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Israel Destroyed Gaza ‘for Generations to Come’ and the World Stayed Silent



Image by Nat.

The first official reference to Gaza becoming increasingly uninhabitable was made by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2012, when the population of the Gaza Strip was estimated at 1.8 million inhabitants.

The intention of the report, “The Gaza Strip: The Economic Situation and the Prospects for Development,” was not merely to prophesize, but to warn that if the world continued to stand idle in the face of the ongoing blockade on Gaza, a humanitarian catastrophe was imminent.

Yet, little was done, though the UN continued with its countdown, increasing the frequency and urgency of its warnings, especially following major wars.

Another report in 2015 from UNCTAD stated that the Gaza crisis had intensified following the most destructive war to that date, the year before. The war had destroyed hundreds of factories, thousands of homes, and displaced tens of thousands of people.

By 2020, though, based on the criteria set by the UN, Gaza should have become ‘uninhabitable.’ Yet, little was done to remedy the crisis. The population grew rapidly, while resources, including Gaza’s land mass, shrank due to the ever-expanding Israeli ‘buffer zone’. The prospects for the “world’s largest open-air prison” became even dimmer.

Yet, the international community did little to heed the call of UNCTAD and other UN and international institutions. The humanitarian crisis—situated within a prolonged political crisis, a siege, repeated wars, and daily violence—worsened, reaching, on October 7, 2023, the point of implosion.

One wonders if the world had paid even the slightest attention to Gaza and the cries of people trapped behind walls, barbed wire, and electric fences, whether the current war and genocide could have been avoided.

It is all moot now. The worst-case scenario has actualized in a way that even the most pessimistic estimates by Palestinian, Arab, or international groups could not have foreseen.

Not only is Gaza now beyond “uninhabitable”, but, according to Greenpeace, it will be “uninhabitable for generations to come”. This does not hinge on the resilience of Palestinians in Gaza, whose legendary steadfastness is hardly disputed. However, there are essential survival needs that even the strongest people cannot replace with their mere desire to survive. In just the first 120 days of war, “staggering” carbon emissions were estimated at 536,410 tons of carbon dioxide. Ninety percent of that deadly pollution was “attributed to Israel’s air bombardment and ground invasion,” according to Greenpeace, which concluded that the total sum of carbon emissions “is greater than the annual carbon footprint of many climate-vulnerable nations”.

A report issued around the same time by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) painted an equally frightening picture of what was taking place in Gaza as a direct result of the war. “Water and sanitation have collapsed,” it declared last June. “Coastal areas, soil, and ecosystems have been severely impacted,” it continued.

But that was over seven months ago, when parts of Gaza were still standing. Now, almost all of Gaza has been destroyed. Garbage has been piling up for 15 months without a single facility to process it efficiently. Disease is widespread, and all hospitals have either been destroyed in the bombings, burned to the ground, or bulldozed. Many of the sick are dying in their tents without ever seeing a doctor.

Without any outside assistance, it was only natural for the disaster to worsen. Last December, Médecins Sans Frontières issued a report titled “Gaza: Life in a Death Trap”. The report, a devastating read, describes the state of medical infrastructure in Gaza, which can be summed up in a single word: non-existent.

Israel has attacked 512 healthcare facilities between October 2023 and September 2024, killing 500 healthcare workers. This means that a population is trying to survive during one of the harshest wars ever recorded, without any serious medical attention. This includes nearly half a million people suffering from various mental health disorders.

By December, Gaza’s Government Media Office reported that there are an estimated 23 million tons of debris resulting from the dropping of 75,000 tons of explosives—in addition to other forms of destruction. This has released 281,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide into the air.

Once the war is over, Gaza will be rebuilt. Though Palestinian *sumud* (steadfastness) is capable of restoring Gaza to its former self, however long it takes, a study conducted by Queen Mary University in the UK said that, for the destroyed structures to be rebuilt, an additional 60 million tons of CO₂ will be released into an already severely impacted environment.

In essence, this means that even after the devastating war on Gaza ends and the rebuilding of the Strip concludes, the ecological and environmental harm that Israel has caused will remain for many years to come.

It is baffling that the very Western countries, which speak tirelessly about environmental protection, preservation, and warning against carbon emissions, are the same entities that helped sustain the war on Gaza, either through arming Israel or remaining silent in the face of the ongoing atrocities.

The price of this hypocrisy is the enduring suffering of millions of people and the devastation of their environment. Isn’t it time for the world to wake up and collectively declare: enough is enough?

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