By the time Israel launched Operation Cast Lead (OCL) on 27 December 2008, the Gaza Strip had been under varying degrees of closure since February 2006, shortly after Hamas won a startling victory in Palestinian legislative elections. At that time, Israel first banned exports from Gaza and restricted imports to minimum humanitarian aid and basic goods in a bid to pressure Hamas. Israel sealed Gaza’s borders almost completely (including restricting fuel and electricity) after Hamas’s takeover of Gaza in June 2007 and eased restrictions only slightly thereafter, despite the 6-month cease-fire that began in June 2008. The statistics below reflect Gaza conditions in the weeks preceding OCL.

**Percentage of Gazans classified as impoverished:** 79

**Percentage of Gazans living in “deep poverty”:** 35

**Percentage of Gazans receiving UN assistance (food and/or money):** 76

**Unemployment rate of Gazans still seeking work:** 49

**Percentage of Gaza’s private sector workers who had been laid off:** 68

**Number of Gaza’s 3,900 industrial enterprises closed due to Israeli import and export restrictions:** 3,877

**Value of all UN and private sector construction projects suspended as a result of Israel’s blockade:** $370 million

**Truckloads of food imports per day required to sustain UNRWA’s distribution of food aid:** 70–80

**Average number of UNRWA truckloads per day of food in November 2008:** 4.6

**Truckloads per day of UNRWA food imports in December 2008:** 5–15

**Minimum weekly truck traffic required to meet Gaza’s basic humanitarian needs:** 3,500

**Average number of humanitarian aid trucks entering Gaza weekly in December 2008:** around 300
Number of the 473 drugs classified as essential for hospitals and clinics to have on hand that were at zero levels across Gaza: 95

Percentage of Gazans subsisting primarily on agriculture: 27

Percentage of Gaza’s arable land located within Israeli-enforced “no go” zones where Palestinians were routinely shot on sight: 43

Percentage of agricultural land left unirrigated for lack of water supplies: 70

Maximum height of crops farmers were allowed to plant as imposed by Israeli military order to preserve the IDF’s clear “lines of sight”: 40 cm

Direct losses to Gaza’s agricultural sector because of terminals closures in 2008: $15 million

Amount of industrial fuel for Gaza’s power plant allowed into Gaza: 20% of basic needs

Amount of diesel fuel allowed into Gaza: 3% of basic needs (intended for UNRWA trucks to deliver food aid)

Amount of cooking fuel allowed into Gaza: 5% of basic needs

Number of days that Gaza’s two main hospitals had been out of cooking gas before the launch of Operation Cast Lead: 34

Gaza bakeries forced to close because of lack of cooking gas and flour: 30 out of 47

Feed imports received by Gaza’s animal producers: 22% of basic needs

Number of chicks euthanized in Gaza’s poultry hatcheries because of a grave lack of feed and cooking gas to incubate them: 400,000

Poultry as percentage of Gazans’ total protein intake: 70

Percentage of Gazans receiving water only once every 5–7 days: 60

Percentage of Gaza’s water wells that were only partly functional: 80

Percentage of drinking water that met World Health Organization potability standards as a result of Israeli restrictions for lack of chlorine and fuel to run treatment plants: 20

Liters per day of untreated sewage dumped into the Mediterranean for lack of chlorine and electricity to run treatment plants: 40 million
Gaza’s ranking among emergency situations necessitating a UN humanitarian appeal: 3d (after the Congo and Sudan)\(^1\)

1“Poverty” is defined as living on less than $2.30 per day and/or having enough funds for only minimum necessary food, housing, clothing, health care, education, etc. Palestine Monitor, “Factsheet: Poverty,” 18 December 2008; World Bank Group, “Country Brief: Middle East and North Africa Region—West Bank and Gaza,” September 2008.

2Deep poverty is defined as living on less than 50 cents per day and/or having a budget for minimum necessary food, clothing, and housing only, not including other necessities such as health care, education, transportation, personal care, or housekeeping supplies. Palestine Monitor, “Factsheet: Poverty,” 18 December 2008; World Bank Group, “Country Brief: Middle East and North Africa Region—West Bank and Gaza,” September 2008.

3On the eve of OCL, 750,000 refugees and 265,000 nonrefugees received aid through the UN’s World Food Program. ANERA Fact Sheet, Gaza Statistics before and after the Bombardment,” 3 February 2009. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Protection of Civilians Weekly Reports,” 3–16 December 2008.


6ANERA Fact Sheet, “Gaza Statistics before and after the Bombardment,” 3 February 2009.


9Sara Roy, “If Gaza Falls.”


11Based on daily figure of 500 cited in ANERA Fact Sheet, “Gaza Statistics before and after the Bombardment,” 3 February 2009.


16ANERA Fact Sheet, “Gaza Statistics before and after the Bombardment,” 3 February 2009.


22Roy, “If Gaza Falls.”

23Roy, “If Gaza Falls.”


26Roy, “If Gaza Falls.”


29ANERA Fact Sheet, “Gaza Statistics before and after the Bombardment,” 3 February 2009.
