and continued shirking any [responsibility for the health of Gaza's residents](#).

Dire living conditions in Gaza are exacerbated by the cumulative damage caused by Israel's repeated military offensives, most recently in [August 2022](#) and [May 2023](#). Israeli bombardments have killed and wounded thousands of Palestinians in Gaza since the closure was imposed, taking a massive toll on the [lives](#), property and [mental health](#) of Palestinians in the Strip. To this day, [restrictions](#) continue to [impede the reconstruction](#), let alone development of basic civilian infrastructure. Israel's policy on the movement of goods and people keeps a [chokehold on Gaza's job market](#) and subjects the Palestinian economy to [narrow Israeli interests](#).

Some of Israel's restrictions have been [lifted or changed](#) since 2007, as detailed below, but the closure on Gaza has remained in place to this day, despite having [failed to achieve ostensive goals](#) of "weakening" Hamas or preventing rocket fire on Israeli communities. Though often presented by Israel as a response to security needs, many of the movement and access restrictions it enforces are not connected to security, nor can they be justified as such. What they have done is unravel conditions on the ground to the point that a United Nations report estimated that [Gaza would be unlivable by 2020](#), a prediction that, in fact, [transpired even earlier](#). The closure on Gaza, which Israel has [admitted](#) is a form of [economic warfare](#), is part of a broader policy of dispossession, fragmentation and apartheid.

Part 1: Movement of People

Erez Crossing

Currently, only two crossings are used for pedestrian travel into and out of Gaza – Rafah, on Gaza's border with Egypt, and Erez, between Gaza and Israel. Even when Rafah Crossing is open, Erez Crossing, which is controlled by Israel, is Gaza's only gateway to Israel and the West Bank. Movement between these areas is essential not only for the Palestinian economy, but also for medical and humanitarian access, as well as family and community life.

Palestinians wishing to enter or exit Gaza via Erez Crossing are required to meet Israel's narrow criteria in order to obtain a travel permit. An Israeli authority called the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) is in charge of implementing the government's policies regarding Gaza. Very few of Gaza's 2.2 million residents are eligible to apply for travel permits under the criteria. Those who are eligible fall into one of [three main categories](#): (1) Workers or traders, (2) medical patients in need of life-saving treatment that is unavailable in Gaza and their companions, and (3) other "exceptional humanitarian cases," including people traveling to attend the wedding or funeral of a first-degree relative, or to visit a terminally ill first-degree relative living outside of the Strip. Israel's narrow criteria, which bar the vast majority of Gaza's residents from travel, ignore [women's](#) needs for travel, [discriminating](#) against them de facto, particularly in regard to [economic access](#) and [access to family](#).

Even the few residents who do meet the criteria for a travel permit are often [denied travel in practice](#), on various grounds, and are subjected to [bureaucratic violence](#), including, sometimes, [years of waiting](#). Israel imposes thousands of "[security blocks](#)" on permit applicants, without further explanation. For example, senior businesspeople with "trader permits" who have traveled back and forth between Gaza and Israel for years might be told unexpectedly that their permits have been denied. In other cases, applicants are told their application to visit a relative, an extremely rare occurrence, is denied for security reasons even though just a few months earlier they posed no threat. Some are denied travel to receive life-saving medical treatment or [accompany a relative](#) seeking treatment in hospitals in Israel or the West Bank.

[Application processing times](#) are long and unreasonable. According to Israel's official directive, an application to visit a sick child or parent may take up to 25 business days. Applications by patients from the Gaza Strip to exit for medical treatment may take as long as 20 business days, regardless of the medical appointment date. Too often, Israeli authorities [don't respond](#) to permit applications within their own timeframes. Tens of thousands of applications receive no response whatsoever.

