



Reform and Transformation

Rafah Tunnel Phenomenon

March 2007

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The purpose?

Reviewing the problem of the tunnels located on the
Palestinian-Egyptian borders

Includes:

- Reviewing previous methods that have complicated the problem
- Providing decision-makers with technical and survey information
- Reviewing new methods to solve the
• problem

Background of the Phenomenon – general objectives

- The tunnel problem is a complicated issue that has security, political, and social dimensions -- requires regional determination and cooperation for resolution.
- Locally:

This issue requires serious treatment and a high level of professionalism in order to achieve three main goals:

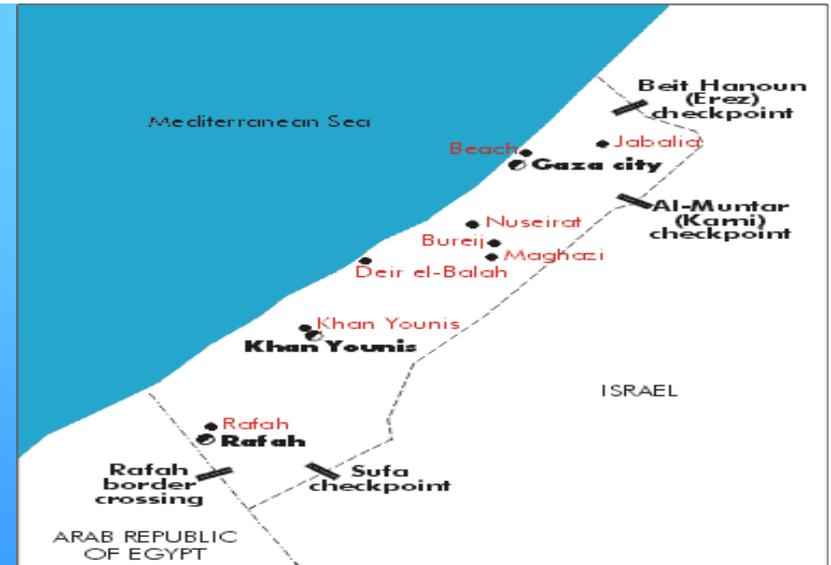
- i. Avoiding past mistakes in addressing the problem
- ii. A radical solution to this problem through destruction of the tunnel infrastructure
- iii. Building and developing Palestinian security capabilities to combat tunnels phenomenon, and maintain superior power over those determined to challenge the Palestinian people and their institutions.

Vision and General Objectives

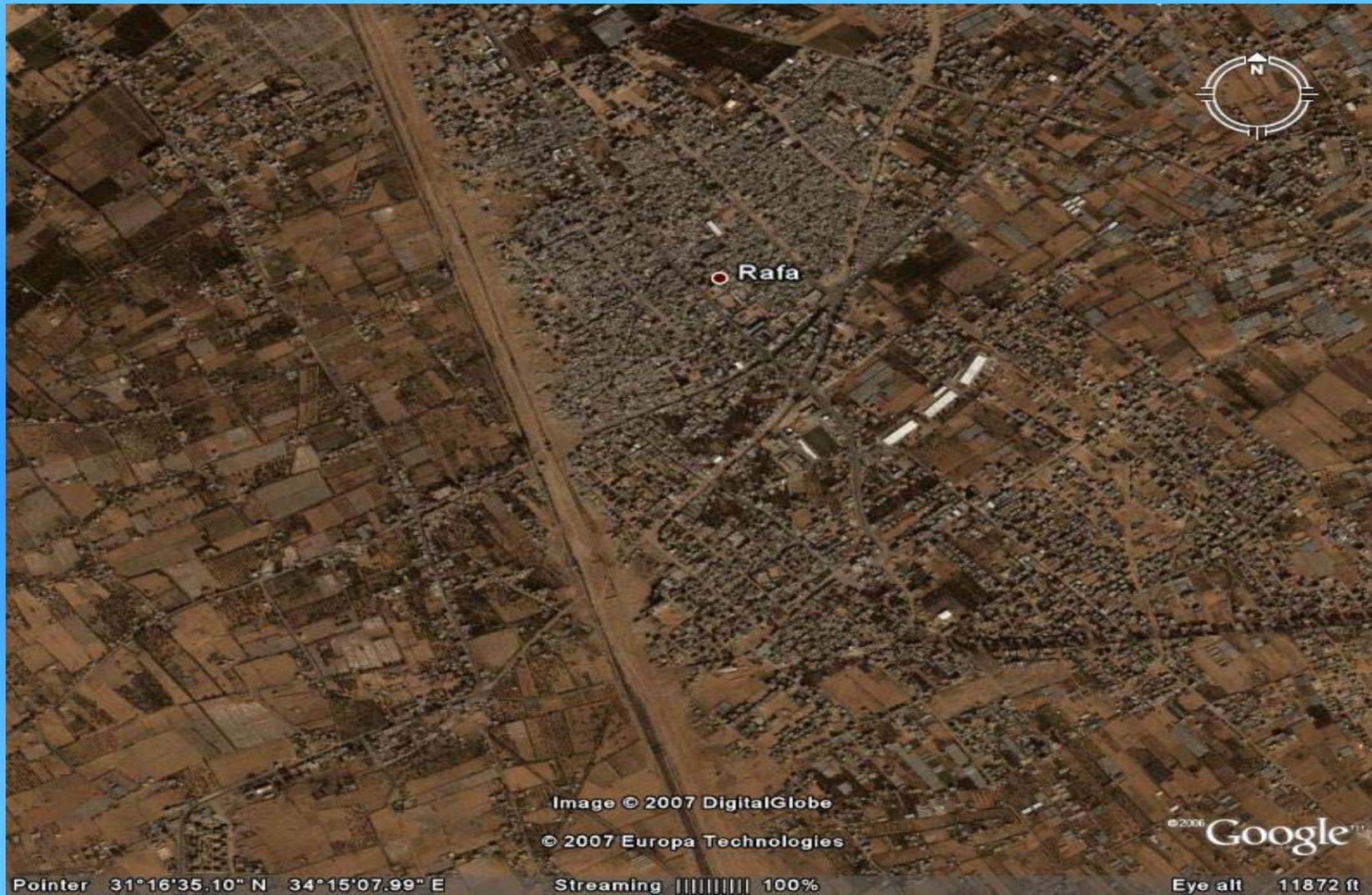
- Required from the Egyptian side:
 - Greater cooperation on the security plan with the Palestinian side
- Required from the International community:
 - Understanding that the tunnel problem creates a regional and international threat involving:
 - Egyptians
 - Israelis
 - US
 - International community
- Palestinian capabilities are not sufficient on their own to solve the problem

