

UMAR

Summer 2023

4th/20th September 2023

Monday to Wednesday (online)

17:30h GMT+3

*After the City
updating & upgrading
the Mediterranean*

Beyond the different layers of acceptance regarding climate change and social justice, there is an unanimous acknowledgement that the pandemic and successive wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Sudan and Ukraine (and other disasters such as the Beirut Port blast and the Turkey-Syria earthquake) have speeded up the the reinvention of globalisation and changes in the structure of the world's supply chains. The broader activities and dynamics in ports, cities and coast are largely affected prompting the urgency to readdress the Mediterranean life through a renewed agenda for the architecture practice in the region. This workshop aim at learning about current urban strategies and public policies, development and management plans for the Mediterranean coastal, urban and non urban areas, and exchanging knowledge within the context of the Port of Gaza.

In line with the work currently being developed by different committees at the UMAR, this workshop summer program aim to improve the transnational professional network gathering member-state architects, architecture education/training and practices; facilitate capacity building on the content relevant to the Mediterranean assessment and development: supporting the architects' scope, representing their practice rights and duties while embracing at the forefront a stronger awareness of the regions' human, cultural and natural diversity.

The UMAR 2023 Summer program uses the Steering Committee for Strategic Lines and Activities proposals from 29.10.2021 to establish priorities and goals:

“The principle of the UMAR Strategic Lines must be guided by a regional agenda that is particular to the Mediterranean and independent from UIA directives with a strong focus on engaging Mediterranean architects in networking; and supporting the younger generation and the architectural heritage and cultural values that bind together different generations of architects throughout the region. Within such commitment the lines or fields we have committed as strategic for UMAR present future are the following:

1.1 Architectural heritage + (building traditions, materials, localities, cultures, Arts...)

1.2 Building Sustainability + Ecological Transition + Adaptation to Climate change

1.3 Gender Equality + Social Justice + Women in Architecture

1.4 Migration + Human Resilience + Architects in Diaspora (migration and cities, how cities can integrate migration, which deal with our competences as architects and planners)

1.5 The Institution Governance & Policy (how UMAR can support practitioners and represent the practice rights and duties throughout national bodies and institutions) + Financing/Resources + Digital Transition.

1.6 Mentorship + Young architects training and education + Professional Networking “

The referred steering committee proposed a strategy for implementation based “on the distribution of responsibilities throughout the different member states grouped in three (to be nominated by all member states) assuring a geographic diversity representation. The group with representatives from 3 different member states was set to constitute an international platform of dialogue and debate which finally must expose UMAR as a facilitator of discussions that are relevant to the region. Each of these member states are expected to receive and organise events and activities requested or proposed by the UMAR council. The hosting national chambers or associations must financially and logistically support the proposed program.”

“The format of these events must include all possible activities listed, from competitions, to school activities, summer programs, art programs, music performances, etc. (...) The major goal of these national communities must be to promote the dialogue and networking among Mediterranean architects under each line.”

The UMAR Workshop Committee expects with the summer program proposed to promote the mentoring of future and young architects expanding their interest and action within architectural heritage and building sustainability, the values of gender equality and social justice, and the implications of contemporary mobility and migration towards human resiliency.

The concept of region in architectural thinking has proven to be quite resilient. With contemporary processes of region-making becoming increasingly complex, architects are compelled to address larger contexts and new problems (complex infrastructural systems, political and warfare disputes, emerging urban formations, rural and environmental questions).

With this broader framework, the UMAR 2023 workshop focuses on the Mediterranean port development, interrogating it as a spatial model that reconceptualises region making. With the present environmental status, new problems have emerged that challenge existing patterns of development.

During the first phase of mass tourism in the sixties, this development brought new infrastructure and economic development to some of the poorest areas of Europe, Turkey, the Levante (Syria , Lebanon and Palestine) and the Tunisian coast while Oil and Gas had similar impact in Algeria and Libya urbanising what was primarily a rural landscape. Identical challenges are now present throughout the Magreb, from Morocco to Egypt.