Prior to the Second Intifada in 2000, about 500,000 exits were recorded at [Erez Crossing](#) each month by laborers who crossed Erez to work in Israel. When the Second Intifada began, Israel drastically reduced the number of permits given to [Palestinian laborers from Gaza](#) and frequently closed Erez Crossing, often for long periods of time, in the years that followed. From March 2006 to the end of 2014, Israel prohibited entry by Gaza laborers into its territory. In late 2014, it unofficially began allowing access by laborers under a limited quota of "trader permits."

In late 2021, several months after Israel's May 2021 attack on Gaza, when the "[coronavirus closure](#)" it had imposed at Erez Crossing since March 2020 was being gradually lifted, Israel [added a criterion](#) for exiting Gaza for "financial needs" and began acknowledging the fact that most of the "financial needs" permit holders were accessing manual labor jobs in Israel. In 2022, the average monthly number of exits by Palestinians from Gaza into Israel was 34,610, almost 90% of which were exits by laborers with "financial needs" permits. While the current number of exits from Gaza via Erez Crossing for work purposes is significantly higher than it was during the first decade of the closure, it remains much lower than in the past **and falls far short of need.**

In addition to sweeping travel restrictions Israel routinely enforces, at times it also closes the crossing as a punitive measure. Erez was closed for several days before the military attack in [August 2022](#), as well as during hostilities and for several days after. The crossing was shut down again during the attack of [May 2023](#).

Rafah Crossing

[Rafah Crossing](#) is located on the Gaza-Egypt border. From 2007 to mid-2012, the crossing operated intermittently. From mid-2012 to mid-2013 the crossing was open regularly, with some 40,000 exits and entries recorded each month. From July 2013 to mid-2018, on the orders of the Egyptian authorities, the crossing remained closed most of the time, until it [resumed more regular operations](#) in May 2018, as humanitarian conditions in Gaza deteriorated and the Great March of Return protests began. Given the grim economic reality in Gaza, [many young adults](#) have taken advantage of the crossing's relatively regular operation to leave the Strip in search of a better future, sometimes [at a deadly cost](#).

In March 2020, Egypt closed the crossing in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 and over the course of almost a year, Rafah was only opened on a few occasions to allow some residents to return to their homes in Gaza. In February 2021, Egypt announced the crossing would be reopened until further notice, and it [has since](#) been operating five days a week, more or less consistently. In 2021, a monthly average of about 15,077 people traveled through the crossing, and in 2022, the monthly average of exits and entries stood at 23,222.

When the crossing is open, people who meet **Egypt's criteria** may travel through Rafah, subject to preregistration: Gaza residents with foreign residency or passports, patients with referrals for medical treatment in Egypt, and individuals with study, work, or family visitation visas for third countries. Many of those wishing to travel through Egypt do not meet these criteria. Those with means are able to obtain an expedited permit with "special" coordination, but many residents cannot afford it. Getting permission to cross Rafah can take time, and transit through the Sinai desert is extremely arduous, sometimes dangerous.

Rafah Crossing does not provide a solution for Gaza residents who [need to travel to the West Bank and Israel](#). Israel does not allow Gaza residents to enter the West Bank without an Israeli-issued permit, even if they travel via Jordan and Allenby Bridge Crossing. Additionally, Israel's often forbids entry into Gaza via Erez for people who exited the Strip via Rafah, or vice versa, putting many in a difficult position – if they leave through Rafah and the crossing is closed, they might be blocked from returning to the Strip.

Part 2: Movement of Goods

Kerem Shalom Crossing

In the first years after tightening the closure (2007-2010), Israel [shut down](#) three commercial crossings it had operated previously – Karni, Sufa and Nahal Oz. For more than a decade, [Kerem Shalom](#) has been Gaza's main [commercial crossing](#) and the only one bordering Israel. The crossing, which began operations in 2005 and was used initially for transporting humanitarian aid into Gaza, serves as a vital lifeline for Gaza's residents.

