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Gaza is Barely Holding Together

by ANERA President Bill Corcoran, excerpted from a post on fmep.org

The United Nations predicts that Gaza will be unlivable by 2020. The study estimates the population of 1.6 million will expand to more than two million, requiring a hefty increase in basic services. But, Gaza has barely recovered from the 2014 war, the third in five years.

Some 75,000 Palestinians are still homeless two years after the last war ended. Shelters have been built but not enough. Qatar financed a public housing project but that only added 1,000 units. The slow pace of reconstruction is due in large part to the lack of cement and building materials. Israel still imposes heavy restrictions on the entry of materials that could be considered dual purpose – for building tunnels. And, the cement that does get into Gaza is too costly for most families. One ton of cement that used to cost \$175 now costs \$475. For a while a successful alternative building material was wood, but that too has been added to the list of restricted items.

Today, Gazans suffer enormously from power shortages. Families get four hours or less of electricity a day but when it comes on is anyone's guess. That makes it hard to get enough water pumped up to the roof-top storage tanks, or to cook and clean and wash clothes. Most families live in high-rise apartment buildings, which means getting to and from home can often be a physical hardship.

ANERA News

The ANERA newsletter is published quarterly by American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), a non-profit agency established in 1968 and dedicated to providing development, health, education and employment programs to Palestinian communities and impoverished families throughout the Middle East.

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Editor: Liz Demarest

Contributing Writers:
Bill Corcoran, Liz Demarest,
Rania Elhilou & Laurie Kassman

Contributing Photographers:
Ron Coello, Nada Dajani, Rania Elhilou & Mohamed Zaanoun
By the Numbers Graphic: Mariele Ventrice

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ANERA
1111 14th Street NW, #400
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-266-9700
anera@anera.org • www.anera.org

COVER PHOTO: Hiyam sits in her makeshift kitchen in Beit Lahia. Limited access to cement coupled with high rates of unemployment have prevented many Gaza families like hers from rebuilding their homes.
Mohamed Zaanoun, photographer

Gaza is Barely Holding Together

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Families who do have a generator can usually only afford six hours of power because of the exorbitant price of fuel. Many families have reverted to battery-operated flashlights or candles. But candle light can be dangerous. Three children were killed this month in a fire caused by candles.

Without regular power supplies, getting clean water is a problem too. When it does arrive in the home, it's fit only for cleaning. That necessitates buying bottled water, which adds to a family's financial burdens. ANERA, for one, has been working on restoring bombed-out water lines and reconnecting water and sewage networks. Yet, after a year and a half, only one-third of the system has been repaired.

Gaza's healthcare system is suffering too. Hospitals and clinics are stretched beyond their capacity. Medicines are in short supply; health workers say about one-third of essential medicines needed for surgery are out of stock. Only about half of the supplies that once came from the West Bank are now entering into Gaza because of the ministry's financial shortfalls.



ANERA delivered blood bags to Gaza's central blood bank, where supplies were completely depleted. Even with 8,000 new bags, they won't be able to cope if another emergency arises.

Gazans are also suffering food shortages. Farmers still have not fully recovered lands that were destroyed when tanks uprooted fields and damaged wells. They can't afford expensive equipment to grade the land. Land restoration programs have helped revitalize some farms in the Khan Younis and Beit Hanoun areas but that amounts to only about 30 percent of the farms. Production is still low.

Farmers also have not been able to replenish their poultry and cows that were killed during the war. With borders and tunnels to Egypt closed down, cheap food and other products are absent from the market shelves. Most families now say they only eat meat two or three times a month.

One bright spot is the fishing industry, which appears to be functioning. There is more fish in the market at moderate prices so families can at least get some protein in their diet.

Another challenge to putting healthy food on the family dinner table is the soaring unemployment. Nearly half of Gaza's workforce is out of a job. With farms and factories damaged or destroyed, there's no work to be had. In the past, non-government organizations like ANERA and others could provide project work but the decrease in funding support has cut down on the number of programs in Gaza that could offer work opportunities.

Experts estimate it will take another 15 years to repair and restore Gaza to its prewar conditions. Forecasts for the future are clouded by despair and frustration. As foreign funding diminishes, fears grow that Gaza will unravel. "De-development" is the catchword. As much as we can do to help, foreign assistance is only just holding Gaza together but nobody knows for how long.

Yes, the United Nations has predicted that Gaza will be unlivable by 2020. But they are wrong. It is unlivable right now.

ANERA Donors Respond to #SendRelief Campaign in May

By the Numbers

455 donors

4 shipping containers

Medicines to restock
200 hospitals/clinics



14,400
baby care kits

25,536
hygiene kits



10,752
school kits

Reverend Rosemarie Carnarius passed away in October 2015 at the age of 76, but her belief in peace and justice lives on, thanks to a generous bequest and her designation that friends and family offer condolences by donating to ANERA in her memory.

Her life partner Aston Bloom says they were both impressed with the sustainable assistance ANERA offers to Palestinians and they have been regular donors to ANERA since 2006. "She wanted to see a resolution to the enormous injustices Palestinians struggle with," says Ms. Bloom. But it was not to be.

Throughout her life, Rosemarie remained committed to human rights, self-determination and peace with justice. She was active in the Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East and started a dialogue group after 9/11 that focused on the tragic conditions in the Middle East. Rosemarie was a prolific writer of poetry, essays, sermons and non-fiction. One of her recent books, "The Ultimate Choice: Armageddon or Awakening," highlights the Palestinian situation.