About Rafah:

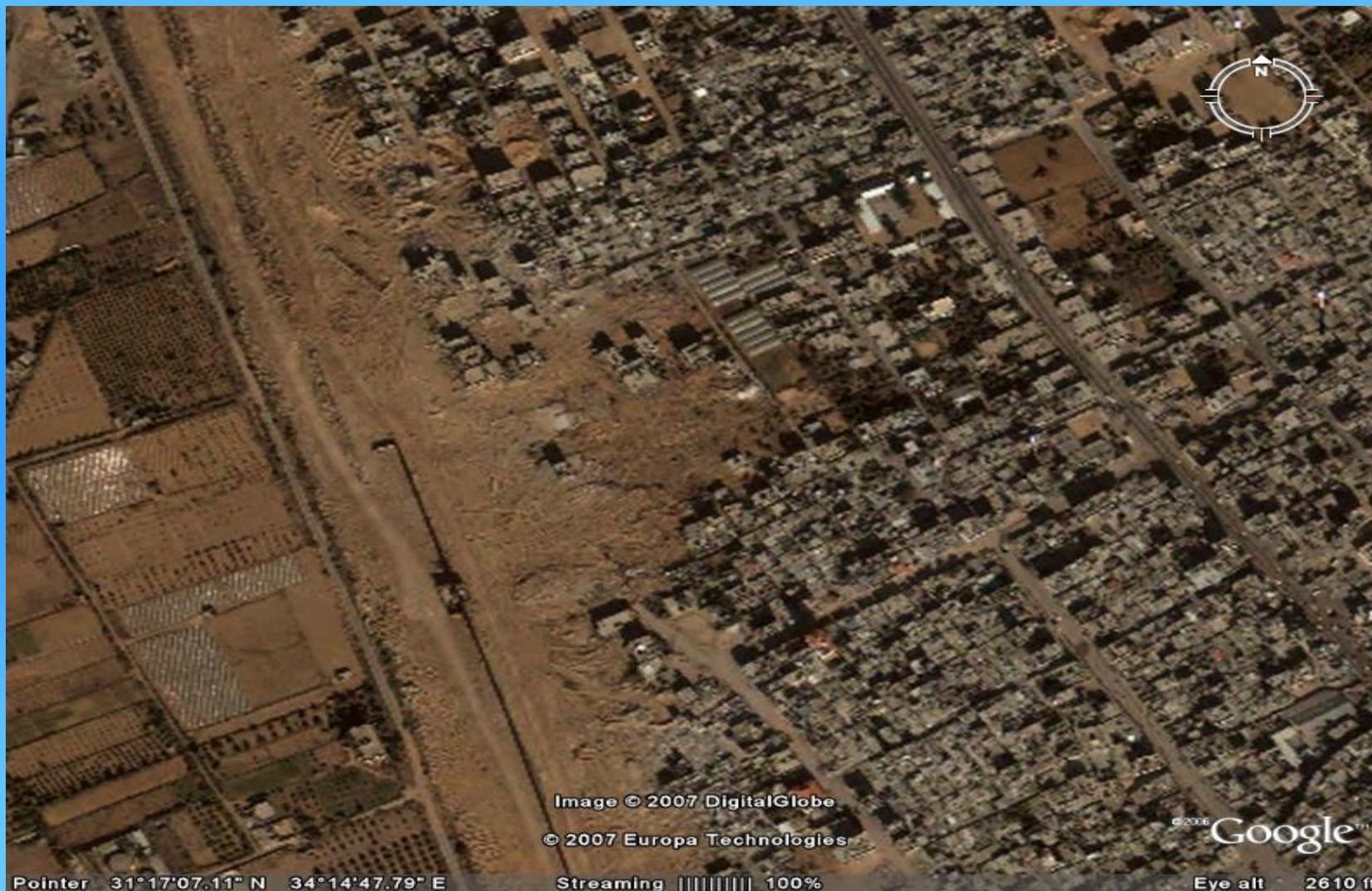
- Rafah is located in the southern edge of the Gaza Strip, near the Egyptian border
- Since ancient times until the Ottoman period, Rafah was an important spot for trade between Egypt and the Levant.
- Following the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, Rafah was divided in 1981 into two parts, one in Gaza and the other in Egypt
- There are 120,000 inhabitants in Rafah