From the time the closure was tightened in 2007 and until the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident of 2010, Israel banned entrance of a [long list of goods](#) to Gaza, including basic products such as coriander, paper, toys, and chocolate. In fact, other than a narrow list of items *permitted* for entry, which was never published, everything was banned. In 2012, following a lengthy legal campaign by Gisha, the Ministry of Defense finally revealed the documents entitled "[Food Consumption in the Gaza Strip – Red Lines](#)" which included information about the restrictions Israel placed on entry of food into Gaza between 2007 and 2010. During this time, Israel deliberately reduced the entry of foodstuffs to the Gaza Strip, accelerating and exacerbating the deep financial crisis brought on by the closure.

Israel no longer restricts the entry of food into Gaza, but it continues to impose [severe restrictions](#), and sometimes bans, the entry of items it defines as "[dual-use](#)." Dual-use items are items with a civilian purpose, which may also, according to Israel, be used for military purposes. The list of dual-use items as defined by Israel, which far exceeds internationally recognized standards, is long and vague. It includes broad categories such as "[medical equipment](#)," or "[communications equipment](#)," as well as basic items and materials required for industry, the ICT sector, for farming and fishing and countless other details of everyday life. The [restrictions](#) on access to these materials curtail economic development, and severely undermine and delay ongoing efforts to improve civilian infrastructure including Gaza's [electricity and water systems](#).

Items Israeli authorities define as [dual-use](#) are not banned by definition. However, bringing them into the Gaza Strip requires **special coordination**, in other words, an even more complex coordination process than the one used for transporting goods through [Kerem Shalom](#).

For many years, basic construction materials like cement and steel and most dual-use items entered Gaza almost exclusively through a coordination mechanism called the [Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism \(GRM\)](#). The GRM was set up according to Israeli specifications after the 2014 war (referred to in Israel as Operation Protective Edge), in collaboration with the Palestinian Authority and under monitoring by the United Nations. Between 2015-2022, Israel stopped treating gravel, gray and white cement, steel rebar and steel sheets as requiring “[special coordination](#),” and since then, they have been entering the Gaza Strip via Kerem Shalom relatively freely (except when Israel imposes a full ban, such as after May 2021). The GRM continues to operate for certain large projects requiring items that are still restricted.

Israel’s control over and restrictions on movement of goods, particularly goods it considers to be dual-use, are extensive and sweeping. The system of controlling dual-use goods, including via the GRM and other mechanisms, is complex, bureaucratic, [unnecessary](#) in many cases, and lacking in transparency, creating delays and incurring additional costs. The chronic lack of dual-use items on the local market impedes construction, reconstruction, the functioning of the healthcare system and critical civilian infrastructure, as well as stifling Gaza’s economy and industries. Israel’s dual-use policy, implemented through [the GRM](#), represents a severe violation of Israel’s obligations under international law.

The ability to **market and export goods from Gaza** is vital for the economy. Israel continues to ban many types of goods made or grown in Gaza from being sold in the West Bank and Israel, which were once its main markets. While Israel did allow some small-scale export of certain goods abroad in the years following the tightening of the closure in 2007, the ban on selling Gaza produce in the West Bank remained in place for seven years. It was only toward the end of 2014, that Israel removed the ban on selling Gaza-grown agricultural goods in the West Bank. Permission to ship out furniture, textile and other goods from Gaza to West Bank markets soon followed. Currently, the types of Gaza-grown produce permitted for sale in the West Bank, according to a list published by Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), are tomato, cucumber, pepper, eggplant, zucchini, sweet potato, strawberry, cabbage, cauliflower, dates and carrots. Onions also appear on this list, but in practice, they cannot be marketed in the West Bank. It is unclear why the list is [limited to these items](#), while other fruit and vegetables are prohibited.

