

# *Israel Begins Building Concrete Wall Around Gaza Strip*

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Ramallah, September 8 (RHC)-- Israel has begun the construction of a giant concrete wall that will completely encircle the Gaza Strip, which is already grappling with a devastating siege imposed by the Tel Aviv regime.

According to a report on the Ynet news website, the wall "will reach several stories underground, and will also be several stories above ground." It will stretch along the 96-kilometer (60 mile) border around the blockaded Palestinian enclave, and is estimated to cost about two billion Israeli shekels (USD 531 million).

Israelis claim that the project is meant to thwart alleged threats posed by the underground tunnels set up by the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas governing Gaza. However, an unnamed high-ranking Hamas official said that the Israelis "will understand that they're digging death traps for themselves."

Israeli Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot said it was the "largest project" ever carried out in the history of the army. The project has already received 600 million Israeli shekels in funding, but risks being defunded, as no money has been allocated to it for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in living standards as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty.

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