“Left in Tatters”

Catastrophic economic results of the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip in May 2021

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor
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On May 10, 2021, the Israeli army began a large-scale military attack on the Gaza Strip that lasted 11 days, throughout which they carried out thousands of air and artillery attacks on the small, besieged enclave inhabited by 2 million people. The attacks killed 254 Palestinians, including 66 children and 39 women, destroyed thousands of housing units and economic facilities, and caused significant damage to infrastructure.

During the military attack, which Israel called “Operation Guardian of the Walls,” the Israeli army committed multiple and complex human rights violations, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Israeli army used massive firepower against densely populated civilian areas, violating a number of basic human rights, most notably the right to life, the right to housing, the right to work and earn a living, and the right to property. Since the attack ended, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor released two reports – “Inescapable Hell” and “One War Older” – documenting the human rights violations that accompanied the Israeli military attack on the Gaza Strip in May 2021. This report examines the Israeli attack’s impact on the economic sectors of the Gaza Strip.

The data that the Euro-Med Monitor team documented shows that the Israeli military operations directly and indirectly affected Gaza’s productive sectors and economic structures, which were already fragile due to years of siege and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.
The Israeli army carried out precision and focused air or artillery attacks on economic facilities containing factories and production and service units, specifically factories that produce plastic, nylon, and food products, in addition to renewable energy projects.

In addition to targeting production facilities in different areas in Gaza, the Israeli army deliberately targeted the Gaza Industrial Estate (GIE). The GIE is one of the largest production complexes in Gaza, where a considerable amount of Gaza's production operations take place, as it contains dozens of factories and companies that employ hundreds of workers.

The Israeli army artillery targeted GIE for days with dozens of shells, which caused massive fires in the production facilities. To make matters worse, the fires continued for days because the Israeli army obstructed the arrival of firefighting teams to the area. Since the industrial city is near the Israeli border, the teams required special coordination in order to arrive unharmed.

By examining the Israeli army's behavior and the nature of the precise munitions it used to target economic facilities, it becomes obvious that Israel may have deliberately targeted the productive sector in Gaza to cause severe, long-term damage to its productive capacities and to stifle any efforts to achieve economic development in the beleaguered sector of more than 15 years.

The direct Israeli attacks caused widespread damage and destruction to more than 100 factories, residential buildings, towers that contained multi-service shops, industrial workshops, educational institutions, training centers, and
agricultural areas, some of which contained livestock and poultry farms. The fishing sector also received a major blow after Israel closed the sea, prevented fishing throughout the attack and its aftermath, and repeatedly reduced the fishing area as a form of collective punishment.

According to a report issued by the Higher Governmental Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, the total direct losses and damages in the economic sector from the Israeli military attack on Gaza amounted to $479 million distributed on the housing, infrastructure, economic development, and social development sectors.

The Israeli attack also caused indirect damages, no less serious than those it caused directly, by disrupting economic activities such as factories, workshops, farms, fishing, and other economic activities. In addition, closing the crossings prevented exports and imports of raw materials, causing huge losses in various economic sectors.


As for stopping economic flows, production, and services, the Israeli attack caused losses ranging from 105 to 190 million dollars.

The Israeli attacks that targeted economic facilities, which are civilian objects, are an example of military operations that violate the rules of international humanitarian law.
Since it occupied the Palestinian territories in 1967, Israel has pursued a systematic policy aimed to control the Palestinians’ economy. Israel has been using several methods, including hard and soft power, to destroy Palestinian economic assets in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza to thwart their efforts to build sustainable economic projects that can form a solid base for a stable economy.

In December 2019, a report prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) revealed that the Israeli occupation economic cost for Palestinians between 2000 and 2017 amounted to about $47.7 billion. The losses are still rising due to Israel’s continued control over...
Palestinian resources and the imposition of major measures and restrictions on the population, UNCTAD said.

Looking at the Israeli policy towards Gaza, since March 2006, Israel has been imposing severe restrictions on Gaza’s economy as part of its ongoing policy of collective punishment on the residents of the Strip.

Due to its control over the Kerem Shalom border crossing, the only commercial crossing between Gaza and Israel, the latter prohibits the entry of dozens of materials into the first under the pretext of dual-use. These items include most of the raw materials used in various industries, contributing to the employment of manpower and allowing the achievement of economic development.

Between 2008 and 2021, Israel launched several military attacks on the Gaza Strip, four of which (2008-2021-2014-2012-) were devastating, leaving hundreds of factories and commercial interests destroyed and infrastructure, communications, and Internet networks severely damaged. The total losses of the four major attacks exceeded $6.5 billion.