Rafah



Rafah



Historical background about the start of the problem

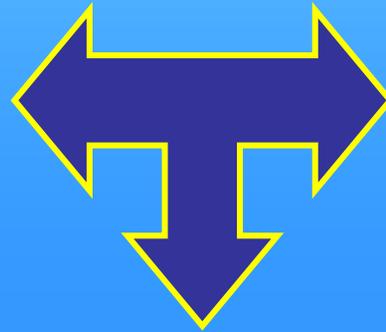
- The tunnel problem began in 1981, when Rafah was divided between Egypt and Gaza as a result of the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement.
- After Israel withdrew from Sinai, the 12.6 kilometer long border was enforced and fences were erected between the two sides of the city.
- The tunnels were mainly used during that time for smuggling cigarettes, drugs, gold, and spare car parts. After the outbreak of the first Intifada at the end of 1987, the tunnels were also used to smuggle weapons and people wanted by Israel.



Key Actors

Parties Harmed by Tunnels

- Owners of neighboring houses which were destroyed
- Merchants
- Citizens
- The national economy
- Internal security and social harmony and calm.
- Political stability
- Others



Beneficiaries from Tunnels

- Smugglers
- Tunnel owners
- Black market merchants
- Weapon dealers
- Armed militias
- others

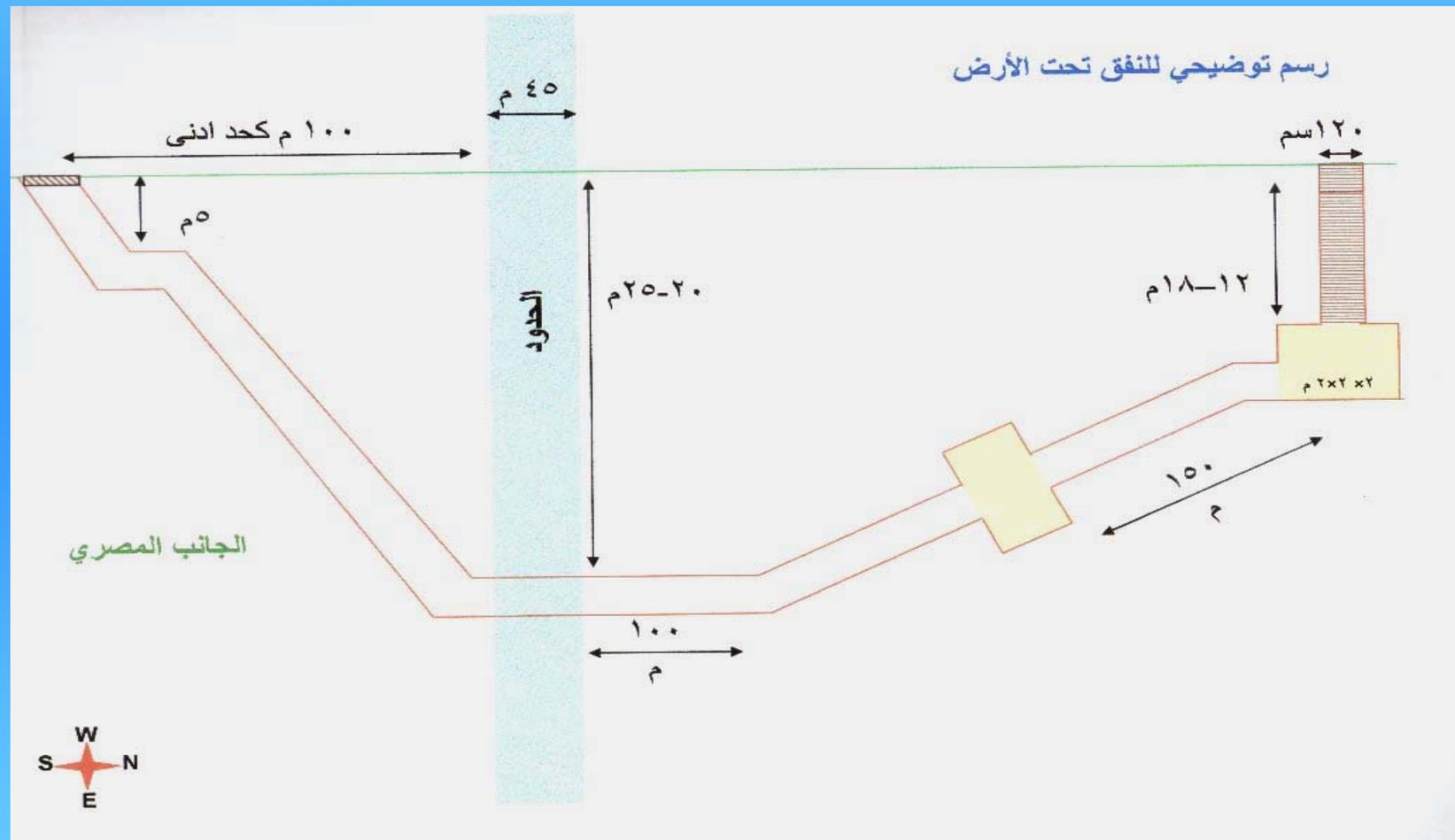
Parties with Direct Roles

- PNA
 - Security Establishment
 - Ministry of Trade & Economy
 - Ministry of Justice
 - Organizations of Civil Society
 - Citizens
- Egypt
- Israel
- International Community

Survey and Technical Information

- Palestinian Security Agencies have estimated the number of active or qualified tunnels between 20 – 25 tunnels along the Palestinian – Egyptian border. These tunnels contain tens of openings (accesses).
- Most of these tunnels are located in the Al-Salaam and Brazil Neighborhoods, Saladin Gate. They are centered along a distance of 7.5 km from west of Tal-Zurob until Rafah crossing. There are some tunnels east of Rafah Crossing toward Karam Abu Salem.
- The depth of the tunnel “the Well” can reach 18 to 20 meters.
- The length of the tunnel can reach up to 2,000 meters long.

Descriptive Model – Depth, Amplitude, and Length



A actual Example of the Depth of the Well



Diagram – A scenario for a Tunnel's Path and Distribution of its Holes (Openings)

