

Gaza Strip

Mapping Movement and Access

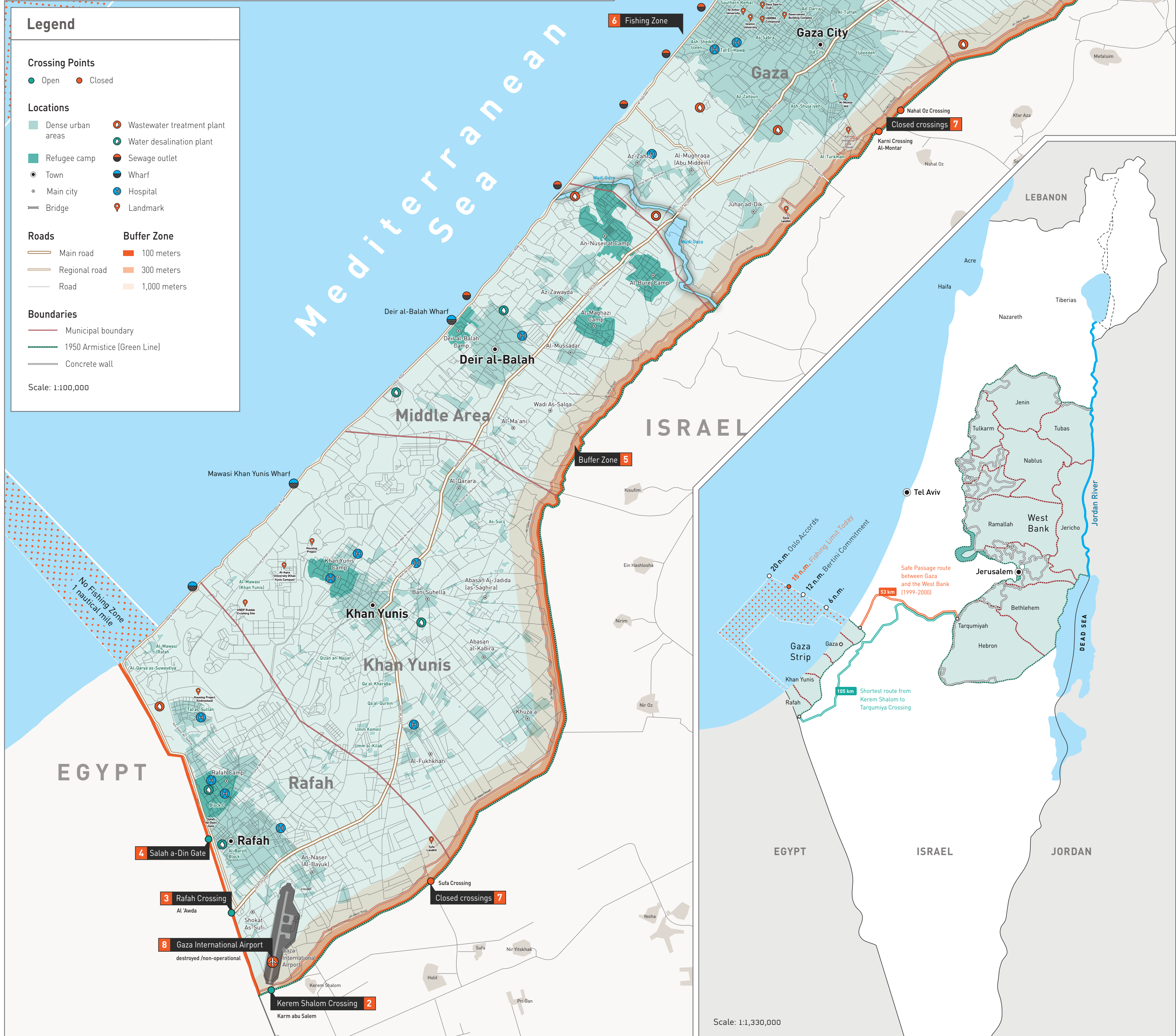
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What is known today as the Gaza Strip, originally a region in Mandatory Palestine, was created through the armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt in 1949. From that time until 1967, the Strip was under Egyptian control, cut off from Israel as well as the West Bank, which was under Jordanian rule. In 1967, the connection was renewed when both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel. The 1993 Oslo Accords define Gaza and the West Bank as a single territorial unit within which freedom of movement would be permitted. However, starting in the early 90s, Israel began a gradual process of closing off the Strip; since 2007, it has enforced a full closure, forbidding exit and entry except in rare cases. Israel continues to control many aspects of life in Gaza, most of its land crossings, its territorial waters and airspace.