The ongoing Israeli siege on Gaza has caused the closure of more than 3,500 factories, workshops, and shops, direct and indirect monthly losses estimated at $70 million, and unemployment and poverty rates to rise to record levels.

The Ministry of Economy in the Gaza Strip estimates that the latest attack in May alone caused the destruction or damage of about 1,500 economic facilities. This has led to a further deterioration of the already fragile
economic sector due to the ongoing Israeli blockade and Coronavirus-related emergency measures, which caused the closure or curtailment of work in hundreds of economic facilities and affected thousands of workers. Given the Israeli army’s top-notch intelligence technology, it is certainly aware that when a residential complex or tower is targeted, a large number of facilities and economic interests will be damaged or destroyed. Thus, it appears that the Israeli army intentionally wants to harm civilians and their property.

The Israeli attack led to the total or partial destruction of hundreds of production facilities, including various factories and workshops, large farms, and fish farming projects, in addition to causing severe damage to the fishing sector.

The Israeli authorities pre-empted their military attack on the Gaza Strip, which began on May 10, 2021, by closing the Erez Crossing, the only crossing designated for the passage of individuals into Israel, and the Kerem Shalom Crossing, the only commercial crossing between Gaza and Israel. Thus, Israel prevented imports and exports to and from Gaza, causing the suspension of work in most productive sectors in the Strip. Even after the Israeli attack stopped, the Israeli authorities continued to close the crossings. On May 25, 2021, the Israeli authorities announced the reopening of the Kerem Shalom crossing but prevented the entry of most goods and raw materials for the various productive sectors. This exacerbated the work crisis in the factories and paralyzed the commercial and industrial movement.
What the Israeli authorities allowed were limited quantities of goods and humanitarian supplies to international organizations. The ban continued until late June 2021, when Israel began allowing some materials to enter the Strip. However, as of writing this report, the movement of goods and raw materials has not returned to what it was before the Israeli attack on May 10, 2021.

Up until mid-July, the Israeli authorities also banned the export movement from the Gaza Strip, which inflicted heavy losses on the productive sectors, especially farmers, factory owners, and fish farming projects.

The Israeli attack on Gaza in May 2021 led to the total or partial destruction of hundreds of different commercial and craft facilities, including grocery stores of various sizes, clothing and accessories stores, and various commercial companies.

The bombardment also caused the destruction or severe damage to many services, such as private educational and university institutions, training centers, law offices, and other private interests. This caused the closure of those professional and craft interests and the layoff of thousands of workers and employees.

The Israeli military attack deliberately and unprecedentedly targeted infrastructure facilities, as the Israeli warplanes destroyed several kilometers of streets, water and sewage networks, and electricity and telephone installations. This destruction was reflected in the provision of basic services, ambulance, and emergency services during the attack, and was clearly reflected in the overall performance of the economic movement.
In Gaza City alone, about 158,625 m² of asphalt, 54,470 m² of sidewalks, and 14,205 (linear meters) of lighting networks were destroyed and damaged. About 26,600 (linear meters) of water networks were destroyed and damaged. In addition, a number of major water wells were damaged in the city, while about 23,070 (linear meters) of sewage networks and 2,850 (linear meters) of rainwater drainage networks were destroyed and damaged. One of the main sewage plants was directly targeted and was almost completely destroyed, which led to the leakage of sewage into the seawater, polluting it.

As for the electricity distribution network, including its components, it was subjected to widespread and unprecedented destruction estimated at $10 million in losses. This included several major components, including major components for approximately six power lines carrying currents from inside Israel that transmit 75 megawatts to Gaza. This caused a severe shortage of electricity supply during the attack and its aftermath, affecting the lives of the residents and the work of factories and commercial establishments in the Strip.

Israel also prevented the entry of fuel intended to operate the sole power plant in Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing for about 50 days after the attack, which exacerbated the repercussions of the crisis on all the different sectors.

The violent Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip severely damaged communication networks and the Internet and destroyed the equipment
and devices of many Internet service providers. This led to the shutdown of services to a large number of the population and caused the cessation of the work of many companies and service offices that depend on telecommunications and the Internet.

During the same attack, Israeli forces destroyed at least 33 media headquarters. The attack targeted journalists and media workers, as well as press and media institutions, most notably Al-Jazeera and the American news agency Associated Press (AP), despite the protection they have as civilian institutions according to the International Law.

