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**WHEN FOOD BEGINS
TO BUILD A PRISON**

Cooking Sections

[1]





After his visit to Gaza in 2012, linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky claimed the Palestinian strip of land to be the world's largest open-air prison - measuring 41 km long and 6 to 12 km wide.¹ The Gaza Strip, situated at the easternmost edge of the Mediterranean Sea, has only three occasionally open entry gates: Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings on the Israeli side, and the Rafah crossing bordering Egypt. Heavily dependent on Israel for energy, food, water, medicine and construction supplies, even the coastline of Gaza has become a prison wall under control of the Israeli Navy Forces.

When constructing an incarceration system in Gaza, food has become one of the crucial prison-building methods. The amount of calories and nutrients allowed to cross, and construct, the border is meticulously calculated by the Israeli government. Only a certain amount of truckloads can enter the Strip on a weekly basis, in a number that results out of the threshold between bare life and human rights watchings, between siege, smuggling and food security.

Departing from the government's position of 'putting the Palestinians on a diet, but not making them die of hunger', Eyal Weizman exposes how reports like the *Red Lines* document outlined the minimum number of calories that are required to sustain Gaza's population at a level just above the UN definition of hunger, using humanitarian standards as a threshold.²

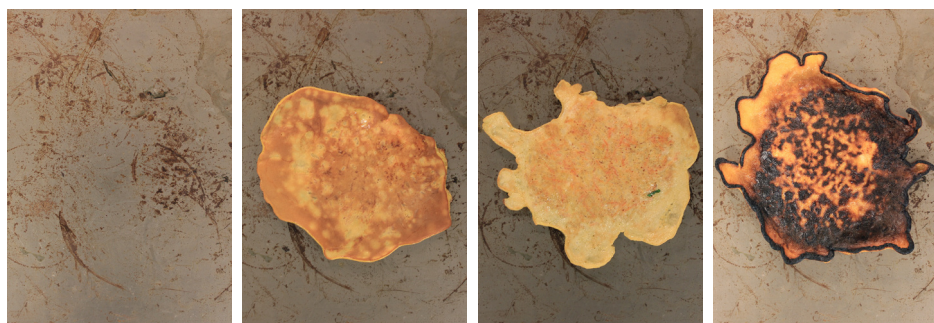
The world's largest open-air prison cannot be visualized as floorplans, sections or elevations. It is the actual flow of supplies imported into Gaza which is shaping its incarceration walls. Their permeability resembles the dimension of the opening of the cell's door that allows the food tray to go through and reach the inmate behind it.

Circulation of foodstuff and energy works in direct accordance and in response to the activities and outbreaks of the political forces in place. 'Dietary Confinement' is a translation of the yearly supply of foods provided into Gaza and cooked into 52 dishes corresponding to the amounts of foodstuff supplied over 52

weeks of 2013. By taking the weekly breakdown of truckloads that the Israeli Government allows to enter into Gaza, we have divided the tons of food by the 1,701,437 inhabitants that the Palestinian Authority acknowledges live in the Strip. As a result, we calculated an estimated average amount of grams of food that every person would hypothetically obtain per daily meal. We cooked them into patties on a frying pan during the proportional amount of minutes corresponding to the cooking gas that entered Gaza every week.

be closed, hence fewer items would enter the Strip that week. Others are more or less nutritious or tasty depending on the quality of the foodstuffs. Some weeks there are no patties at all in our calendar of Gaza, since reports were not issued by the Israeli Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).³

When prison boundaries are created by strict dietary confinement, food becomes the tool to visualize the architecture of the world's largest open-air prison.



[2-5]

The 52 patties that configure the year 2013 in Gaza are a series of edible maps. Some are burnt if that week there was abundant cooking gas and little cooking oil imported. Others are raw if that week there was a lack of sufficient gas to cook with. Some others are big or small depending on the amount of truckloads of food. If there had been a rocket attack over Israel or there was a Jewish holiday, the crossings would



NOTES:

1. Chomsky, Noam. *My visit to Gaza, the world's largest open-air prison*. in Truth Out, 9/11/2012
<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/12635-noam-chomsky-my-visit-to-gaza-the-worlds-largest-open-air-prison>

2. Weizman, Eyal. *The least of all possible evils: Humanitarian violence from Arendt to Gaza*. London: Verso, 2012. 82-85.

3. COGAT - Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories.
Accessed: February 2014
www.cogat.idf.il/1927-he/Cogat.aspx

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[1] Week 2. 3-9 Feb, 2013

[2] Week 7. 10-16 March, 2013

[3] Week 19. 2-8 June, 2013

[4] Week 28. 4-10 August, 2013

[5] Week 41. 3-9 November, 2013