

“Where do they go?”

A Full Year of Siege, the Denial of Rights, and the Criminalization of Solidarity

The Egyptian Response to the Humanitarian Disaster
in the Gaza Strip:

An annual report that monitors, documents, and analyzes movement to and from the Gaza Strip for individuals and aid, as well as the legal status of displaced people in Egypt’s access to rights and services, their education obstacles, and the criminalization of solidarity and support for Palestinians.



Published by the Refugee Platform in Egypt

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Report Methodology

The Refugee Platform in Egypt's researchers used a qualitative descriptive approach to revise and prepare the report, while the researchers studied, analyzed, and reviewed the following to establish a general and specific framework and background for the report:

- Egyptian legislation including (constitution, local laws, and administrative decisions) related to the topic of the report.
- International and regional agreements signed and ratified by Egypt related to the situation of refugees in general and Palestinians in particular.
- Memoranda of understanding signed between Egypt and international organizations whose work is related to refugees and the circumstances of displaced Palestinians.
- Official statistics and statements issued by:
 - 1. The Egyptian government regarding the circumstances of Palestinians, especially within the last year
 - 2. Official statistics and statements issued by international organizations working to bring support to the Gaza Strip through Egypt
 - 3. Official statistics and data issued by the government office of Gaza
 - 4. Official statistics and data issued by local and international organizations operating in the Gaza Strip

To achieve the results of this report, the researchers implemented the following:

- Reviewed, studied, and analyzed:
 - The various official Palestinian documents held by Palestinians residing in Egypt.
 - Official documents held by displaced Palestinians in the last year.
 - Expulsion decisions issued by the Egyptian authorities to Palestinians residing in Egypt.
 - Official documents given to those who were evacuated in the last year from the Gaza Strip to Egypt through security and medical coordination mechanisms.
 - Available documents from cases that criminalized Palestine solidarity activists.
 - The archives of local human rights organizations that documented violations against Palestine solidarity activists.
 - The archive of the Refugee Platform in Egypt.
 - Documents and data from the Refugee Platform in Egypt related to the topic of the report.
- Conducted in-depth interviews with:

- Palestinians who evacuated to Egypt through the security and health coordination mechanisms.
- Injured, wounded, and chronically ill Palestinians in Egypt who were evacuated from the Gaza Strip in the last year.
- Employees of relief organizations that manage aid deliveries from Egypt.
- Employees of local Egyptian organizations that provide support to Palestinians.
- Sources familiar with issues related to the subject matter of the report.
- Lawyers providing legal support in cases criminalizing solidarity with Palestine.
- Health workers in Egypt who provide medical support to injured, wounded, and chronically ill Palestinians.

Introduction

‘Where are we going to go?’ This is what Palestinians ask themselves every day, inside and outside of the Gaza Strip. ‘Where can they go?’, ‘Where will they go?’, there is no longer a safe place to relocate to after the ethnic cleansing campaign targeted every place that could be considered reliable or referred to as ‘safe.’ These are questions that illustrate the magnitude of the disaster and illustrate the intensity of their human suffering.

‘Where do we go?’, in light of solidarity spaces being eroded by the criminalization and targeting of, the mechanisms of international law and society have abjectly failed at stopping genocide, siege, and starvation. “Where do we go?” is a question for neighboring countries, led by Egypt, whose response to the ongoing catastrophe has been shameful.

The war machine attacking the Gaza Strip, and what has recently transpired in the northern Gaza Strip, specifically in the *Jabaliya* refugee camp, the ongoing siege and starvation, the displacement at gunpoint and tankpoint, the destruction of government facilities, schools, shelters, and hospitals, and the direct targeting of more than 400,000 civilians forcing them to flee, and for the fourth and most violent and bloody time since the beginning of the colonial occupation, all of this reflects the clear intention of the Israeli occupation’s army to implement a long-term settlement plan. This plan is based on the forced displacement of the population of the northern Gaza Strip, not only to retrieve hostages or eliminate Hamas, as the occupation continues to falsely claim.

The operations carried out by the occupation use many unjustified pretexts, which are clearly contrary to international and humanitarian law, as a cover to implement the settler-colonial project. By putting pressure on the civilian population and targeting them with military sieges and attacks, the occupation army aims to empty the areas of their original inhabitants and impose a new reality that allows the occupation to control the land, as a part of a settler-colonial project that aspires to annex parts of the Gaza Strip as well as expand the scope of the state of Israel’s settlements.

Gaza: A Year of Continuous Annihilation and Deadly Siege:

The number of casualties, as of November 2, 2024, reached:

43,314 martyrs were reported to have reached hospitals.

102,019 injured individuals were treated at hospitals.

More than a year has passed since the start of the genocidal campaign against the Gaza Strip, bringing the number of [martyrs](#), as of November 2nd, 2024, to 43,314 martyrs who reached hospitals, and the number of wounded to 102,019. Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation's offensive on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, during which the occupation deliberately targeted all elements of human life in the Strip including health facilities, some of which were converted into military bases, the settler's army targeted civilian cadres. These targeted operations included [teachers](#), doctors, civil defense workers, [and ambulance](#) workers by directly killing them and their families, destroying their homes or arresting them, along with completely destroying their infrastructure, while attacking safe havens that the settler occupation itself defined as shelter centers and UNRWA schools.

[Population Displacement](#)

The population faces continuous displacement due to ongoing aggressions

[Infrastructure Destruction](#)

Gaza's Infrastructure is severely damaged

[Targeting Health Facilities](#)

Health facilities are being deliberately targeted and converted into settler occupations' military bases

[Attack on Civilian Cadres](#)

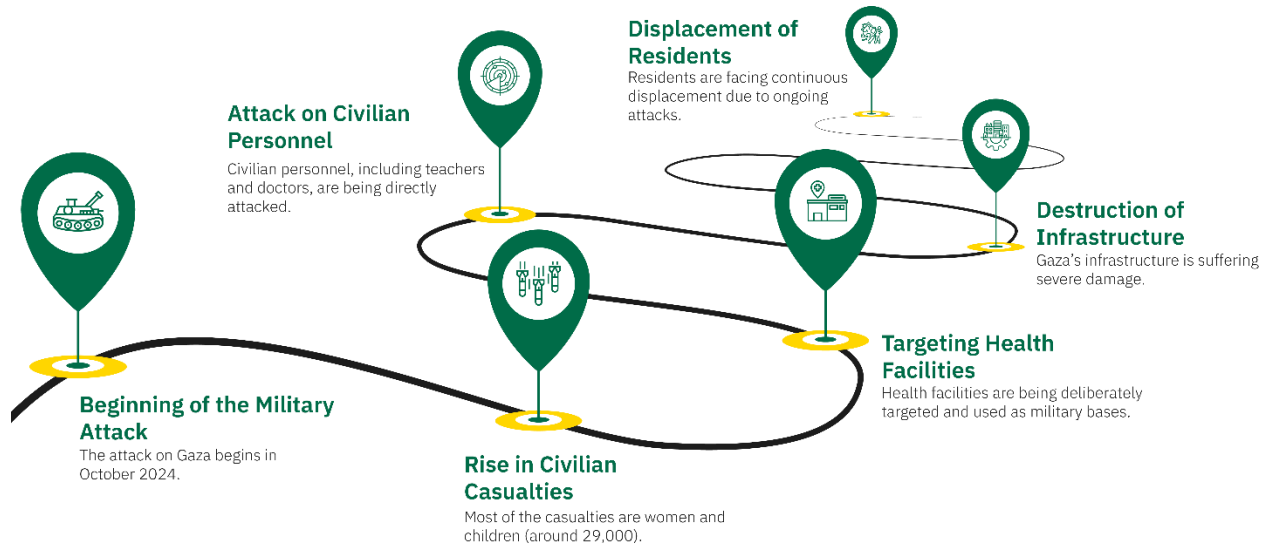
Civilian cadres, including teachers and doctors are under direct attack

[Number of Civilian Casualties Rises](#)

The number of Civilian casualties increases dramatically

[Military Offensive Begins](#)

The attack on Gaza in October 2023 begins



According to OCHA [reports](#) from September 2024, more than 1.9 million people have been displaced, representing nearly 90% of Gaza's population. These displaced people are living in dire conditions, with many forced to move into UNRWA shelters, partially destroyed buildings, or into unsafe makeshift tents that have all been bombed repeatedly.

One notable example of the difficult living conditions is what the United Nations reported on in its September 27th, 2024 [report](#), where the report documented that many families in the Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis areas are living in dilapidated tents or destroyed schools with water and food shortages. Additionally, all displaced Palestinians suffer from food insecurity. The report stated that 60% of displaced Palestinians can only procure one meal a day to eat, while 40% are forced to go an entire day without eating. The government media [center](#) estimated that 100,000 tents housing displaced Palestinians are falling apart.

