



Academic Paper

# The Effects of the Total Israeli Siege on Gaza Strip and Their Impact on Youth



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July 2022



**Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations**

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# The Effects of the Total Israeli Siege on Gaza Strip and Their Impact on Youth

Dr. Raed Hillis<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, the Palestinian economy received many shocks that limited its development and led to the continuous fluctuations of many economic indicators, which had an impact on a large segment of the society.

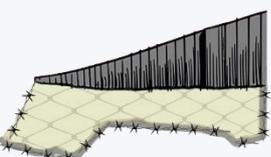
The most prominent of these shocks is the strict Israeli siege of Gaza Strip (GS) for the past 15 years, by which the Israeli occupation impeded and prevented the entry and exit of goods. This has caused the GS's economy to enter into an unprecedented state of stagnation with disastrous repercussions on various sectors, as well as all segments of society, more severely on youth.

In addition, during the siege period, the GS faced four major military attacks, which made the economic and social conditions of the Gazans deteriorate. For these attacks lasted for a long period and paralyzed all economic sectors, mostly due to the destruction of factories and companies and the loss of jobs.

In light of the above, this paper monitors the repercussions of the Israeli siege on the economic situation in GS and addresses their impact on the youth.



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## First: Methodology of the Total Israeli Siege

The siege is Israel's main strategic tool for dealing with GS. It has three major aspects: First, the Israeli control of resources; Second, the control of borders and crossings; and third, the paralysis of the Palestinian decision making.<sup>2</sup> Through the siege, Israel ensures the continuation of economic dependence on it, and the inability of the Palestinian economy to grow and develop. The siege is also meant to curb Palestinian endeavors to build an independent and sovereign national economy, while dismantling the Palestinian political, economic, cultural and social structure. Thus, making people frustrated and uncertain about the future, in addition to preoccupying them with poverty, suffering and deprivation so that their priorities become providing the necessities of life and livelihood, instead of thinking about the conflict and ending the occupation.<sup>3</sup>



## Second: Measures of the Total Israeli Siege on the GS

The Palestinian schism of June 2007 provided Israel with suitable conditions to impose a siege on GS, close the crossings, prevent the freedom of movement of people and goods and launch repeated military attacks. Immediately after the schism, Israel took five main measures as bases of the total siege system, namely:<sup>4</sup>

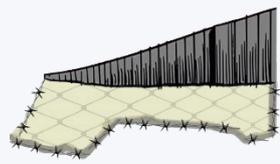
- ▶ 1. On 21/6/2007, it suspended the Gaza customs code, used in the clearance of goods process, thus affecting the movement of trade.
- ▶ 2. On 20/9/2007, it declared GS a hostile entity.

<sup>2</sup> For more details on the siege:

Amnesty International et al., "Dashed Hopes: Continuation of the Gaza Blockade," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - OCHA, November 2010; Legal Center for Freedom of Movement (Gisha), Information Sheet, Unraveling the closure of Gaza, July 2010; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - OCHA, special Focus, "Locked in: The Humanitarian Impact of Two Years of Blockade on the Gaza Strip," August 2009; and Report by 22 aid agencies and international human rights groups/Non-UN document, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Mohamed Lubbad, "The Inclination of Palestinian University Students Toward the Role of Websites in Arranging their Priorities regarding Local Issues," Master's Thesis, The Islamic University, Gaza, 2014, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Raed Hillis, "The Development of the Palestinian Economy from Partial Independence to Dependence," *Tasamuh Journal*, Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies, issue 71, 2020, pp. 75–76.



- ▶ 3. Closing all GS crossings except for Rafah and Erez, designated for the movement of individuals, and Karm Abu Salem crossing which is designated for the transport of goods. It should be noted that the movement of individuals and goods to and from the GS used to take place through six crossings, namely: Beit Hanoun/ Erez, Karni, Nahal Oz, Karm Abu Salem and Sofa crossing on the border with Israel, in addition to the Rafah crossing on the border with Egypt. Accordingly, Israel imposed restrictions on the entry of raw materials, whether for construction or industry, as well as on different currencies, especially the shekel in some cases. It also stopped the import of more than 4,000 goods, which used to be imported before the complete closure, and allowed the import of about 18 essential goods, only to prevent a humanitarian crisis. These gradually increased to 67 commodities before the easing of the siege in 2010.<sup>5</sup>



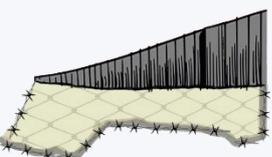
- ▶ 4. Since late 2008, expanding access restricted areas, which are agricultural lands located on the Gaza side of the “Green Line” demarcated in 1949, whose area is estimated at 17% of the total GS land mass and 35% of its agricultural land. Israel also prevented Palestinians from accessing sea areas beyond three nautical miles (a nautical mile is approximately 1.85 km) from shore.<sup>6</sup>

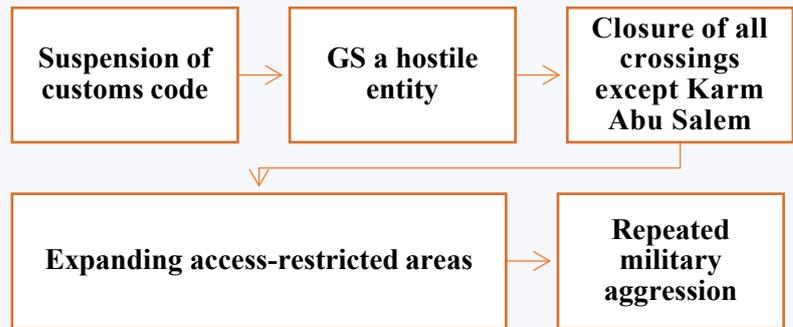
- ▶ 5. The repeated military attacks on the GS, which affected people’s lives, property, livelihoods and resources through killing and destruction. The number of major military attacks on GS reached four which Israel launched in November 2008, November 2012, July 2014 and May 2021. The attempt to fix what was destroyed made the reconstruction of GS and the need for building materials a priority, at a time Israel is imposing strict restrictions on the entry of such materials and the entry of people.



