



A People in Danger

Effects on Health of the 2014 Israeli Offensive on the Gaza Strip



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Introduction

Under Israeli military occupation since 1967, the Gaza Strip has been subjected to a near-total blockade since 2007 and to severe attacks by the Israeli military in recent years, the most intense of which took place in 2006, 2008, 2012 and 2014.¹ Policies of separation from the West Bank, and of isolation and containment, have also been in place for decades: closures began as early as 1991; they were intensified after 2000 during the Second Palestinian Uprising, and even more so after Hamas took over the Strip in June 2007 and the imposition of the blockade.² This situation has not only disrupted and sometimes destroyed the infrastructure and economy; it has also put people's lives under constant threat. With

more than two thirds born following the Oslo Accords of 1993, most inhabitants of the Gaza Strip have been living under chronic exposure to Israeli military violence³ and have suffered intense military attacks.

Most of the reports written on the repercussions of the summer 2014 Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip have focused on emergency support and the documentation of infrastructural and economic damage. Some have undertaken specific assessments, examining the situation of children, women, health infrastructure or markets.⁴ All provided important tools to steer humanitarian responses and document the extent of the damage; however, the focus on specific sectors fails to depict the situation comprehensively.

Producing numerical accounts of destroyed structures and homes, of the killed and injured, and of those affected by diseases or disability is necessary, but insufficient to assess the impact of military offensives on the well-being and quality of life of the Palestinians. Protracted exposure to various types of military violence and prolonged suffering can have long-term health effects and eventually lead to death. Palestinians are not only subjected to violence; they also suffer from insecurity, uncertainty, humiliation and deprivation, all of which contribute to aggravate the short-term repercussions of military offensives.

This study examines some of the long-term consequences of occupation and violence on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. It is based on a survey of the political, economic and social impact of the 2014 offensive as reported by Gazans themselves, and on data on their well-being and health. Health is a social construction, positively and negatively affected by factors such as the economy, education, environment, housing and exposure to military and other forms of violence. Breaking disciplinary boundaries, the survey helped to understand some of the consequences of the most recent military offensive on the Gaza Strip and its effects on population health, in the context of protracted Israeli military occupation and blockade.

This paper is the first of a series, which will be produced based on the analyses of the 2015 survey data and other data sources. Its main goal is to describe the effects of the 2014 Israeli offensive on Gaza, compounded with those of the previous offensives and the protracted blockade, on the health and well-being of adult Gazans (18+ years of age). The survey design, sample selection, field work, and data coding and entry, were carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), with technical assistance from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH).

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Endnotes

1 Dubbed by Israel "Summer Rain" and "Autumn Clouds" (2006); "Cast Lead" and "Hot Winter" (2008); "Pillar of Defense" (2012); and "Protective Edge" (2014).

2 Roy, 2012.

3 Israeli military violence in this context refers to military operations by the Israeli army, the blockade on the Gaza Strip, and shooting incidents along the border between the Strip and Israel and in maritime areas along the Gaza coast.

4 Some of these studies are available from <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/occupied-palestinian-territory/assessments>.

<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/people-danger-effects-health.pdf>

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