Among the most affected sectors in Gaza is the education sector, with 85% of schools suffering total or partial damages. According to a report issued by [UNRWA](#) on September 27th, 2024, 477 out of 564 schools in Gaza were destroyed, disrupting the education of more than 625,000 students. As a result, the government media [center](#) estimates that 126 schools and universities were completely destroyed and 339 schools and universities were partially destroyed by the settler's occupation army.

Destruction of the Education Sector in Gaza



Student casualties
12,700 students have been killed



Displacement
625,000 students are unable to attend.



Academic Disruption
785,000 students are deprived of education.



Infrastructure Damage
477 schools were completely destroyed.



Loss of Teachers
750 teachers were killed.



Destruction of Schools
85% of schools were damaged.

Destruction of the Education Sector in Gaza

Destruction of Educational Institutions - 85% Totally or Partially Damaged

Murder of Teachers

750 Teachers Killed

Murder of Students

12,700 Students Killed

Displacement of Students

625,000 Students Unable to Attend School

Academic Service Suspension

785,000 Deprived of Education

Structural Damage of Infrastructure

477 Academic Institutions Completely Destroyed

The Israeli occupation's army has killed 12,700 students since October 7th and deprived 785,000 students of education, in addition to killing 750 teachers and 130 researchers, academics, and university professors.

Students in the Gaza Strip face enormous challenges, as the remaining institutions are being used as shelters for displaced Palestinians and continue to be directly and deliberately targeted, either through raids or direct incursions, evacuating those sheltering in them by force of arms, or the Israeli occupation's army deliberately burning them. According to OCHA reports, the remaining schools are severely overcrowded with internally displaced people, with more than 100 students being taught in a single classroom, making it impossible to provide quality education.

Additionally, the UNRWA report noted that many children in Gaza are psychologically traumatized as a result of the conflict, increasing the need for psychosocial support for students. International facilities in the Gaza Strip were also directly targeted by the Israeli occupation's army, resulting in the destruction of some of them and severe damage to others. According to OCHA and UNRWA reports, more than 190 UN facilities, including schools, healthcare centers, and relief warehouses were bombed causing severe damage. This has disrupted the delivery of humanitarian aid to at-risk populations in Gaza, specifically in light of blockade and restrictions against the movement of international organizations.

In a report issued by [OCHA](#) on September 27th, 2024, 588 humanitarian organizations' movements were documented as coordinated with the Israeli occupation's army during that month, 79 of which were between northern and southern Gaza. Nevertheless, 90 percent of those 79 route movements were blocked or disrupted, depriving hundreds of thousands of people of vital aid.

One of the main challenges faced by the population of the Gaza Strip is the worsening food crisis. According to World Food [Program](#) estimates, 96% of Gaza's population is food insecure, with 745,000 Palestinians experiencing severe levels of food insecurity. The blockade and destruction of agricultural land has paralyzed local food production, with OCHA reporting that 60-70% of livestock in Gaza have either been actively targeted for slaughter prematurely.

While conditions have worsened as a result of the ongoing blockades, the obstruction of humanitarian aid entry, and the haphazard crossing process, these tragic and deadly conditions have forced hundreds of thousands of Gazans to be forcibly displaced internally repeatedly, while thousands more are being forced into displacement externally. With the only way out of Palestine being through Egypt, while the main route for aid crossing into Gaza is also through Egypt, specifically the Rafah border crossing.

As part of its emergency response to the threat of ethnic cleansing in Gaza over the past year, the Refugee Platform in Egypt worked to monitor the Egyptian response to the humanitarian situation inside the Strip. Through the control of the transit route of humanitarian aid, the reception of displaced people in Egypt as well as their legal and living conditions internally, their activities continue in international and regional solidarity to advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people and provide possible assistance to those displaced to Egypt.



Addressing Palestinian Struggles

06: Report Results

05: Criminalization of Solidarity

04: Access to Education

03: Legal Status in Egypt

02: Controlling Aid Routes

01: The Rafah Border Crossing

In this report, the Refugee Platform reviews what has been monitored and documented over the past year with regard to:

- I: Rafah Crossing: The only way out of the settler's siege and occupation, how was the flow of people's migration impacted by the genocidal campaign before and after its commencement?
- II: The Egyptian border with Gaza under ethnic cleansing: From Egyptian prohibition, exploitation, racketeering, and profiteering to Israel's occupation while committing genocide
- III: The legal status of displaced Palestinians in Egypt.
- IV: The legal status of displaced Palestinians in Egypt: Palestinian students in Egypt and their access to education.

I. Rafah Crossing: The only way out of the settler's siege and occupation, how was the flow of people's migration impacted by the genocidal campaign before and after its commencement?

Historical Background of the Rafah Crossing:

The Rafah crossing is the border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. The crossing has gained strategic importance since the closure of Gaza's international airport after the Second Intifada in 2000. After the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the Palestinian Authority (PA) assumed the task of managing the crossing from the Palestinian side, in coordination with international observers from the European Union and Israeli coordination in accordance with the Crossings Agreement of 2005.

With the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, circumstances changed drastically. Israel imposed a comprehensive blockade on the Gaza Strip, making Rafah the only outlet that could alleviate the isolation of Gaza's residents.

How People Move Through the Rafah Border Crossing:

The Rafah crossing is the only pathway connecting the Gaza Strip to the outside world via Egypt, and is used as a major route for people and humanitarian aid moving in light of the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip.

The importance of the crossing has increased since the beginning of the genocidal campaign that started on October 7th, 2023, as it is the only resource, that is not controlled by the occupation, possible for the entry of aid, goods, and supplies including food and water. The crossing is also the only means of transporting the wounded and injured in need of treatment outside of Gaza, in addition to being a passageway for the movement of migrants through special coordination; specifically through health coordination by way of the crossing for the wounded and chronically ill through the Hala Travel Company.

On April 25th, 2024, 12 days before the Israeli occupation's military closed the crossing, the Palestinian ambassador in Cairo, Diab al-Loh, told Agence France-Presse (AFP): 80,000 to 100,000 Palestinians have arrived in Egypt from Gaza since October 7th, 2023, while the United Nations estimates the number of Palestinians in Egypt at 70,021 with 1,210 wounded Palestinians treated abroad.

1. Crossing the Wounded Through Health Coordination

1.1 Process

Since the start of the genocidal war in Gaza, the Rafah crossing has been a vital resource for the transfer of the wounded and injured for treatment in Egyptian hospitals and abroad. This process is carried out through a strict coordination procedure between the Ministry of Health in Gaza and the Egyptian authorities, in addition to [the Israeli settler side's approval of](#) names. The lists sent to the Egyptian side usually contain the names of injured people who need immediate treatment that cannot be provided in the overcrowded and damaged hospitals in Gaza.

The names of patients are transferred through the Ministry of Health in Gaza to the Egyptian side after assessing their health condition and prioritizing critical cases that require immediate treatment. Often, the wounded are transported using ambulances belonging to the Palestinian Red Crescent, or international medical organizations in coordination with the Red Cross.

1.2 Crossing Duration

The time it takes to cross the wounded depends heavily on bureaucratic procedures that include: Checking documents, verifying names on lists, and Israeli approval, which can take weeks. The coordination process is lengthy, and the Palestinian Ministry of Health reports that many sick and wounded have died while waiting for their exit to be coordinated.

On January 14th, 2014, the Refugee Platform in Egypt and Egyptian human rights organizations issued a [call for](#) an urgent response to the health crisis in the Gaza Strip, while 6,000 wounded were facing life-threatening injuries due to a lack of medical capabilities. This logical call, which was intended to create Egyptian diplomatic pressure in the face of the humanitarian crisis that has since manifested itself in Gaza, was met with official disregard and [media attacks](#).

1.3 A Life-Threatening Process for the Wounded and Injured Who Require Urgent Medical Evacuation

According to reports by the Palestinian Ministry of Health and UN [organizations](#), 100,000 patients have died due to the lack of treatment and standard medications, 12,500 cancer patients [are](#) at risk of death, and 25,000 [ill](#) and wounded people are in urgent need of treatment abroad.

This process, which the Refugee Platform in Egypt describes as 'distressing in its [report](#) on the Egyptian response to the circumstances of the wounded and injured from Gaza published in February 2024, by which time 1,210 injured people had been evacuated from Gaza within 100 days with an average of 12 injured people per day despite the worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza with each passing day, the Egyptian response has not improved.

2. Individuals Crossing Through Hala Travel

The Egyptian company [Hala](#), founded by [Ibrahim](#) Gomaa al-Organi, plays a pivotal role in the transportation of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Egypt through the Rafah crossing, especially in light of the current circumstances that have worsened since the outbreak of the genocidal campaign in October 2023. Since its establishment in 2019, Hala has focused on providing [VIP](#) transportation services at a cost ranging from 350 American dollars to 1,200 American dollars, but since the beginning of the aggression on the Gaza Strip, the prices of ‘security coordination’ and transportation carried out by the company have inflated, as will be detailed below.