This workshop/competition uses the premisses of 'rehabilitate' the Port of Gaza as an opportunity for generating ideas to regenerate and intervene along the Mediterranean coast. It is an opportunity for architecture students, from all over the region, to interact with their peers and show their capacity to operate outside their conventional framework. For the local Palestinian students is an opportunity to get exposure and potentially interact and intervene within their communities motivated by a Mediterranean agenda and knowledge exchange.

updating & upgrading the Mediterranean Port

Gaza



Moslem [i.e., Muslim] celebrations at Mejdal (Wady Nemill and Sey'd Hussein Shrine at Ascalon) and at Gaza (el Muntar) April 20th, 21st and 22nd 1943. Gathering at Wady el Nemill, animals to be bathed & healed
1943-04-20 Photo by Moshe Milner

After more than half a century, a new type of landscape has emerged along the Mediterranean coast, one that increasingly resembles the periphery of large cities, a kind of urban sprawl that includes historical fabric, agriculture as well as various typologies of transient accommodation, many in need of *updating & upgrading.*

Can the future Mediterranean Port development rehabilitate the very landscape it has produced? What might be the role of architects, urbanists and other disciplines in directing this process? Can this rehabilitation process not only provide short term value for the shipping and tourism industries but can it also result in more sustainable and more resilient and biodiverse coastal leisure environments?

The Gaza coastal strip is no exception to the transformations that took place during the second half of the twentieth century all over the Mediterranean sea, although the freedom of movement for Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip has been restricted. The ongoing Israeli blockade of Gaza began in 2007, but a gradual closure of the territory started much earlier, in 1991, during the first Intifada, when Israel cancelled general exit permits for Palestinians living there. In January 2000, before the second Intifada, an average of 17,635 day labourers crossed from Gaza into Israel everyday. By 2005 that number dropped to 49, today it is zero.

updating & upgrading **the port**

Gaza

On the one hand, tourism-centric economies explain the large structural investments in transportation infrastructure as well as the expansion of the construction industry and land speculation, all of which have contributed to an unmanageable loss of biodiversity and natural resources. On the other, tourism is one of the only segments of the economy of the Mediterranean countries expected to continue growing.

Beyond tourism, these ongoing transformations in port cities all over the region will help to understand the socio-spatial synergies in which local communities and urban development, have become implicated in global processes.

Architecture, urbanism and other related disciplines have played various roles in this process but they rarely had a leadership role. Despite the lack of leadership, these disciplines have been held responsible for the very visible impact of this type of development, the built fabric that has nearly overwhelmed parts of the Mediterranean coast line.



To find the tourism or water sport in Gaza is at once both surprising and completely natural. In a region where the common narrative is conflict and daily life is marked by constant struggle the beach offers a means of escape. Equipment to surf and other water sports is almost impossible to find in the Gaza Strip so international donors have helped to get boards and wetsuits into the territory and with more resources it is believed water sports could flourish. For instance, "the group of surfers in the Gaza spot still small, but, they are some of the very few who get to escape the confinement and who find some semblance of freedom, every time the waves come." in Andrew McConnell, "The Gaza Surf Club"

Gaza (Azzah) is one of the World's ancient cities, situated on the coastal road. This road, known in the Bible as Derech Hayam ("Via Maris") connected the Egyptian empire in the south to the civilizations of the Levant (Israel, Phoenicia, Syria), Mesopotamia (Babylon, Assyria, Persia) and Asia Minor in the north. The city was located on a hill, 1.5km away from the shore, while its port city (Gaza Yam, also named in antiquity: Anthedon or Maioumas) was located near the modern port.

Strabo and Ptolemy referred to it as Gazaion limen. Prior to the Romans the settlement on the sea was known as Anthedon. Under Constantine the Great, the settled area around the port was granted city status and named Konstaneia. Under the emperor Julian, it was downgraded and the name was changed to Maioumas ("harbor place"). It became associated at this time with a pagan festival. During the Byzantine period the Pagan temples throughout the city were replaced with churches, in order to service the growing numbers of converted Christians. In 637 AD Gaza was conquered by the Arabs. During centuries it remained on the border between the Arabs in Egypt and the Christian Crusaders in the Holy Land and was fortified by the later. Under the rule of the Mamlukes (1250-1516), the city expanded, to become larger than Jerusalem. The following 400 years was ruled by the Ottoman army until destruction was brought by the Napoleon command in 1799. The first known documentation and survey of Gaza is from 1874-75 by Conder and Kitchener of the Palestine Exploration Fund. The report highlights " the principal archaeological points of interest are the Jamia el Kebir, Bab ed Darun, and Meidan ez Zeid. Green mounds extend round the houses on the hill, and seem to indicate the ruins of former fortifications. These show probably the site of the walls of Crusading Gaza." During WWI Gaza is ruined.

