



# Humanitarian Aid in Inhuman Times

February 2024

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# Aid in Gaza: At A Glance



01

# Aid in Gaza: At A Glance

80%

of Gaza's population reliant on humanitarian aid before 7 October

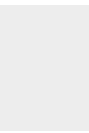
*Source: International Rescue Committee*

## US Aid to Gaza

*Sources: BBC, CNN*



2021 - \$235 million



2018 - \$60 million



2009 - \$900 million

150  
tonnes

of humanitarian aid delivered to Egypt by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) waiting in at Rafah border  
*Source: British Armed Forces*

1.84  
million

Gazans food insecure before 7 October  
*Source: World Food Programme*

Children in Southern Gaza accessing only

1.5 to 2  
litres water

litres water per day, well below the recommended requirements for survival  
*Source: UNICEF*

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# Humanitarian Aid to Gaza before 7 October



02

# Humanitarian Aid to Gaza before 7 October

Before 7 October, approximately 80% of Gaza's population were reliant on humanitarian assistance, which required about 500 trucks of aid to enter Gaza each day.<sup>1</sup> 1.84 million people in Gaza were food insecure before 7 October, according to the World Food Programme.<sup>2</sup>

This high aid dependency is due to Israel's ongoing blockade of Gaza by land, sea, and air, and restrictions on the goods that can enter Gaza.<sup>3</sup> Since the blockade, trade stalled, jobs disappeared, and more and more families fell into poverty, while the population in Gaza grew by nearly 60%.<sup>4</sup>

The amount of international aid for Gaza fluctuates annually, making it impossible for Gazans to plan for the future.<sup>5</sup>

In 2018, the Trump administration cut about \$200 million in Palestinian aid and halted contributions to UNRWA.<sup>6</sup> Though Biden reinstated assistance in 2021, the amounts have never returned to Obama-era levels, which reached as high as \$1 billion in 2009.<sup>7</sup>

Europe has been the largest donor to the Palestinian territories over time, with countries and EU institutions contributing on average 46% of funds donated annually.<sup>8</sup>

Qatar has also been a major donor to Gaza, contributing about \$1.3 billion since 2019.<sup>9</sup>

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# Humanitarian Aid to Gaza since 7 October



# Humanitarian Aid to Gaza since 7 October

Since 7 October, humanitarian organisations have only managed to deliver limited humanitarian assistance to Gaza, despite extraordinarily difficult conditions, but the quantities fall far short of what is needed to prevent a deadly combination of hunger, malnutrition, and disease.<sup>10</sup> The shortage of food, clean water, and medical assistance is particularly severe in the northern areas.<sup>11</sup>

From 7 to 21 October, no trucks, commercial or humanitarian, were able to enter the Gaza Strip.<sup>12</sup> From 21 October through 23 November, limited trucks carrying humanitarian assistance were able to enter, though the daily number of entries varied widely.<sup>13</sup>

During the humanitarian pause period (24 – 30 November), an estimated 33 food trucks were crossing daily into the northern governorates, while 85 trucks were crossing into the southern governorates (representing 22% and 57% of pre-escalation daily food truck levels, respectively).<sup>14</sup>

After the end of the humanitarian pause, the number of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance entering the Gaza Strip briefly reduced again, though daily truck entry levelled out around 100, across all commodities, on most days.<sup>15</sup> This included 30-40 food trucks on average, compared with the 150 food trucks that were coming in prior to the start of the hostilities.<sup>16</sup>

After 15 December, trucks also began entering via the Kerem Shalom crossing.<sup>17</sup> This marginally increased the number of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance entering the Gaza Strip, though total daily truck entry remained well below the pre-October rate of 500 per day.<sup>18</sup>

When trucks carrying humanitarian assistance are permitted to enter the Gaza Strip, they are also not necessarily prioritised for entry by humanitarian need, which leads to challenges in ensuring the most critical, life-saving assistance enters the fastest.<sup>19</sup>

Once inside, efforts to set up service points for people in need are hampered by bombardments and constantly shifting battle fronts, which endanger the lives of ordinary Gazans and the UN and other humanitarian personnel striving to help them.<sup>20</sup>

Currently there are devastating levels of food insecurity in Gaza and the entire population of Gaza – roughly 2.2 million people – are in crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity.<sup>21</sup> Virtually all Palestinians in Gaza are skipping meals every day, while many adults go hungry so children can eat, and there will be widespread famine if current conditions persist.<sup>22</sup>

UNICEF has been warning since November that children in southern Gaza are accessing only 1.5 to 2 litres of water per day, well below the recommended requirements for survival.<sup>23</sup> To address this, UNICEF and partners have provided safe drinking water to over 1.3 million people, but much more is needed to address the desperate conditions.<sup>24</sup>