2.1 Procedure

Aside from health coordination, there is a way for individuals to cross through the Rafah border crossing through private coordination using travel companies such as Hala Travel. Hala has become the main company providing this type of service, and has become famous for the term ‘crossing through security coordination.’ This company provides coordination services between individuals wishing to travel and the Egyptian authorities, often including non-humanitarian cases such as students, businessmen, residency holders, and foreign nationals.

Coordinating with Hala Travel usually requires several steps, including submitting an application that includes travel documents such as a passport and visas in addition to paying fees. After submitting the application, the company communicates with the authorities to obtain transit approvals, a process that can take days or weeks.

2.2 The Cost and Timing of Coordination

The [costs](#) associated with coordination services vary according to the circumstances and the time of the request, as the cost of coordination increased significantly after the beginning of the aggression. In October 2023, the cost of [coordination](#) amounted to about 3,000 American dollars per person, while in November 2023 it increased to 3,500 American dollars per person. As the humanitarian crisis continued, the [cost](#) reached more than 4,000 American dollars per person in December 2023 until it reached 5,000 American dollars for an adult and 2,500 American dollars for those under the age of 16, while in some cases the cost of coordination reached more than 8,000 American dollars per person.

2.3 Crossing Duration

Due to security and administrative complexities, obtaining approval through special coordination can take anywhere from a week to a month. In some cases, individuals on crossing lists may be stopped or delayed as a result of intensive security procedures, adding to the long wait times and affecting their plans.

As the genocidal campaign intensified and the Israeli bombardment of Gaza escalated, Palestinians were forced to seek a safe exit through the Rafah crossing, the only passageway to the outside world. Hala took advantage of this material reality by charging higher fees.

The Refugee Platform in Egypt believes that the measures taken by Hala were not intended to regulate the entry process, but rather facilitate the financial exploitation of Palestinians in the absence of international protection and denial of the right to movement for Palestinians. Coordination and travel have become tied to a profit motive and capitalist system that ignores

basic human rights to safe movement and accessible international protection. Palestinians who face catastrophic humanitarian conditions and desperately need to cross from Gaza are forced to pay large sums of money for services that are disproportionate to their suffering, thereby violating their basic rights.

Hala is a glaring example of economic exploitation in the midst of a major humanitarian crisis. As Palestinians seek to escape the hell that is ethnic cleansing, they are faced with a system of arbiters that include exorbitant fees that make their right to migrate a huge financial burden.

The Company's [Profits](#) Have Skyrocketed

In April 2024, Hala made at least 2 million American dollars per day, capitalizing on the increase of the number of daily migrants through the [Rafah](#) crossing from 295 to 475. The company is estimated to have profited nearly 88 million American dollars in just a few weeks from the crossing of 20,000 Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt, taking advantage of their tragic situation while leaving Gaza during the escalation of a genocidal campaign waged against them; which is textbook economic exploitation of the humanitarian crisis. These procedures were completely stopped after the Israeli occupation [took control of](#) the crossing by direct military force on May 7th, 2024.

The Evacuation of Foreign and Egyptian Citizens from Gaza: Mixed Response Amid Criticism of the Egyptian Government's Inaction

At the beginning of the Israeli occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip, European countries and the United States rushed to evacuate their citizens, including those working for international organizations and dual citizens. These evacuations were mainly through the Rafah crossing.

[On November 1st](#), more than 500 dual citizens, including [American](#) citizens, crossed through, followed by other nationalities such as French, Russian, and Polish, as foreigners were prioritized. Conversely, Egypt has handled the evacuation of its own citizens from Gaza with remarkable callousness and procrastination.

While the Egyptian government announced on October 10th that [30 Egyptian Canadians had been evacuated](#) from Gaza, most of the approximately 400 Egyptians stranded in Gaza remained unsure of the Egyptian government's plan for their evacuation.

This situation continued until the government office in Gaza announced on November 2nd, 2023 an appeal for Egyptians stranded in Gaza to write to the [Egyptian embassy](#) in Ramallah, which would begin receiving requests from stranded Egyptians. The Egyptian response was delayed and ineffective despite the collective responses from Egyptian citizens in the Gaza Strip, who found themselves facing the same avenues made available to Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip. This involved either going through security coordination or through Hala at a high financial cost.

This lethargic response angered stranded Egyptians who resorted to posting videos and appeals on [social](#) media, criticizing the Egyptian government's delay in dealing with their difficult circumstances; despite the fact that the evacuation of foreigners began in early November without any significant change in the Egyptian government's response.

In the same context, [an Egyptian citizen](#), Mahmoud Gamal Abdel-Moneim Abdel-Latif Seif al-Nasr, [published a](#) video appeal on the first anniversary of the genocidal campaign, in which he explains that he has been stuck in the Gaza Strip since the start of the Zionist's ethnic cleansing project and cannot return to Egypt with his family. Furthermore, he added that the Egyptian authorities refuse to allow him to cross into Egypt because his name was not included on the transit lists, and despite his mother in Egypt's attempts to appeal to the relevant authorities to repatriate a citizen to his country, stalling prevailed until the crossing was closed after the Israeli settler's army occupied the Palestinian side of the crossing, leaving Seif al-Nasr trapped in the strip until now.

By mid-November 2023, [about 7,000](#) foreigners and dual citizens [had been evacuated](#) through organized operations coordinated between foreign embassies and Egyptian authorities.

II: Egypt's Border with Gaza in the Shadow of a Palestinian Genocide: From Egyptian prohibition, exploitation, racketeering, and profiteering to Israeli settler-colonial occupation

After the beginning of the Israeli occupation's assault on Gaza, the Rafah crossing became the center of attention as the only crossing that is not under direct Israeli control, along with the need to apply sustained pressure to bring in aid.

According to the monitoring of the Refugee Platform, the Egyptian authorities' efforts focused on managing the entry of aid through certain companies that enable the coordination process. Hala is one of the most prominent of these companies, as mentioned above, and is one of the few authorized to coordinate the entry of aid, including medical and humanitarian materials.

As per observations of the Refugee Platform, instead of using the Rafah crossing to execute the entry of displaced people, whether Palestinian or Egyptian and stuck in the Gaza Strip, or to expedite the passage of medical and humanitarian aid, or journalists, as well as doctors, the Egyptian authorities imposed a series of security, financial, and administrative obstacles that hindered the flow of entry and exit. This in turn increased the difficulty of getting necessary aid, such as food, drink, and medicine, into the Gaza Strip, as well as allowed the piling up of these provisions at the Rafah crossing for long periods of time. This also resulted in hindering the exit of displaced people seeking asylum, which exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and increased the suffering of those affected.

This is in addition to the Israeli occupation's direct siege on all Gaza crossings presently. Prior to the military takeover, the Israeli occupation's army obstructed the entry of aid, starting with the [targeting of](#) the crossing gate at the beginning of their genocidal campaign, then the restriction of the passage of aid, allowing only a very small amount to enter, until the occupation imposed direct military control by force of arms over the crossing and the entire Egyptian-Palestinian border.

Medical Organizations

As of August 2024, 18 medical relief teams entered the Gaza Strip through a *health cluster*, in coordination with the occupying settler-colonial power, and reached various parts of the Gaza Strip, according to UN organizations.

According to the August 2024 Health Bulletin report of a number of UN organizations, 18 international medical teams, including 63 international medical personnel, were deployed to the Gaza Strip. These teams provided a total of 185,479 medical consultations, performed 919 surgeries, and contributed to 888 referrals. The average length of stay for each team is not mentioned in the report but, according to the Refugee Platform's sources and interviews with a number of those involved in medical relief campaigns, the average length of stay inside the Gaza Strip ranges from 7 to 14 days.

The report noted that these teams are active in northern and southern Gaza, amidst significant challenges facing the continued provision of health services, such as a shortage of medical supplies and medicine, lack of equipment in hospitals, long working hours, lack of rest areas, and the constant, heightened possibility of being targeted and killed by the Israeli occupation. The Israeli occupation's army allowed only a very limited number of medical organizations, in small numbers, to cross into northern Gaza. These delegations must travel from Jordan to the Gaza Strip, a distance that takes a lengthy amount of time to traverse, including walking more than 2 kilometers on foot amid unpaved terrain, through which organization members were forced to carry their supplies on their backs. The organizations are required to stay inside the Gaza Strip for only a maximum of seven days.

While international organizations sent a total of 63 medical staff, the Palestinian Ministry of Health lost [146](#) doctors of different specialties as a result of direct killing by the occupation forces, while 300 medical staff were [captured](#), and 3 of them were assassinated by the occupation. According to the [Government Media Center](#), the health sector lost 1074 workers as a result of the occupation army's targeting and mass murder.