The different ruins of the ancient port and city are now surrounded by precarious residential high-rise. The main road, tracing the ancient trade route, is still crossing the center of Gaza from northeast to southwest.

updating & upgrading **the port history**

Gaza Yam (anthedon or maioumas)



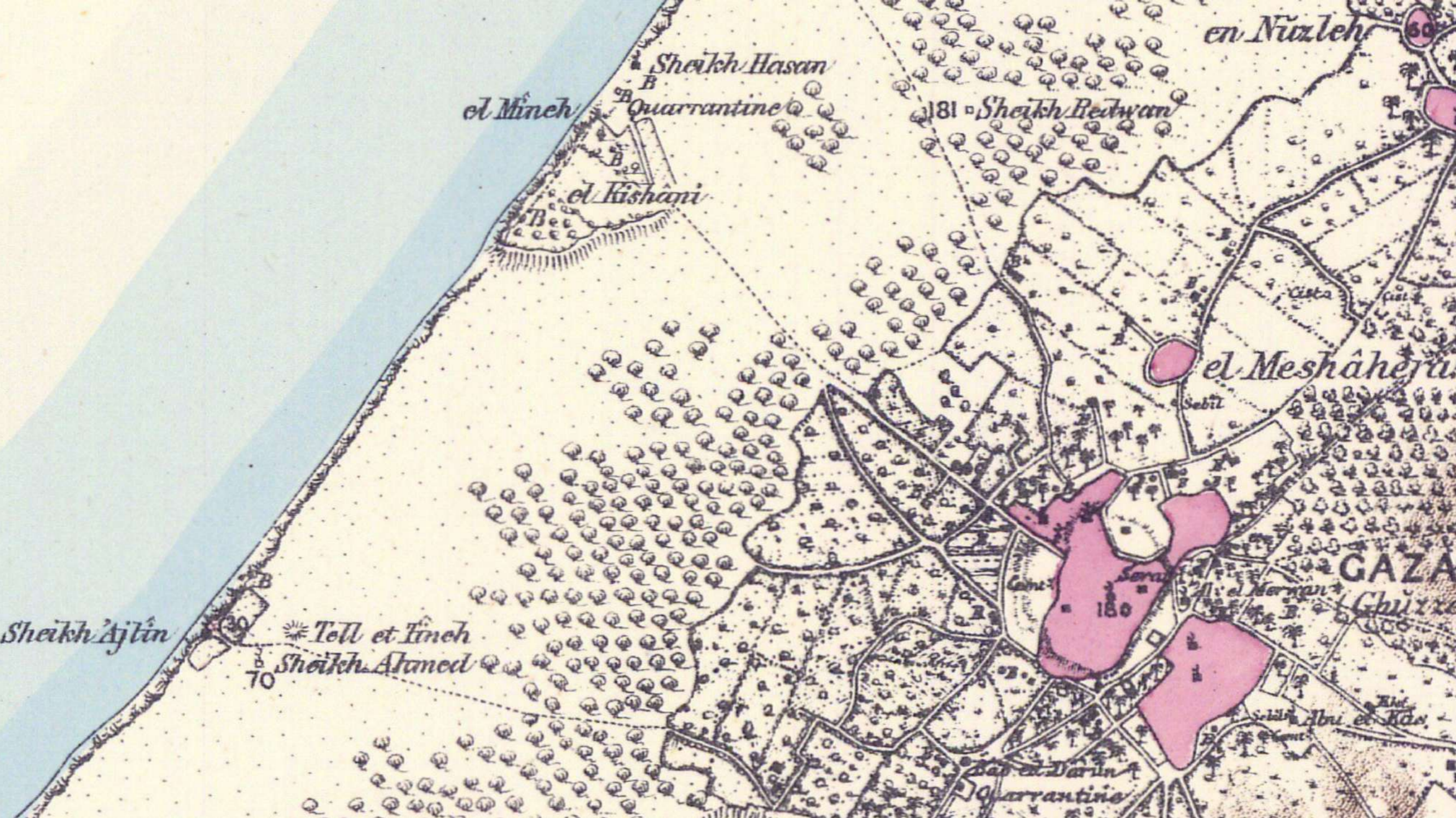
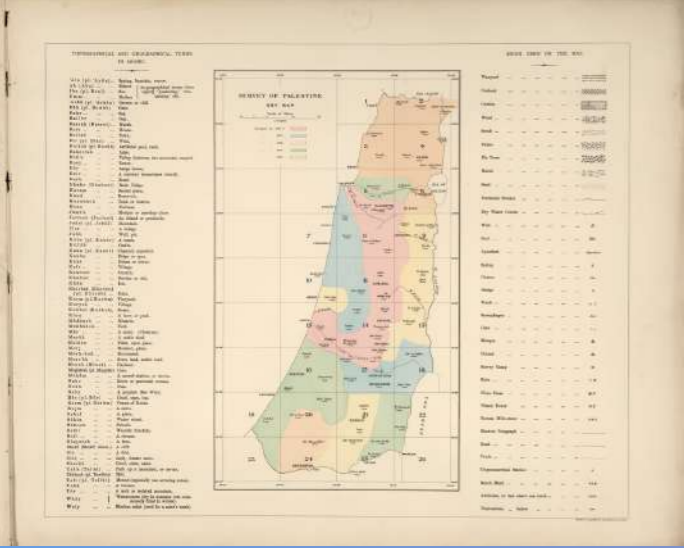
Gaza by David Roberts
21 March 1839