## Humanitarian Aid to Gaza since 7 October continued...

Meanwhile, over 150 tonnes of humanitarian aid delivered to Egypt by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is waiting in trucks queued at the Rafah border to be transferred into Gaza.<sup>72</sup>

### Egyptian Profiteering

There are also allegations that Egyptian organisations are profiteering from the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. An international charity described being forced to pay \$5,000 a truck to a company linked to Egypt's General Intelligence Service (GIS) to get aid into Gaza.<sup>73</sup>

The price for commercial traffic going into Gaza charged by companies owned by the company Organi is \$9,000 a truck, although the cost of the fare charged by truckers is commonly just \$300 a load.<sup>74</sup>

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# Humanitarian Organisations Currently Working in Gaza



# Humanitarian Organisations Currently Working in Gaza



## UNRWA

UNRWA is the primary humanitarian agency in Gaza, with over 2 million people depending on it for their sheer survival.<sup>25</sup> Many are hungry as the clock is ticking towards a looming famine. UNRWA runs shelters for over 1 million people and provides food and primary healthcare even at the height of the hostilities.<sup>26</sup>



## The Palestine Red Crescent Society

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is the leading provider of emergency medical services in Gaza and the West Bank. As hospitals run out of vital supplies and fuel, the PRCS has supported the evacuation of the sick and wounded and their families to safe places in the south of Gaza.<sup>27</sup>



## The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is working with Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) and PRCS for the transportation of aid into Gaza.<sup>28</sup>



## Medical Aid for Palestinians

Medical Aid for Palestinians is also responding to the current emergency by providing drugs, medical disposables, and other humanitarian supplies to hospitals and shelters.<sup>29</sup> MAP have also sourced more than \$1.8 million of humanitarian supplies from the local market, which have been distributed to hospitals and shelters.<sup>30</sup> This includes medicines, disposables and lab reagents for hospitals, and mattresses, blankets and hygiene kits for thousands of people displaced from their homes.<sup>31</sup>

## Humanitarian Organisations Currently Working in Gaza continued...



### **UNICEF**

UNICEF continues to focus on the critical needs of children for protection and humanitarian assistance, including distributing water, emergency medical supplies, and nutritional supplies.<sup>32</sup>



### **Oxfam**

Oxfam is also on the ground in Gaza, ready to provide people with humanitarian aid like clean water, food, and other essential items like soap to survive the immediate impacts of this crisis.<sup>33</sup>



### **Médecins Sans Frontières**

Médecins Sans Frontières or Doctors Without Borders has also been working in Gaza, performing surgeries, inpatient care, and medical supplies for hospitals.<sup>34</sup>

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# UNWRA in Gaza



05

# UNWRA in Gaza

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is the main humanitarian agency for Palestinians worldwide.<sup>35</sup> UNWRA operates in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.<sup>36</sup>

UNRWA was created by the UN General Assembly in 1949 to provide basic support including food, healthcare, and education to tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees after the 1948 Nakba.<sup>37</sup>

UNRWA supports around six million Palestinian refugees who live within and outside Palestine. It provides direct services, such as schools, primary health centres and other social services, as well as loans to Palestinians.<sup>38</sup>

In 2021, about 545,000 children were enrolled in UNRWA schools, UNWRA's Social Safety Net Programme assistance reached 398,044 beneficiaries, and 1.7 million Palestinians received critical humanitarian aid.<sup>39</sup>

Since October 7, approximately a million Palestinians from Gaza, or nearly 45 percent of the population, have been sheltering in UNRWA schools, clinics and other public buildings.<sup>40</sup> Nearly the entire population in Gaza now relies on UNRWA for basic necessities, including food, water and hygiene supplies.<sup>41</sup> UNRWA schools and buildings operate beyond capacity to provide shelter to internally displaced Palestinians who have very limited safe spaces to go to.<sup>42</sup>

More than 30,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria work for the UNRWA.<sup>43</sup>

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# Allegations Against UNWRA



06

# Allegations Against UNWRA

Israel has long advocated for the dismantling of UNRWA, arguing that its mission is obsolete.<sup>44</sup> On 4 January, a former Israeli Foreign Ministry official, Noga Arbell, stated in a discussion in the Knesset that: “it will be impossible to win the war if we do not destroy UNWRA, this destruction must begin immediately”.<sup>71</sup>

Immediately after the result of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that UNRWA is “perforated with Hamas” and accused 12 UNRWA staff of involvement in the October 7 Hamas attack inside Israel.<sup>45</sup>