Prepared by Preventive Security Agency - Gaza

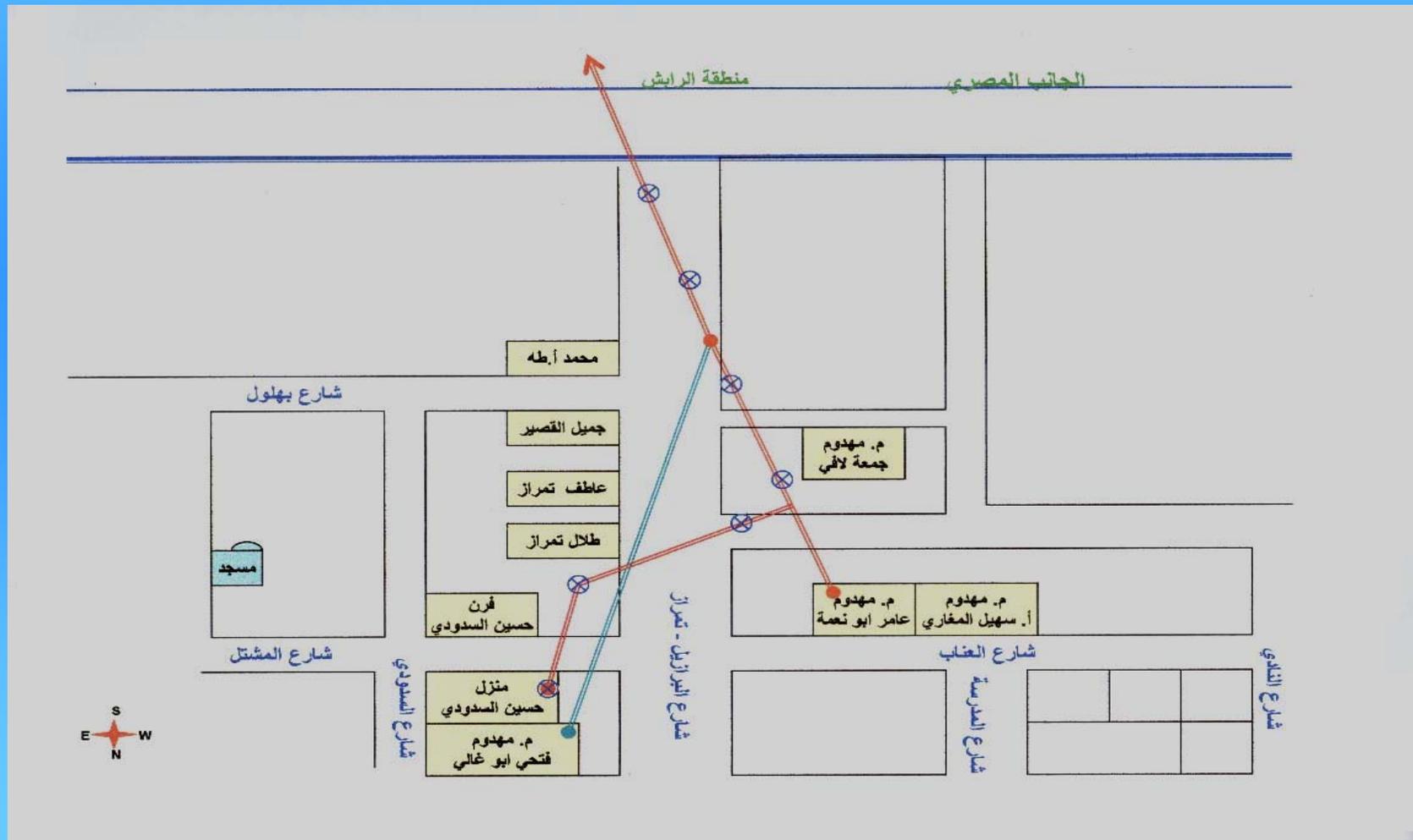


Diagram :