<sup>5</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Report on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Geneva, 2010, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> OCHA and World Food Programme (WFP), “Between the Fence and a Hard Place: The Humanitarian Impact of Israeli-Imposed Restrictions on Access to land and Sea in the Gaza Strip, OCHA oPt, 2010, pp. 5, 10 and 33, [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha\\_opt\\_special\\_focus\\_2010\\_08\\_19\\_english\\_1.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_special_focus_2010_08_19_english_1.pdf)





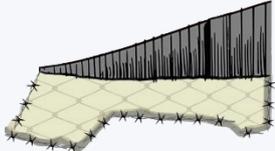
### Third: Repercussions of the Israeli Siege on the GS Economy

Fifteen years into the Israeli total siege on GS, the economic and social situation looks very bleak, due to the major measures imposed. They practically led to the cessation of movement of goods and raw and intermediate materials, to and from the Strip, the expansion of access restricted areas, whether land mass or sea areas, as well as the control of movement of cash to and from the Strip. This led to a major collapse of production, where many factories and workshops were forced to close completely or partially, thus laying off a large number of workers. Data indicate that more than 90% of projects and more than 3,500 companies were forced to close, while more than 75,000 workers lost their jobs in 2007, which exacerbated the high unemployment problem, already existing before the siege.<sup>7</sup> Besides, the only local power plant in GS was targeted, and the entry of fuel needed to operate it was prevented, leading to a power outage that directly or indirectly impacted all economic sectors, especially the productive, industrial and agricultural sectors.<sup>8</sup>



Consequently, the Israeli siege has plunged the GS into unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, and has participated to the erosion of production due to the heavy economic losses. In addition, there are economic losses caused by the major Israeli military attacks, and there is continuous obstruction of reconstruction. Therefore, we can imagine the size of losses and destruction inflicted on production, human capital, economy and the economic sectors.

<sup>7</sup> Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse, *‘Uyun fi Ghazzah (Eyes in Gaza)*, translated by Zakia Khairhoum (Amman: Shorok Publishers, 2011), p. 277.  
<sup>8</sup> UNCTAD), Report on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Developments in the Economy of the occupied Palestinian territory, Geneva and New York, 2015.



# 1. Effects of the Total Siege on Economic Growth

Economic growth is one of the most important indicators of economic activity. Figure 1 shows the development of economic growth in GS throughout 1994–2021, reflecting its weakness during the years of siege 2006–2021, compared to the prior period 1994–2005.

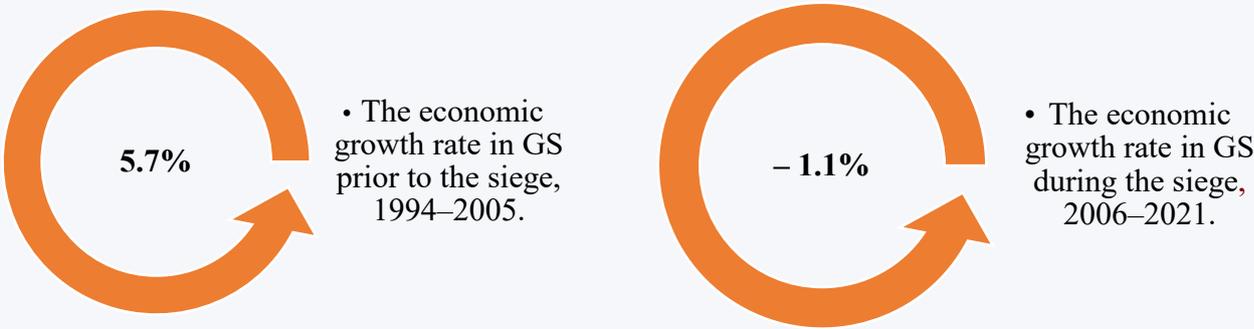
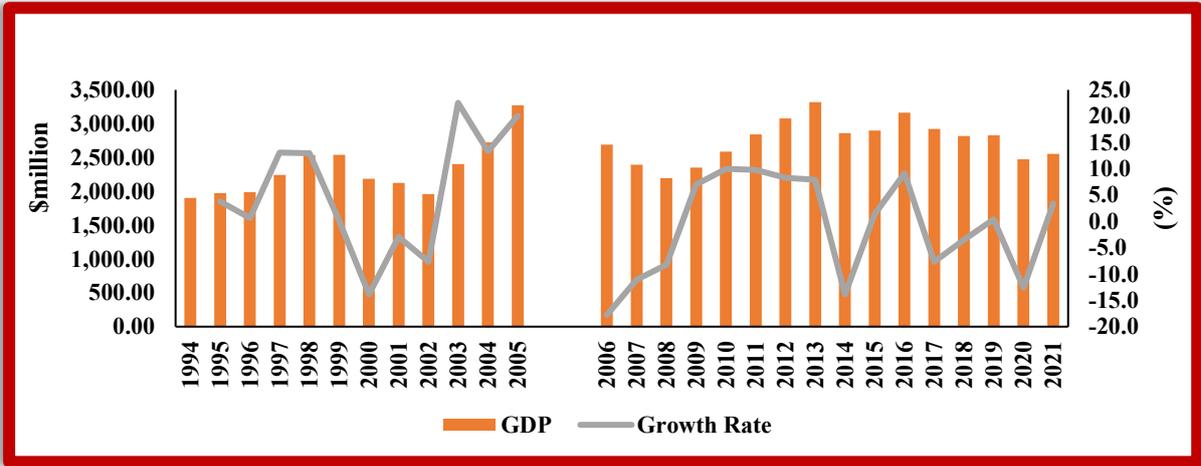
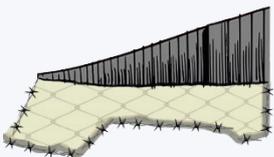