Due to the impact of the Israeli military attack on the state capital and the halt in economic activity during the attack, the Gross domestic product (GDP) in Gaza is expected to drop by 0.3% in 2021, compared to an expected growth rate of 2.5% before the Israeli attack.

It is expected that the effects of the capital balance drop will continue for at least the next two years, hindering future growth at all levels, unless reconstruction efforts are accelerated, the affected compensated, and budgets to the various economic sectors allocated.

The drop of the GDP led to the deterioration of social conditions and the creation of new phenomena, such as the high rates of financial crimes against the affected merchants, and the high unemployment rate, which is estimated to rise at around 50% by the end of this year, mainly due to the damage to workers' facilities, physical injuries, and the general decline in economic activity.
Through documentation and field inspections, it was seemingly apparent that the Israeli army, during its attack on the Gaza Strip in May 2021, deliberately targeted basic pillars of the Gaza Strip economy and worked in an organized manner to inflict severe and long-term damage to the productive capabilities in the industrial and agricultural sectors and the fishing industry, both directly and indirectly.

Following the end of the military offensive, the Israeli authorities imposed severe restrictions on the border crossings and the import/export movement, which exacerbated the losses of the productive sectors and impeded
the attempts to revive the damaged facilities as the import of alternative equipment and production-necessary raw materials was prevented. This part of the report reviews the Israeli targeting of production sectors in the Gaza Strip during the recent attack, including the industrial and agricultural sector and the fishing industry.

• **The industrial sector**

In addition to targeting residential homes and infrastructure facilities, the Israeli bombing apparently deliberately destroyed about 300 economic facilities in the industrial sector that employed about 4,000 workers and disrupted the work of all factories during the attack. This disruption continued in many factories after the attack, while other factories reduced their production capacity and stopped some production lines as a result of closing the crossings and preventing the import of raw materials. The targeting included factories with various fields of work with a seemingly deliberate approach to destroying the economic pillars in the Gaza Strip. These factories continued to operate despite the losses they had sustained in three previous military attacks, a tight siege since 2006, and collective punishment due to the Palestinian division. The destruction and disruption of factories led to a record-high increase in the unemployment rate, surging to over 60% among workers. The number of unemployed people increased to about 270,000 workers and the poverty rate among workers increased to more than 80%, according to the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions.
Euro-Med Monitor’s field team documented the complete destruction of several factories as a result of the Israeli bombing, including the Al-Jalil Ice Cream Factory in the Al-Zaytoun neighborhood, south of Gaza City at dawn on Tuesday, May 11, 2021, followed by the bombing of the Abu Al-Khair Factory and Hamada Ceramics Company in the northern Gaza Strip. The Israeli forces also targeted the Gaza Industrial Estate (GIE), residing in the southeast of Gaza City near the border with Israel, which led to the destruction and/or significant damage to about 15 factories and companies within the area, although it is devoid of any military presence and does not represent a threat to the Israeli army. In addition, European and international officials regularly visit the area in order to develop and support it. GIE was built on an area of 500 acres with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the European Union. The estate is considered the main area specializing in commercial and industrial businesses in the Gaza Strip. Euro-Med Monitor’s field team documented that the Israeli army artillery targeted 15 factories and companies in the Industrial Estate with tens of shells, which led to their total or partial destruction. These included the Abu Iskandar Factory for Plastic Industry, which was targeted on the evening of Monday, May 17, 2021, with several artillery shells causing a fire inside that burned tons of plastic raw materials. The Euro-Mediterranean Monitor team documented the testimony of Ahmed Omar Harb, co-owner of the Abu Iskandar factory, who said:
“The Israeli army artillery fired several incendiary shells at the factory on the evening of Monday, May 17, 2021, which caused a huge fire in the place as the raw materials in the factory are highly flammable. The fire lasted 5 hours, which was enough to destroy everything. The factory employs 17 people, and they are all now unemployed.”

“We used to think we were safe by our presence in this area that is protected under the founding agreements, but the reality was shocking,” he added.

He continued, “I lost all my capital and currently need about 700,000 dollars and a period of 6 months to restart the business.”

In his testimony, Mohammed Refaat al-Khudari, an official of the WPS Company for Renewable Energy in Gaza Industrial City, told the Euro-Mediterranean Monitor team:

“After targeting the nearby Abu Iskandar factory and setting it on fire, the flames spread to the company’s factory and raw materials started burning. The fire was so huge that all the equipment consisting of solar panels, electric cables, spare parts, and machinery}
were melted to ashes, and the whole factory was destroyed.”