Tunnels' entrances and exits through houses and neighborhoods

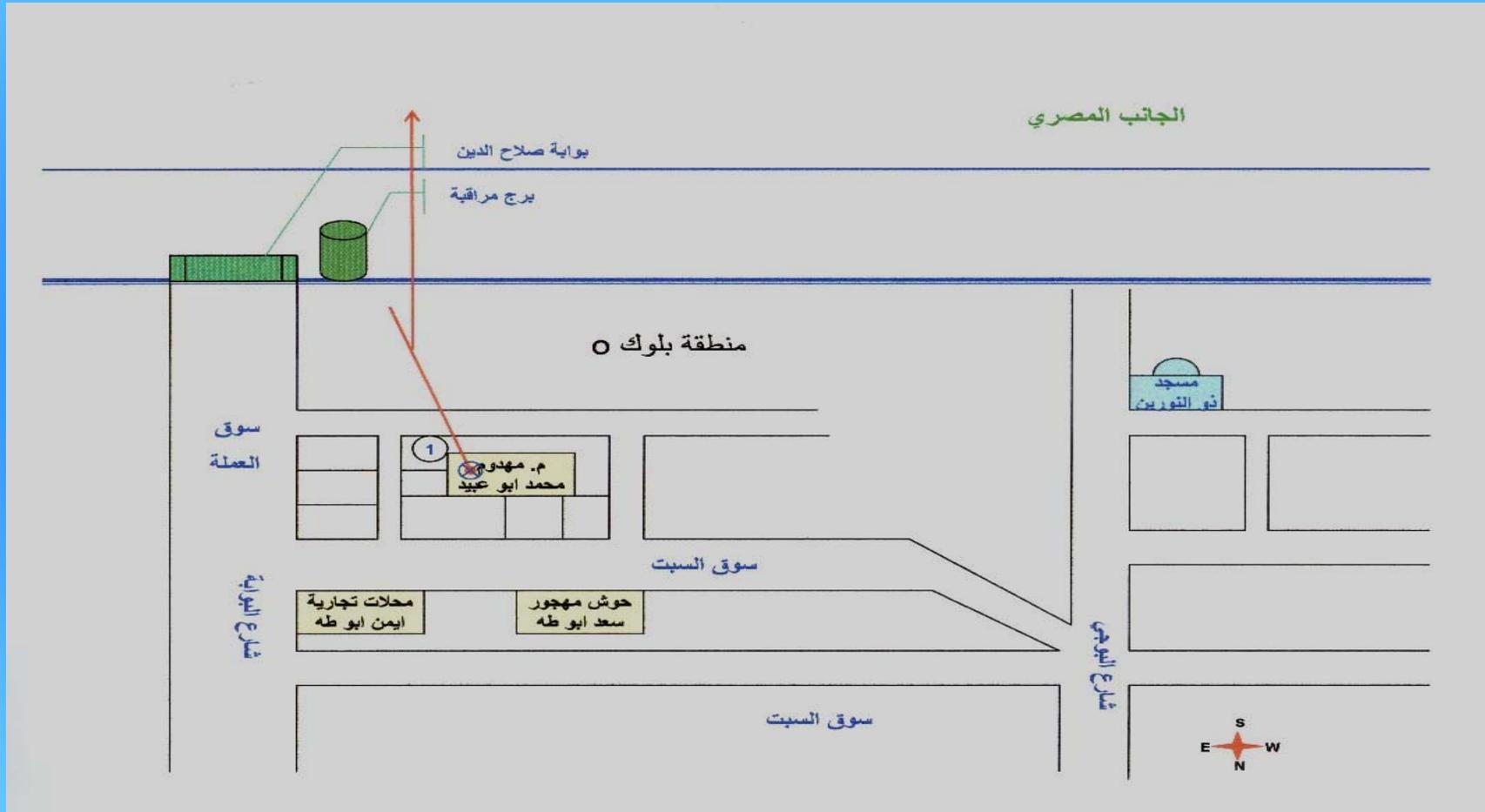


Diagram :

Tunnels' entrances and exits through houses and neighborhoods despite control towers.