The Port was at the end of the Nabataean spice road where trade was conducted in herbs, spices incense, drapery, glass and food. Goods arrived in the port on the backs of camels from Southern Arabia (the Kingdom of Sheba) through Petra, the Arava Valley and crossing Negev Desert via Avdat. At the port of Gaza, these goods were dispatched to the European markets. After Alexander Jannaeus (Hasmonean dynasty) destruction of the port, it was rebuilt by the Romans. However the city would be a constant target of destruction.

updating & upgrading the city and the port

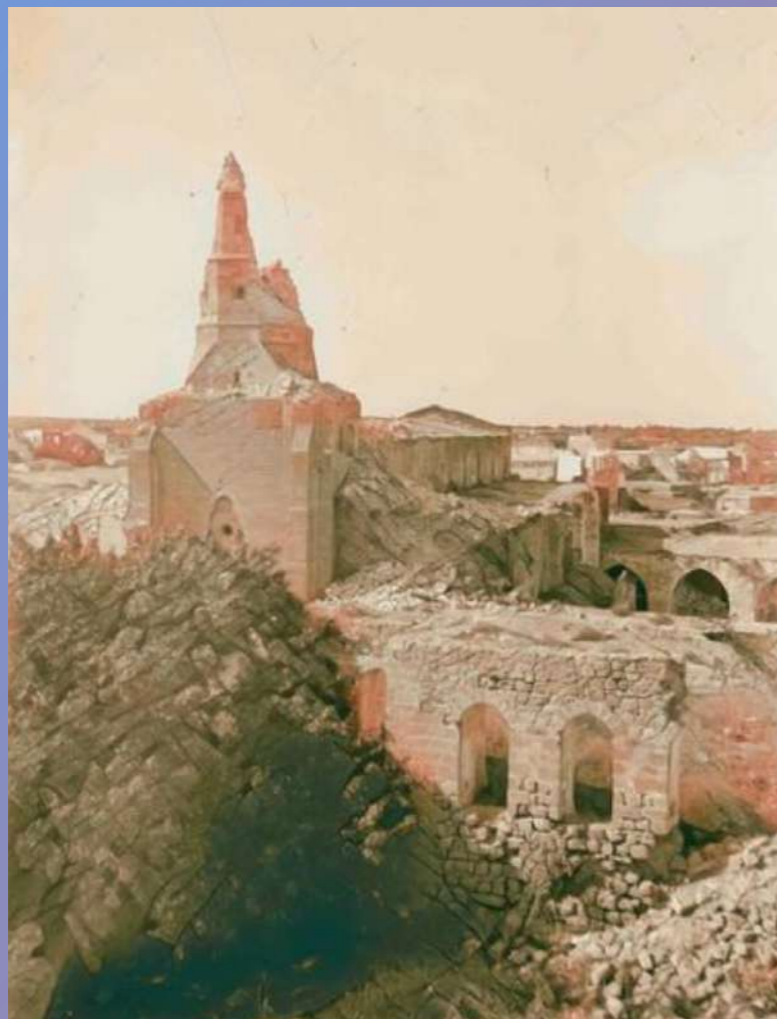
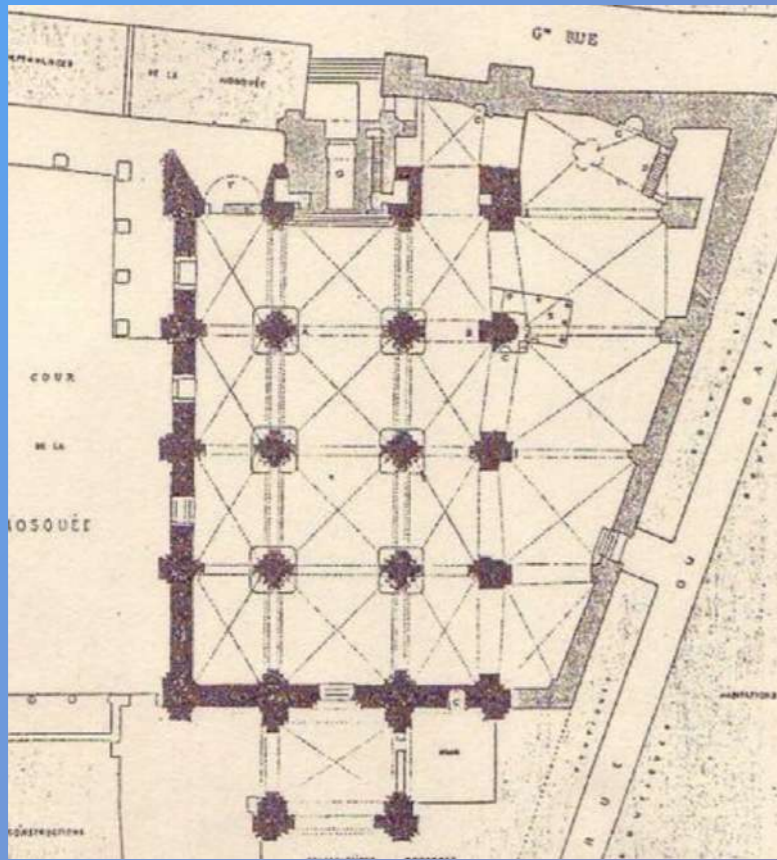
Gaza Yam

