

Gaza: Airdrops and sea routes are no alternative to aid delivery by land

25 NGOs call on governments to prioritize ceasefire and ground-based humanitarian aid as deaths from malnutrition and disease rise

Human rights and humanitarian organizations present on the ground in the Gaza Strip have reiterated since the start of the current escalation that the only way to meet the unprecedented humanitarian needs in the enclave is to secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire and to ensure full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access through all land crossings. **States cannot hide behind airdrops and efforts to open a maritime corridor to create the illusion that they are doing enough to support the needs in Gaza: their primary responsibility is to prevent atrocity crimes from unfolding and apply effective political pressure to end the relentless bombardment and the restrictions which prevent the safe delivery of humanitarian aid.**

For months, every person in the Gaza Strip has been surviving with crisis-level hunger, in the largest proportion of any population in food security crisis [ever recorded by the Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#). Families have been drinking unsafe water for months and spend days without eating. The health system completely collapsed amid disease outbreaks and severe injuries due to constant bombardment. [At least 20 children](#) have recently died from severe malnutrition, dehydration and related diseases. As each day witnesses an acceleration in the deterioration of the food, water and health situation, more deaths from starvation and disease are to follow if humanitarian access continues to be impeded by Israeli authorities. The [UN has warned](#) that famine is imminent.

While States have recently ramped up airdrops of aid in Gaza, humanitarian professionals stress that this method of aid delivery alone has in no way the capacity to meet the massive needs in the enclave. **2.3 million people living in a catastrophic state of survival cannot be fed and healed by airdrops.**

Airdrops are unable to provide the volumes of assistance that can be transported by land. While a convoy of five trucks has the [capacity to carry about 100 tons](#) of lifesaving assistance, recent airdrops delivered only a few tons of aid each. Airdrops can also be extremely dangerous to the lives of civilians seeking aid: there have already been reports of at least 5 persons killed from free falling aid packages in Gaza. Humanitarian assistance cannot be improvised: it must be delivered by professional teams, with expertise in organizing distributions and providing direct lifesaving services. Aid deliveries need to have a human face: not only to be able to properly assess the needs of affected people, but also to restore hope and dignity to an already traumatized and desperate population. **After enduring five months of continuous bombardments and dehumanizing conditions, children, women and men in Gaza have the right to more than meager charity dropped from the sky.** While any humanitarian aid arriving to Gaza is welcome, transportation by air or by sea should be seen as complementary to land transportation and not as a substitute as it cannot in any circumstances replace the assistance delivered by road.

It is important to note that some of the States who have recently conducted airdrops are also providing weapons to Israeli authorities, namely the US, UK and France. **States cannot leverage aid to circumvent their international responsibilities and duties under international law, including the prevention of atrocity crimes.** For these States to meet their international law obligations they must halt all arms transfers that risk being used in

international crimes, as well as implement meaningful measures to enforce an immediate ceasefire, unrestricted humanitarian access and accountability for perpetrators.

Third States recently announced efforts to open a maritime corridor from Cyprus, including the establishment of a floating port on Gaza shore that will not be fully operational before several weeks. Families are starving and do not have the time for offshore and ashore infrastructure to be constructed: saving their lives requires immediately allowing the humanitarian trucks full of food and medicine whose entry in Gaza is currently being withheld. Moreover, shipments from this dock to distribution points around Gaza will suffer from the same obstacles that aid convoys from Rafah are currently facing: persistent insecurity, high rate of access denial by Israeli forces, and excessive waits at Israeli checkpoints. Therefore, its establishment will not substantially change the humanitarian catastrophic situation, unless it is combined with an immediate ceasefire and full, unimpeded access to all areas of the Gaza Strip. There are also concerns about the lack of transparency concerning which entity will be responsible for the infrastructure and security of aid delivery ashore: States must ensure that the maritime corridor does not legitimize a prolonged Israeli ground military occupation of the strip by instrumentalizing the necessity of aid delivery.

We recognize that every aid is needed in this dire context but alert on the potential devastating consequences of creating dangerous precedents leading to the degradation of humanitarian access through land and prolongation of hostilities. The appropriate humanitarian response to the massive needs in Gaza is unrestricted access for the aid and professional humanitarian personnel that have been prepositioned for months on the Egyptian side of the border. So far, the possibility for 2.3 million people in Gaza to eat, be healed, and have a roof over their head has been at the sole discretion of the Israeli authorities: this situation cannot remain unchallenged. Humanitarian organizations have the logistical capacity to provide for Palestinians in Gaza: what is missing is the political will from State actors to enforce access.

What humanitarian organizations are expecting from Third States is to urgently use their leverage towards an immediate ceasefire and to compel Israeli authorities to stop their deliberate blockade of lifesaving aid in all parts of the Gaza Strip, including through the full opening and lifting of restrictions on Rafah, Kerem Shalom / Karam Abu Salem, Erez / Beit Hanoun and Karni crossings. We recall that an immediate and permanent ceasefire is the only condition to allow for the colossal increase in the flow of humanitarian aid needed to alleviate the suffering of 2.3 million people in the Gaza Strip.

Signatories:

Action Aid International

American Friends Service Committee

Amnesty International

Association of Italian NGOs

CCFD-Terre Solidaire

CISS - Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud

DanChurch Aid

Danish House in Palestine

Danish Refugee Council

HelpAge International

Humanity & Inclusion - Handicap International

IM Swedish Development Partner

International Federation for Human Rights

INTERSOS

Medical Aid for Palestinians

Mennonite Central Committee

Médecins du Monde International Network / Doctors of the World

Médecins Sans Frontières France / Doctors Without Borders France

Oxfam

Plan International

Première Urgence Internationale

Secours Islamique France

Terre des Hommes Italy

War Child Alliance

Welfare Association