

# WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GAZA?:

## KEY POINTS:

THE CURRENT BORDERS OF GAZA WERE DRAWN FOLLOWING THE 1948 AND 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WARS.

GAZA, LIKE THE WEST BANK, WAS UNDER ISRAELI RULE FROM 1967 TO 1993.

THE OSLO ACCORDS, SIGNED BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PLO IN 1993-1995, ESTABLISHED THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY, UNDER WHOSE RULE 90% OF PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA LIVED.

IN 2005 ISRAEL UNILATERALLY WITHDREW FROM GAZA.

THE ISLAMIST TERRORIST GROUP HAMAS, SEIZED CONTROL OF GAZA IN 2007. HAMAS'S DECLARED AIM IS TO DESTROY ISRAEL AND IT HAS MILITARISED THE GAZA STRIP AND TURNED IT INTO A HUGE HUMAN SHIELD.

ISRAEL'S BLOCKADE OF GAZA SINCE 2007 HAS BEEN DEEMED LEGAL BY A 2011 UN REPORT BECAUSE "ISRAEL FACES REAL THREAT TO ITS SECURITY". STILL, THE RESTRICTED MOVEMENT OF GOODS, SERVICES AND PEOPLE HAS CONTINUED. EGYPT MAINTAINS A BLOCKADE IN THE SOUTHERN BORDER.

- The Gaza Strip is a small coastal area (**41km long and 10 km wide**) between the Mediterranean Sea, the Israel to the north and east and Egypt to the south. More than two million Palestinians live there in densely populated towns and refugee camps.
- Today's borders of Gaza were drawn after the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. In 1947, **the Arab population in the British Mandate for Palestine rejected the UN Partition Plan**, which allotted (today's) West Bank and an enlarged area of Gaza to a proposed Arab state, alongside a Jewish state in the rest of the region west of the Jordan River.
- After Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence, local Arab militias and five neighbouring Arab states **attacked Israel**. The 1949 armistice agreement redrew the boundaries and reduced the size of Gaza, which remained under Egyptian occupation until 1967. (The West Bank was conquered by Jordan in 1948 Jordan and annexed it shortly thereafter).
- In the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, **Israel occupied enemy territories**, including Gaza. After the war, Israel accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242, which called for the return of some (not all) territories occupied by Israel in return for 'secure and recognized borders' in the context of peace negotiations. The Arab League issued its '**Three No's**' – **no peace, no recognition (of Israel), no negotiation**.
- Gaza and the West Bank **remained under Israeli rule between 1967-1993**. Israel accepted its de-facto humanitarian obligations under international laws of occupation and rejected the de jure status of these territories as 'occupied' since the UN had never recognized prior Jordanian or Egyptian sovereignty there.
- The **Oslo Accords, signed between Israel and the PLO in 1993-1995, established the Palestinian Authority and divided Gaza and the West Bank into three categories (A, B, C) based on the degree of military and civilian rule**. Since 1996, 90% of the Palestinian population in these areas have lived under PA rule which covers all aspects of government other than external security. The Oslo Accords, which have the full force of international law, were meant as a temporary measure prior to a final status agreement. But the peace process was undermined by the murder of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, the second Palestinian 'Intifada' (2000-2005), and the continued refusal of Palestinian leaders to recognize Israel as the sovereign state of the Jewish people.
- In 2005, **Israel withdrew from Gaza (incl. evacuation of all settlements and military bases)**. Since 2006 Gazans have been subjected to the authoritarian regimes of first the PA and then the Islamist group Hamas founded in 1987, overtly committed to the destruction of Israel.
- Since 2007, Israel and Egypt have tightened their respective borders with Gaza. UN Secretary-General Inquiry Report from 2011 recognized that "**Israel faces a real threat to its security from militant groups in Gaza**" and the blockade of Gaza was therefore deemed legal under international law. The naval blockade was "imposed as a legitimate measure in order to prevent weapons entering Gaza by sea" and was deemed neither as collective punishment against civilians nor as disproportionate. At the same time, Israel maintained significant traffic between Israel and Gaza: Kerem Shalom crossing for goods (food, medical equipment, fuel, building materials, agricultural inputs, textile products and more), Erez crossing for people (Gazans for medical treatment, foreign officials, journalists, and Palestinians from Israel and the West Bank). The traffic continued during closures due to Hamas rocket attacks.
- The militarisation of Gaza since Hamas seized power has taken the form of the immense tunnel network under Gaza's densely crowded urban areas. Command posts, rocket launch pads, communication networks, weapons dumps, siege storage units and cells for keeping prisoners and hostages were excavated by using shafts that lead from the basements of thousands of residential and public buildings (schools, hospitals and mosques). Hamas has turned entire cities where over 2 million people live into one big human shield. **This makes for the high civilian casualty toll arising from Israel's attempts to defend itself from the repeated attacks launched by Hamas and other terrorist groups.**
- Since 2008, Israel and Hamas have fought several armed conflicts, culminating in the current war that started with the 7th October 2023 rocket barrages, massacres and hostage-taking carried out by Hamas.