Survey of Western Palestine 1880
sheet 19, PEF, Charles William Wilson and others



updating & upgrading building legacy

Gaza city



Great Mosque of Gaza plan 1873 (above)
Gaza, the Great Mosque from the east. 1917, after WWI battle.
Reimagined by Gibon (below)



Gaza. (Ghuzze). Section near the mosque
Creator: American Colony (Jerusalem). Photo Department, 1920-1933

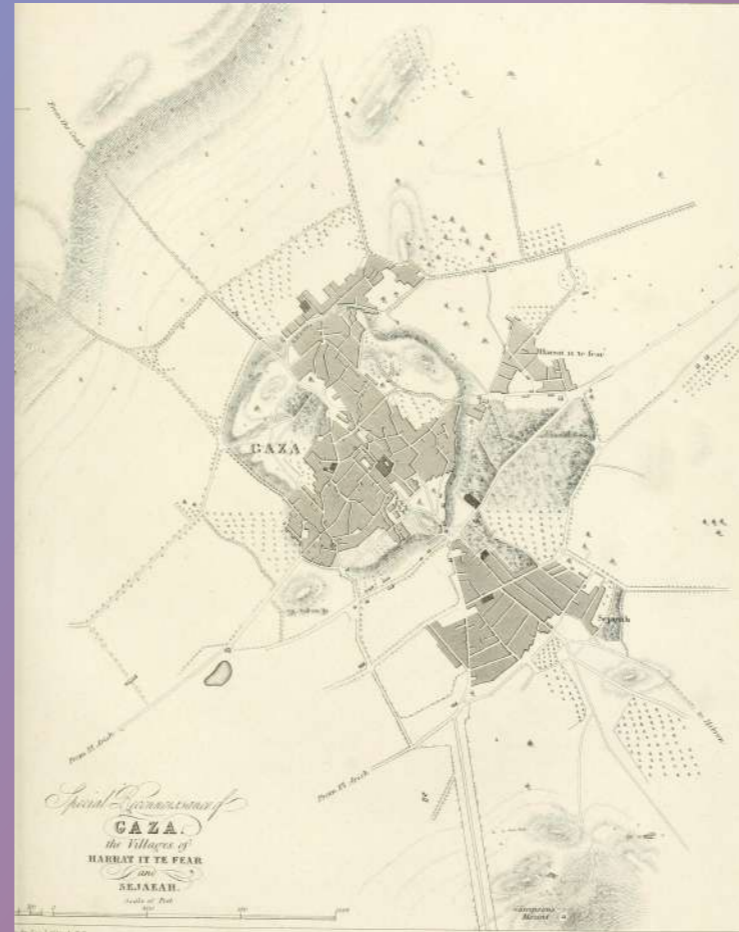
During Egyptian occupation [1948-1967], Gaza became a major destination for refugees, however the city's permanent residents as well as the refugees' camp residents have become stateless, did not officially extend Egyptian citizenship rights to Gaza's residents, being the difference among them that the former ones have kept the property ownership rights and the second ones were set apart from the city. In 1967, Israel, in order to uniform urban citizenship on refugees and locals, envisaged a development plans to dissolve the camps and resettle the refugees in designated neighborhoods that would normalize their property rights and that would integrate them into the cities' urban sprawl. In Gaza city, Al-Shati camp was partly demolished and refugees were resettled in a new housing project in Sheikh Radwan, so refugees in the camp expanded their plots and improved their housing.