Figure 1: Evolution of the GS GDP and its Growth Rate 1994–2021<sup>9</sup>



The weakness of economic growth in GS during the siege years is due to the decline of economic activity, and the failure to use available human, material and natural resources. This is due to the continued Israeli restrictions imposed on imports and exports, in addition to other restrictions on both supply and demand.<sup>10</sup>

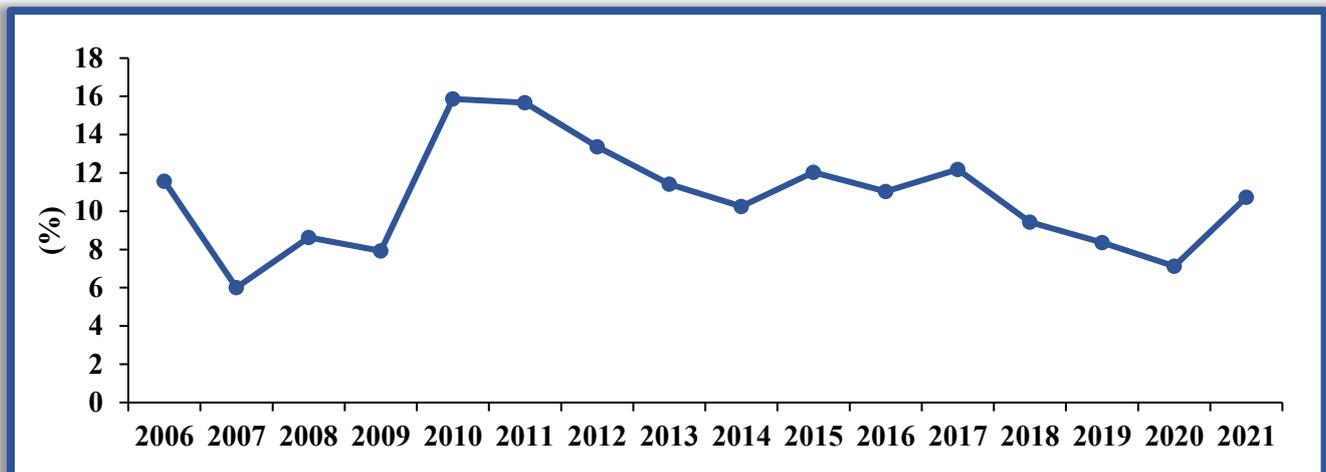
<sup>9</sup> The figure was prepared by the researcher based on: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Estimates of National Accounts, 1994–2020, Ramallah, 2022.  
<sup>10</sup> Mazen Elejliah, *Sanwat al-Tanmiyah al-Da'i'ah fi Qita' Ghazzah (2007–2018)* (The Lost Years of Development in the Gaza Strip (2007–2018)) (Ramallah: Palestine Research Center, 2020), p. 98.



## 2. Effects of the Total Siege on the Industrial Sector

The industrial sector is one of the important productive economic sectors that have an effective role in achieving economic growth, reducing unemployment and improving the trade balance. Figure 2 shows the weak contribution of the industrial sector to the GDP of GS during the siege years 2006–2021, not exceeding an average of 10.7%.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 2: Industrial Sector Share of GDP in GS 2006–2021**<sup>12</sup>



During the siege years, the employment of manpower by the industrial sector was weak, as the number of workers decreased from 12,700 in 2007 to 9,300 in 2010, then increased to 19,400 workers in 2015, which is the highest level throughout 2007–2020. The number of workers decreased from 18,100 workers in 2016 to 16,200 in 2020. In sum, the contribution of the industrial sector to absorbing labor force in GS did not exceed 7.3% in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

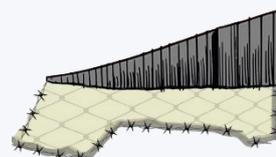
The low contribution of the industrial sector to the GDP and employment is due to the multiple obstacles that have faced this sector since the schism and the imposition of siege in 2007. The most important are limiting the types and quantities of raw materials allowed to enter GS for use in manufacturing industries, Israeli restrictions on exports and imports, where there are complicated procedures for issuing



<sup>11</sup> The rate was calculated by the researcher based on: PCBS, Estimates of National Accounts, 1994–2020.