Critics have denounced the accusation and claimed that Israel is falsifying information to tarnish UNRWA in Gaza, which employs 13,000 people, who run schools, healthcare clinics and other essential services.<sup>46</sup> Experts have said the Israeli allegations remain unverified.<sup>47</sup>

UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said that Israel has not yet shared the intelligence dossier with the UN.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Human Rights Watch is not aware that the UN or any of the states that fund UNRWA, have seen any written documentation of evidence that establishes what has been alleged by Israel.<sup>49</sup>

*“It will be impossible to win the war if we do not destroy UNWRA, this destruction must begin immediately.”*

**Noga Arbell**  
Israeli Foreign Ministry official





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# Countries that have Pulled Funding from UNWRA



07

# Countries that have Pulled Funding from UNWRA

UNWRA is facing an unprecedented funding crisis after its main international donors, led by the United States, cut its funding over “terror” allegations.<sup>50</sup> In 2022, the UNRWA’s top government donors were the US, Germany, the European Union, Sweden, Norway, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and Turkey.<sup>51</sup>

**At the time of writing, 12 countries have paused all funding for UNWRA:**



The US, which contributed **\$343.9 million in 2022.**<sup>52</sup>



Canada, which contributed **\$23.7 million in 2022.**<sup>58</sup>



Germany, which contributed **\$202.1 million in 2022.**<sup>53</sup>



The Netherlands, which contributed **\$21.2 million in 2022.**<sup>59</sup>



Sweden, which contributed **\$61 million in 2022.**<sup>54</sup>



The UK, which contributed **\$21.2 million in 2022.**<sup>60</sup>



Japan, which contributed **\$30.2 million in 2022.**<sup>55</sup>



Italy, which contributed **\$18 million in 2022.**<sup>61</sup>



France, which contributed **\$28.9 million in 2022.**<sup>56</sup>



Australia, which contributed **\$13.8 million in 2022.**<sup>62</sup>



Switzerland, which contributed **\$25.5 million in 2022.**<sup>57</sup>



Finland, which contributed **\$7.8 million in 2022.**<sup>63</sup>

Combined, this will leave UNWRA without \$667.2 million dollars – more than half of its budget – compared with the previous year. The rest of the budget amounts to \$496.5 million.<sup>64</sup>

The European Commission has said that it will “review” its support to UNWRA.<sup>65</sup>

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# Impacts of Funding Withdrawal



# Impacts of Funding Withdrawal

In a statement, UNWRA chief Phillipe Lazzarini announced that “if the funding remains suspended, we will most likely be forced to shut down our operations by end of February not only in Gaza but also across the region”.<sup>66</sup>

The director of UNRWA Affairs in Gaza and UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Thomas White, has stated: “It’s difficult to imagine that Gazans will survive this crisis without UNRWA”.<sup>67</sup>

UN Secretary-General António Guterres appealed to the countries that suspended funding to UNRWA, urging them to reconsider their decisions: “I strongly appeal to the governments that have suspended their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA’s operations.”<sup>68</sup> The dire needs of the desperate populations they (UNRWA staff) serve must be met”.<sup>69</sup>

Since the announcement that several donor countries will stop funding UNWRA, five countries: Belgium, Ireland, Denmark, Spain, and Norway have pledged to continue their funding.<sup>70</sup>

# Footnotes

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- <sup>10-11</sup> ‘Preventing famine and deadly disease outbreak in Gaza requires faster, safer aid access and more supply routes’ World Health Organisation (15 January 2024) *available at* <https://www.who.int/news/item/15-01-2024-preventing-famine-and-deadly-disease-outbreak-in-gaza-requires-faster--safer-aid-access-and-more-supply-routes>
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- <sup>32</sup> ‘Children in Gaza need life-saving support’ Unicef (31 January 2024) *available at* <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/children-gaza-need-lifesaving-support#:~:text=How%20is%20UNICEF%20helping%20children%20in%20the%20Gaza%20Strip%3F&text=UNICEF%20continues%20to%20focus%20on,society%20partners%2C%20remain%20in%20Gaza>.
- <sup>33</sup> ‘Crisis in Gaza’ Oxfam *available at* <https://www.oxfam.org/en/what-we-do/emergencies/crisis-gaza>
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- <sup>35-50</sup> ‘What is UNRWA and why is it important for Palestinians?’ *Al Jazeera* (1 February 2024) *available at* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/1/what-is-unrwa-and-why-it-is-important-for-palestinians>

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- 51-63 ‘The demise of the UN’s Palestinian agency could spell disaster for millions. Here’s why Israel wants it dismantled’ *CNN* (30 January 2024) available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/29/middleeast/unrwa-funding-israel-war-mime-intl/index.html>
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