



مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان
AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Ecocide: Israel's Deliberate and Systematic Environmental Destruction in Gaza

16 October 2024



Introduction

A healthy and clean environment is essential for a population's physical survival. Vital resources like clean air and water, fertile soil, and arable land sustain life and ensure the overall well-being of any population. When the environment is compromised, the very foundation of human life is jeopardized, threatening both survival and quality of life.

For many years, and long before October 2023, Al Mezan has been documenting and reporting on the devastating environmental impact of Israel's settler-colonial and apartheid regime in Gaza.¹ This includes the effects of recurrent large-scale military operations and the de-development policies implemented through the 17-year-old closure and blockade imposed by Israel on Gaza.

Israel's closure regime has been the primary catalyst for environmental degradation in Gaza, severely hindering Palestinians' ability to protect the environment and pursue sustainable development. For example, Israeli authorities have consistently obstructed the development of critical projects such as the construction of desalination plants, landfills, and sewage disposal systems necessary for effective waste management and public health. Furthermore, chronic electricity and fuel shortages—a direct consequence of the Israeli closure, further escalated with the implementation of the total siege as of 9 October 2023—continue to erode Gaza's infrastructure and de-develop critical sectors.

The deliberate and systematic destruction of Gaza's environment has been a central feature of Israel's genocidal campaign since October 2023. Israeli military operations in Gaza have been characterized by the intensive use of explosive ordnance in densely populated urban areas, resulting in vast quantities of debris and rubble, along with the widespread destruction of critical civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including environmental infrastructure such as water treatment facilities, sewage systems, rainwater harvesting systems, and waste management facilities essential for the safe disposal of medical and hazardous waste. Israeli military operations have also significantly impacted air, water, soil, and noise pollution. Israeli actions—including the forced displacement of around 90% of Gaza's population—have also hindered the ability of Palestinian authorities to prevent or try to mitigate environmental damages.

As a result, an environmental catastrophe is currently taking place in Gaza.

By intentionally and systematically targeting or eroding key components of a healthy and clean environment, Israel has sought to purposely inflict living conditions calculated to bring about the physical destruction of 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza—a genocidal act foreseen at Article 2(c) of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and

Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention).

In this context, the term 'ecocide' refers to Israel's extensive destruction, damage, and obliteration of the basic components of the environment and ecosystems in Gaza to such a degree that the survival of the Palestinian population is severely threatened or rendered impossible. This devastation not only affects the current population but also endangers future generations, compromising their ability to live and prosper in Gaza.

The present report examines the consequences of Israel's ongoing ecocide in Gaza, highlighting how the deliberate destruction of the environment has been systematically used to undermine the survival and well-being of the Palestinian population, both immediate and long-term. Through this lens, the report connects ecocide to various acts of genocide.

Read the full report ↓