

# “Welcome to Gaza” – Banksy’s anti-Israel video



Banksy, a popular British street-artist, has just issued a new video attacking Israel’s more recent conduct in Gaza. The video, ostensibly presented as a promotional film to attract tourism to Gaza, heavily applies sarcasm from the outset, with statements concerning Gaza’s appeal as a tourist destination, that frame bracketed follow-on points intended to reveal Gaza’s supposed reality.

The video begins by recommending a new destination for tourists: Gaza! It shows Banksy apparently climbing through a tunnel, presumably constructed by Hamas. The video claims that Gaza is...

“Well away from the tourist track (Access is via a network of illegal tunnels)”

“The locals like it so much they never leave (because they’re not allowed to)”

“Nestled in an exclusive setting (surrounded by a wall on three sides and a line of gun boats on the other”

“Watched over by friendly neighbours” (in 2014 Israel destroyed 18,000 homes)

“Development opportunities are everywhere (No cement has been allowed into Gaza since the bombing)”

“Plenty of scope for refurbishment”

An Arab-Palestinian man discusses a street painting of a cat, presumably by Banksy. He repeatedly asks “what about our children?” The “promotional” video then ends with a message

painted on a wall:

“If we wash our hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless we side with the powerful – we don’t remain neutral.”

## Point and Counterpoint

Despite the fact that Banksy has attacked Israel intermittently over the years, this short and quite unremarkable Youtube video was deemed to be newsworthy. For example, on February 26<sup>th</sup>, it was featured cyclically on Irish State broadcaster RTE’s “top stories” section of their *News Now* channel (“Banksy video takes aim at Gaza destruction”), and given a glowingly [obstructing the movement of Mary and Joseph via the security fence](#). [imprisoned](#) the notionally Christian town of Bethlehem.

Concerning Gaza, Banksy [but it still does so](#) to lessen the impact of the maritime embargo. The Palmer Report has found Israel’s maritime blockade to be a [since its election](#) in 2006.

Hamas, as the defacto governing body controlling the region, is the authority responsible for supplying water to Gaza’s populace. Israel transferred control of the water supply infrastructure to the Palestinian Authority, with their withdrawal in 2005, and exceeds its OSLO II 31 MCM water supply obligations, by [drilled several hundred wells](#) without authorisation from the joint Israeli-Palestinian water authority, thereby harming water quality. In 2013, Israel doubled its water supply to Gaza, with the construction of a new pipeline. During the 2014 war, Israel continued to supply Gazans with water, and [power blackouts](#) over the territory, whilst Israel initiated projects to [damaged](#) the power supply. The many media reports claiming Israel had destroyed the plant were [amounts of fuel](#) for domestic use.

In broader terms, Israel has sponsored several hundred

projects to improve conditions [sea access was restricted](#) from the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2008 after Hamas instigated further acts of belligerency. A six nautical mile limit for Gaza's fishermen was established, and temporarily restricted to three miles when hostilities escalated.

Banksy claims 18,000 homes have been destroyed by the 2014 Gaza war. This figure was postulated in August/September 2014 by Arab-Palestinian representatives. Figures are difficult to establish with some estimating as few as 10,000 buildings were destroyed, whilst the UNRWA asserts that 7,000+ homes have been destroyed, [anti-Israel activism is notorious](#) so it is likely that its figures err rather generously. Either way, it is untrue to claim that 18,000 homes have been destroyed by Israel and particularly disingenuous to reveal such a figure without mention of Hamas' policy of firing from [inside](#) family homes."

Banksy claims that tunnels are the only method of access to Gaza. Presumably, this claim is not meant to be taken seriously. However, it does reinforce the imprisonment narrative, whilst presenting to his audience an amusing stance on Hamas' use of tunnels for black market imports as well as terrorist activities.

It would surely have been intolerable for Banksy's anti-Israel narrative to have informed his viewers that Hamas use tunnels to conduct terrorist attacks against civilians. The immense amount of cement used in such tunnels has been widely discussed. Hamas [continues to do so](#).

## **Omitting Hamas from the equation**

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Banksy's video is not so much what it states but the content it leaves out. There is a complete absence of any reference to Hamas, rocket and mortar attacks, Islamist terrorism perpetuated against Israeli civilians etc. In other words, the video provides zero

context. There is only space for poignant images of Arabs living in a bomb damaged environment, and instances of Israeli oppression and aggression.

The video's absolutist dichotomy is reinforced by a total absence of images or footage that includes Hamas. The viewer is not any wiser about Gaza's governance. In fact, without explanation, the video features a scene of heavily armed IDF, with the words "The locals like it so much they never leave (because they're not allowed to)". However, the video footage of the soldiers appears to have been shot in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), because the security barrier is shown in the background. The inclusion of such content may lead to the viewer to believe that Gaza is still occupied by Israel.

By implication, Banksy casts Hamas as powerless, when he wrote "of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless..." This is a normative claim by anti-Israel activists, who excuse Hamas' belligerency, incitement, and terrorism against a civilian populace which it desires to see exterminated.

Perhaps Banksy should ask which party truly tyrannises the Gazan populace, an Islamist regime that is no longer the territory's elected representatives, that puts its people in harms way [left-wing themes of his work](#) which are arguably compatible with Britain's more recent cultural patterns. His [little space afforded](#) to pro-Israel perspectives.

Any promotional tourist video will of course be expected to present the location being promoted in the most attractive fashion possible. Such videos are expected to be economical with the truth. Banksy's rather artless faux-tourist video is presented as the opposite. It presents itself as the unpleasant truth confronting the viewer. Unfortunately however, a rich unintended irony occurs since the video features is a string of normative and propagandistic pro-Palestinian falsehoods.

The Arab-Palestinian man who asks “what about our children?”, is perhaps the line that lingers most in Banksy’s video. This is a question that can cut both ways. It has a particular resonance for anyone with a passing familiarity with [children of Gaza](#).

It can be argued with justification that, despite all its profound falsehoods, this Banksy reveals a deeper truth – how disingenuously the anti-Israel movement present this complex conflict. Viewers might ask if the echoing of conflict propaganda clarifies ethical matters or merely thickens the fog of war.

First published in