

United Nations says development in Gaza set back 69 years

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United Nations, October 23 (RHC)-- A United Nations report has estimated that development in the blockaded Gaza Strip has been set back nearly seven decades due to the Israeli campaign of death, destruction and genocide.

The UN Development Program (UNDP) and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) compiled the report, run by media on Monday. Development in Gaza has been set back by as long as 69 years since October 2023, it said.

The UN-backed report confirmed that the year-long war has caused acute hunger, with around 86 percent of Gaza's population experiencing crisis levels of hunger. Earlier estimations by the UNDP said Gaza's reconstruction could take 80 years.

A UN official says the destruction caused by Israel's Gaza war is unseen since World War II, estimating that the reconstruction process will cost up to \$40 billion.

The UNDP estimates Gaza's gross domestic product (GDP) will contract by 35.1 percent in 2024. Unemployment is expected to rise to almost 50 percent. The report added that poverty in Palestine is also set to rise by 74.3 percent in 2024, impacting a further 2.61 million people who are newly impoverished by the Israeli war machine's genocide.

The displaced residents of Gaza have been fleeing from one refugee camp to another where they are packed into squalid encampments or buildings repurposed as shelters.

The new report said the Palestinian economy could be put back on track if a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction plan, which combines humanitarian aid and strategic investment in recovery and reconstruction, is devised.

However, it emphasized that the decades-long Israeli siege needed to be lifted if Gaza was to recover from the war. Since 2007, Tel Aviv has had the blockade on the Gaza Strip, closing its borders from land, sea and air.

ESCWA Executive Secretary Rola Dashti said, "The assessment indicates that, even if humanitarian aid is provided each year, the economy may not regain its pre-crisis level for a decade or more. As conditions on the ground allow, the Palestinian people need a robust early recovery strategy."

"Our assessments serve to sound the alarm over the millions of lives that are being shattered and the decades of development efforts that are being wiped out."

Israel has massacred more than 42,000 Palestinians in Gaza since October 2023. The savage campaign has also left at least 100,000 Palestinians injured under such dire circumstances that a large number of hospitals have become dysfunctional.

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