



Educator's Guide

What Is Life Like in Gaza?

Educational resources compiled by Sarah Golubtchik

Life for Palestinians in Gaza under Hamas has been extremely difficult. Palestinian civilians lack basic water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructures, as well as access to upward economic mobility and the rights to freedom of speech and self-expression. The constant suffering from rampant political and economic corruption has left civilians in Gaza with a sense of despair and a longing for a change in leadership.

[Link to video](#)

Big Ideas

1. Current events do not exist in a vacuum.
2. Life for Gazan civilians is challenging in many ways.
3. Hamas is a terrorist organization that harms its own people.

Essential Questions

1. How does history inform our understanding of current events?
2. What factors contribute to the challenging conditions faced by Gazan civilians?
3. What responsibilities does a government have towards its civilians?

Review Questions

1. For the 19 years following Israel's War of Independence, Gaza was controlled by:
 - Jordan
 - Israel
 - **Egypt**
 - Lebanon
2. Following the Oslo Accords in 1993, Gaza and the West Bank were governed by the Palestinian National Authority, under the leadership of which ruling party?
 - **Fatah**
 - Raam



- Hamas
 - Palestinian Front for Liberation of Palestine
3. An *intifada* is a(n):
- **Uprising**
 - Rave
 - Civil war
 - Truce
4. Under whose leadership did the Israeli government disengage from Gaza in 2005?
- Ehud Barak
 - Benjamin Netanyahu
 - **Ariel Sharon**
 - Yitzchak Rabin
5. Hamas won control of Gaza in 2006, largely because:
- Gazans were fed up with Fatah's corruption
 - Hamas had built up infrastructure in Gaza
 - Hamas had a strict interpretation of Islam
 - **All of the above**
6. True or false: Hamas is accepting of all kinds of romantic relationships.
- True
 - **False**
7. Hamas built an extensive network of _____ to funnel goods into Gaza:
- Bridges
 - **Tunnels**
 - Ports
 - Fences
8. Hamas leadership uses aid money and tax money to fund:
- Infrastructure
 - Their wealthy lifestyles
 - Terrorism
 - **B and C are correct**



Discussion Questions

1. **Civility or civilian?** It is clear that life in Gaza is challenging for its civilians on many levels. However, the brutal nature of the attacks by Hamas can engender a lot of anger and strong emotions, especially when [clips](#) can be found of some Palestinians cheering about the assault in Gaza.
 - How can we distinguish between the actions of Hamas and groups of Palestinian civilians?
 - Who is considered a civilian? Does age or gender matter? Do cheering and other forms of explicit support affect one's status as a civilian?
 - As a society that places immense importance on morality and the value of human life, how might Israel maintain empathy for civilians regardless of their beliefs?
 - In what ways can hearing the stories of Gazans who are suffering under Hamas inform our attitude towards these civilians?
2. **Taking responsibility:** In a recent interview, Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk claims that it is not the responsibility of Hamas to take care of its civilian population. Watch this [video clip](#) of the interview and answer the following questions:
 - What obligations does an elected government have towards its civilian population in general?
 - What additional obligations does an elected government have towards its civilians during wartime?
 - In what ways has Hamas fulfilled these obligations? In what ways has it failed to fulfill them?
 - What role do you think the international community has in protecting civilians, especially during wartime?
3. **Freedom for all?** One of the core values of a democratic society is the protection of individual freedoms, including the freedom of speech. Many Gazans feel that they cannot speak freely under Hamas about their lives, their beliefs, their leadership, or their relationships (see [here](#) and [here](#) for some examples).
 - Why is the freedom of speech a cornerstone of democratic societies?
 - What methods does Hamas use to restrict the speech of its civilians?
 - What role does narrative play in creating relationships between different groups of people? What happens to these relationships when some



narratives are not allowed to be told?

Learning Activities

1. Lesson plan

Use our ready-made lesson plan on What is life like in Gaza? [HERE](#).