The year 2015 was [a shmita](#) or sabbath year in Israel, during which, according to Jewish law, Jewish growers are commanded to let their land lay fallow and observant Jews do not purchase produce unless it has been certified to have been grown and harvested by non-Jews. During that year, Israel [permitted](#) sales of tomatoes and eggplants from the Gaza Strip within Israel, subject to narrow quotas. Following the end of the *shmita* year, it allowed those same items to continue exiting Gaza. In 2022, another *shmita* year, Israel permitted

more types of Gaza-grown produce to be sold inside Israel. The value of produce sold from Gaza to Israel that year was the [highest](#) on record since 2000: 9.9 million USD compared to 1.03 million USD in 2021, an 864% increase. Furniture, textile and scrap metal are also permitted for sale in Israel.

The restrictions on the quantities and types of Gaza goods cleared for sale in Israel and the West Bank block development and stop Gaza [from reaching its economic potential](#), meaning Israel's policy continues to block entrepreneurship, business and commerce and deny livelihoods. From the time the Gaza closure was tightened in June 2007, until the end of 2014, an average of only 14.7 truckloads of goods exited Gaza every month – about 1% of number of the truckloads exiting prior to the closure (1,064 per month on average). In 2021, an average of 338 trucks exited Gaza each month; in 2022, 484 trucks exited the Strip per month on average.

As it does at Erez Crossing, too often, Israel abuses its control of Kerem Shalom as a means of exerting pressure on Gaza's residents, sometimes restricting access to vital goods for extended periods of time. Every [closure at Kerem Shalom](#) or further restrictions imposed on transit of goods through it has an immediate impact on humanitarian conditions, and leads to serious financial [losses](#) for Gaza's residents and industry. It also constitutes collective punishment, which is prohibited by international law.

Salah a-Din Gate

In February 2018, goods began coming into Gaza from Egypt via the Salah a-Din gate, located near Rafah Crossing. The gate operates under the civilian and security control of Hamas and Egypt. The entry of goods via Salah a-Din, particularly fuel and construction materials, has become significant. In 2021, about 20% of all goods to enter the Strip entered via Salah a-Din, and in 2022, some 32% of goods entered from Egypt.

Despite the increase in volume of goods coming into Gaza through Egypt, Salah a-Din Gate cannot substitute or obviate the importance of routine operations at Kerem Shalom Crossing. The gate does not connect Gaza to its most relevant markets – Israel and the West Bank – it lacks the infrastructure needed to transport all types of goods, and it is located far from local seaports.

Since August 2021, small volumes of scrap metal have been allowed to exit to Egypt via the gate. Since January 2022, battery waste has been permitted to exit too. In 2021, an average of 39 truckloads of goods exited Gaza to Egypt each month, increasing to 141 in 2022. The gate is not operated according to known, transparent working procedures. Often, items denied by Israel at Kerem Shalom are blocked from entering Gaza by Egyptian authorities at Salah a-Din as well.

Part 3: Land, sea and air

Israel's control in Gaza does not end with the commercial and pedestrian land crossings. Israel also controls the Strip's sea, air space, and many other facets of life. Contrary to

understandings reached as part of the Oslo Accords, Israel prohibits the construction of a seaport in Gaza and blocks the rebuilding of its international airport, destroyed in an Israeli air raid in 2001. Israeli drones can be heard flying over Gaza's skies, their infamous humming audible at all hours of the day. Israel blocks access to Gaza's air space and also controls Gaza's [electro-magnetic](#) space, denying it [3G, 4G, and 5G frequencies](#), which impedes cellular communications, blocks development in the hi-tech sector, and prevents the proper functioning of internet-reliant businesses and institutions.

The Buffer Zone

Israel also imposes a "[buffer zone](#)" inside Gaza, along the perimeter fence, where much of Gaza's farmland is located. Israel prohibits Gaza residents from approaching any closer than 300 meters from the perimeter fence, with farmers permitted access to a distance of up to 100 meters from the fence. Access restrictions in this area are enforced using live fire, and Israel routinely carries out incursions into areas adjacent to the fence. In 2017, the authorities in Gaza also began imposing some restrictions around the buffer zone. Farmers are not permitted to pass the 300-meter line (east of Jakar Road) after 7:00 P.M., and non-farmers need a special permit to access the area at any time.