Contrary to what took place in previous wars on the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian Medical Syndicate has not sent any relief medical teams to the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the genocidal campaign, despite calls issued for the deployment of relief teams since the beginning of the ethnic cleansing project. Moreover, for the first time, according to sources for Refugee Platform, the process of coordinating the crossing of medical teams was conditional on the medical staff holding non-Egyptian citizenship. The process of coordinating the crossing of medical personnel required that the medical staff hold a nationality other than Egyptian, and were allowed to enter only if they held dual nationality. Afterwards, an order was issued in April 2024 prohibiting the entry of any doctor of Palestinian origin, even if they hold dual citizenship. In October 2024, the ban and restrictions expanded to include most of the organizations that send health clusters in cooperation with United Nations organizations, except for five organizations, most of which are American.

Journalists

The state of Israel prevents foreign media from entering Gaza, and if journalists enter with the settler occupation's army, published material is subject to Israeli settler approval first. The task of documenting the war on the ground fell on Palestinian journalists in Gaza, many of whom continued to work, despite extreme and grave risks to their safety. As of October 28th, 2024, [182](#) journalists have been targeted and murdered by the Israeli occupation's army.

Oppositionally, according to what the Refugee Platform in Egypt has documented, the Press Center of the State Information Service (SIS) did not officially respond to the requests of some foreign journalists to pass into Gaza through Egypt. The only neutral and insouciant response provided was that Egypt would not take responsibility for the passage of journalists into the Gaza Strip without first obtaining Israeli settler approval to guarantee the safety of those journalists.

The Egyptian Journalists Syndicate issued several [statements](#) condemning the crimes of the Israeli settler's occupation in the Gaza Strip, while also [making moves to](#) honor Palestinian journalists. This included submitting a proposal that gives Palestinian journalists in the Gaza Strip the same privileges as Egyptian journalists, while hosting several events in support of Palestinians.

The head of the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate, Khaled al-Balshy, issued a 'global call' for a '[World Conscience Caravan](#)' which aims to organize the efforts of journalists, media professionals, and activists from all over the world to gather in Egypt to demonstrate in a popular march to break the siege on Gaza. As documented by the Refugee Platform in Egypt through the testimonies of foreign journalists and activists who tried to join the call, the official authorities addressed by the activists, including the SIS, categorically denied any knowledge of this call, or any official statements regarding its organization.

The State Information Service (SIS) categorically denied any knowledge of this invitation or any official statements regarding its organization, while an inside source stated that, several days after the captain called for this convoy, the sovereign authorities in Egypt decided that nothing similar could be organized under the current political circumstances in Egypt considering the security situation in the Gaza Strip; and that access to the Rafah crossing for journalists is only possible after obtaining a permit from the *Press Center*.

Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation's genocidal campaign against the Gaza Strip until now, no Egyptian or foreign journalists have entered through the Rafah crossing. What the Egyptian authorities have allowed, in accordance with the decisions of the security authorities, is the process of organizing Egyptian and foreign journalists in convoys at the Rafah crossing gate. According to the documentation implemented by the Refugee Platform in Egypt, the process of coordinating visits and determining their program and timeline was carried out by employees of the Press Center of the State Information Service, with two different types possible. The first type, Egyptian journalists and social media reporters, by mobilizing them in front of the Rafah crossing, especially in the first weeks, which later disappeared due to its futility and its impact, which then had a reverse effect on the direction of Egyptian public opinion.

The second type, according to what the Refugee Platform in Egypt documented from different sources, the organization for a visit was carried out in conjunction with the arrival of a group of crossers through the 'security or health coordination procedure', or the arrival of an international figure or diplomatic delegate to visit the crossing. The visit starts from Cairo and these journalists are gathered and organized in buses belonging to the State Information Service, then moved to Rafah first, and if there was an evacuation operation, the evacuation operations were delayed until the arrival of journalists, which was repeated several times according to witnesses. Afterwards, the crossing process begins with the urging of Egyptian authorities to evacuate them.

Aid

Since the beginning of the genocidal campaign on the Gaza Strip, humanitarian organizations have found themselves facing major challenges despite their extensive experience in dealing with crises resulting from repeated Israeli occupation attacks. The international community and relief organizations rushed to launch urgent appeals to mobilize support and assistance, with the aim of minimizing the catastrophic effects of the violence, but the reality on the ground proved that their capacity is very much limited in the face of the scale of destruction and the imposed siege.

The occupation imposed a suffocating siege on the Gaza Strip, closing Gaza's crossings and imposing arbitrary conditions on the entry of humanitarian aid. With the Gaza Strip declared a closed military zone, international organizations and relief teams were forced to leave some areas, leaving the bulk of the work in the hands of local staff. This situation, coupled with intensive shelling that targets water and electricity plants as well as food and medicine stores, led to an unprecedented deterioration of the humanitarian situation and increased suffering of the population.

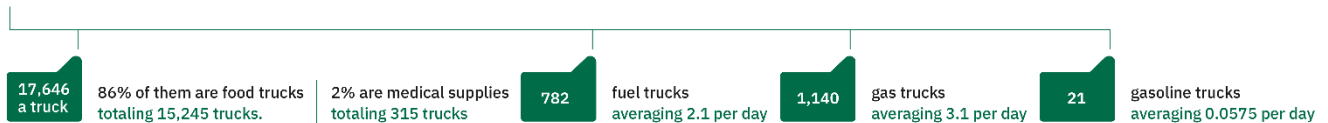
Despite the obstacles, humanitarian organizations were able to bring in about 3,000 tons of food and medical aid in the first month of the ethnic cleansing project. Nonetheless, this aid faced significant delays due to the Israeli occupation's bureaucratic impediments. Trucks were forced to pass through the *Auja* commercial crossing, where they were inspected by the Israeli settlers, who detained them for several days, before forcing them to return through the Rafah crossing. This delay caused much of the supplies to be damaged and increased the shortage of basic items in the Gaza Strip. In July 2024, UN experts [accused](#) Israel [of](#) carrying out a 'starvation campaign' in Gaza, with dozens of people dying from malnutrition since the start of the genocidal campaign.

[According to](#) UN organizations, 17,646 trucks crossed into the Gaza Strip in 365 days: 86% of which were food trucks, 15, 245 trucks specifically; and 2% of trucks were medical supplies, 315 trucks specifically. During the same period on any average stretch of days before the start of the genocidal campaign, 219,000 trucks entered the Gaza Strip, and, according to UNRWA, 50 fuel trucks entered the Gaza Strip every day. Since October 7th, 2023, according to UNRWA data published on October 5th, 2024, 782 fuel trucks (a general term that includes any substance used to produce energy through combustion or other chemical reactions, as fuel includes many different types such as gasoline, diesel, natural gas, coal, biofuels, etc.), specifically 1,140 gas trucks and 21 gasoline trucks, have entered. That's an average of 2.1 fuel trucks per day, 3.1 gas trucks, and 0.0575 gasoline trucks.

It should be noted that the first aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip on October 21st, which included 20 trucks of mostly medical supplies and food provisions, after 13 days of strict blockade. The health cluster estimates that health needs alone for the Gaza Strip at 43,278,564 American dollars. One of the challenges facing relief organizations is the occupation's ban on fuel, which has severely affected the operation of hospitals and vital infrastructure, as most medical supplies and medical equipment needed to save lives have also been denied entry. Despite international efforts to pressure the state of Israel to allow greater access to aid, the Israeli settlers' response has been limited.

Delivering Humanitarian Aid to Gaza
 Fuel Shipments to Gaza
 The First Aid Trucks Enter Gaza
 UN Publishes Data on Aid Shipments
 Total Trucks Delivered in 365 Days
 Average Daily Gas Trucks Calculated
 Averaged Daily Fuel Trucks Calculated
 Estimated Health Needs of Gazans Calculated
 Comparison of Shipments Before and After Genocide Began
 Percentage of Food and Medical Trucks Calculated

Delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza



The entry of aid trucks is managed by the [health cluster](#), which includes UN agencies, most notably UNRWA, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, civil society organizations, the Red Crescent and Red Cross, and the Ministry of Health. This cluster prioritizes the aid that crosses, after the occupation forces allow it to pass, and informs them of the number of trucks allowed to cross.

Prior to the occupation of the Rafah crossing by the Israeli occupation's army in May 2024, trucks were inspected and traveled through the crossing, after Egyptian coordination with the occupation, and the Palestinian side received them directly while supervising their distribution.

With the military control of Rafah crossing, the border crossing was closed and the trucks were forced to pass through the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Egyptian-Israeli border into the Israeli settlers side, and from there into the Gaza Strip or to Gate 96, near the Israeli occupation's hub, called Netzarim. From there, the trucks made their way to the main warehouses in Deir al-Balah, and then their contents were distributed according to need. Otherwise, the trucks can go through another route, which includes passing through the Salah al-Din gate to Deir al-Balah city, from where the distribution process is carried out.

There are also logistical warehouses for United Nations organizations that receive aid in the Palestinian area of Rafah, but the Israeli army has targeted them several times. Additionally, the constant assaults and mass murder of the committees that secured the trucks from the Israeli occupation's army, which were formed after the Internal Security Forces who performed the same task were targeted, made it easier to loot the aid and prevent it from reaching its beneficiaries.