Width 5.7-12.5 km / 3.5 – 7.7 mi
Length ~40 km / 24.8 mi
Area 365 km² / 141 m²
Population 1,943,398 • 48% Under age 17 July 2019
Unemployment rate 47% 2019 Q2
Percentage of population receiving aid 80%
Population density 5,453 per km² July 2019



1 Erez Crossing

The crossing, for pedestrians, is Gaza's only access point to Israel and the West Bank, and, particularly when Rafah Crossing is closed, also to the outside world. In 1991, Israel canceled the "General Exit Permit" and began requiring Palestinian residents to obtain individual permits to cross Erez. Since 1993, enforcement of travel restrictions has become more strict and the criteria for receiving permits more narrow. Today permits are mostly given only in what Israel refers to as "exceptional humanitarian cases, with an emphasis on urgent medical cases." During the first half of 2019, travel through Erez Crossing was about 2% of the volume recorded there in early 2000.



2 Kerem Shalom Crossing

This is Gaza's only commercial crossing, through some goods enter the Strip from Egypt through Salah a-Din Gate. Kerem Shalom is located at the southernmost tip of the Gaza-Israel border and operates under full Israeli control. While Israel ostensibly retracted its policy of economic warfare (2007-2010), when many everyday items were blocked from entering the Strip, it continues to limit entry of a long list of items essential to industry, infrastructure and daily life, which it deems to be "dual-use." Due to ongoing restrictions on what goods can exit the Strip, especially to Gaza's primary markets in the West Bank and Israel, the volume of goods exiting the Strip through Kerem Shalom is only about 20% of what it was before the closure was tightened in 2007.



3 Rafah Crossing

Opened in 1982, Rafah is the only crossing for pedestrians between Gaza and Egypt. From late 2005 to mid-2007, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority operated the crossing under EU supervision, with indirect Israeli control. Following the Hamas takeover, the crossing was closed or operated sporadically for a number of years. From mid-2012 to mid-2013, the crossing operated regularly and some 40,000 items entered each month. From July 2013 to May 2018, it remained mostly closed. Pressure on Egypt to open it, generated by the Great March of Return protests and deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Gaza, led to the crossing being open five days per week, with a monthly average of 11,000 entries and exits recorded in the first half of 2019.



4 Salah a-Din Gate

The Salah a-Din Gate is located about four kilometers west of Rafah Crossing, and has been used for bringing goods into Gaza from Egypt since February 2018. On the Gaza side, the crossing is controlled by Hamas officials in terms of both security and civilian matters. No Palestinian Authority customs or government officials are present. From the time the crossing began operations until June 2019, an average of 714 trucks entered each month, compared to 8,962 trucks entering through Kerem Shalom Crossing over the same period of time. However, about 25% of the cement entering Gaza and 70% of the cooking gas enter via Salah a-Din Gate.



5 Access Restricted Areas (Buffer Zone)

Israel restricts access to an area within Gaza that runs along the perimeter fence separating it from Israel. Gisha's attempts to receive exact information about access restrictions in this area have yielded contradictory answers from Israeli authorities over the years. According to the most recent response, Gaza residents may approach up to 300 meters from the fence and farmers may approach up to 100 meters. Israel enforces restrictions aggressively, including through use of live fire. Since 2014, Israel has been spraying herbicides onto lands near the fence, causing damage to crops and financial losses for farmers.



6 Fishing Zone

According to the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement (1995), Gaza fishermen may sail to a distance of up to 20 nautical miles off the coast. In practice, however, Israel has not allowed access that far; in recent years, the fishing zone has ranged from three to nine nautical miles most of the time. In 2019, Israel allowed fishing as far as 15 nautical miles off a small stretch of Gaza's southern shore for the first time. Restrictions are routinely enforced using live fire at boats and fishermen, resulting in loss of life, injury and damage to equipment. The Gaza Strip does not have a seaport, despite agreement to build one under the Oslo Accords. In September 2001, Israel destroyed the planned site and has not given permission for a port to be built.



7 Closed crossings

Karni Crossing was built in 1994 and served as the main commercial crossing for the transfer of goods into and out of the Strip. In June 2007, after Hamas seized control of Gaza, Israel shut down the crossing, leaving only a conveyor belt used for transferring grains and animal feed, which remained operational until March 2011. Sufa Crossing was built in 1994 and was used to transport construction materials into Gaza. Israel closed it in 2008. Nahal Oz crossing, used to transport fuel, was shut down in early 2010.



8 Yasser Arafat International Airport

The airport, located on the southern edge of Rafah City, was inaugurated in late 1998. Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and US President Bill Clinton attended the inaugural ceremony. The airport was slated to serve 700,000 passengers each year. Israel put a halt to its operations in October 2000, after the start of the Second Intifada. In December 2001 and May 2002, Israel bombed the control tower and the runway. What remained was destroyed during Operation Cast Lead in 2009.