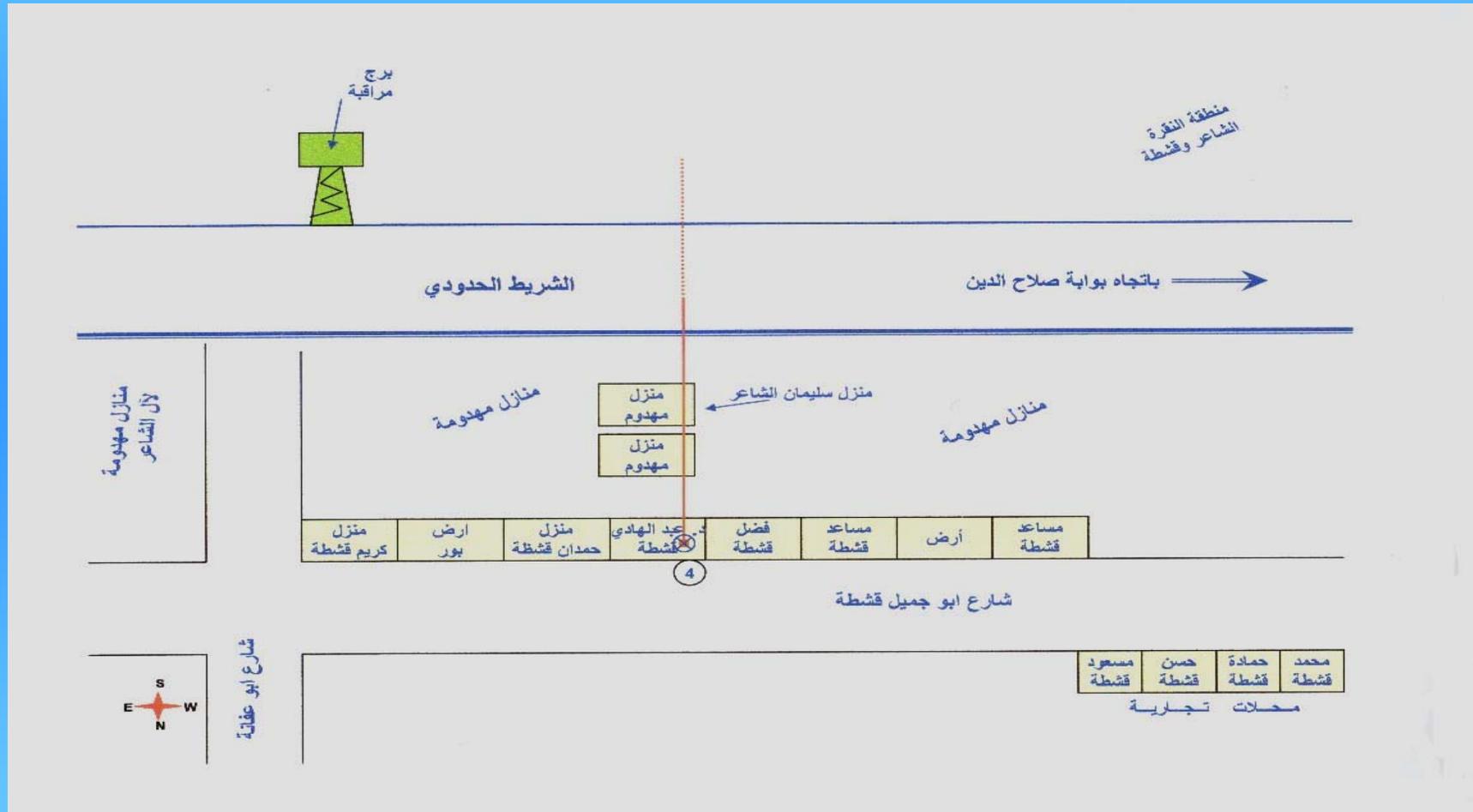