Data published by the Euro-Mediterranean [Monitor](#) for Human Rights in March 2024 demonstrated that the Israeli occupation's army killed 563 Palestinians and injured 1,523 others during the settlers' military operations that directly targeted aid waiters, distribution centers, and workers responsible for organizing, protecting, as well as distributing aid in the Gaza Strip. The report stated that among the victims were 53 workers securing and distributing aid, two of them

from UNRWA, and 41 members of the police and popular protection committees responsible for securing the distribution of aid.

In addition to the bombing, relief operations were also hampered by funding restrictions, as the occupation imposed financial sanctions on some humanitarian organizations, which led to a reduction in the amount of aid reaching Gaza. This, as well as logistical and organizational challenges and constant interdictions, has made the distribution of aid more complex and difficult.

On the Egyptian Side

The disruption of the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip due to the Israeli occupation's restrictions, Egypt's response to these restrictions, and direct Israeli settler control over the Rafah crossing and the entire Palestinian-Egyptian border, have all contributed to the [accumulation of](#) aid for lengthy periods of time. This led to the spoilage of a large part of the provisions, specifically the foodstuffs. According to the documentation of the Refugee Platform in Egypt, and through direct communication with those who were allowed to be in Egyptian Rafah and *Al-Arish*, we listened to testimonies regarding how certain parties collect money from aid trucks for stalling in front of the crossing, in addition to dividing parts of the areas near the crossing and turning them into logistical warehouses that are either rented in full to certain countries or providing storage services for a fee through the *Organi Group*.

The Egyptian government also imposes strict security policies that limit access to the cities of *Arish* and *Rafah*, limiting access to individuals and specific organizations such as the Red Crescent. As for individuals, movement is flexible for those working with the Red Crescent and the Organi Group, while time- and area-specific crossing permits are granted to the rest of the individuals working or volunteering, most of whom represent other relief organizations.

As for the trucks, the Egyptian government follows the same security policy that led to the monopolizing of the transportation of aid to the Rafah crossing through one company, the Organi Group, forcing everyone, including UN agencies, to engage with them. This has led to the extortion of large amounts of money as a result of the restricting of transportation services to one company, unlike the situation at the beginning of the genocidal campaign in which several companies were providing services, in some cases up to 66. This gives the impression that the goal was just to profit immensely, and to not provide assistance in the greater context of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.

The Refugee Platform in Egypt documented testimonies that the occupation army deliberately destroyed the aid, dumped it on the ground, slowed down its inspection, and stalled it for long periods, turning the area into an accumulation point for aid. Simultaneously, rendering the area an Israeli military zone from which many attacks on the Gaza Strip are launched from the Israeli occupation's side, while also contributing to the occupation of the border crossing between Egypt and Gaza.

The Impact of the Egyptian Government and Israeli Settlers Occupation on the Delivery of Relief Aid

Among the effects of the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the aggression was the emergence of other forms of aid delivery as a temporary alternative to the closure of the crossings and then the occupation of the Rafah crossing:

Airdrops as an Alternative to Crossing Trucks

Following the escalation of the crossing's crisis and the Israeli settler occupation's intransigence in preventing the entry of aid, and the failure of international organizations, bodies, and even countries to pressure the state of Israel to open the crossing for the transfer of relief supplies, some countries have resorted to the potential of airdrops as an alternative solution to deliver aid. According to researcher [Sajoud Awais](#), who specializes in Palestinian media and international law, the worsening famine crisis in northern Gaza as a result of the blockade has prompted the exploration of new ways to deliver humanitarian aid. The Kingdom of [Jordan](#) began these operations in February 2024, followed by several other countries [such as](#) Qatar, Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, France, [Spain](#), the United States, [and Germany](#).

Nevertheless, airdrops have presented significant challenges on both operational and technical fronts. On one occasion, [more](#) than 18 Palestinians died as a result of aid falling on them or [drowning](#) while trying to obtain it, and, in many cases, the coordinates of the airdrops were inaccurate, resulting in some shipments [falling](#) on Gaza envelope settlements.

Despite these risks, the quality of aid delivered by airplane was poor in terms of nutrition and quantity, compared to that arriving by truck. Air packages were usually insufficient to support one person, while trucked packages were sufficient for a family of at least five. In this context, air aid was characterized as 'lifesaving' while families needed more comprehensive supplies.

Technically, the volume and type of aid provided by airdrops was far less than that provided by trucks. To cover this shortfall, countries used another criterion to promote their relief work, counting airdrops by the number of meals rather than total weight. On March 2nd, the United States announced seven airdrops that provided more than 200,000 meals and 50,000 bottles of water.

These payload ranges from 3.2 tons to 10 tons, which is enough to feed about 4,000 people, while a single truck can carry at least 22 tons at a much lower cost. With 2.4 million people in the Gaza Strip in dire need of aid, airdrops are ineffective and appear to be little more than a propaganda tool.

Seaport as an Alternative to Airdrops

After international criticism of the limited quantity of humanitarian aid delivered by airdrop, and the Israeli settler occupation's obstruction of Rafah crossing, as well as other crossings, former American President Joe Biden [announced](#) on March 7th, 2024 the establishment of a seaport in Gaza, to be built by the American military within 60 days, through the participation of a thousand American soldiers and logistical support from the American base in Sardinia.

With the participation of more than 1,000 American soldiers and logistical support from the American base in Sardinia, the port was ready to receive the first humanitarian aid ship, loaded with 200 tons of food and water aid. Nevertheless, Israeli settlers' inspections, and security restrictions enacted on the permitted movement of relief organizations by the occupation's army,

created new challenges thereby affecting the distribution of aid. Additionally, the seaport faced technical challenges, and the collapse of the port led to the cessation of operations, according to the American military.

In the aftermath of the collapse, the [World Food Program \(WFP\)](#) moved to activate a land route connecting Jordan to the Gaza Strip, in an attempt to facilitate the delivery of aid. Nonetheless, this route faces many complications as well, starting with an arduous and logistically nonsensical pathway to traverse, as the distance between the King Hussein Bridge on the Jordanian border, the occupied Palestinian territories and state, and the Erez Crossing, Gaza's closest crossing with the Israeli border, is 125 kilometers total indirectly, while there is a direct border between Egypt and Gaza.

In addition to settler attacks on aid convoys, prolonged inspection times, and the deliberate changing of inspection locations, trucks are sometimes forced to be inspected in the Kerem Shalom area, resulting in a distance of 172 kilometers, so that they can re-enter through the northern Gaza crossings, leaving humanitarian organizations in a difficult situation that lacks rescue and relief options.

In April 2024, an airstrike by the occupation army targeted two cars carrying seven employees from the World Kitchen Organization, killing them all. The organization had directly coordinated with the occupation forces by providing them with their location, with the American seaport serving as its main supply point.

The Transfer of Aid Operations to Government Agencies

The recent ethnic cleansing project changed the procedures behind providing and collecting aid to Arab countries, with regard to supporting the Palestinian people. Previously, civil society organizations and NGOs were responsible for collecting aid and supervising its entry into Palestine and the government only played the role of coordinator. Presently, the process has undergone a significant change, with Arab governments forming alliances or establishing connections under their direct supervision to coordinate and organize aid collection operations.

Jordan did so through the Jordan Hashemite Charity Commission, the UAE launched the government-sponsored operations 'Al Fares Al Shahm 3' and 'Birds of Charity', involving the Interior and Defense Ministries, the Red Crescent, and charitable organizations, while Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait organized the humanitarian efforts. These governmental agencies left no room for the efforts of non-governmental organizations or individuals to provide aid.

In Egypt, the 'National Alliance for Civil Society Development Work' was the entity through which the Egyptian authorities decided to channel humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip; which was established on August 31st, 2023 by Presidential Decree No. 171 of 2023 regarding the establishment of the National Alliance for Civil Society Development Work. According to a source working within the Alliance, *"the idea of the Alliance became a unified government entity through which the efforts of Egyptian civil society can be organized in line with the plans of the Egyptian government and through an easier framework to move the security agencies in charge of civil society issues."*

According to an employee of one of the local Egyptian organizations participating in the Alliance, *"the process of coordinating the efforts of Egyptian civil society internally was done through coordination between individual organizations and the Social Solidarity Ministry, according to the conditions imposed by the law, as well as the decisions of the ministry and*

associated sovereign authorities. While in the process of sending aid abroad, such as in the case of previous wars in Gaza and humanitarian crises in African countries, such as the floods in Sudan, it was done through a coordination procedure with the Egyptian Red Crescent, and of course, based on the ministry's conditions, so that the National Alliance framework works as a model for unified process that is led by the political administration in Egypt, through security intermediaries who control the process of providing aid internally and externally, as well as through the resources of civil society organizations.”

Various sources that Refugee Platform in Egypt spoke with from Egyptian organizations working in the Alliance confirmed that all participating organizations were informed, since the beginning of the Israeli occupation's assault on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, that all relief support from Egyptian local organizations to Gaza will be provided only through the National Alliance. Furthermore, all organizations are obligated to work through the Alliance's instructions, whether by collecting donations or in the form of aid provided, and that any deviation from these instructions may cause risks to the organization.

