
Gaza Reconstruction to Take 'More Than 100 Years'

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Gaza's reconstruction could take as long as a century due to Israel's illegal siege, Oxfam warned Thursday.

“At current rates it could take more than 100 years to complete essential building of homes, schools and health facilities in Gaza unless the Israeli blockade is lifted,” the charity said in a statement.

According to Oxfam, less than 0.25 percent of the construction materials needed for basic rebuilding have arrived in Gaza in the past three months. They estimate as many as 800,000 truckloads of construction materials are needed.

“Yet, in January only 579 such trucks entered Gaza. This is even less than the 795 trucks that entered the previous month,” they stated.

The charity warned that “tens of thousands” of Gazans including families have nowhere to sleep but ruins.

“Only an end to the blockade of Gaza will ensure that people can rebuild their lives,” said Oxfam's regional director Catherine Essoyan. “Families have been living in homes without roofs, walls or windows for the past six months. Many have just six hours of electricity a day and are without running water. Every day that people are unable to build is putting more lives at risk.”

Essoyan also laid part of the blame on the international community, pointing to unproductive peace talks.

“It is utterly deplorable that the international community is once again failing the people of Gaza when they need it most,” she said.

Reconstruction efforts have also been hampered by international donors [failing to live up to pledges](#) to the U.N Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA).

“People are literally sleeping amongst the rubble; children have died of hypothermia. US\$5.4 billion was pledged at the Cairo conference last October and virtually none of it has reached Gaza. This is distressing and unacceptable,” UNRWA director Robert Turner said last month.

During Israel's invasion of Gaza from July to August 2014, over 2,000 Gazans were killed and 273,000 displaced by fighting. An estimated 5,000 homes were damaged and public infrastructure was left in ruins by Israeli bombing.

At the height of fighting, around 11 percent of Gazans relied on UNRWA schools for shelter. These same schools were repeatedly bombed by Israeli forces, leading to the deaths of 10 U.N. workers and around 46 Palestinian refugees – including children.

Reconstruction of the Gaza Strip is expected to [cost around US\\$7.8 billion](#), but according to Turner the international community “cannot even provide the bare minimum – for example a repaired home in winter – let alone a lifting of the blockade, access to markets or freedom of movement.”

The Siege

Gaza has been besieged by Israel since 2006 after Hamas won elections in the enclave. Since then, Gazans have been cut off from the outside world by Israel's blockade, often with the support of Egypt. The Israeli government argued the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from developing crude, home-made rockets.

However, the blockade restricts imports ranging from basic foods to construction materials and medicine.

Most international institutions agree the blockade is illegal and has produced a dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