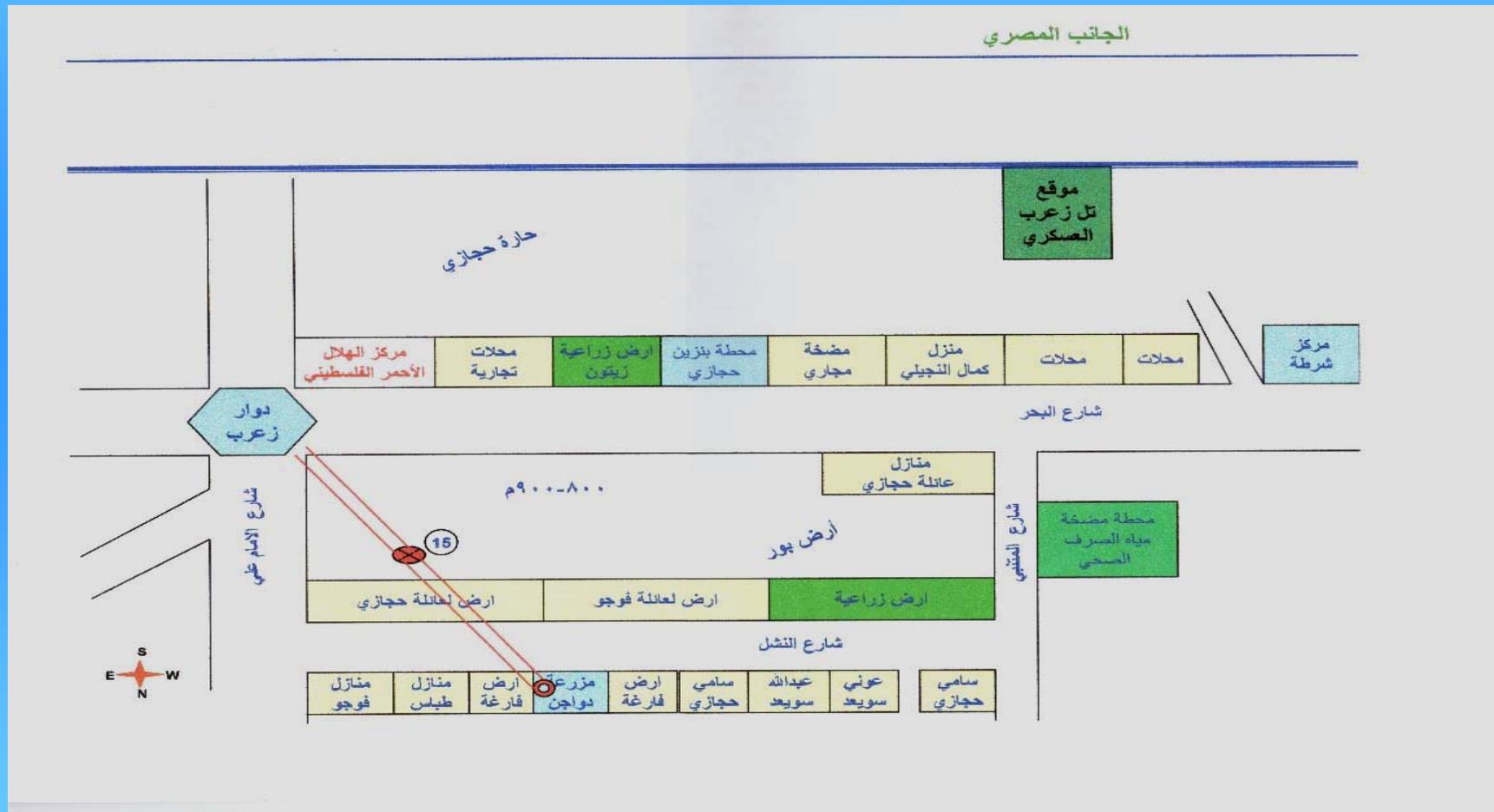


