

# *UN Report Says Gaza Strip May Become Uninhabitable by 2020*

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United Nations, September 2 (RHC)-- A small strip of land next to the Mediterranean Sea, which has been ravaged by war and years of a crippling economic blockade may become uninhabitable by the next five years. The United Nations says there is no way to "reverse the ongoing de-development and impoverishment," unless Israel's grueling blockade on the Gaza Strip is lifted.

In the summer of 2007, Tel Aviv imposed its blockade on the tiny coastal sliver, which has one of the highest population densities in the world and is home to over 1.8 million Palestinians. The import of everything apart from basic humanitarian goods has been banned as has the exporting of goods.

Israel's devastating summer war in 2014 and two other military operations over the last six years have caused economic losses close to three times the size of Gaza's gross domestic product. The latest onslaught claimed the lives of over 2,200 Palestinians and left over half a million more displaced. It also severely damaged more than 20,000 homes, 148 schools, 15 hospitals, and 45 clinics. At least 247 factories and 300 commercial centers were rendered inoperable or totally destroyed in the attack.

The coastal sliver's socio-economic conditions have also reached their lowest since Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967. Unemployment has sky-rocketed by around 44 percent, and 72 percent of all homes in Gaza are dealing with food insecurity.

Based on figures released in May, some 860,000 people required UN food distribution to survive while in 2000 the recorded number was only 72,000. "Gaza could become uninhabitable by 2020 if current economic trends persist," the United Nations development agency said in its annual report on Tuesday.

The report added that Israel's blockade has "ravaged the already debilitated infrastructure of Gaza, shattered its productive base, left no time for meaningful reconstruction or economic recovery and impoverished the Palestinian population in Gaza.

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