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Description

A rare look at how those who live in Gaza are affected by the blockade set up by Israel, from the lack of supplies, to the huge amounts of stress carried by children, to the inability for Palestinians to venture outside the strip for employment and other opportunities.

Keywords

Gaza, Strip, Israel, Palestine, Prisoners, Poverty, Raid, Ship, Blockade, Food, Supplies, Humanitarian, Aid, Weapons, United Nations, UN, Investigation, Children, Pebbles, Cement, Tunnels, Smuggled, Egypt, Medicine, Conditions, Mental, Health, Trauma

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APA

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

Transcript
Behind the Blockade in Gaza

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:

We are back now with a rare look inside a place 1.5 million people call home. The Israelis call it a hotbed of terrorism, but the people who live there say they are prisoners of poverty and misery. It's the Gaza Strip, and it's once again gotten the world's attention after that raid on a ship trying to break Israel's blockade of Gaza to deliver what many say was food and basic supplies. The Israelis say some of those supplies could have been used as weapons. Israel tonight is still saying no to a UN investigation into the raid, but tonight our own Tom Aspell has a report from behind the blockade.

TOM ASPELL reporting:

This is what you see when you cross the border from Israel into Gaza, children desperately scrambling for pebbles, pebbles to be ground into cement. Israel won't let cement into Gaza. It says the cement would be used for tunnels to smuggle weapons. So thousands of homes destroyed in the 2009 offensive can't be rebuilt. Some supplies, like groceries and even animals, are smuggled through hundreds of illegal tunnels under the border form Egypt. Israel says there's no humanitarian crisis. Some food and medicine is allowed in, but the United Nations says conditions have never been worse.

Mr. CHRISTOPHER GUNNESS (UNRWA Spokesman): Eighty percent aid dependency, 44 percent unemployment. Deep poverty tripling in the last year.

ASPELL: Deep poverty and also despair. Eighty percent of Gazans, like Rushti Abotawela, get their food from the UN. Born deaf, he has no chance of getting a job here. He and his family, two of them also deaf, live on $70 a month from the Palestinian government.

Israel's blockade on Gaza isn't just about preventing goods from getting in, it's about preventing 1.5 million Palestinians from getting out. It sentences them to life inside a 140-square-mile prison.

Life here is a struggle from birth. In Gaza's Schiffer Hospital, the best around, there isn't enough special formula for premature babies, not even enough incubators.
So this baby is only one hour old, but there's no place for him?
Unidentified Man: Yeah. (Unintelligible)
Offscreen Voice: No place.
Man: No place.

ASPELL: Fifty percent of Gazans are children under 15. Mental health experts say 95 percent of all children in Gaza suffer from trauma and stress.

Dr. AHMED ABU TAWAHEENA (Gaza Mental Health Community Director) Most important one of them is their violent behavior, aggressive behavior among school students, for example.

ASPELL: Eight-year-old Mahmud Kaleel has turned to music to erase memories of bombs and missiles during the 2009 offensive when he spent a month hiding in a basement. Mahmud had extreme mood swings, either laughing or crying constantly. His mother, Anwan, says music therapy now keeps him calm. Music may also be his escape. Given the chance, Mahmud says he'd like to pack up his instrument and leave here forever. Tom Aspell, NBC News, Gaza.