

al-shabaka executive summary

# HONOR THE VICTIMS: AVOID PAST MISTAKES IN RECONSTRUCTING GAZA

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## Why This War Is So Much Worse

The third Israeli war on Gaza in the seven years that Hamas has been in control has turned out to be worse than the previous two because the death toll is higher; the destruction has been cumulative, and Gaza is facing its worst economic, social, and political conditions in decades.

Gaza has suffered from an Israeli blockade that has only been slightly eased once since it was imposed in June 2007. Significantly worsening the situation in Gaza has been Egypt's destruction of most of the tunnels, which has deprived the Hamas authorities of a vital source of income and supply of raw materials and goods.

The newly formed national unity government has accomplished very little in terms of addressing Gaza's immediate needs. This is largely due to Israel's refusal to recognize it or allow its members to move freely between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

## A Preliminary Assessment of the Damage

- Eight thousand eight hundred homes have been destroyed beyond repair and 7,900 have been partially destroyed and are uninhabitable. Entire residential neighborhoods have been demolished.
- Many of the estimated 475,000 people who were forced to leave their homes will not be able to return to them or use them.
- Fuel tanks allocated for the sole power generation station in the Gaza Strip were destroyed and the power plant knocked out. The power supply imported from Israel has decreased significantly due to their destruction.
- Dozens of water wells and sewage plants have been destroyed, posing a potential environmental and health disaster.
- Dozens of factories and commercial establishments have been destroyed as well as thousands of dunums of cultivated land and greenhouses.

- Many government institutions have also been hit; official documents and records were destroyed.

## Avoiding the Mistakes of the Past

The nature, extent, and effectiveness of the reconstruction efforts will hinge on the terms of a ceasefire agreement. The right approach lies in successfully combining efforts to reconstruct, renovate, build, and develop.

The biggest error that donors made in the past was to exclude Gaza-based representatives, including Hamas itself, from the reconstruction effort.

The dire situation in Gaza today, in which infrastructure and people still suffer from the damage inflicted in that war, [raises questions](#) as to what proportion of the funds was ever received and if so, how and where were they disbursed. These same questions must be asked today.

Hamas is not expecting to be invited to the upcoming donors conference, but there are other institutions and voices from Gaza that could participate. Nevertheless, Hamas' inclusion in the reconstruction process is crucial so that the Palestinian Authority can adequately supervise the reconstruction process.

## Urgent Relief and Development Needs

1. Repair the water and electricity grids.
2. Repair the power lines carrying electricity from Israel and seek to increase the current imports of 120MW.
3. Import and locally manufacture prefabricated shelters to accommodate those who lost their homes and to boost the economy. This effort should also include cash assistance to some of these families to rent residential units.
4. Support the health sector to treat the thousands of people wounded during the war.
5. Increase and develop psychosocial support services to care for the tens of thousands of citizens who have been subjected to psychological trauma.

In the medium term, development efforts should focus on:

1. Labor-intensive projects in the areas of housing, infrastructure, agriculture, and fishing to create jobs immediately and boost economic activity.
2. Cultivating the agricultural land in the border areas to create jobs and provide food for the population and fodder for livestock.

3. Clearing some of the destroyed areas in order to enable families to return to their homes, if habitable, and to prevent health hazards in the areas destroyed in the early days of the war.
4. Sweep and remove debris from streets and public venues in order to create jobs, boost economic activity, and fight the poverty and destitution.

## Ways to Bring Gaza Back to Life

The international community must exert pressure on Israel to end the siege if it wants to see a successful and long lasting reconstruction process.

Reconstruction must be a national rather than international operation and Palestinian society must receive the bulk of the expected funding.

Coordination is key, especially between local, regional, and international relief funds and fundraising campaigns for Gaza and among those carrying out the work on the ground. Furthermore, a transparent mechanism must be set up to monitor and follow up on these donations and guide beneficiaries in accessing them.

Palestinians in the Diaspora can be called upon to contribute money and expertise. This would also help to consolidate the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation process.

Finally, the banking sector across the Occupied Palestinian Territory has accumulated deposits amounting to \$8 billion. Mortgage schemes offered by the Palestinian Authority can be established to employ these deposits and address the housing crisis.

On a larger scale, internationally recognized investment tools such as franchising, strategic partnerships, and joint ventures can be employed, especially in the fields of energy and electricity, the construction of the port and airport, and regional development projects.

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