



UNITED NATIONS
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
occupied Palestinian territory

ACCESS RESTRICTED AREAS (ARA) IN THE GAZA STRIP

JULY 2013

Key facts

Since September 2000, Israel has tightened restrictions on Palestinian access to the sea and to land located near the fence with Israel, citing security concerns.

- ◆ Up to 35% of Gaza's agricultural land and as much as 85% of its fishing waters have been affected at various points.
- ◆ Currently, access to farming land within 300 metres of the perimeter fence separating Gaza from Israel is largely prohibited, while presence for several hundred metres beyond this distance is risky.
- ◆ Fishermen are currently allowed to access less than one third of the fishing areas allocated under the Oslo Accords - 6 out of 20 nautical miles (nm) from the coast.
- ◆ There are currently 3,500 registered fishermen, compared to approximately 10,000 in 2000; an additional 2,000 people work in fishing-related industries.
- ◆ The potential fish catch lost as a result of access restrictions between 2000 and 2012 is estimated at approximately 1,300 metric tonnes (mt) per year.
- ◆ At least 95% of Gaza fishermen receive international aid.
- ◆ Prior to November 2012, access restrictions resulted in a loss of approximately 75,000 mt of agricultural produce, valued at USD 50.2 million, per year.
- ◆ 319 shelters, or 12% of those destroyed during Operation "Cast Lead" in 2008/2009 were located in the ARA
- ◆ Thirteen schools, with 4,800 students and staff are located within 1,500 metres from the fence and have been damaged or had class sessions disrupted due to the enforcement of access restrictions.
- ◆ Since June 2007, 214 Palestinian have been killed, including at least 127 civilians, and 825 injured, including at least 761 civilians, in the ARA on land.
- ◆ During the same period, five Palestinian fishermen were killed and 25 injured when Israeli naval forces opened fire to enforce access restrictions.

- 1. Restrictions imposed by Israel on access to land along Gaza's perimeter fence and to fishing areas along Gaza's coast undermine the security and livelihoods of Palestinians.** These restrictions prevent access to large farming and fishing areas and their enforcement places civilians at serious physical risk. Methods of enforcement include the use of live ammunition, detention and harassment of fishermen, leveling of farm land, destruction of private and public property, and confiscation of fishing boats.
- 2. Additional risks to civilian life and property have stemmed from activities of Palestinian armed groups operating in the access restricted areas on land.** Though this activity has decreased in recent months, Palestinian armed groups have regularly fired projectiles towards towns in southern Israel from areas along the fence, increasing the risk posed to civilians.
- 3. In recent months there has been improved access for farmers and fishermen to previously inaccessible areas,** following the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in November 2012. However, improvement has not been consistent or sustained and the potential impact on land has also been limited by restrictions on the entry of vehicles and equipment, which make some land unusable.
- 4. Uncertainty regarding access restrictions impacts physical security and livelihoods.** The fishing zone has been altered three times since November 2012, including reduction in response to rocket fire from Gaza. Various Israeli authorities have made contradictory statements regarding the extent and nature of land restrictions. Enforcement incidents continue to be reported even in areas where access restrictions should not apply. This uncertainty contributes to a situation in which farmers and fishermen are concerned about their physical safety and fearful, or unwilling, to invest financially in developing their livelihoods.
- 5. Access to schools for children living in the ARA on land can be dangerous and classes are often disrupted.** Israeli incursions have occurred regularly and many schools have been repeatedly damaged in hostilities. The anxieties associated with attending school there has taken a toll on students, with teachers reporting signs of psychosocial distress.
- 6. Recurrent hostilities and difficulties of access have resulted in unexploded ordnance contamination of certain areas of the ARA on land,** which is a further impediment to productive use of land and livelihoods, and raises concerns regarding the safety of farmers and humanitarian stakeholders aiming at rehabilitating the ARA
- 7. Restrictions imposed on access to land and sea and the methods used to enforce them raise serious concerns under international law.** These restrictions should be removed to the fullest extent possible; measures imposed to address Israel's security concerns must not result in disproportionate harm to the lives and livelihoods of Palestinian civilians. The use of force must be in conformity with Israel's obligations under international law.



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