Diagram :

Tunnels' networks with many paths and openings can also be internal inside the Palestinian side.



Common Uses for Tunnels

- Drug smuggling
- Arms smuggling
- Smuggling of food, cigarettes, and other material
- Smuggling of wanted people
- Gold smuggling
- Conducting terrorist activities.
- Violating security and internal stability in the neighboring states.

Difficulties and Obstacles

- Absence of effective cooperation among all parties related to the battle against tunnels.
- Israeli prevention of Palestinian security forces to enter an area of 3.5 Km between Rafah crossing and Karam Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing in order to be able to exercise patrol activities, and to follow-up smugglers and tunnel activities.
- Lack of political progress along with the continuation of the occupation and closure provides motives and environment for the problem to grow.
- Combating tunnels may contradict some Palestinian political powers and might lead to internal struggle.
- The difficulties of controlling tunnel networks on the ground compared to what can be done on the Egyptian side. This is because of several factors, among which:
 - The numerous openings on the Palestinian side.
 - Interference of several parties, such as families and political factions, in the tunnel activities

What has been Achieved

- 6 openings and about 19 tunnels were destroyed in the Rafah area by a joint force including the Police and National Security, headed by the Preventive Security.
- This joint force has conducted periodic inspections of destroyed houses in order to find and close openings, either by using cement and sand, or other means.
- This was the result of cooperation with Egypt and with full political and financial support of the US, and some limited cooperation from the Israeli side.

Negative Effects if the Problem Continues

	Type of Negative Effects	Explanation
1.	Lives lost	“ in 2001, Suleiman and his brother Mohammad were hit by a 50-inch width water pipe while they were digging toward the surface, then the water flow caused the tunnel to collapse, which led to the death of those two brothers and their bodies remained buried under the mud for three days.
2.	Social effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spread of drugs and organized crime syndicates (Mafia).• Flight of people who are wanted by justice.• Increased family clashes in Rafah and the surrounding refugee camps.
3.	Economic effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Widening the circle of corruption and economic crimes.• Supporting and financing terrorism.• Evading customs and other duties related to import and export activities.• Proliferating black markets and damaging the Palestinian consumers.
4.	Political and security effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undermining confidence in the Palestinian Authority, its achievements, and its national goals.• Harming the image of the Palestinian people, their national cause, and their relations with other nations and organizations.• Disrupting efforts to rebuild and reform the security establishment and impeding the provision of security for the Palestinian citizen.• Outside interference in the Palestinian internal affairs, through strengthening a party over another party.

Palestinian suggestions to control the phenomenon

At the security and political front

- ✓ Creating a Palestinian-Egyptian-Israeli intelligence, financial, and political cooperation to combat the Rafah tunnel issue
- ✓ All beneficiaries of the tunnel issue must be dealt with firmly, including some of the security agencies and political organizations that sometimes participate in the management of these tunnels
- ✓ Assigning a specific Palestinian security agency (NSF) with the task of combating the tunnels through political leadership (regional):
- ✓ Requesting all agencies to collect and compile all information available to them and provide to the NSF
- ✓ Forming a joint operations unit led by the NSF for the specific tasks of executing operations for combating the tunnels.

Continued/Palestinian suggestions

On the legal front

- ✓ Strengthening and activating legal and judicial proceedings against tunnel operators and smugglers
- ✓ Issuing high level political decrees for the destruction of the tunnels

Continued/Palestinian suggestions

On the logistical and financial front

- ✓ Building control towers along the entire Palestinian – Egyptian border (the Philadelphi corridor) installed with high quality surveillance cameras
- ✓ Lighting the Egyptian-Palestinian border sufficiently to cover far distances on both the Palestinian and Egyptian sides of the border
- ✓ Providing vehicles and equipment to completely cover the area at all times
- ✓ Providing large rigs, sensors and the technology needed to inspect the tunnels and access their deepest levels to destroy the infrastructure