The coalition's first convoy was sent to Gaza and arrived at the Rafah crossing on October 14th, and the coalition has launched a total of seven convoys during the past year of the genocidal campaign.

As far as international organizations are concerned, the process of coordination between organizations involved in sending aid through Egypt was done through a governmental procedure.

Humanitarian aid provided by governments seems to be governed by political arrangements, which negatively affects the capacity to meet the needs of the population; as these governments only implement what is consistent with their policies which prevents the main purpose of this aid in reaching beneficiaries sufficiently.

In contrast, other countries, such as Turkey and the European Union, tend to support the efforts of humanitarian organizations, resulting in more diverse forms of rapid assistance.

III: The Legal Status of Displaced Palestinians in Egypt

Overview: Agreements without implementation, designations without rights, documents without protection

Palestinians in Egypt have faced increasing difficulties for decades. Under the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Palestinians were treated as equal to Egyptians, including enjoying extensive rights to residence, employment, and access to public services. Since 1978, however, these privileges have been gradually eroded. As a result, Palestinians suffer from restricted access to government services, such as education and healthcare, as well as difficulties in renewing residency permits.

Although Egypt signed the Casablanca Protocol in 1965, which guarantees residency, work, and travel rights for Palestinians while maintaining their citizenship, these agreements have not been effectively implemented. As, practically speaking however, the provisions of these documents have not been implemented towards Palestinians. Egyptian policies towards Palestinians have gradually changed according to the political situation in the country, which has led to the curtailment of their rights.

According to a 2015 UNHCR report, approximately 70,021 Palestinians lived in Egypt, distributed in areas such as Cairo, Ismailia, El Arish, Port Said, and Rafah. The UNRWA has no legal mandate to register or document Palestinian refugees, which also raises the question of how many Palestinians in Egypt now have different legal statuses, determined by the type of documents they hold. Despite the long history of Palestinians in Egypt since 1948, fluctuating policies towards them have made their lives unstable, greatly affecting their basic rights to residence, work, and migration.

Palestinian citizenship is not on the list of nationalities benefiting from UNHCR's registration processes in Egypt, while the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) does not carry out registration processes for Palestinians in Egypt.

This shifting response to legal status determination has denied Palestinians in Egypt access to international bodies that can advocate for their needs and rights.

In general, regional and international agreements such as the Casablanca Protocol and the UN Refugee Convention have failed Palestinians in Egypt by not guaranteeing their human rights at home, on their land, and abroad, in other nations. Despite international pressure, the circumstances have not improved significantly, reflecting an erosion of legal support for Palestinians in the diaspora. Egyptian laws and regulations have reduced the status of Palestinians and resulted in treating them like foreigners, but with greater security restrictions, including requiring security approval for every legal action related to them, their migration, studies, or renting real estate.

As far as confronting the Palestinian issue from a legal and legislative standpoint, the Egyptian state has adopted an approach that focuses on issuing temporary ministerial decisions to regulate the presence and work of Palestinians in Egypt, rather than enacting laws that guarantee them permanent rights. Although some decrees have granted Palestinians limited privileges, such as temporary residency and the right to work under certain conditions, these privileges remain subject to ministerial decrees that can be easily amended or revoked at any time, leaving Palestinians in a state of legal vulnerability. This policy reveals the government's tendency to avoid committing to binding legislation that guarantees Palestinians immutable rights, reflecting their unwillingness to provide a legal framework that protects Palestinians on a sustainable basis.

Instead of adopting laws that guarantee Palestinians legal protection and basic rights, the government prefers to rely on ministerial decisions that can be changed at any moment. This policy places Palestinians in a precarious legal situation, depriving them of any future guarantees and making them vulnerable to fluctuating political trends. This policy places Palestinians in a precarious legal situation, depriving them of any future guarantees and making them vulnerable to fluctuating political trends, reflecting the state's lack of a clear vision for protecting their rights or securing their status in Egypt.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has traditionally taken care of Palestinian refugees, but only has a small liaison office in Cairo therefore limiting their operational capabilities there. Egypt prides itself on not setting up refugee camps. Egyptian authorities prefer to integrate them into the local community, allowing them to benefit from the rights and responsibilities of a citizen, but in reality this is not the case. The first step in integrating people into a new society is determining their legal status, followed by the legal protection of basic rights.

Consequently, Palestinians have faced significant challenges throughout their time in Egypt in obtaining and regularly renewing their residency permits, whether they hold Palestinian citizenship, a Palestinian refugee document, or a Jordanian document. Additionally, they face great difficulties in obtaining the necessary documents as well as high fees for processes related to documentation. When it comes to traveling, severe restrictions are imposed on them, which in turn exposes them to a higher risk of losing the right to return to Egypt if they exceed six months outside of the country without a return visa.

In terms of employment, Palestinians are not allowed to work in the public sector, while obtaining work permits in the private sector requires complex bureaucratic procedures that include security clearance, making employers reluctant to hire them. They also face challenges when investing in Egypt, as an Egyptian partner is required. As for marrying an Egyptian, they are only granted residency rights with no additional rights such as naturalization or access to certain government privileges.

Palestinians coming from Syria, that are holders of Syrian documents, face double discrimination, as the UNRWA does not provide them with support as their activities' jurisdiction is limited to five specific regions: Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria; and UNHCR does not accept their registration on the grounds that registration, protection, and support services are provided to Syrians only. Meaning that, Palestinians do not have their status, or legal status, which makes them, in a legal situation, void of any protection, neither from the point of view of their country of origin or from the point of view of their country of foreign citizenship. The Refugee Platform in Egypt has documented the Egyptian authorities' refusal to issue residency permits for them, as the UN agencies are not in charge of this, as Palestinians fall under a legal status through which they cannot be considered as beneficiaries of the services of these organizations. Hence, they are denied all services, including education, healthcare, and obtaining identification documents.

Additionally, the Egyptian government grants them temporary residency permits for short periods of time, without equal access to health and education services unlike Syrian refugees.

Although Palestinians meet the requirements for permanent residency, security authorities refuse to grant them residency, leaving them without any legal defense, recourse, or international protection. In some cases, the authorities carry out campaigns to forcibly deport them to Syria, thereby adding to their suffering as well as endangering their lives.

These policies highlight the legal and bureaucratic obstacles that Palestinians face throughout their time in Egypt, as a group that lacks legal protection, making their lives vulnerable to exploitation and great risk in the absence of any concrete solutions or international protection.

Movement Through the Crossing Before October 7th

Over the past several years, the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip has witnessed constant fluctuations in crossing traffic, as the political and security situation controlled the opening and closing of the crossing. Rafah is the only crossing not controlled by the state of Israel, but the crossing is not operated regularly, due to tensions between the Egyptian authorities and the Hamas movement that governs the Gaza Strip. During this period, the crossing was opened sporadically and for humanitarian reasons or special coordination, resulting in very limited movement between Gaza and Egypt, with only a small number of patients, students, and foreign residency holders allowed to cross.

For four years, the Refugee Platform has monitored the increased suffering of Gaza's residents, who rely on the Rafah Crossing as the only access point to the outside world. With each opening, thousands of applications to cross piled up, creating long queues and enormous psychological and physical burdens on Palestinians. Despite some partial improvement after the Egyptian revolution, the crossing remained haphazardly managed until just before October 7th, 2023, when migration was again affected by Israel's genocidal campaign against the Gaza Strip.

This situation is contrary to international laws and Arab protocols signed by Egypt that guarantee the right of Palestinians to move freely, and puts Palestinians under great pressure that prevents them from moving easily for urgent reasons, such as medical treatment and education.

Fleeing From Annihilation to a Complex Legal Situation Created by the Decisions of the Egyptian Authorities that Increase Challenges and Create Endless Concerns

In December 2023, two months after the start of Israel's genocidal campaign against the Gaza Strip, the Refugee Platform in Egypt issued a joint statement with Egyptian human rights organizations calling on the authorities to move quickly to decide on the legal status and permits of Palestinians evacuated through the security coordination procedure, as all those who evacuated to Egypt after October 7th without being issued residency permits, since the legal residency period associated with evacuation is no more than one month or 45 days at most; thereby making their legal claim to personhood and status in accessing government resources such as education, health, and social services unrecognized.

According to the Refugee Platform in Egypt, Egyptian authorities have argued that allowing Palestinians to obtain legal residency could lead to their 'settlement' in Egypt, which the authorities believe contradicts the principle of the 'right of return for Palestinians to their occupied state. Nevertheless, human rights organizations reject this claim and assert that the Egyptian constitution, and international conventions to which Egypt is a signatory, oblige to establish, even temporarily, a legal status that enables people to obtain legal protection and access to basic services as well as rights for all persons on their territory. This includes recently displaced Palestinians and former Palestinian residents, regardless of the form of official documentation they hold.

