

URGENT ACTION

ISRAEL MUST ENSURE AID PROVISIONS REACH GAZA

On 26 January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that Palestinian civilians in the occupied Gaza Strip face a real and imminent risk of genocide. Pending its final ruling on the allegations of genocide brought by South Africa against Israel under the Genocide Convention, the Court ordered six provisional measures, including for Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts proscribed by the Genocide Convention and to ensure the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza. However, Israeli forces continue to intensify their cataclysmic assault on the occupied Gaza Strip, threaten land operations in Rafah, maintain a near-total illegal and inhuman siege, and obstruct the entry of desperately needed humanitarian aid.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prime Minister
Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister's Office
3 Kaplan St. Hakiryia
91950 Jerusalem, Israel
Email: mankals@pmo.gov.il

We are writing to express our grave concern over Israel's failure to comply with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in response to the case brought by South Africa, in which the latter accused Israel of violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention in relation to Palestinian civilians in the occupied Gaza strip. In light of the real and imminent risk of genocide faced by Palestinians in Gaza, I urge you to ensure Israel implements all six provisional measures ordered by the Court, including for Israel to prevent the commission of acts proscribed by the Genocide Convention, to prevent and punish public and direct incitement to genocide and, crucially, to take immediate and effective measures to provide urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by civilians in the occupied Gaza Strip.

After four months of Israel's relentless bombardment of the Gaza Strip, accompanied by the further tightening of the over 16-year-long illegal siege, civilians in Gaza are grappling with an apocalyptic humanitarian catastrophe. Civilians in Gaza are facing mass displacement, engineered famine and deliberate deprivation of basic services, including access to clean water and sanitation services, and contending with lack of adequate fuel supplies, which in Gaza is desperately needed to power hospitals, purify water and process food. The death toll continues to rise, with over 28,000 people killed, a further 10,000 missing under the rubble, and nearly 68,000 wounded, thousands of whom have been left with permanent disabilities. Over 1.7 million Palestinians, more than 85% of Gaza's population, have been internally displaced at least once; 2.2 million people are facing imminent risk of famine; infectious diseases are becoming increasingly prevalent due to successive waves of mass displacement, overcrowding, and lack of clean water and adequate hygiene. Supplies of humanitarian aid are scarce and woefully insufficient, particularly to the many in catastrophic need in northern Gaza.

Restricting the delivery of essential humanitarian aid and the ongoing attacks on hospitals are not only a violation of the provisional measures that the ICJ ordered Israel to take; they also constitute a breach of Israel's legal obligations, as the occupying power, under international humanitarian law.

In light of the real and imminent risk of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and to prevent the deterioration of the humanitarian catastrophe even further, I urge the State of Israel to comply with the ICJ ruling and to take immediate and effective steps to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian and medical aid across the entire Gaza Strip as required by international law.

Yours Sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Israel must ensure to the fullest extent of the means available to it, that the basic needs of the population of Gaza are met, which could include, for example, urgently opening additional access points to Gaza, including in the north, ensuring supplies can reach all parts of Gaza, and lifting the siege. Israel must ensure that Gaza is supplied with the food, medical supplies and other basic goods, including sufficient water and fuel, needed to allow the population to live under adequate material conditions. Using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited.

The continuous Israeli bombardment across the occupied Gaza Strip, by air, land and sea, the mass displacement of Gaza's population, the blocking of aid to civilians coupled with the vast destruction of civilian infrastructure, and the tightening of Israel's siege of Gaza, have resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe for civilians who face a real and imminent risk of genocide and famine. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 2.2 million people are at imminent risk of famine in Gaza. Moreover, infectious diseases mount in the entire Gaza Strip due to severe overcrowding and lack of access to adequate health services, hygiene facilities, clean water and sanitation. According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), children in Gaza face deadly threats to their lives, as cases of diseases rise and nutrition plummets, resulting in a worrying increase in cases of chronic diarrhoea. UNICEF has also expressed its concern about the lack of adequate nutrition of over 155,000 pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, as well as more than 135,000 children under two, given their specific nutrition needs and vulnerability.

Further compounding the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in the entire Gaza strip is the continuous deterioration of the healthcare system, which is on the brink of total collapse. According to WHO, only 13 hospitals out of 36 are partially functioning in the entire Gaza Strip. In central and southern Gaza, where currently over two million people are sheltering, hospitals are operating far beyond capacity, including the three most important hospitals in those areas: European Gaza Hospital and Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis in the south, and Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah in the central area. The remaining partially functioning hospitals are grappling with the grave shortage of medical supplies such as anaesthesia, antibiotics, pain relief medicines, and external fixators, as well as their urgent need for fuel, food, and drinking water. The shortage of medical staff, including specialized surgeons, neurosurgeons, and intensive care staff remains a major challenge for the remaining functioning health system.

Furthermore, the limited access to electricity, fuel, and telecommunications services continues to drastically hamper the humanitarian situation in Gaza. According to OCHA, since 11 October 2023, the entire Gaza Strip has been lacking electricity, after the Israeli authorities cut off the electricity supply, and fuel reserves for Gaza's sole power plant were depleted. The communications and industrial fuel shutdown continue to significantly hinder people from seeking lifesaving services, as well as the aid community's efforts to assess and to adequately respond to the deepening humanitarian crisis. Severe fuel shortages prevent the operation of sewage stations, resulting in environmental and public health problems, which are exacerbated by the limited access to essential sanitation supplies and services.

Amidst this humanitarian catastrophe, women in Gaza are paying an exorbitantly high price, facing a desperate shortage of hygiene supplies, including menstrual supplies such as pads, clean underwear, wet wipes and more. Some women have been reduced to ripping off edges of shelter tents or pieces of clothing to use as pads. There are tens of thousands of pregnant women in Gaza, according to the United Nations Population Fund. At least 40% of those pregnancies have been classed as high risk; 180 mothers give birth daily without a doctor, midwife or nurse to support them during labour, and with no pain relief, anaesthesia or hygiene material.

Amnesty International calls on the State of Israel to comply with the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ and to take immediate and effective measures to provide urgently needed basic services and humanitarian aid to the population in the occupied Gaza Strip. Amnesty warns against the devastating consequences of a land invasion of Rafah, as over 1.2 million Palestinian civilians who are trapped there, the vast majority of them displaced, have nowhere to go. Israel must also end its near-total siege and refrain from attacking hospitals and medical facilities. While the Court has stopped short of calling for a ceasefire, Amnesty International reiterates that an immediate and sustained ceasefire by all parties is the most effective way to ensure the implementation of the Court's provisional measures and to prevent genocide in Gaza.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Hebrew, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 APRIL 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.