Abreek-Zubiedat, Fatina; Nitzan-Shiftan, Alona, 2020, "Being citizens of the City of Gaza: the resettlement of the Al Sahti Refugee Camp at Sheikh Radwan, 1967-1982"

After the Egyptian occupation and a period of development of a Israeli masterplan for the Gaza Strip and North Sinai between 1967-1978, a joint Israeli-Palestinian planning team led by the Israeli Architect Eylon Meromi and the Syrian architect Saad Mohaffel was commissioned to develop Gaza masterplan. Gaza's Mayor, Rashad A-Shawa, who commissioned Saad Mohaffel, wrote the architect a long letter where he reviewed the city's history from the Islamic-Arabic period to the end of the British Mandate period. A-Shawa did write about his father, Said A-Shawa, Gaza's last mayor in the Ottoman period, hailing the strides he made toward founding some of the city's major urban institutions. He also approvingly recounted his elder brother's tenure as mayor from 1939 to 1951, under whose watch the city's economy flourished, particularly following an expansion of its port facilities. Gaza only became a port city under the British efforts with a new road from the Old City to the port as the new city's main economic artery, attracting a new merchant class to a new neighborhood, Rimal, built next to the port and to the west of the Old City.

updating & upgrading the port history

The Modern Port



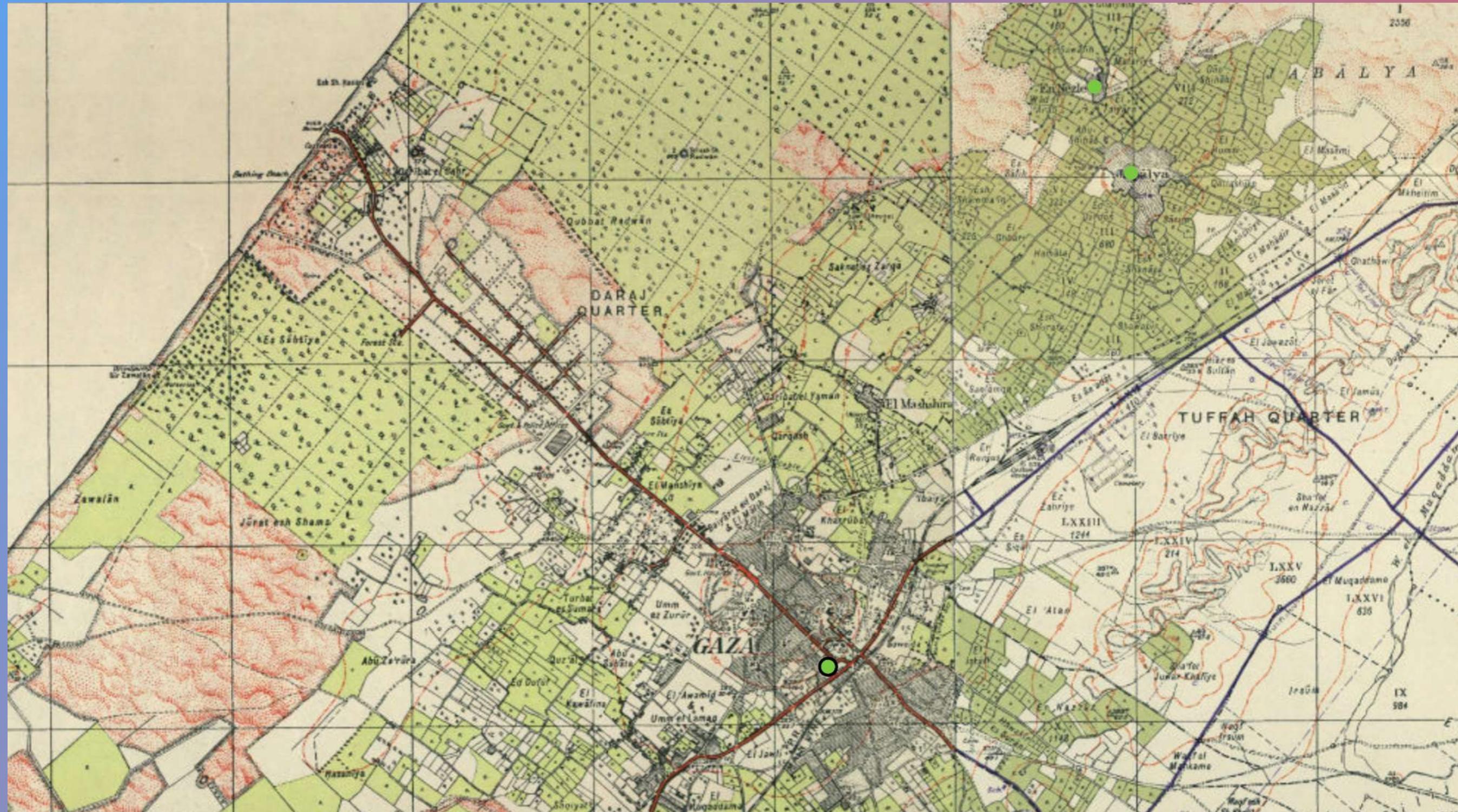
1840-41 Royal Engineers map of Gaza

During the Israeli Independence war (1948), Gaza was captured by the Egyptian army, who held it until 1967. For a brief time the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) captured the city in the Sinai war of 1956. The port city is briefly described in the PEF report as follows as El Kishani, meaning in arabic "the place of the Persian ceramics". The shore front is named El Mineh – meaning in Arabic: "the Harbour" (see map) in Sheet XIX p 251: "El Kishani. The gardens are surrounded by a bank, and there are several wells. It seems probable that ruins of a walled town may here be covered by the sand. Marble slabs and other fragments are dug up here by the peasantry". The old site was discovered by chance in 1965 during ground work for a new Casino. The port city may have been walled, although its walls were not traced. Between 1949-1967 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's developed plans to build a modern port and central power station.