Moreover, the global solidarity movement for the Palestinian cause is led by many members of Palestinian communities with dual citizenship, who advocate for their and their parents' right to return to Palestine. This movement does not call for the resettlement of Palestinians in the countries in which they temporarily reside, but rather emphasizes return as a fundamental and inalienable right. Thus, granting Palestinians in Egypt basic rights does not in any way imply a waiver of their right to return, but rather implements a humanitarian and legal necessity imposed by international conventions.

This 'illegal' status inflicted by the Egyptian authorities on Palestinians removes their legal protection and exposes them to the risk of forced deportation as well as deportation decisions without the right to defense. The Refugee Platform documented the attempt of a Palestinian document holder to renew a residence permit through the Interior Ministry, only to be surprised that the response was a decision to deport him from the country.

In their joint statement, the organizations demanded that people be exempted from fines due to the 'illegal' situation imposed by the Egyptian authorities, who refuse to renew residence permits. Nonetheless, neither the Egyptian authorities nor the Interior Ministry issued any

exemption decisions, nor did they issue a decision to protect Palestinian people from the placing of their names on lists of those prohibited from entering the country due to this human rights violation that they were coerced into committing by the authorities protocol. This puts Palestinians at risk of ‘perpetrating’ official violations that force them to pay financial penalties, as documented by the Refugee Platform in Egypt. This is what the Refugee Platform in Egypt has documented with Palestinians who hold residency in other countries, as this also puts people in a position of financial penalty for a crime they did not execute.

IV: Displaced Palestinian Students in Egypt

The costs associated with coordination services vary depending on the situation and the time the request is submitted.

Before the aggression began:

The coordination cost ranged between **\$350** and **\$1,200**.

October 2023:

The coordination cost reached approximately **\$3,000** per person.

November 2023:

The coordination cost reached approximately **\$3,500** per person.

With the ongoing humanitarian crisis:

The cost exceeded **\$4,000** per person in December 2023.

Before the crossing was closed:

The cost reached **\$5,000** for adults and **\$2,500** for those under 16 years old.

In some cases, the coordination cost reached over \$8,000 per person.

According to *Mada Masr's* report ‘What Educational Future for Palestinians in Egypt?’, approximately 100,000 Palestinians arrived in Egypt after the recent aggression, including about 21,000 students, 15,000 of whom are in basic education. These students face significant challenges in enrolling throughout various educational stages due to the absence of a legal framework that regulates the status of displaced Palestinians in general and students in particular. Due to the lack of clarity on this legal status, Palestinian students are subject to foreigners' treatment laws, which impose very high tuition fees as university tuition fees range between 3,000 and 3,500 American dollars per year, even after applying some partial exemptions of up to 50%.

In the absence of official support from either international bodies or the Egyptian government, Palestinians remain outside the legal framework for direct assistance, as they are not registered as refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and there is no UNRWA representation in Egypt. As a result, Palestinians are treated as foreigners and rely heavily on donations and grants to cover academic expenses. This precarious situation exacerbates the financial burdens on Palestinian families and negatively impacts the educational opportunities available to their children.

To avoid Palestinian students in Egypt being held back for a full school year, Palestinian officials sought to provide online education, especially for basic education students. High school exams were also organized in Egypt through the cooperation of the Palestinian Embassy and the

Egyptian Education Ministry. Nevertheless, challenges remain consistent for the future of these students, given the uncertainty of the circumstances in Gaza.

Last December, Al-Azhar University announced full scholarships for the 519 Palestinian students enrolled there. Despite this initiative, thousands of Palestinian families still face enormous financial pressures, with many students struggling as they accumulate debts while their sources of income are disrupted by the occupation's aggression. The Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education did not provide any special exemptions or grants for Palestinians, but they did approve the Palestinian Embassy's request to postpone the payment of installments for students coming from the Gaza Strip.

V: Criminalizing Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Since the beginning of the occupation's assaults on the Gaza Strip, while Egyptian citizens have been outraged by the Israeli settlers' aggression on the Gaza Strip, there have been voices of opposition against the Egyptian authorities' responses at the diplomatic level as well as the lack of support for the people of the Gaza Strip; with the Egyptian authorities continuously suppressing any form of expression of opinion, especially with regard to dissident views of the lackluster response from the Egyptian government.

Various forms of expression of opinion and solidarity with the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and those displaced to Egypt were launched, including demonstrations, the publishing of articles, social media posts, signature campaigns, popular mobilization to the Rafah crossing, and the organization of various solidarity and support groups in Egypt.

In the Face of Demonstrations

The first and largest protest against the Israeli settlers' invasion of the Gaza Strip was the demonstration at Al-Azhar Mosque on October 20th, 2023. The Egyptian authorities dealt with this demonstration very violently after the protest reached Tahrir Square. 67 protesters were arrested in the vicinity of the square, and on the same day, 21 protesters from Alexandria were arrested. Afterward, Egypt witnessed a series of small vigils in front of the Journalists' Syndicate, which were usually limited to journalists, political and human rights activists, as well as members of political parties.

According to data from the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, they reported the arrest of 152 people in several governorates. Of these, some were released without investigation by the interior forces, and others were released by the public prosecution with or without financial bail, while 83 people are still being held in pretrial detention since October 2023 until now; in addition to 6 others who have forcibly disappeared.

In the Face of Other Forms of Solidarity

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) documented 12 arrests, deportations, and prosecutions related to solidarity with Palestine in their report 'One Year After the Genocidal Campaign in Gaza: A Year of Suppressing Solidarity with the Palestinian Cause'. In this report, EIPR examined how the Egyptian authorities suppressed forms of solidarity with the Palestinian cause, whether through vigils and protest marches, while also arresting those who held signs in the streets or expressed their solidarity through social media.

According to interviews conducted by a team of researchers from the Refugee Platform in Egypt, the arrest of 135 people in more than 8 different cases was documented during the period of

October 2023 to June 2024. The main reason for the arrests of these people was due to their declaration of solidarity with the Palestinian people in various forms.

These individuals participated in various solidarity activities, such as peaceful demonstrations, posting on social media, writing on walls, raising the Palestinian flag on bridges, and collecting donations for affected families. According to lawyers defending these detainees, the prosecution initially charged them with joining terrorist groups, spreading false news, demonstrating without notice, gathering with intent to organize, and, in cases related to fundraising, the charge of obtaining foreign funding was added.

Although the numbers of those arrested could be monitored at first, the SSSP changed its approach and began transferring detainees in other cases not directly related to their solidarity with the Palestinian people. This included filing charges in cases based on the security classification of detainees by the National Security Agency. For example, people were arrested for their solidarity with Palestine, but were surprised when they were charged with joining terrorist organizations, a charge that had nothing to do with their solidarity activity.

In one fundraising case, individuals were arrested and categorized as belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood by security services in the past, even though their recent activities were related to supporting Palestine. In another case (No. 1567 of 2024), Egyptian police arrested a group of female journalists, lawyers, and activists in front of the UN Women's Regional Office in Cairo while they were organizing a protest against the assault on Gaza and violations against Sudanese women. The participants had intended to submit a memorandum denouncing violence against women to the UN, but were beaten and sexually harassed during their arrest and detention. These violations were not investigated by the Public Prosecution despite a complaint filed by them demanding an investigation. Instead, the demonstrators were charged with establishing and joining an unspecified group and gathering without a permit. They were released two days later on financial bail following a broadcasting media and international campaign calling for their immediate release. Additionally, according to interviews conducted by the researchers, some Egyptian governorates and cities witnessed security attacks targeting the homes of activists, including the destruction of their homes and threats to stay away from any movement in solidarity with Palestine.

According to what was documented through interviews with lawyers defending detainees in these cases, during the arrests and detentions of Palestinian solidarity activists, the police and security services do not provide clear reasons for the arrests or detentions, nor is 'permission for relevant prosecution' provided, which is a clear violation of Article 54 of the Egyptian Constitution that states no one may be arrested or detained without a reasoned judicial order.

Additionally, some individuals accused of solidarity with Palestine are detained in undisclosed places of detention for periods ranging from days to weeks, without being allowed to communicate with their lawyers or families. For example, students Mazen Draz and Ziad Bassiouni were arrested as part of Palestine solidarity cases, detained at an undisclosed location, and interrogated without authorities notifying their families or allowing them to communicate with their lawyers. This is in clear violation of the Egyptian constitution, which guarantees the right of the accused to communicate with their lawyer according to Article 98 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Amnesty International has documented such violations, stressing that preventing detainees from communicating with their lawyers hinders their ability to properly prepare their defense, which is

a violation of the right to a fair trial. The organization also noted that pretrial detention is being used excessively as it is constantly renewed without the detainees being brought to trial, which contradicts Article 143 of the Code of Criminal Procedure that guarantees the right of defendants to a speedy trial.