<sup>12</sup> The figure was prepared by the researcher based on: PCBS, Estimates of National Accounts, 1994–2020.

<sup>13</sup> Ola Awad, Performance of the Palestinian Economy in 2020, PCBS, 2021, pp. 23–24.



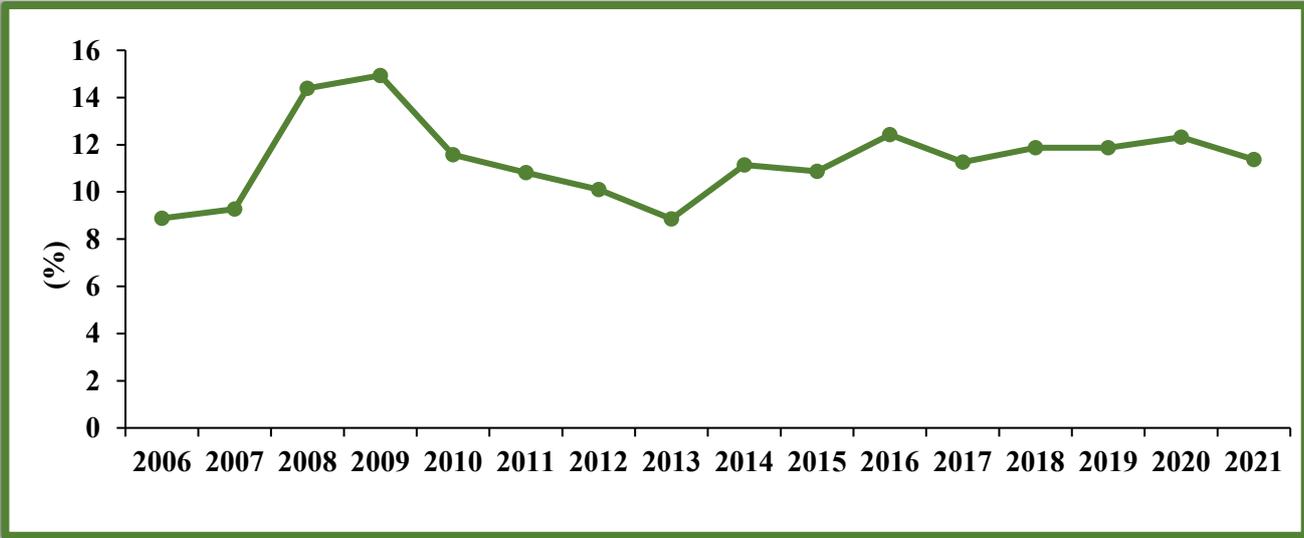
certificates, and the destruction of many crops. These have inflicted heavy losses on industrial activity, especially agricultural industries.

Other obstacles include the restrictions on access to imported inputs, as well as to foreign markets and the West Bank (WB) markets, in addition to the Israeli dumping policy implemented on Palestinian markets, as they are flooded with Israeli goods of low price and quality, which curb the ability to establish any Palestinian industry that can compete with its Israeli counterpart. In addition, the donors focus on emergency cases and relief aid without paying attention to infrastructure and production sectors, not to mention that the decrease of power supply to GS has led to an increase in the costs of various industries.<sup>14</sup>

**3. Impact of the Total Siege on the Agricultural Sector**

The agricultural sector in GS has an important contribution to the GDP and it plays an important role in absorbing the labor force. Yet, this sector does not receive the required attention and does not support the economy as it should, and this is due to the Israeli siege. Figure 3 shows the weak agricultural sector share of GDP in GS, where we note its decrease during the years of the siege 2006–2021, whereas its contribution to the GDP did not exceed the average of 11.4%.<sup>15</sup>

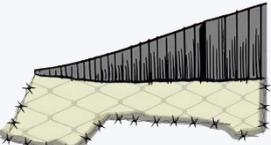
**Figure 3: Agricultural Sector Share of GDP in GS 2006–2021<sup>16</sup>**



<sup>14</sup> See: UNCTAD, The Palestinian Economy, The Palestinian economy: Macroeconomic and trade policymaking under occupation, New York and Geneva, 2012, p. 10; and UNCTAD, Report on Assistance to the Palestinian People: Developments in the Economy of the occupied Palestinian territory, Session 57, Geneva, 2010, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> The rate was calculated by the researcher based on: PCBS, Estimates of National Accounts, 1994–2020.

<sup>16</sup> The figure was prepared by the researcher based on: PCBS, Estimates of National Accounts, 1994–2020.



One of the important impacts of the siege on the agricultural sector of GS is the decline in its role, as well as the decrease in its absorption capacity of labor force, which deteriorated from 13.1% in 2007 to 5.7% in 2020.<sup>17</sup> For the siege has eroded the productive base, destroyed the infrastructure, denied the farmers access to their lands and natural resources, confiscated agricultural land and financial resources, in addition, it imposed restrictions on the movement of agricultural sector workers who opt for the service sector as an alternative source of employment. Also, there are the restrictions on agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, equipment and machinery in addition to the restrictions on the movement of people and transport of goods. Consequently, the farmers were prevented from accessing their lands, market their produce as well as importing and exporting agricultural products and inputs.