“The factory employed 20 workers before the bombing, but now we have to manage with only 9 workers,” he added.

“We used to pay about $15,000 annually to rent the place, which was supposed to be safe, but all the agreements did not prevent the targeting of the place and the destruction of factories. We incurred losses of about $330,000 as a result of the destruction of the factory, and we need quite a bit of time to rebuild and start working again,” he added.

In a testimony, Khader Hafez Raqeq, the official of the Raqeq sewing factory, said:

“The Israeli army targeted at dawn on Saturday, May 15, 2021, the area where the factory is located with incendiary shells, and the targeting continued for 3 continuous days, during which we were unable to approach the area due to the severity of the situation, especially since it is close to the border.”

He continued, “The factory contained about 30 tons of manufacture-ready fabrics, which increased the flame spread very quickly and caused the fire to continue for days. What shocked us was that the
production machines in the factory were made of the strongest and most durable steel with a thickness of 30cm, but as a result of the fire, they crumbled into ashes. Although the walls of the factory are 13 meters high, the flames exceeded them, which indicates the enormity of what happened to the place.”

He added, «This factory is all I have and the product of my whole life’s labor, and today it has become just ashes. My losses amounted to about 1.5 million dollars. I am not the only one who lost, as the factory used to employ 101 workers, now they are reduced to only 8, and the others have lost their only source of livelihood.”
• **Agricultural sector**

The Israeli attack caused severe damage to the agricultural sector by targeting agricultural lands, including trees, plants, greenhouses, and water wells, in addition to targeting poultry and livestock farms of all kinds. The Israeli forces also implemented a policy of fire control over the border agricultural lands, which prevented farmers from accessing their lands and practicing their agricultural activities. This resulted in the damage of hundreds of acres of vegetables and trees, either as a result of direct targeting or as a result of the interruption of irrigation during the days of the attack.

Livestock breeders (poultry, ruminants, fish, and bees) also suffered heavy losses, as large numbers of birds and animals died as a result of the interruption of supplies of animal feed due to the closure of border crossings.

On the other hand, agricultural facilities, fodder factories, wells, main and subsidiary conveying lines, agricultural ponds, fish farming stations, fodder stores, agricultural equipment stores, pesticides, and bee farms were seriously damaged.

All this led to weak and sometimes lack of marketing capacity for many agricultural, plant, and animal products as a result of restricted movement and difficulty in accessing agricultural lands, animal and fish facilities, as well as market disruption, in addition to the absence of an export opportunity for many agricultural and fish products. All of these factors and others caused sharply lower prices in many commodities, causing huge losses to producers.
In addition to what was mentioned, the Israeli attack caused a large number of workers to stop working. In total, the value of losses in the agricultural sector as of the date of writing this report is estimated at more than $200 million.

Euro-Med Monitor’s field team visited the sites of six farms in various regions of Gaza and conducted three interviews with owners of damaged farms, in which they reported the size of the losses they incurred as a result of the Israeli attack.

Yasser Mohammed Hunedek, who owns a peach farm east of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, said,

“I have a peach farm on an area of 100 dunams, less than one kilometer away from the eastern border. The ripening of the peach fruits coincided with the start of the Israeli attack on May 10, 2021, and we were supposed to pick the fruits and sell them on those days. We could not reach the area as it is borderline and is subjected to heavy air and artillery shelling around the clock.”

“On May 13, 30 workers and I took a risk to pick the fruits and avoid some losses, and we were able to pick 700 kilos of peaches, but during our work, an Israeli drone targeted a land beside the farm,
so we had to flee immediately. As a result of our inability to reach the farm after that, all the fruits fell to the ground and became unfit for sale, causing losses estimated at $60,000, and 50 seasonal and 10 permanent workers lost their jobs.

Aref Saeed Shamali told Euro-Med Monitor,

“I own 33 dunums of agricultural land near the eastern borders of Gaza City, planted with zucchini and pecans, and there are greenhouses for tomatoes. On May 15, the Israeli army directly targeted the land with artillery shells. This caused the destruction of all irrigation networks and the destruction of most of the crops.” He continued, «The value of my losses as a result of the Israeli targeting is more than $20,000, and seven seasonal and four permanent workers have lost their source of income as a result.»
In another testimony, Hussein Jaber Habib, owner of a bird farm, said,

«My brothers and I own a poultry farm that extends over an area of 15 dunums east of Al-Shojaeiya neighborhood, east of Gaza City, and there were about 16,000 turkeys. Since the beginning of the attack, the farm was directly targeted by several air raids, and the artillery shelling did not stop around the farm during the days of the attack. We were unable to reach the place to do our work, so the birds died because of the direct bombardment and the interruption of water and fodder.”