Farmers and shepherds whose livelihoods depend on access to lands in the area closest to the fence with Israel experience great uncertainty as to when they might be in danger. Whether enforced by Israel or by local authorities in Gaza, restrictions on access to these lands, on the type of crops that can be grown in them or on the structures that can be built in the area undermine [agricultural production](#) in the Gaza Strip as well as local residents' livelihoods, which are already precarious.

According to Gaza-based [Al Mezan](#) Center for Human Rights, between 2020 and 2022, some 2,084 incidents of use of Israeli live fire aimed at farmers, shepherds, scrap metal collectors were recorded. At least 19 Palestinians were killed in these incidents and 159 were injured. The Israeli military also made [extensive use of live fire](#) against protestors participating in the Great March of Return demonstrations that took place near Gaza's perimeter fence beginning March 2018 and throughout 2019. According to figures published by the [United Nations](#), 214 Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers at the protests, including 46 children; more than 36,100 people were injured, almost 8,800 of them children.

Israeli aggression near the fence does not end with live fire alone. In late 2015, the Israeli army [confirmed](#) for the first time that it conducts aerial spraying of herbicides close to the fence in order to maintain a line of vision into the Strip. In a February 2019 response to a Freedom of Information request filed by Gisha, the state admitted that it had conducted aerial spraying on a total of 30 occasions between 2014 and 2018. Monitoring conducted by various organizations, including Gisha, revealed that the [spraying](#) harms crops [well beyond](#) the official 300 meters of the "buffer zone," leading to extensive losses for farmers. The long-term effects of the spraying for people and animals are unknown.

In 2019, the first year since 2014 that herbicide aerial spraying was not conducted, farmers in the areas near the fence [saw an improvement](#) in yield, but by January 2020 Israel had [resumed](#) the spraying, damaging large swaths of farmland. The harmful practice was carried out [again](#) in April 2020, against the backdrop of the global outbreak of COVID-19,

and in breach of Israel's duty to protect food security for Gaza's residents. No further cases of herbicide spraying have been documented since April 2020, but local farmers live in constant fear that it could be resumed without warning and cause immense financial damages.

The Fishing Zone

Fishing, one of Gaza's oldest sectors, has become a [dangerous occupation](#) over the past decades. Israel restricts access to Gaza's sea space, and its navy enforces these restrictions with warning shots or live fire at fishing vessels and fishermen, resulting in losses for fishermen, injuries, and even death. The fishing unions in Gaza report the use of live fire, [seizure of fishing boats and equipment](#), and arrests of fishermen even within the permitted fishing zone. [May 2020](#) saw an escalation in the navy's use of violent measures and an uptick in incidents of fire at fishermen off Gaza's coast. Reports of such cases have continued [over the course of 2021](#) and 2022; a total of 107 incidents of use of live fire were [recorded](#) from the beginning of 2023 until the end of April, according to Al Mezan.

The Oslo Accords set a limit of 20 nautical miles off the coast where Gaza fishermen should be able to sail, but this provision of the agreement was never implemented. [Over the years](#), Israel imposed varying restrictions on access to sea, ranging from three to nine nautical miles off the coast. In early 2019, Israel [expanded](#) a southern section of the fishing zone to 12 nautical miles, and later that year, added a small area where fishermen can sail to a distance of up to [15 nautical miles](#). A one-nautical mile strip of sea at each end of Gaza's coastline is strictly off limits to residents of the Strip. Since February 2022, Gisha has led a [legal campaign](#) challenging the legal basis for the restrictions Israel imposes on Gaza's sea space and the authority of Israel's navy to permanently confiscate fishing boats it seizes in it.

As is the case with closing the crossings or adding restrictions to the movement through them, Israel has reduced the permitted fishing zone as a way of pressuring or punishing Gaza's residents, which amounts to prohibited collective punishment. In 2019, Israel reduced the fishing zone on at least [nine different occasions](#), imposing a [full maritime closure](#) on four of these. This practice [continued](#) throughout 2020 and [2021](#). In May 2021, during Israel's attack on the Strip, it banned all sea access for 15 consecutive days. For weeks after a ceasefire was reached, it [continued to restrict](#) access the fishing zone.