updating & upgrading the city and the port

Gaza modern infrastructure

Palestine, 1:20,000, 1940s



updating & upgrading **the port history**

The Modern Port

The period of accelerated growth during British mandate ended when Gaza lost access to most of its agricultural hinterlands during the Nakba, striking a crippling blow to its barley exports. Egyptian plans to develop the port were drawn up in the mid-1960s under Gamal Abdel Nasser but were never realized due to the 1967s war. Initially, the Israeli government did not plan to make any investments in the port of Gaza.

The letter A-Shawa sent to Mohaffel in 1978 was, above all, a call to action. A copy of the letter opens the meticulously prepared "Gaza Master Plan" (al-Mokhatat el-Haykali la Madenat Gaza), which A-Shawa commissioned for the city. The impressive 80-plus-page master plan translates the historical imaginary of the city and its developmental aspirations into a planning prospectus detailing land uses, structural layouts, institutional distribution, and preservation policies. Each section opens with a photograph depicting the city's glorious past and goes on to feature detailed statistics, graphs, and various technical maps.

That the plan was an attempt to strike a middle line between preservation and development is evident even from the image chosen to adorn its cover: a reprint of an etching by the Scottish traveler and artist David Roberts from 1839.

The architects were asked to work within the context of colonial development to link native Gazans to their past. Additionally, they were asked to lay the foundations for future development, while also attending to the present demand to serve native Gazans only, and not the many refugees occupying the temporary refugee camps at the city's outskirts. Their task was to sustain Gazans' sense of belonging to their city place by adhering to the division between locals and refugees set out by Palestinian nationalism that was most forcefully encapsulated in the partition between the city itself and the adjacent Al-Shati refugee camp. A specific challenge that A-Shawa posed to the planners was the development of the beach area. A-Shawa wanted to create a recreational promenade that would connect the port compound to the well-to-do Rimal neighborhood.