He continued, «Our losses are estimated at about $60,000, and six workers, whose only source of income was the farm, became unemployed.»
Table showing the damage to plant production:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Damaged</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Number of units affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plant production sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>tree</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable crops</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,000</td>
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<td>Field crops</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenhouses completely destroyed</td>
<td>acres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenhouses damaged</td>
<td>acres</td>
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<td>2,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plants in greenhouses</td>
<td>acres</td>
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<tr>
<td>nurseries destroyed</td>
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<tr>
<td>seedlings in nurseries ravaged</td>
<td>seedlings</td>
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<td>1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>agricultural pits</td>
<td>pit</td>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fertilizers</td>
<td>ton</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pesticides</td>
<td>liter</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
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Table showing the damage to the animal production:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Damaged</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Number of units affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal production sector</td>
<td>cattle and sheep barns destroyed</td>
<td>barn</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cows died</td>
<td>cow</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sheep died</td>
<td>sheep</td>
<td>600</td>
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<td></td>
<td>poultry farms destroyed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>broiler chickens died</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>egg laying hens died</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rabbits and domestic birds died</td>
<td>bird</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>hives destroyed</td>
<td>beehive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>milk spoiled</td>
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Table showing the damage to the water sector:

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<th>Unit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water sector</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>solar energy units</td>
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<td></td>
<td>water pipelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>irrigation networks</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cement overhead water tanks</td>
<td>tank</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Fishing sector**

The number of fishermen in Gaza is about 4,000, while 500 others work in professions related to fishing, such as fishmongers, mechanics, electricians, boat builders, and fishing equipment dealers. There are also three fish farms in the sector.

Fishermen in Gaza suffer from being unable to practice their work freely in the area where they are allowed to sail and work. This is due to the repeated Israeli attacks, the frequent restriction of the fishing area, which ranges between 6 to 15 nautical miles at best, in addition to the ban on the necessary equipment they need.

Since 2006, Israel has killed 13 fishermen and injured more than 200 others while working at sea, in addition to arresting 700 fishermen, destroying 185 boats at sea, and confiscating 170 others.

On the morning of Monday, May 10, 2021, the Israeli army completely closed the Gaza sea hours before its attack, entirely halting the fishing operation. The head of the Fishermen’s Syndicate in Gaza, Nizar Ayyash, told Euro-Med Monitor that the closure of the sea during the Israeli attack caused the disruption of more than 4,000 fishermen, who support about 50,000 people. He said that the closure caused indirect damages estimated at $2 million, in addition to losses estimated at $170,000 due to the direct bombardment that targeted several docks in the governorates of the Gaza Strip.

In the wake of the ceasefire, Israel reopened the sea to fishermen, but only for an area of 6 nautical miles, after it was 15 miles in the part extending from
the center to the south of the Gaza Strip. On July 12, 2021, Israel announced “the expansion of the fishing area in specific areas of the Gaza Strip sea to 12 nautical miles,” claiming that the security situation had improved. Then, on July 25, the fishing area was reduced to 6 nautical miles under the pretext of the unstable security situation. This indicates that the Israeli authorities are using the basic rights of Palestinians for political blackmail.

Suhail Mahmoud Al-Hajj, an investor in a fishery southwest of Gaza City told Euro-Med Monitor,

“The area surrounding the farm was subjected to frequent and violent Israeli bombardments. This damaged the farm severely after the solar panels that feed the equipment with electricity were broken down. In addition, some Dennis fishponds were damaged. After the attack ended, the Israeli side continued to close the crossing and prevented the export movement, which increased our losses significantly. The value of the direct losses as a result of the bombing and the indirect losses as a result of the suspension of exports are estimated at about $110,000, and 15 workers out of 35 lost their jobs as a result of reducing production due to damages.”
Legal background

The Gaza Strip was seized by Israeli forces in June 1967 and falls within the framework and concept of the 1907 Hague Convention, especially Article 42 of it, which stipulates the following: “Territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation extends only to the territory where such authority has been established and can be exercised.”