Other obstacles include the negative impact on perishable agricultural products that have limited shelf life, and the control of water resources leading to increased production costs and the erosion of the profits of Palestinian producers as their products cannot compete with their Israeli counterparts. There is also reducing the accessible sea areas for fishermen to only 3–6 nautical miles in most of the siege period, and increasing them when there are the understandings with the occupation to 12 miles and 15 nautical miles at best, whereas the allowed fishing distance in the Oslo Accords is 20 nautical miles. Notably, a reduced fishing zone harms the fishing sector.<sup>18</sup>



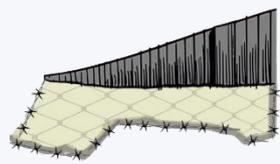
#### 4. Effects of the Total Siege on the Commercial Sector

The commercial sector is one of the most prominent economic sectors affected by the total siege due to the decline in exports and imports resulting from the suspension of the customs code and the closure of all commercial crossings except for the Karm Abu Salem. In 1996–2006, prior to the siege period, the GS exports reached \$42.5 million, while during the siege, in 2007–2020, they reached an average of \$7 million.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ola Awad, Performance of the Palestinian Economy in 2020, PCBS, 2021, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Samir Abu Mdallalah, “Repercussions of the Israeli siege on the economic and social indicators in the Gaza Strip,” *Al-Azhar Scientific Journal of the Commercial Faculties*, Al-Azhar University, Gaza, issue 17, 2017, pp. 256–257.

<sup>19</sup> The researcher calculated the average based on: PCBS, Statistics on Foreign Trade, 2021.





- The average volume of exports prior to the siege, 1996–2006



- The average volume of exports during the siege, 2007–2020

Similarly, in 1996–2006, prior to the siege period, the GS imports reached \$621.3 million, while during the siege, in 2007–2020, they reached an average of \$559.3 million.<sup>20</sup>



- The average volume of imports prior to the siege, 1996–2006



- The average volume of imports during the siege, 2007–2020

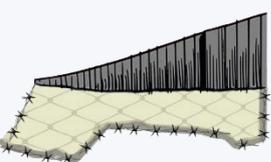
This decline of exports and imports has caused monthly losses of about \$10 million.<sup>21</sup>

To mitigate the impact of the siege, tunnel trade emerged, and although it was one of the solutions, it harmed the Palestinian economy due to its risks and negative impact. For it turned the GS into a consumer market, as no material or commodity was exported through the tunnels, and also plunged the Strip into a cash crisis as a result of exporting money and importing goods. It also deepened the schism and political separation from WB, thus dismantling the social fabric. The tunnel trade has led to an increase of crime, delinquency, drugs and family disintegration. Also, a new class of wealthy people emerged, numbering more than 200 people, whose fortunes were estimated in millions. Tunnel owners also focused on employing money in non-productive channels represented in the purchase and sale of land and real estate, car showrooms, large consumer complexes, hotels, some finance and exchange institutions, and others.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ghazi Sourani, *Iqtisad Qita' Ghazzah Tahta al-Hisar wa al-Inqisam* (Economy of the Gaza Strip under Siege and Division) (Gaza: Al-Aqsa University Publications, 2019), p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> Samir Abu Mdallalah, "Tunnels Economy in the Gaza Strip: National Need or Social and Economic Catastrophe?" *Siyasat Journal*, Institute of Public Policies, Ramallah, issue 12, 2010, p. 43.



In this regard, a report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicated that tunnels could not supply Gaza with the level and composition of imports needed for rebuilding a productive economy and, equally importantly, tunnels had no impact on Gaza's export sector.<sup>23</sup>



Tunnel trade continued from 2008 until 2013, when the Egyptian army tightened its grip on the borders and took several measures, some of which were already applied at lower pace, like destroying tunnels and preventing their excavation. After the 2014 Israeli war on GS, Egypt established a buffer zone, which in the first stage stretched from the border crossing 500 meters inside Egypt and in the second phase one kilometer. The first and second phases included the displacement of thousands of families in Egyptian Rafah, in addition to the demolition of nearly two thousand houses, so that the number of demolished houses during 2014–2015 exceeded 3,200 houses. In the fourth stage in 2017, the buffer zone reached a depth of two thousand meters. According to Egyptian statements, the buffer zone may extend to a depth of 5–6 km in Egyptian territory, which means the complete removal of the Egyptian city of Rafah, the displacement of its people, the dismantling of the social structures that incubated the tunnels and the end of tunnel trade definitively.<sup>24</sup>



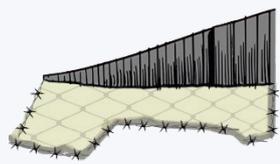
#### Fourth: The Repeated Military Attacks on GS amidst the Total Siege

The repeated Israeli attacks on GS were an essential tool to tighten the siege and destroy what the Palestinians have achieved economically and socially. Thus, they undermined the ability of the economy to grow, weakened the entire national project and curbed the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state that has an independent national economy depending on its own capabilities and resources.

