

Report Says Egyptian Military Destroyed 521 Gaza Tunnels



Istanbul, May 26 (RHC)-- The Egyptian army has destroyed 521 entry points to tunnels under the border with the Gaza Strip, which has been subject to an Israeli blockade for the past eight years, a report says. According to military spokesperson Mohamed Samir, the border guards had demolished the tunnel openings over the past six months, Turkey's Anadolu Agency reported on Monday. Samir added that some of the tunnels had railroad tracks and communication rooms.

Back in April, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi issued a decree, rendering the digging or using of border tunnels punishable by life term. "Anyone who digs or prepares or uses a road, a passage, or an underground tunnel in the country's border areas with the purpose of connecting with a foreign entity or state, its citizens or residents... will face life in prison," said the presidential decree.

Under the decree, those who are aware of such tunnels and refrain from informing authorities also face life in prison, which in Egypt amounts to 25 years behind bars. The Egyptian government claims that it has destroyed vast numbers of such routes and has recently intensified efforts to demolish such underground passages that connect the restive Sinai Peninsula to Gaza.

Palestinians use the underground tunnels to transfer essential supplies, including food and fuel, into Gaza, which has been blockaded by Israel since 2007, a situation that has caused a decline in the standard of living, unprecedented levels of unemployment, and unrelenting poverty.

The 1.8 million Palestinians of the Gaza Strip are living in what is called the world's largest open-air prison as Israel retains full control of the airspace, territorial waters, and border crossings of the territory.

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