

# *Oxfam Says Gaza Blockade Denies Palestinians Their Freedom*

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London, June 4 (RHC)-- The Israeli-imposed blockade on Gaza enters its 9th year this month, and according to British charity Oxfam, it has devastated the lives and livelihoods of 1.8 million Palestinians stuck in what has been compared to an open-air prison.

Oxfam Country Director Chris Eijkemans said in a press release: "The blockade is making a dire situation worse. The economy has ground to a halt and people have been denied their freedom, access to essential services and basic human rights for almost a decade,"

The Israeli blockade of Gaza has all but shut down trade, separated families and prevented people from traveling for health care, education and business.

According to the United Nations, electricity and power shortages, the highest unemployment rate in the world and an inability to access even the most basic necessities such as food and clean water mean that Gaza will be effectively unlivable by 2020.

Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip, which was imposed by the government after Hamas won Palestinian elections in 2006, prevents the flow of foreign aid to the Palestinian government and the entry of construction materials urgently needed to reconstruct the war-plagued territory.

In September of 2011, a five-member panel of independent United Nations rights experts reporting to the U.N. Human Rights Council concluded that the blockade had subjected Gazans to collective punishment in "flagrant contravention of international human rights and humanitarian law."

This collective punishment keeps people poor, denies them their rights and fails to make Israel safer, Oxfam added in its press statement.

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