

“Best-case” UN assessment says rebuilding Gaza homes destroyed by Israel’s genocidal onslaught will take close to two decades

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Rebuilding the approximately 80,000 housing units, destroyed throughout the Gaza Strip by the imperialist-backed Israeli regime’s bloody assault, would take until 2040, according to an assessment by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released Wednesday. The “best-case” projection, which underscores how far Israel has gone in enforcing its deliberate ethnic cleansing of the enclave, is based on the highly improbable assumptions that the war ends now and the Zionist regime allows a five-fold increase of construction material imports into Gaza.

Assuming instead that construction material imports arrive at a similar pace as they did in the aftermath of previous Israeli bombardments, the Palestinians would need “approximately 80 years to restore all the fully destroyed housing units.” The estimate does not include performing any repairs to an additional 290,000 homes damaged in the incessant air bombardments and shelling that have officially claimed the lives of over 34,500 people and unofficially well over 40,000.

The agency projects that the cost of rebuilding Gaza would fall somewhere between \$30 billion and \$40 billion. “The scale of the destruction is huge and unprecedented ... this is a mission that the global community has not dealt with since World War II,” added UN assistant secretary-general Abdallah al-Dardari. Another anonymous UN official quoted by Reuters referred to a “moonscape” of destruction.

The report, co-written with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), found that Palestine’s human development index (HDI), a measure of well-being, will have regressed by more than two decades across Gaza and the West Bank if the war lasts nine months. The HDI for Gaza alone after

nine months of war would regress by 44 years, returning Gazans to the HDI level for 1980. The poverty rate for Gaza and the West Bank will rise to over 60 percent, 2.25 times higher than the pre-war level. In absolute terms, this would mean an additional 1.86 million people across Gaza and the West Bank would be in poverty compared to pre-war levels.

ESCWA executive secretary Rola Dashti commented, “This assessment projects that Gaza will be rendered fully dependent on external assistance on a scale not seen since 1948, as it will be left without a functional economy, or any means of production, self-sustainment, employment, or capacity for trade.”

A separate UN report revealed that 85.8 percent of schools in Gaza have suffered some level of damage since October 2023, with 70 percent of all schools requiring major reconstruction.

What the statistics in these two reports reveal are the consequences of a deliberate policy of genocide pursued by the Zionist regime with the unstinting support of US imperialism and its European allies. Even if the onslaught ended today, which is all but out of the question as Israel makes advanced preparations for a savage assault on Rafah, many of the basic necessities required to support modern life would not be present in Gaza for decades to come.

This was the intended outcome of the far-right Netanyahu government from the start. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant summed up the Israeli regime’s fascist ideology early on in the Gaza bombardment when he described Palestinians as “human animals.” Later in October 2023, a document leaked to the Hebrew-language publication *Mekomit* from Israel’s Ministry of Intelligence recommended preparing to

“evacuate the civilian population to Sinai.” In November, Security Cabinet member and Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter asserted that Israel was “rolling out the Gaza Nakba,” while the fascistic Finance Minister Bezalil Smotrich appealed for the “emigration of the Gaza Arabs to the countries of the world.”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has analysed, the ethnic cleansing of Gaza is bound up with an expansionary “greater Israel” policy aimed at permanently annexing the territories in Gaza and the West Bank illegally occupied by Israel. The systematic cultivation of settlers following Israel’s capture of Gaza and the West Bank in the 1967 Six Day War created the social base out of which outright fascist forces have migrated into leading positions within the Israeli government and state.

The imperialist powers, with the US in the lead, endorse the Gaza genocide because they see it as a key component of a region-wide war targeting Iran. American imperialism’s goal is to consolidate its dominance over the energy-rich Middle East, as part of its pursuit of world war against Russia and China to redivide the globe in its interests.

The Biden administration has intensified its backing for Israel as the planned barbaric offensive into Rafah approaches, adopting late last month an aid package worth \$26 billion for Israel. Emboldened by the assurance of massive military support, Netanyahu reaffirmed Thursday his government’s determination to assault Rafah, where over 1.5 million people are crammed together, stating, “We will do whatever is necessary to win and overcome our enemies, including in Rafah.”

After two hours of extensive consultations with Netanyahu Wednesday, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken merely expressed pro forma concerns about the lack of a “plan” to ensure that “civilians are not harmed” by Israeli military operations in Rafah. A 30 April open letter addressed to President Biden and signed by numerous aid organisations pointed to the absurdity of the claim that it is possible to protect civilians while Israel bombards Rafah. “[N]o such credible humanitarian plan is feasible in the current crisis,” they wrote. “An Israeli military operation into Rafah would profoundly exacerbate the already catastrophic levels of need and the humanitarian emergency for millions of civilians with nowhere left to

go.

“Displaced Palestinians in Rafah are effectively trapped with no safe alternatives. Many of them are too young, elderly, sick, starving, injured, or disabled to move again. Those physically able to leave Rafah would be exposed to life-threatening health and security risks during their movement, while staying in the densely populated city during an attack by the Israeli military would directly endanger their lives.”

Despite claims by Israel of significant increases in aid deliveries into Gaza and media reports asserting that the US is applying “pressure” on Israel to expand deliveries, the food crisis remains catastrophic. Gaza’s government Media Office reported Thursday that Israel allowed an average of 163 aid trucks into Gaza each day in April, a fraction of the 500 per day arriving prior to the bombardment. Israel declared that a record high of 406 trucks entered Gaza on Wednesday.

Late Thursday, reports emerged of yet another attack by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on an aid convoy. Soldiers in Gaza City opened fire on several trucks carrying food at the Kuwait roundabout, killing one driver and injuring others. The Kuwait roundabout was the scene of a horrific massacre by the IDF that claimed the lives of well over 100 people in March as thousands of starving Palestinians sought to access food.

Separately, aid dispatched from Jordan to Gaza came under attack from far-right settlers while passing through Israel. No deaths were reported, but several trucks were damaged.

Another demonstration of the Israeli regime’s barbarism was the news of the death of Dr. Adnan al-Barash, a respected surgeon at al-Shifa hospital, while in Israeli custody. Al-Barash was detained at the notorious Ofer military prison. UN rapporteur for the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese said she was “extremely alarmed” by the news, adding in an X post, “No Palestinian is safe under Israel’s occupation today.”



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