Aerial view
flight Gaza-Cairo
1956

The Israeli urban masterplan 'Gaza Strip and North Sinai' [1971] is an example of the relation about policies and materiality, a large scale resettlement that Israeli government undertook in order to use urban planning to remove the refugee problem and to replace the city of Gaza from its position of cultural, political and economic pre-eminence in the region. The regional development scheme also secured territorial continuity between Israel and the Gaza strip, guaranteed Israel's uninhibited access to Gaza's most coveted resources and the foundation of a Jewish settlement, Yamit, the new port for Gaza, in the southern-western outskirts of Rafah. Massive government investments in Yamit would create a lasting economic and political dependence of the Strip on Israel. However, the development project met an abrupt end in 1982 when Israel withdrew from the Sinai desert as part of the peace agreement with Egypt signed in 1979. Yamit was bulldozed to the ground, and, with it perished the principal contender to the city of Gaza as the principal port city of the South-Eastern Mediterranean seaboard. This, however, did not lead to any new hope for the refugees and the residents of the Gaza Strip.

Abreek-Zubiedat, Fatina; Nitzan-Shiftan, Alona, 2020, "Being citizens of the City of Gaza: the resettlement of the Al Sahti Refugee Camp at Sheikh Radwan, 1967-1982"

Abreek-Zubiedat, Fatina & Nitzan-Shirftan, Alona, 2020, "The right to an urban history: The Gaza Master Plan, 1975-1982."

The Gaza Strip has been under a complete land, sea and air closure and restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza. In addition to the restrictions, there are military operations which has led to an unprecedented and permanent humanitarian crisis, with a regional economy almost collapsing. Gaza has registered one of the world's highest unemployment rates, and more than half of its population lives below the poverty line. The majority of the population has no access to safe water, a regular and reliable electricity supply or a proper sewage system. Between 2007-2018 gross domestic product [GDP] per capita shrank by 27%, unemployment increased by 49% and poverty increased by 42% [UN, 2020].

updating & upgrading the port history

a modern hope



updating & upgrading the port

The environmental challenges

1. **"De-development" is hindering water treatment.** According to UNCTAD, de-development is a "process by which development is **not merely hindered but reversed.**" Gaza faces deteriorating infrastructure and a negative economic growth, both of which feed Gaza's sanitation crisis. Years of continuing conflict damaged Gaza's infrastructure. Unfortunately, Gaza does not have the money or the supplies to rebuild. Businesses suffer from Israel's stifling 11-year blockade of Gaza; their lack of options often forces them to close, driving up unemployment and the poverty rate. Rather than give much-needed support to Gaza, Israel also controls and hinders access to supplies and fuel, which Gaza needs for rebuilding and treating water at its desalination plants.
2. **The Gaza Strip has limited freshwater.** In fact, **97% of freshwater** in the Gaza Strip is unsuitable for human consumption.
3. **Only approximately 200,000 people have safe water.** Only 10% out of the nearly 2 million people who live in Gaza have **access to safe drinking water.**
4. **Sewage filters into water plants.** Every day, approximately 110 million liters of sewage, raw and untreated, go directly into the Mediterranean, which then feeds the desalination plants.
5. **A depleted aquifer is a contaminated water source.** According to the U.N., **90% of the water** from the underground aquifer is undrinkable because it now contains the seawater that untreated sewage has contaminated. However, a lack of options forces Gazans to use the contaminated aquifer water.
6. **Unaffordable water bills.** According to the U.N., 38% of Gazans live in poverty. As a result, they simply cannot afford to pay water bills. The spread of poverty is largely due to Israel's blockade. The blockade restricts imports and exports, migration and access to the land and sea. Since businesses cannot reach their markets, they shut down, causing a lack of employment opportunities. As a result, it is challenging for Gazans to provide for their families, especially without fishing or farming.
7. **Unsafe drinking water leads to health complications.** Water pollution increases the number of kidney problems, diarrhea and **blue baby syndrome**, an illness that causes babies' lips and skin to turn blue. The rising cases especially affect Gaza's **increasing child mortality rate.**
8. **A lack of electricity immobilizes treatment plants.** In Gaza, a \$10 million desalination plant can only operate for four hours a day because Israel controls fuel and electricity. Even though Gaza has some functioning treatment plants, the lack of electricity decreases their reliability and output.
9. **Gaza receives less than 16% of items necessary to construct water infrastructure.** Israel restricts equipment and supplies, such as cement, from entering Gaza. It does not want Gazans to have anything they could potentially turn against Israel.
10. **Cooperation is key.** Political parties often use water and electricity as political instruments against another party. If Israel and Gaza work together, they may be able to solve the sanitation crisis in the Gaza Strip.