Rosemarie was born in East Germany and lived through the brutalities of World War II and the ensuing Soviet occupation. She fled West Germany at 17 to escape detention because of her political action against communism. Three years later, she came to America, having married an American serviceman.



Rosemarie Carnarius

"We can make no more serious mistake than to delude ourselves into thinking that Palestine/Israel is a far-off place that does not affect our lives," wrote Rosemarie. "This is the central issue of our world, our time – an issue that will determine the future... How we deal with it will shape the fate of our world."

Legacy of Commitment to Palestinians

Our Community



Three Innovative Programs

The 2016 Annual Dinner on October 7 is raising funds to support innovative programs that grow out of ANERA's deep connections in Palestinian and Lebanese communities. The programs below come from creative ideas that ANERA's staff developed to help people address critical needs.

SOLAR COOKERS IN GAZA: Fuel and electricity shortages are a daily problem in Gaza. Most families have access to electricity for about 6 hours a day and can't afford to buy fuel for cooking or running generators. Using locally sourced and inexpensive materials, ANERA is building cookers that run on solar power. Families just set them up in a sunny place – not a hard thing to do in Gaza – put their food inside, and after a couple hours a tasty, cooked meal emerges (like the one pictured top left).

WASTE WATER REUSE IN THE WEST BANK: In the arid West Bank where water is a precious and scarce resource, farmers struggle to find the means to irrigate their fields. A first-of-its-kind, ANERA-built facility near Jenin processes and cleans waste water that otherwise would be discarded and uses it for irrigating fodder and orchard fields. Participating farmers (like Odai, pictured in front of his harvested, dried alfalfa) are able to significantly improve their crop yields and family incomes.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN LEBANON: Half of the refugees from Syria in Lebanon are under 18. Schools struggle to accommodate them and most young people feel they must work to support their families. ANERA is providing remedial education courses (pictured bottom right) and job skills workshops designed to appeal to adolescents who are unable to go to school. Short, intensive and interactive courses are run at times when it is most convenient for the youths to attend.



National Standards for Palestine Preschools

With expertise and a long-term vision, ANERA has been supporting the construction of a preschool curriculum framework that prepares Palestine's youngest children for a better future. In the past six years alone, the ANERA early childhood development (ECD) team has reached 30,000 children with innovative learning techniques, helped rehabilitate and rebuild 165 kindergartens, and trained more than 600 teachers.

On May 15, 2016, the Ministry of Education held a launch to recognize the culmination of ANERA's efforts to co-draft the national guidelines for a preschool curriculum.

The first-ever national framework for preschool education evolved through many months of intensive work, meetings, field visits and work sessions. It was a joint effort including the Ministry of Education, ANERA, and other well-respected international and local organizations. Preschool supervisors, who have a vested interest in the program's success, also actively participated.

ANERA engaged former board member Dr. Ilham Nasser, associate professor in the early childhood education program at George Mason University, to develop the framework. As a consultant to the ministry, Dr. Nasser led the national work team through the entire process. At the May 15 ceremony, she proudly held the framework document and underscored its significance for Palestinian children:

"A national framework is an investment in a better economic, cultural and social future...It's an educational roadmap with a clear path toward a safe and constructive preschool experience. But we need to move quickly to implement the plan to better serve young Palestinians."

ANERA's ECD program is built on a comprehensive and holistic vision to provide the best learning environment for children in safe and colorful settings featuring child-appropriate learning materials and furnishings, sanitary facilities and playgrounds.



Dr. Nasser speaks about the framework at the May 15 event.

In July, 50 teachers from Jericho and Ramallah will join 32 of their Gaza peers in completing ANERA's in-service teacher training program. One thing teachers learn is how to use drama, art and music to enhance learning. The pictured teachers are making their own music with the instruments the children use. | A proper learning environment is also an essential part of ANERA's ECD work. ANERA has already renovated 165 preschools, like Karameesh Al Salam in Zarqa, Gaza (pictured). In the next few months, ANERA will complete 20 renovations and build two new schools.



tending **ROOTS**, bearing **FRUIT**



2016
ANNUAL DINNER

You don't want to miss this year's Annual Dinner: a **new concept** that features **more time to mingle** with friends, lounge seating, live music, Middle Eastern food, and a **5-sense experience of Palestine and Lebanon**.

ANERA ANNUAL DINNER

Friday, October 7, 2016 in Washington, DC

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Your support will make them blossom.

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American Near East Refugee Aid
1111 14th Street NW, #400
Washington, DC 20005

Gaza is Barely Holding Together

ANERA News

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Dear Friend:

This issue of ANERA News opens with an op-ed I recently wrote after a visit to Gaza, where conditions are deplorable and people continue to suffer mightily as they face chronic unemployment and shortages of just about everything. Homes and businesses still lie in ruins, waiting to be rebuilt, and the borders remain sealed. ANERA's important work there offers some hope, but there is so much still to be done.

Looking ahead, I hope you'll plan to attend this year's Annual Dinner in support of those still in such dire need. The event – in Washington, DC on Friday, October 7 – will delight your senses as you experience a glimpse of Palestinian and Lebanese culture with like-minded ANERA supporters from around the world. Funds raised will support innovative programs, like those featured on pages four and five of this newsletter.

Gratefully,



ANERA President