Regarding security procedures, police used extreme violence during arrests of protesters, such as what happened with the aforementioned group of women who went to the UN Women headquarters to protest the double standards in dealing with women's issues in Sudan and Palestine. The protesters were physically assaulted by the police and harassed by soldiers and officers during arrest on the street and inside the detention facility.

How the Investigative Authority, specifically the Public Prosecution, Deals with Detainees in Cases of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

According to the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, the security services of the Interior Ministry arrested 152 people, 17 of whom were released without charges. All while the prosecution investigated 129 people, and the State Security Prosecution charged all those arrested with belonging to a prohibited group, while some of them were charged with protesting and gathering without a permit, and some of them were charged with spreading false news.

Over the course of the past year of aggression, the prosecution has released 40 people and ordered the renewal of the detention of 83 people so far in cases 2468 of 2023 and 2463 of 2023, both state security cases on vague charges such as ‘spreading false news or ‘joining an undisclosed group’ without providing clear evidence or rationale. These practices contradict international human rights standards, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which includes, in its Article 9, the right to personal liberty and freedom from arbitrary arrest, and, in its Article 19, guarantees freedom of expression and peaceful protest.

The state employs anti-terrorism laws, such as Law No. 94 of 2015, extensively when dealing with issues of solidarity with Palestine. These laws are used to impose harsh penalties on individuals whose actions supposedly fall under freedom of expression, such as protesting or posting online. Prosecution investigations often focus on the use of social media to express solidarity with Palestine, linking such activities to charges such as spreading false news or harming national security. Laws such as the Cybercrime Law, No. 175 of 2018, are used to monitor and control digital expression in ways that go beyond internationally recognized legal protections.

The handling of Palestine solidarity cases in Egypt is characterized by fair trial violations during the arrest and investigation phases. Investigative authorities are taking harsh legal measures based mainly on anti-terrorism and cybercrime laws, leading to the harassment of individuals who express their views on social media or participate in peaceful demonstrations.

VI: Report Results

This document concludes with a set of points related to the five elements of the report, as follows:

Firstly, the passage of the wounded and injured is carried out through a strict coordination procedure between the Ministry of Health in Gaza and the Egyptian authorities, in addition to the Israeli settler occupation’s approval of their names. The time for crossing the wounded depends heavily on bureaucratic procedures, and the coordination process takes extensive periods of time.

This procedure poses a grave risk to the lives of the chronically ill and wounded, especially those who need urgent treatment and are suffering from serious illnesses such as cancer.

As for the passage of individuals, this procedure requires security coordination through the Hala Travel Company whose profits have inflated at the expense of the dire conditions of Palestinians, as the price of individual crossing has increased from \$350 American dollars before the start of the genocidal campaign to about \$8,000 American dollars per person currently. The process of evacuating Egyptian citizens was also characterized by confusion and a lack of clarity on the Egyptian government's plan to evacuate them, to the point where an Egyptian citizen published an SOS on the first anniversary of the genocidal campaign in which he said he was still trapped in the Gaza Strip.

Secondly, Egypt's borders with Gaza from the beginning of the ethnic cleansing project to the expansion of Israeli settler occupation:

The Egyptian authorities' efforts focused on managing the entry of aid through certain companies that manage the coordination process, and Hala is one of the most prominent of these companies. According to what the Refugees in Egypt Platform monitored, instead of using the Rafah crossing to facilitate the entry of forcibly displaced people, the Egyptian authorities imposed a series of security, financial, and administrative obstacles that hindered the movement of entry and exit, which in turn made it more difficult for the necessary aid to reach the Gaza Strip. This resulted in the aid's accumulation in front of the Rafah crossing for lengthy periods, and hindered the exit of displaced people seeking asylum, which exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and increased the suffering of those affected.

As far as the medical situation is concerned, the Egyptian Medical Syndicate has not sent any medical relief teams to the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the genocidal campaign, and for the first time, requirements were introduced for the process of coordinating the crossing of medical staff stipulating that medical staff must hold a citizenship other than Egyptian, and they are only allowed to enter if they hold dual citizenship. Afterwards, an order was issued in April 2024 to ban the entry of any doctor of Palestinian origin, even if they hold dual citizenship. In October 2024, the newly-introduced bans and restriction protocols expanded to include most aid organizations based on the sending of delegations who are in cooperation with the United Nations organizations, except for five organizations most of which are American.

As for journalists, the Israeli settler occupation prevented foreign media from entering Gaza, and in the case of journalists entering with the occupation's army, published materials are subject to Israeli settler approval first. On the Egyptian side, the *Press Center* of the State Information Service did not officially respond to the requests from some foreign journalists to enter Gaza through Egypt.

As for the entry of aid, the Israeli settlers' army deliberately obstructed the entry of aid, targeted relief teams, and completely restricted relief entry after their occupation of the Rafah crossing. It should be noted that Egyptian authorities responded to Israeli settlers' requests regarding the entry and inspection of trucks, and were responsive to Israeli settlers' requirements regarding the exit of the wounded and injured.

The Egyptian authorities also limited the transportation of aid through the Rafah crossing to the Organi Group, forcing everyone, including UN agencies, to engage with them. This led to

profiting large amounts of money as a result of restricting transportation services to one company, unlike the circumstances at the beginning of the genocidal campaign when several companies were providing services, in some cases up to 66. This gave the impression that the goal was to capitalize off of, and not to provide assistance in the context of, the genocidal campaign.

These obstacles led to the introduction of other alternatives for the delivery of aid, including airdrops, which caused Palestinians to lose their lives either by packages falling on them or drowning in the sea while trying to reach the packages that fell into the sea, as well as aid falling into Israeli settlements. The cost of the airdrop alternatives was also enormous compared to aid entering by land, and quantities were much smaller than a single truck can carry compared to an airdrop.

The American seaport also failed to withstand the waves of the sea, operating for only a few days. In conjunction with these conditions, relief operations in Arab countries shifted to the government sector only, eliminating the role of civil society organizations, where aid became subject to political arrangements dictated by the government's sending of aid.

Thirdly: Regarding the Legal Status of Displaced Palestinians in Egypt

Palestinian citizenship is not included on the list of nationalities benefiting from the registration processes carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Egypt, while the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) does not carry out registration processes for Palestinians in Egypt. This wavering response at the level of determining legal status has denied Palestinians in Egypt access to international bodies that can advocate for their needs and rights.

The Egyptian state has adopted an approach that focuses on issuing temporary ministerial decrees to regulate the presence and work of Palestinians in Egypt, rather than enacting laws that guarantee them permanent rights, leaving Palestinians in a state of legal vulnerability.

After the start of the assaults on the Gaza Strip, the Refugee Platform in Egypt issued a joint statement with Egyptian human rights organizations demanding that the authorities move quickly to decide on the legal status and permits of Palestinians evacuated through the security coordination process, but the Egyptian authorities did nothing but reiterate their position that allowing Palestinians to obtain legal residency may lead to their 'settlement' in Egypt; as the authorities believe this is contrary to the principle of the 'right of return' for Palestinians to their occupied state, resulting in an 'illegal' status inflicted by the Egyptian authorities on Palestinians that deny them legal protection and expose them to more dangerous conditions.

Fourthly: The Circumstances of Palestinian Students Displaced to Egypt

Palestinians in Egypt face significant challenges in accessing various stages of education, as a result of their lack of clear legal status compared to refugees of other citizenships. This legal status has prevented them from obtaining financial support or exemptions usually granted to refugees by civil society organizations, especially within the field of education. They are required to pay high tuition fees at schools and universities, which complicates their access to public education. Many Palestinians also have to resort to private universities, but their cost is exorbitant and beyond the means of many Palestinian families.

Despite these circumstances, the Ministry of Higher Education, like Al-Azhar University, did not offer any special exemptions or grants to Palestinian students. Instead, the ministry approved a request from the Palestinian Embassy to postpone the payment of university fee installments for students coming from the Gaza Strip.

Fifthly: Egyptian Authorities' Criminalization of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

The Egyptian authorities dealt very violently with demonstrations denouncing the aggression against the Gaza Strip, whether demonstrations were large-scale, a sit-in on the stairs of the Journalists Syndicate, or a small group of women denouncing what is happening in Palestine and Sudan. These arrests in the streets were accompanied by police brutality and the sexual harassment of women, as well as the destruction of the organizers' homes, should their unlawful arrests taking place at the organizers' homes, as well as the forced disappearance of some detainees. These 6 detainees have not been seen or located since the October 20th, 2023 demonstration.

Furthermore, Egyptian authorities arrested 152 citizens for their solidarity with the Palestinian people. Initially, the Egyptian prosecution charged the detainees with false charges of joining terrorist groups, spreading false news, demonstrating without notice, gathering with the intent to organize, and, in cases related to fundraising, the charge of obtaining foreign funding was later added. Afterwards, the prosecution began charging detainees in other cases that were not related to any direct charges involved in their solidarity with the Palestinian people, as well as filed charges for cases based on the security classification of the detainees by the National Security Agency (NSA).