During one decade and a half, Israel launched four successive military attacks on GS, specifically in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021, in addition to sporadic military attacks, which caused heavy human, material and economic losses GS. As for human losses, Israel killed during these attacks, 5,418 people, 23% of whom were children and 9% women, in addition to injuring thousands of unarmed civilians. In terms of material losses, the

<sup>23</sup> UNCTAD, Report on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Geneva and New York, 2015, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Rafah Trade Tunnels: Digging to Survive, site of Metras, 24/1/2019, <https://metras.co>



Israeli forces completely destroyed about 12,631 housing units, besides the partial destruction of 41,780 housing units, while tightening restrictions on the entry of building materials to prevent Gazans from rebuilding or renovating their homes. As for economic losses, the Israeli forces destroyed about 3,118 commercial facilities, 557 factories, 2,237 vehicles and 2,755 public facilities.<sup>25</sup>

The value of damage and losses during the major military offensives (2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021) amounted to about \$7,636 million. (See Figure 4)

**Figure 4: Total Losses Resulting from the Israeli Military Attacks on GS<sup>26</sup>**

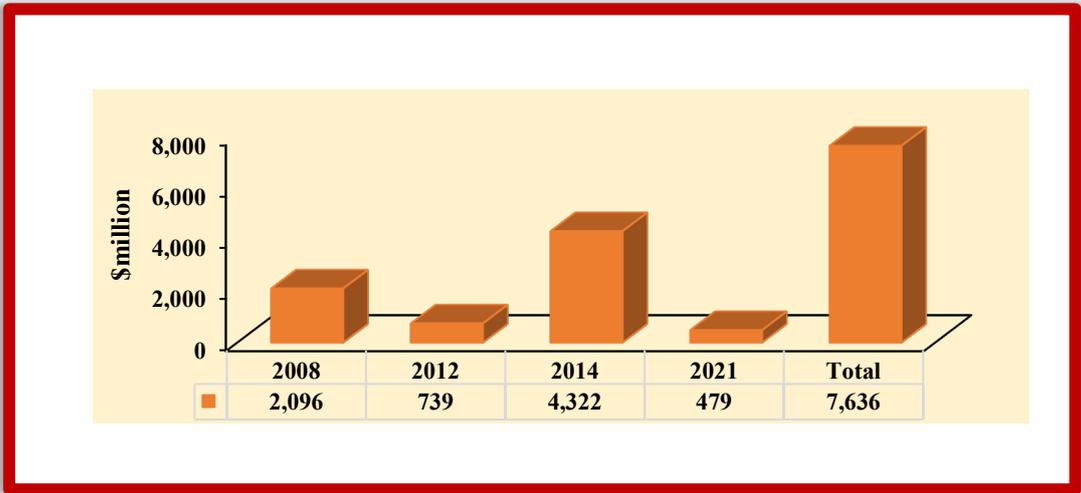
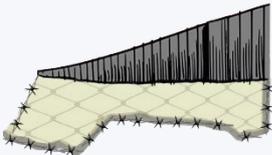


Figure 4 shows that the total losses inflicted on GS during the Israeli attacks were extensive. However, the one launched in the summer of 2014, which lasted 51 days, was the most harmful, in terms of direct and indirect losses as well as its future impact on people’s lives and economic variables. It caused massive destruction to the already exhausted infrastructure, destroyed its production base and left no room for reasonable reconstruction or economic recovery. It also led to the impoverishment of the Gazans and made their economic well-being worse than it was during the previous two decades.<sup>27</sup>

Notably, the massive destruction and heavy economic losses that these multiple military attacks on GS have caused, paved the way for international and regional

<sup>25</sup> Fact Sheet: “15 Years Too Long,” Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, Gaza, 2022, p. 4.  
<sup>26</sup> Data included in the figure are collected by the researcher based on the following sources: A comprehensive statistical report documenting the death toll and material losses to civilians and their property in the Gaza Strip during the Israeli aggression, Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, Gaza, 2014; Field survey of industrial facilities damaged in the recent war on Gaza, General Federation of Palestinian Industries, Gaza, 2015; The Gaza Strip Development and Reconstruction Plan, Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), Jerusalem, 2014; and the report on the damages of the aggression, May 2021, Higher Governmental Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, Gaza, 2021.  
<sup>27</sup> UNCTAD, Report on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Developments in the Economy of the occupied Palestinian territory, Geneva and New York, 2014, p. 11.



interventions under the title of GS reconstruction, which became an important part of every recovery plan and economic support. Despite its clear humanitarian dimension, the GS reconstruction issue is difficult and intertwined, as it is a mixture of complex factors and overlapping variables where the humanitarian aspect intersects with the political, economic, local, regional and international dimensions.<sup>28</sup>

Reconstruction is no longer a purely Palestinian issue, a group of regional and international players control it. Israel through its siege decides the nature and volume of commercial transactions, in addition the US, EU, UN, and some Arab countries such as Egypt and Qatar have also their influence. The impact of US and Israeli influence and their vision of reconstruction is considered dangerous, for they tend to link it to their political conditions, namely reaching a long-term truce and ending the prisoner exchange file.<sup>29</sup>



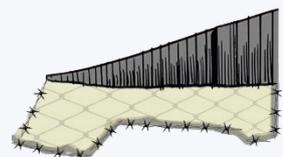
In addition to the political risks and regional interventions, there are also economic risks, represented in making the path of external support and financing focus on reconstruction instead of economic development and investments in agricultural and industrial sectors. This has made achieving economic development in light of the total siege and repeated Israeli military aggressions extremely difficult and complex.

### **Fifth: The Economic Cost of the Total Siege and Military Attacks**

The GS siege, the closure of all commercial crossings, the ban on the entry of raw materials and the repeated attacks on the Strip over 15 years, led to the collapse of vital economic, agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors constituting the GS's economy. This has made most sectors stop working and reduced the production capacity of others, leading to severe damage to the workers of these sectors, as thousands lost their jobs and their ability to meet their necessary and basic needs.

