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## The New York Times Finally Admits Gaza is an Outdoor Prison



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“Gaza’s Are Trapped in a Prison That Was Decades in the Making,”

– Mark Landler, New York Times, October 8, 2024.

Gaza is a “big outdoor prison.”

– British Prime Minister David Cameron, July 28, 2010.

Fourteen years after British Prime Minister David Cameron charged the Israelis with creating a “big outdoor prison” in Gaza, the New York Times finally acknowledged that the Palestinians in Gaza have been “effectively imprisoned...in a 141-square-mile strip of land between Egypt and Israel that has become a killing zone.” On the same day, the Washington Post finally acknowledged that it would take “80 years to rebuild all of Gaza’s destroyed

homes” if the pace of construction “mirrors previous conflicts.” Israel has bombed Gaza on several previous occasions, but the past year has seen “an unprecedented scale of destruction,” according to the United Nations”

A U.N. satellite assessment recorded that Israeli shelling and airstrikes have “damaged more than 65 percent of structures in Gaza, including 230,000 homes. The World Health Organization estimates there are at least 10,000 bodies buried beneath these buildings. Clearing the rubble and getting to these bodies will be particularly difficult because approximately 70 percent of Gaza’s road network has been damaged. The toxic dust and debris from Israeli bombings over the years has caused long-term health problems, according to Natasha Hall, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Toxic byproducts from the current war are likely to pollute Gaza’s already limited water supply, according to the Washington Post, and will undoubtedly cause many more serious health issues.

The mainstream media has been very slow to acknowledge the Israeli-Egyptian collaboration that has imprisoned Gaza since Hamas’ election victory in 2005, which endorsed Hamas for its opposition to Israel and for providing welfare, schools and nurseries to the impoverished residents of the territory. Hamas won 75 out of 118 seats, leaving Fatah with 39.

More than two million Palestinians have been in this lockdown for the past 17 years. Since 2007, Israel has banned Palestinians from leaving through Erez, the passenger crossing from Gaza into Israel; it is through Erez that they can reach the West Bank and travel abroad via Jordan. Palestinians are not permitted to operate an airport or seaport in Gaza, and Israeli authorities sharply restrict the entry and exit of goods. As a result, the rebuilding of Gaza will take decades if it is even possible to create a postwar Gaza.

Israel also has made it impossible for Palestinians from Gaza to relocate to the West Bank. Because of Israeli restrictions, thousands of Gaza residents who arrived on temporary permits and now live in the West Bank are unable to gain legal residency. Although Israel claims that these restrictions are related to maintaining security, there is ample evidence that the main motivation is to limit Palestinian demography across the West Bank, whose land Israel seeks to retain, in contrast to the Gaza Strip.

Egypt is no better than Israel when it come to the humiliation of Palestinians trying to leave Gaza for legitimate medical reasons. The parents of a 7-year-old boy with autism and a rare brain disease said they sought to travel for medical treatment for him in August 2021; Egyptian authorities only allowed the boy and his mother to enter. The mother said their journey back to Gaza took four days, mostly as a result of Rafah being closed. During this

time, she said, they spent hours waiting at checkpoints, in extreme heat, with her son crying nonstop. She said she felt “humiliated” and treated like “an animal,” observing that she “would rather die than travel again through Rafah.”

The laws of occupation permit occupying powers to impose security restrictions on civilians, but they also require them to restore public life for the occupied population, which Israel has never done and which the international community has ignored. A prolonged occupation, such as Gaza, demands that the occupier must develop narrowly tailored responses to security threats; these must minimize restrictions on rights. Israel has never done so, and the mainstream media has never paid any attention to the debilitating effect of Israeli unwillingness to respect the human rights of Palestinians.

For years, Human Rights Watch has documented the cases of Palestinians in Gaza who were denied permission to reach the West Bank or East Jerusalem for professional and educational opportunities. In 2019, a Gaza soccer team had a match scheduled on the West Bank with a rival in a match that would determine the Palestinian representative in the Asian Cup. The Gaza team applied for permits for the entire 22-person team and 13-person staff, but Israel granted permits to only four people, only one of whom was a player.

For the past 17 years, Israel has limited Gaza’s use of electricity, forces sewage to be dumped in the sea, makes sure that water remains undrinkable, and endures fuel shortages that cause sanitation plans to be shut down. Netanyahu’s actions ensures the perpetuation of desperation among those forced to live in these conditions. Such desperation would lead any human being to believe that violent resistance is the only recourse. Is there a comparison here with the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943?

No one can ever justify the brutality of the Hamas invasion of Israel on October 7th, but the brutal conditions that Israel and Egypt have imposed on the citizens of Gaza help to explain the motivations for that invasion. There are two compelling factors that stand out in any examination of the crisis in Gaza: the persistent intransigence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Israeli unwillingness to pursue a diplomatic and political solution to the Palestinian tragedy. Like a long line of Israeli politicians, Netanyahu favors total humiliation of the Palestinian people. The Hamas invasion of October 7th was inevitable.

Melvin A. Goodman is a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and a professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. A former CIA analyst, Goodman is the author of [Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA](#) and [National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism](#), and [A Whistleblower at the CIA](#). His most recent books

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