Israel also restricts and in some cases denies entry of [materials required to repair](#) boats damaged by gunfire or in accidents at sea, which means that boats in need of repair are put out of commission, leading to further losses for their owners. The various restrictions have severely impaired this important sector of Gaza's economy and harmed the livelihoods of [more than 50,000 people](#) who rely on it. The [number of people employed](#) in the fishing industry in Gaza dropped from about 10,000 in 2000 to about 3,600 by early 2020.

Part 4: Power shortage

For many years, Gaza residents have suffered prolonged daily blackouts. The power shortage in the Strip impacts countless aspects of daily life, including the proper

functioning of hospitals, businesses, and schools, as well as civilian infrastructure such as the water and sewage treatment systems. The ongoing crisis undermines livelihoods, limits industrial activity and causes complex environmental hazards that exacerbate living conditions in the Gaza Strip.

There is one power plant in the Strip, which runs on diesel fuel, in recent years funded by Qatar, purchased from Israel, and transported to Gaza via Kerem Shalom Crossing. Supply from the plant's three turbines is ranges between 65-75 megawatts. An additional supply of 120 megawatts is purchased from Israel and delivered through direct power lines to the Strip. Egypt, which also used to supply electricity to Gaza, stopped doing so in February 2018. The total power supply in Gaza (about 195 megawatts) provides residents with [up to 15 hours of electricity per day](#) on average, depending on weather conditions. In the height of summer or winter, when demand rises, households receive fewer hours of electricity.

External funding has helped mitigate Gaza's power crisis, allowing public infrastructure, hospitals and businesses to function better than in previous years, but sustainable solutions are still nowhere on the horizon. According to the Gaza Electric Distribution Company, even when demand is lower, the total supply available in Gaza cannot meet even half of actual demand, which is estimated at 400-500 megawatts.

In addition, Israel has blocked access to fuel for Gaza's power plant on [numerous occasions](#), most recently in [August 2020](#), [May 2021](#) and [August 2022](#), knowingly [undermining](#) the already meager supply of electricity and harming living conditions for Gaza's two million residents.

As many countries around the world take measures to counter the growing climate crisis, chronic shortages of electricity and Israel's policies around movement and access exacerbate environmental damage in the Strip and [block its Palestinians residents](#) from developing climate resilience.

Part 5: Gisha's position

Under international law and by virtue of its prolonged and ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territory, including Gaza, Israel has an obligation to enable normal life in the Strip. Given Israel's far-reaching control over so many aspects of life in the Strip, it also has a basic moral obligation to refrain from harming Gaza's population, at the very least, but also to allow much more than that.

Egypt, which also shares a border with Gaza, does not owe obligations to Palestinians under the law of occupation. However, given Israel's closure of Gaza, and Egypt's shared border with the Strip, it does bear some [obligations](#), including to allow humanitarian access. Like other countries in the world, Egypt also has an obligation to act to prevent breaches of international law, including by refraining from all forms of collective punishment.

Israel has a right to establish security measures to prevent the transfer of weapons, but international law requires that such measures be **reasonable and proportionate**. Israel must strike a balance between its security needs and its duty to uphold Palestinians' human rights. The closure Israel imposes on Gaza does not strike such a balance. It systematically violates the right to freedom of movement and a variety of other rights that rely on movement, and is entirely unacceptable.

Gisha's position is that Israel must allow free movement of people and goods to and from Gaza, subject only to reasonable, proportionate individual security screening, and enable Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip not only to exercise their fundamental rights but also to have access to all that is required for life with dignity.

*As required by law, Gisha is proud to share that as a result of our partnerships with countries and international organizations that support our work to promote human rights, the majority of our funding comes from "foreign governmental entities."