

Fishing for Justice

Fact Sheet: Fishing in the Gaza Strip

Imagine fishers heading out to sea on a beautiful day, ready for a hard day of work to support their families. They might face challenges—a poor catch, storms, not enough buyers—but ordinarily their job is fairly straightforward. Now imagine these fishers getting shot at—routinely—when they go fishing. Imagine the fishers stripped, searched, detained and their boats confiscated by the navy. This is an everyday reality for fishers in the Gaza Strip who live and work under constant threat of Israeli attack at sea.



Fishing in Gaza

- The 1993 Oslo Accords granted Gazan fishers the right to fish up to 20 nautical miles offshore (one nautical mile is roughly 1.15 miles.) The 20 nautical mile limit is only 10 percent of the exclusive international legal limit of 200 miles granted to sovereign countries under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- In 2006 Israel unilaterally reduced the fishing area to 6 nautical miles offshore when Hamas came to power in the Gaza Strip. During the 2008–2009 Israeli Operation Cast Lead, Israel further reduced the fishing area to just 3 nautical miles.
- In November 2012, Israel increased the fishing limit to 6 nautical miles as part of the ceasefire agreement after Operation Pillar of Cloud. The limit has gone up and down 3 times since November 2012, and Israeli authorities have made contradictory statements about what the limits are. The uncertainty contributes to the fear and instability fishers face.
- The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) reports that Israeli naval forces routinely shoot at Gazan fishing boats even when they are well within 3 nautical miles from shore.
- By reducing the fishable area, Israel has cut off up to 85 percent of the available seas, including the best waters containing valuable fish such as sardines and mackerel.
- The limits on fishing have dramatically reduced the number of fishers and the yield of fish that they catch; in 2000 there were 10,000 registered fishers who caught 3,650 metric tons of fish. Currently, there are only 3,500 registered fishers and in 2012 Gazan fishers yielded only 1,938 metric tons of fish—that's a nearly 50 percent reduction in yield.

Grassroots International works in partnership with social movements to create a just and sustainable world by advancing the human rights to land, water, and food through global grantmaking, building solidarity across organizations and movements, and advocacy in the US.



- Fishers were once one of the wealthiest sectors of Palestinian society, but today 95 percent of fishing families are dependent on food aid.
- Pollution from Gaza's failed sewage system—much of which was destroyed during Operation Cast Lead—has made fishing even worse in the waters closer to shore. 89 million liters of raw or partially treated sewage drain into the sea each day.
- Between June 2007 and July 2013 five fishers have been killed and 25 injured by live fire from the Israeli navy. PCHR reports that shootings and naval presence have intensified since December 2013 and that the navy has chased fishing boats within 1 nautical mile from the Gazan shore. In January of 2014, PCHR reported 21 incidents of live fire directed at fishing boats within the unilaterally imposed fishing limit.



Mahmoud Mohammed Jarboa (52) is a fisherman from Beach Camp, Gaza City, who relies on the income he and his sons make from fishing to support 21 dependents. Whether the limit is set at 3 or 6 nautical miles makes little difference to Mahmoud. "It is the same. There is a lot of sand in those shallow waters. We need to go to 15 or 16 miles at least, where there are rocks. Many more types of fish live there and lay their eggs... The Israeli soldiers do not apply the limit in a straight line, so you can easily go beyond it without knowing. When we try to fish, the Israeli soldiers chase us and shoot at us without warning. One of my sons has been killed and two others injured. Sometimes we are arrested, detained, and our boats are taken away for up to two years or more. I have no other source of income, and I have 21 people to feed. I know that I risk my life when I go fishing, but what other choice do I have?"

Motorola Solutions Profiting from Occupation and Violence against Palestinians

- Motorola Solutions is an electronics and telecommunications company that split from Motorola Inc. in 2011. Through its subsidiary, Motorola Solutions Israel, the company profits from Israel's control of the Palestinian population by providing surveillance systems around Israeli settlements, checkpoints, and military camps in the West Bank, as well as by providing communication systems to the Israeli Defense Forces.
- Motorola recently signed a contract to provide the Israeli Defense Forces and the Ministry of Defense with a next generation smartphone to replace their previous encrypted system also developed by Motorola. The 15 year-agreement will cost \$100 million, half of which is funded by US aid.

What You Can Do:

Sign a petition to push TIAA-CREF to divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation.

Donate to Grassroots International, to accompany our Palestinian partners in their struggle for rights to land, water, and food sovereignty.

Spread the word with your networks, friends and family.

Join our e-advocacy list to receive e-mails with actions you can take.

