

Humanitarian Coordinator's opening remarks to Geneva-based correspondents

27 Oct 2023

By Lynn Hastings, Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory

As delivered



All humanitarian assistance and humanitarian issues have to be unconditional. We all know there are more than 200 hostages in captivity, and they need to be released immediately and unconditionally. The same goes for humanitarian assistance going into Gaza. It has to be able to reach civilians unconditionally.

According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza at least 6,500 Palestinians have now been killed in the past 21 days. 17,000 are injured, 68 per cent of those are children and women.

45 per cent of all housing units have been destroyed or damaged.

76 attacks on health care affecting 35 facilities and 24 ambulances.

219 facilities for education have also been hit, and 29 UNRWA schools.

There is about 1.4 million people displaced right now, and nearly 630,000 of those are in UNRWA shelters, most of them at least at 2.5 times their capacity.

For the 18th consecutive day, Gaza remains under full electricity blackout following the Israelis halt of electricity and fuel supply to Gaza, and water as well.

The backup generators for many essential services, including hospitals and water desalination plants and food production are one by one coming to a halt because of the lack of fuel. The health system is overrun, of course, and one third of the hospitals in Gaza have been shut down and two-thirds of the primary health care clinics have shut down due to the damage or to the lack of fuel.

Some improvements in drinking water supply in the areas over the past few days. But people still only have access to brackish or saline groundwater. The majority of water available to people in Gaza comes from the ground. It is very salty, needs to be desalinated, which cannot happen without fuel for generators. We have seen some deliveries of trucks starting. They started on the 21st of October, we have gotten in approximately 74 trucks, we are expecting another eight or so today. Just to put things in comparison, there were 450 trucks going into Gaza before October 7th. And that was under some very strict restrictions in terms of goods being able to get into Gaza. We are down now to approximately 12. So, from 450 down to 12, and at the same time, very little access to any type of drinking water or electricity, which means we need to be bringing in fuel and water, which we weren't having to do before.

I also want to highlight some of the messages that a lot of the population in Gaza has received, a number of them being told to leave the north. I've said it before that over a million people cannot just pick up and move to the south where there have been repeated bombings, there is no service delivery, there is no shelter, there is no accommodation. We estimate about 300,000 to 400,000 people are still left in the north. We need to be able to deliver to those people, we need to be able to deliver assistance to wherever the people who are in need are living.

I will end it there saving except to say that now 53 UNRWA staff have been killed. And these are the people who are out there trying to deliver services in these extremely difficult circumstances. It is they, that we really need to be paying tribute to.

Thank you.

* As explained during the briefing, some of the above-listed figures have not been independently verified by the United Nations and are based on the sources referenced in OCHA's daily Flash Updates.