

# *Palestinians Protest Israeli Blockade in Gaza*

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Gaza City, May 9 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Palestinians have staged a demonstration in the Gaza Strip against the near decade-long Israeli blockade of the enclave. People took to the streets on Sunday to express their opposition to the nine-year-long siege of Gaza that has crippled its infrastructure.

The protesters were carrying photos of three children who died after their home in the al-Shati refugee camp was set alight by a candle. Gazans are mostly forced to use candles as constant power cuts leave them without electricity sometimes for some 18 hours a day.

The enclave's electricity was partially supplied by its single remaining power plant until last month when fuel shortages caused the plant's closure. The remainder of electricity is purchased from Israel and Egypt.

Reports blame fuel shortage on the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority's recent removal of fuel tax exemption, demanding that the Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement pay taxes on fuel imports to the coastal strip. Gazan energy authorities, however, say they cannot afford their tax bill, which adds up to some 10 million shekels (2.6 million dollars) a month.

Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standards of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty.

Israel has also waged three wars on Gaza since 2008, including the 2014 offensive, which left more than 2,200 Palestinians dead and over 11,100 others injured.

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