

# *Israel Begins Work on Underground Barrier Surrounding Gaza*

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Tel Aviv, September 9 (RHC)-- Israeli military officials have confirmed that the Tel Aviv regime has begun construction of a massive underground barrier along the frontier with the already besieged Gaza Strip.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, officials with Israel's ministry for military affairs said Thursday that work on the underground barrier had begun in recent weeks. The Associated Press reported a day earlier that the Israeli news website Ynet says that "construction has begun along all towns considered to be next to the fence with Gaza."

The first part of the underground barrier, which will have above-ground sections as well, will run for 10 kilometers (over six miles). One Israeli source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Tel Aviv regime has already allotted some \$160 million to build one section of the underground concrete barrier.

The barrier would have sensors to detect digging and eventually run the length of the 60-kilometer (35-mile) Gaza border, according to Ynet. Israel says the plan is aimed at blocking the cross-border tunnels, which are used by Gazans to bring basic goods such as food and construction material in the coastal enclave amid a crippling Israeli siege.

Salah Bardawil, a senior Hamas official in Gaza, said that “the Palestinian people and the resistance can overcome all the obstacles made by the occupation.”

The Gaza Strip has been blockaded since 2007, a situation that has caused a decline in the standards of living, unprecedented levels of unemployment, and unrelenting poverty. The siege denies about 1.8 million people in Gaza their basic rights, such as freedom of movement, proper job, and adequate health care and education.

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