2. Four corners debate:

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a long, nuanced history, where each side has its own layers of complexity. Use this activity to help students explore this question: Can one support Israel's right to defend itself while maintaining empathy for Gazan civilians?

- Designate one corner of the room for each response: Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree.
- Pose the following statements to the class, and allow them to respond to each statement by placing themselves in the corner of the room that best reflects their personal opinion.
 - i. Israel has the right to defend itself at all costs
 - ii. Gazan civilians should not be held accountable for the actions of Hamas
- After students have responded to these statements, pose the third statement: One can support Israel's right to defend itself while maintaining empathy for Gazan civilians.
- While students remain in their corners, ask them to explain their position. Allow students to reflect and respond to their classmates' explanations.
- Ask students to think about and share what it might look like to support Israel's right to defend itself while maintaining empathy for Gazan civilians.

3. Whispered in Gaza:

As the video showed, it can be dangerous, and even deadly, for Gazans to speak out against Hamas. The Center for Peace Communications, in partnership with *The Times of Israel*, published a collection of clips that share personal accounts from Gazans who are living under the rule of Hamas. Read this introductory [article](#) from the *Times of Israel* and choose one of the embedded clips to watch. Think about the following questions, and share your answers in a small group discussion:

- What did you learn about life in Gaza from the clip you viewed?
- What emotions did this account evoke in you?
- How would you describe the individual who shared his or her story?



- Did this clip change your perception about Gazan civilians? If so, in what way?
- 4. Daily life:** The average Gazan lives on \$13 a day, while many of its leaders live lives of luxury. Using an excel spreadsheet or poster, design a sample daily, weekly, or monthly budget for a teenager like yourself who has \$13 dollars a day to spend. When making your budget, consider the following:
 - What are your “needs”?
 - What are your “wants”?
 - What makes something a “need” versus a “want”?
 - Given your budget, what percentage of your “needs” are you able to afford? What about your “wants”?
 - Reflect on the lifestyle of someone your age who is living on this budget in Gaza. How do you think he or she might feel after seeing this [video clip](#) from the son of a Gazan minister’s birthday party?
- 5. Kahoot:** Play our [Kahoot](#) about “What is life like in Gaza?”

Reflection Questions

- 1. Dialogue:** Imagine that you have the opportunity to speak to someone your age who lives in Gaza. What questions would you want to ask? What would you like this person to know about you? What would you hope to accomplish through this dialogue?
- 2. Emotional response:** The media, and especially social media, is filled with all kinds of images and stories about the situation in Gaza. These reports raise valid, intense, and often conflicting emotions in us such as fear, sadness, anger, and helplessness.
 - When you see a post on social media that depicts the suffering of Gazan civilians, how does it make you feel?
 - What are some of the emotions the Israeli-Hamas war brings up for you? Are some emotions felt more deeply than others?
 - What are actions that help you feel grounded and nurture your mental health during this difficult time (ex: talk to a friend or mentor, take action by attending rallies or writing letters, journaling...)?



- 3. Fresh perspectives:** What are three things that you learned about life in Gaza that you didn't know before? What is something that surprised you? What would you like to learn more about?

Further Learning

- 1.** Unpacked for Educators:
 - [Is the IDF Held to a Higher Moral Standard?](#) (video)
 - [Why Israel must destroy Hamas](#) (video)
 - [October 2023 Israel-Hamas War: FAQs](#) (article)
 - [Helping your students process the war](#) (article)
 - [Who is Hamas](#) (video)
 - [Hamas's Control over Gaza](#) (video)
- 2.** The Jewish Virtual Library offers several articles on Gaza:
 - [Myths and Facts](#)
 - [Palestinian Public Opinion Polls](#) (2021)
 - [The Gaza Strip Table of Contents](#)
 - [Hamas: General Principles and Policies, 2017](#) (primary source)
- 3.** In his book [Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor](#), Yossi Klein Halevi addresses his Palestinian neighbors, sharing empathy and longing for reconciliation as he describes how the conflict is viewed through an Israeli perspective.
- 4.** IDF, [Hamas](#) (articles giving background about Hamas)