

Resistance to Israeli occupation can and must take many forms

Susan Abulhawa >>



- HOME
- NEWS
- ARTICLES
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- MEDIA REVIEW
- REPORTS
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Palestinians denied access to their natural gas fields

Wednesday, 02 April 2014 11:19

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Gazans have suffered for several years under an Israeli imposed siege which includes tight restrictions on border crossings. If the Palestinians are able to take advantage of their right to extract gas any of the discovered fields, this will create at least 20,000 jobs and solve Gaza's economic problems as well as years of frequent power cuts and fuel shortages.

Fourteen years ago, British Gas drilled the Gaza Marine-1 and Gaza Marine-2 wells, 30 kilometres off the coast of Gaza. The drilling led to the discovery of a massive natural gas field.

British prospectors have found a substantial field of natural gas, holding an estimated 1.5 trillion cubic feet, about 30 kilometres off the coast of Gaza

The gas fields were discovered in the era of the late leader Yasser Arafat, when British Gas was conducting geographical scanning of the Egyptian shores.

According to the agreement which was reached and signed between the contracting parties, there are three share holders in this project and British Gas has the exclusive right to gas extraction. The Palestinian Authorities share is only 12 per cent, in addition to 28 per cent tax revenues.

In 2011 Tel Aviv authorised the US-based Noble Energy, a crude oil and gas exploration giant, to begin developing the field. But the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) says the offshore field belongs to the Palestinians.

The untapped natural gas reserves in the Gaza Strip are considered one of the most important natural resources for a future Palestinian state (if the two-state solution is adopted), and essential for the state's development. However, the siege conditions in Gaza prevent the development of the gas fields and there is a risk that the Israeli exploratory drilling companies



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will drill the gas reserves in such a way that will appropriate some of Gaza's gas reserves.

International law forbids occupying entities from using, transferring or selling the natural resources of any occupied land. A report by the UN Economic and Social Council says Israel not only prevented Palestinians from accessing and utilising their natural resources, but also depleted and endangered them.

Experts say Israel will continue to tap into Gaza's natural gas reserves to meet its needs after supplies from Egypt were interrupted amid the unrest in the Sinai Peninsula following the ouster of late Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak.

Since the discovery of the gas fields, Israel has been imposing a media blackout on the matter. Palestinians say Tel Aviv's monopoly on Gaza's energy and natural resources violates international laws and norms.

The issue of sovereignty over Gaza's gas fields is crucial. From a legal standpoint, the gas reserves belong to Palestine. UN resolution 3005 affirmed the principle of sovereignty of the population of occupied territories over their natural wealth and resources.

Crude oil and natural gas sit in pockets in the onshore region of occupied Palestine. One of the wellheads that has been producing crude oil for Tel Aviv for some years sits off the northeast tip of the Gaza Strip and was once a Palestinian territory.

Analysts blame the international community for failing to protect the rights of Palestinians.

Since the beginning of the blockade in 2006, British Gas has been dealing with Israel. In turn, the Hamas government in Gaza has been bypassed in regards to exploration and development rights over the gas fields.

Israel has received the bulk of its natural gas supplies from Egypt in the past two decades but the supply was interrupted following the anti-government protests and the ouster of Mubarak. Now experts say Israel may plan to tap into Gaza's natural gas reserves to meet its needs.

Because of the Israeli blockade, Gaza's nearly two million people don't have enough cooking gas in the coastal enclave especially in winter.

Israel allows limited shipment of cooking gas into Gaza via the Karm Abu Salem crossing, Gaza's sole commercial crossing situated in the southern Gaza Strip near the Egyptian-Israeli border.

Gaza needs at least 250 tonnes of gas every day. The frequent drop of gas shipments coincides with daily power cuts that last for up to 12 hours.

Egypt's systematic crackdown on the tunnels further exacerbates the problem, with hardly any gas being brought in through the tunnels.

Some experts say that the Israeli naval blockade and restrictions imposed on fishing zones aim to prevent Palestinian fishing boats or journalists from coming close to the natural gas fields.

Last February, Palestinian Member of Parliament Dr Salem Salama, a member of the Economic Committee of the Palestinian Legislative Council, announced that the Palestinian government in the Gaza Strip has discovered a natural gas field off the coast of the central province about 200 to 300 metres away from the central province's beach, which means that the natural gas can be easily extracted.

The MP explained that the field was discovered by a number of Palestinian fishermen when they saw bubbles coming out from the water and thought they were the result of plants or fish moving. He pointed out that a number of navy personnel then took samples of the gas to the laboratories at the Islamic University where it was confirmed that the substance was natural gas.

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Salim Bardoli

Why israel need to do blocked of gaza?for what?their is a something out their.

Reply · Like · 27 July at 10:22



Ruth Tenne

You rightly note that "UN resolution 3005 affirmed the principle of sovereignty of the population of occupied territories over their natural wealth and resources". The only way forward, therefore, is to challenge Israel's violation of UN resolutions in the International Criminal Court (ICC) . That means that President Abbas should take a courageous step forward ad ratify the Rome Statue which will enable Palestine to lodge a case against Israel's constant violations of international and humanitarian law as well as solidifying the political and economical status of the fledgling Palestinian statehood. <http://www.redressonline.com/2014/03/the-way-ahead-taking-israel-to-the-icc/>

Ruth Tenne

Reply · Like · 3 · 3 April at 06:39



Greta Berlin · Top commenter

Israel has been busy stealing Gaza's gas for years.

Reply · Like · 3 · 2 April at 21:43



Joe Gelman · Top commenter

Why would Israel need to take a measly 1.5 trillion cubic feet of gas from Gaza waters when Israel itself has GIANT proven reserves of over 30 trillion cubic feet of natural gas right off its own coast in the Tamar and Leviathan fields? (none of which was mentioned in this article). Israel is now completely self sufficient in gas production and has enough to last it over 100 years!!! With the potential for much more to be found. They [the Israelis] certainly don't need the small gas reserves off the coast of Gaza, and they already have a larger GDP than all of the surrounding Arab countries combined even without their own huge gas reserves. Israel is beginning to export gas as well. Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians, the Turks and the EU are all looking to buy gas from Israel. So 1.5 trillion cubic feet of gas off of Gaze is not even on Israel's radar screen.... why are you inventing absolute nonsense to stir up hatred. The reason that the 1.5 trillion feet of gas off Gaza has not been developed is because an internationally recognized terrorist organization called Hamas had taken control of the Gaza strip from the PA. The EU, Israel, The USA and even Egypt all recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization, and thus will not allow funds from gas production off of Gaza go to a terrorist organization. It's that simple.

Reply · Like · 3 April at 09:52



Martin Twigmeister

Mmm, well the hatred has already been kinda stirred up by the actions of the terrorist state of Israel :-)

Reply · Like · 2 · 3 April at 11:31



Joe Gelman · Top commenter

Martin Twigmeister : NO, the hatred is generated by ignorant and blatantly untrue articles like this... which is targeted toward ignorant people who don't know any better... and repeated at nausea by people with a hate-filled agenda.

Reply · Like · 4 April at 08:13



Martin Twigmeister

An apartheid, terrorist state which uses chemical weapons against it's enemies, lies to the rest of the world about it's nuclear capabilities and is propped up and armed by the great US of A , oh bravo. There's nowt as one-eyed as a Israeli sympathizer. Here's to peace, love and justice :-)

Reply · Like · 4 · 4 April at 08:27

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**Ruth Tenne**

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