Despite withdrawing from Gaza in 2005, Israel continued to maintain a clear state of “actual authority” in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli forces effectively control the lives of the residents of the Strip by controlling the crossings of people and goods, the civil registry, sea and air, and the quantities of electricity, water, and basic goods and services entering Gaza. International humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, prohibit the occupying power from targeting civilian objects, installations, and private property in the territory it controls. Given that it is a state of occupation, Israel, as the occupying power, is responsible for ensuring the access of food and medical supplies to the residents of Gaza in accordance with the provisions of Articles 55 and 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. However, it still imposes a stifling blockade on Gaza, the impact of which increases with each military attack that includes systematic destruction of the productive sectors, either by direct targeting or indirectly by preventing the supply of raw materials or the export of products outside Gaza.
The Israeli targeting of the productive sector in Gaza is prohibited by the text of Article 14 of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions relating to the Protection of Victims of Armed Conflict, which states: “Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited. It is therefore prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless, for that purpose, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies, and irrigation work.”

This article applies to all forms of Israeli targeting of civilian commercial or industrial facilities, without which it is impossible to live and survive. Rather, Israel is required under international humanitarian law to do more than that as an occupying power. It is responsible for providing care services to everyone who resides in the occupied territory, including all humanitarian fields, such as health, food, and development services, such as industrial and commercial services.

**Commercial establishments**

Commercial establishments enjoy all the guarantees of protection granted to civilian objects. It is prohibited to target them, as Article 52 of Annex I (Protocol) Additional to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 stipulates the following:

1. “Civilian objects shall not be the object of attack or of reprisals. Civilian objects are all objects which are not military objectives as defined in paragraph 2.”
2. Attacks shall be limited strictly to military objectives. In so far as objects are concerned, military objectives are limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose, or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total, or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.”

• **Residential facilities and infrastructure**

Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits the destruction of individual and collective property by the occupying forces, as it states:

“Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.”

• **Journalists and media organizations**

International law treats journalists who exercise their professional duties as civilians as long as they adhere to their work standards, as Article 79 of Annex I (Protocol) Additional to the 1977 Geneva Conventions states:

1. “Journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians within the meaning of Article 50.

2. They shall be protected as such under the Conventions and this Protocol,
provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians [...]"

• **Agricultural establishments**

Article 14 of the Second Additional Annex (Protocol) to the 1977 Geneva Conventions guarantees special protection for installations necessary for the survival of the population, such as agricultural areas and irrigation networks, as it stipulates the following:

“Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited. It is therefore prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless, for that purpose, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies, and irrigation works.”

The same was confirmed by Article 54 of the Additional Annex (Protocol) to the Geneva Conventions, which stated:

1. “Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited.

2. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies, and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.”
Findings

The Israeli attack:

- inflicted direct and indirect losses of more than half a billion dollars on various sectors, which deepened the crisis of the already fragile economy due to the repercussions of 15 years of siege and political division;
- destroyed or obstructed the work of factories and production facilities, causing thousands of workers to be suspended from work, and an increase in the unemployment rate, which is already high in Gaza, reaching about 49% in general, and rising among young people and graduates to more than 67%;
- impeded economic growth and weakened the production capacity of the various productive sectors in Gaza.
Recommendations

The Israeli violations, during the military attack on the Gaza Strip in May 2021 which affected economic facilities, are an example of military operations on a territory under military occupation. Under international humanitarian law, these actions must be held accountable in accordance with the Rome Statute, as targeting and destroying civilian objects during military operations is a war crime.

Based on the above, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor:

- urges the Israeli authorities to open a serious investigation into the aforementioned incidents, hold the perpetrators accountable, and work to neutralize civilians, their property, and economic facilities during the military attacks.
- calls upon the Security Council to open an investigation into the grave violations committed by the Israeli forces during their attack on Gaza, including the killing of civilians and targeting of their property, and the deliberate destruction and severe damage to media headquarters, agricultural lands, and economic facilities that support and provide services to hundreds of thousands of the civilian population.
- calls on the International Criminal Court to investigate the Israeli attacks on the productive sectors in Gaza and to take legal requirements that would prevent impunity for the perpetrators.
- calls upon the states party to the Geneva Conventions to convene a
meeting to discuss their role under Article 149 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and activate accountability before their national courts for grave violations of the Geneva Conventions.

• urges the international community to put pressure on the Israeli authorities to lift the severe restrictions, allow the entry of raw materials for the reconstruction process, and compensate the civilian population for the losses they have suffered.
Left in Tatters: Catastrophic economic results of the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip in May 2021
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