<sup>28</sup> Mazen Elejlah, "The political economy of the reconstruction of Gaza Strip: politics before economy," Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies - Masarat, Ramallah, 2021, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Mazen Elejlah, "Reconstruction in Gaza Strip One Year after the Israeli Aggression: Options and Policies," Masarat, 2022, p. 7.



Moreover, unemployment reached unprecedented rates globally, and the poverty rate reached catastrophic levels.

According to the UNCTAD report issued on 25/11/2020, the economic cost of the Israeli occupation measures on the GS during 2007–2018 was estimated at about \$16.7 billion.<sup>30</sup>



## Sixth: Repercussions of the Total Siege and the Repeated Military Attacks on Youth in GS

The GS has been severely affected by the siege and repeated military attacks launched by Israel in recent years causing Gazans to live in difficult and tragic economic conditions, in addition to the continuation of the Palestinian division which also cast heavy shadows on all economic sectors and segments of society, especially the youth.<sup>31</sup>

### 1. High Unemployment Rates

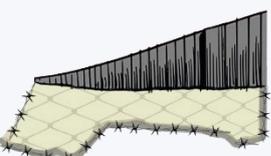
The unemployment rate in the GS reached unprecedented rates in the world at 46.9%, with 41.9% among males participating in the labor force and 65% among females participating in the labor force in 2021.<sup>32</sup> Figure 5 shows the increase and exacerbation of unemployment rates in the GS throughout the years of the siege compared to the rates before the siege where the unemployment rate was 30.3% in 2005 and rose to 46.9% in 2021.



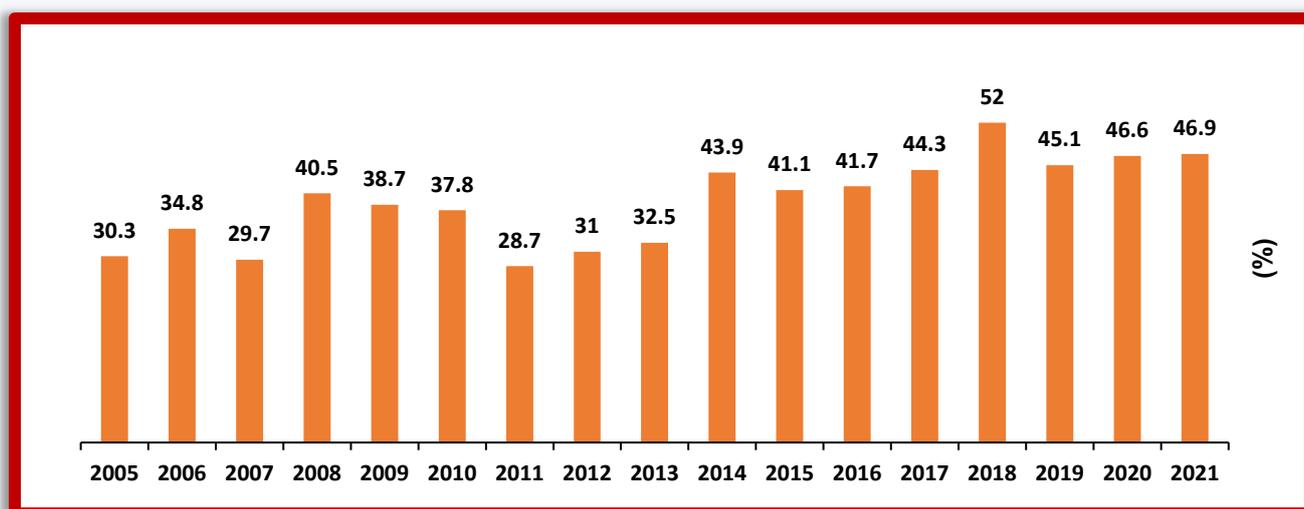
<sup>30</sup> UNCTAD, The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Palestinian People: The Impoverishment of Gaza under Blockade, Geneva, 2020, [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gdsapp2020d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gdsapp2020d1_en.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Raed Hillis, “The Development of the Palestinian Economy from Partial Independence to Dependence,” p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> PCBS, Labour Force Survey: Annual Report 2021 (Ramallah, PCBS, 2022), p. 30.



**Figure 5: Unemployment Rate in GS 2005–2021<sup>33</sup>**



The problem of unemployment in GS is exacerbated when it comes to unemployment among young people and university graduates. The unemployment rate in GS among young people aged 20–29 years who have an intermediate diploma or a bachelor’s degree reached about 78.4% in 2020.<sup>34</sup> The problem is not only limited to the high unemployment rate among young people and university graduates, but it is becoming more severe and serious due to the continuous increase in the number of young graduates in light of the limited and lack of opportunities in the local labor market. The annual average number of graduates from the Palestinian higher educational system has reached 40 thousand, while local labor market absorbs an average of 8 thousand jobs annually.<sup>35</sup> This means that the Palestinian economy, especially in GS, is facing a real dilemma, which lies in providing job opportunities for these, in addition to the previously unemployed uneducated people (unskilled labor).

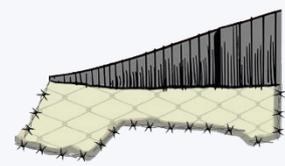
## 2. The Poverty Increase Among Youth in GS

The total siege and the four major attacks on GS have led to the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Strip. All productive sectors, basic social services and infrastructure have declined, as the Israeli occupation deliberately destroyed economic establishments and undermined their work, while imposing restrictions on exports and imports to and from the GS. This has reinforced the high unemployment rates among citizens who practice professions such as fishing, agriculture, construction and various industries that have deteriorated as a result of the continued siege, and

<sup>33</sup> The figure was prepared by the researcher based on: PCBS, Performance of the Palestinian Economy.

<sup>34</sup> Press Release: Educational fields and labor market among individuals aged (20-29 years) in 2020, PCBS, 2021, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Press release for students who took the “Tawjiji” examination for the general secondary school certificate for the academic year 2019/2020, PCBS, 2020, p. 1.



contributed to deepening economic crises. Consequently, 53% of the GS population suffers poverty while 68.5% suffers food insecurity.<sup>36</sup>

The youth in the GS were not far from these effects, as the reverberations of the total Israeli siege were more severe among them. Poverty among young Gazans (20–29 years) reached about 57% in 2021.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, poverty in GS constitutes, in the midst of all the difficulties, a new challenge for economic decision-makers.



### 3. The Growing Desire to Emigrate among the Youth

According to the Palestinian Youth Survey 2015, the desire of young people to emigrate has increased, as a result of the deteriorating living conditions in GS, especially during the siege, schism and repeated military attacks. The percentage of youth (15–29 years), who hold a diploma or above and desire to migrate reached 41.8% compared to 35.8% among those holding a high school diploma while the percentage among young people with qualification lower than high school reached 35.9%.<sup>38</sup>



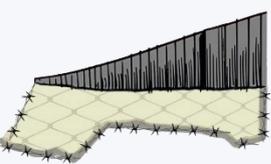
Despite the high risks of migration for the youth in GS, many are considering it a high priority, according to a study by the United Nations Population Fund in October 2014. Before the 2014 war on GS, a high percentage of young people talked about leaving the GS to work or study. After the war, many youth tended to emigrate regardless of the opportunities provided outside GS, where 64% said that the current conditions justified emigration, while 41% supported the idea as a solution to the problems that the youth face in GS.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> PCBS, “Multidimensional Poverty in Palestine,” Ramallah, June 2020, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> Press release demonstrating the situation of youth in the Palestinian society on the occasion of the International Youth Day, PCBS, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> PCBS, “Palestinian Youth Survey, 2015,” 2016, p. 87, <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2179.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Waseem Burghal, Analytical study: Status of Vulnerable and Marginalized Youth Groups in Palestine (New York, United Nations Population Fund, December 2016), p. 15.



Recent years witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of youth displaced from GS, as a result of the siege and the consequent difficult living conditions, lack of job opportunities and high unemployment and poverty rates.<sup>40</sup>

It should be noted that there are no accurate statistics available from official and relevant authorities regarding the number of youth who have emigrated from the GS in recent years, especially since the last migration survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) was in 2015. Yet, in mid-May 2020, the official Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation (Kan) published a television report on the Palestinian youth who emigrated from GS, estimated at more than 40 thousand until mid-2018. Estimates of the UN relief organizations indicate that the number of migrant youth from GS reached about 61 thousand, while human rights specialists from Gaza indicate that between 2014 and early 2020, their numbers have exceeded 70 thousand.<sup>41</sup>



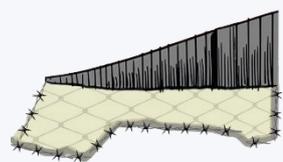
Youth migration from GS has become a main concern. Therefore, all parties, including the government, private sector institutions and civil society institutions, must participate in combating it. The researcher here believes that one of the main approaches is improving economic conditions and providing job opportunities, especially since unemployment for young people is their major concern.

## Recommendations

Living in the midst of a siege, schism and repeated aggressions during a decade and a half has been difficult. Their hard impact on various vital economic sectors has reflected on all society sectors, and more severely on youth, who are considered the most important player to achieve real and sustainable development in the short and long run. Given that development is for the sake of youth, it is necessary to empower them in their homeland by improving the living conditions, providing them with job opportunities and involving them in political decision-making. Accordingly, we recommend the following:

<sup>40</sup> Raed Hillis, "Working Paper: The Implications of the Siege on the Reality and Future of Youth in the Gaza Strip," The Community Gathering: Palestinian Youth and the Challenges of the Stage, Society Voice Foundation, Gaza, 219, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> The Youth of Gaza.. From a Bitter Reality to a More Bitter Refuge, Hadaf news, 3/5/2021, <https://hadfnews.ps/>



- ▶ 1. The necessity of reconciliation and ending schism, in addition to working in a unified manner to address the effects and repercussions of the schism.
- ▶ 2. Mobilizing international pressure and advocating for human rights with the aim of urging the international community to put pressure on Israel to lift the siege and allow free movement of people and goods, in addition to stopping the repeated military attacks on the Strip.
- ▶ 3. Working to provide economic aid to the youth in GS by creating job opportunities and reducing high unemployment rates.
- ▶ 4. Working to employ graduates in government institutions as much as possible, and in light of the inability of the public sector to absorb the high number of graduates, the private sector remains the only recourse to employ part of their numbers.
- ▶ 5. Encouraging the youth to start innovative small entrepreneurial projects.
- ▶ 6. Preparing studies on university and vocational majors needed by the Palestinian labor market, so that educational institutions can provide students with the right majors.
- ▶ 7. Allocating special budgets to help the unemployed graduates and supporting creative initiatives. Allocating an item in the general budget for the projects of the underprivileged youth.

