

# HUMANITARIAN ACCESS GAZA STRIP

1-31 JANUARY 2024

## OVERVIEW

In January, amid ongoing intense hostilities, the ability of humanitarian missions to support people in need wherever they are across Gaza deteriorated compared with October-December 2023. Departing from the southern-most governorate of Rafah, aid missions increasingly had their access denied to areas north of Wadi Gaza (hereafter "the north"); as well as to areas south of Wadi Gaza, which are increasingly requiring coordination with Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) due to geographical shifts in conflict activity. Additionally, such missions were increasingly interfered with programmatically or delayed by Israeli forces. Amidst the above, threats to the safety of humanitarian personnel and sites continue to reduce the ability of humanitarian staff to operate.

**Aid to North of Wadi Gaza: 16% of planned aid missions were facilitated.** Of 61 planned missions to the north, ten (16%) were facilitated by the Israeli authorities, two (3%) were partially facilitated, 34 (56%) were denied access, and six (10%) were postponed by aid organizations due to internal operational constraints. In an emerging pattern, the access of an additional nine missions (15%) was initially facilitated, but subsequently impeded as routes designated by the Israeli military proved to be unpassable, or due to the imposition of excessive delays prior to the departure of the missions or at checkpoints en route. Facilitated missions primarily involved food distribution, while the access of missions to support critical hospitals and facilities providing water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) services remained amongst those overwhelmingly denied.

**Aid to South of Wadi Gaza: 57% of planned aid missions were facilitated.** Of 114 planned missions to areas assessed as necessitating coordination to the south of Wadi Gaza, 65 (57%) were facilitated, one was partially facilitated, eight (7%) were initially facilitated but then impeded, 28 (25%) were denied access, and 12 (11%) were postponed internally. The 25% denial rate represents an increase compared with December 2023, where two (12%) of 16 missions were denied access. The 12 postponed missions, all destined for or returning from hospitals and humanitarian sites, were an emerging trend related to the geographical spread of military activities. The denials included critical resupply missions to hospitals and to address unexploded ordnance (UXOs). Areas not requiring coordination are excluded from these statistics.

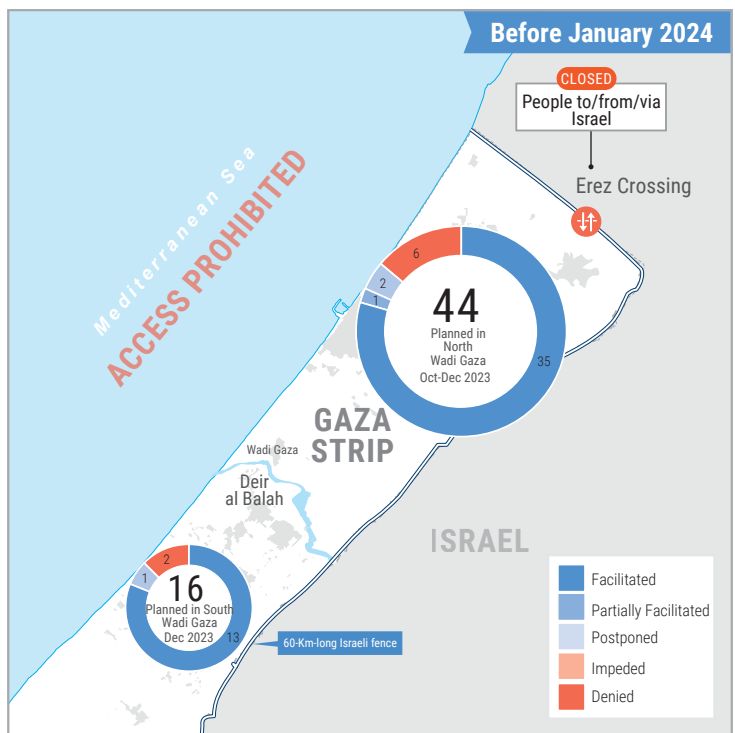
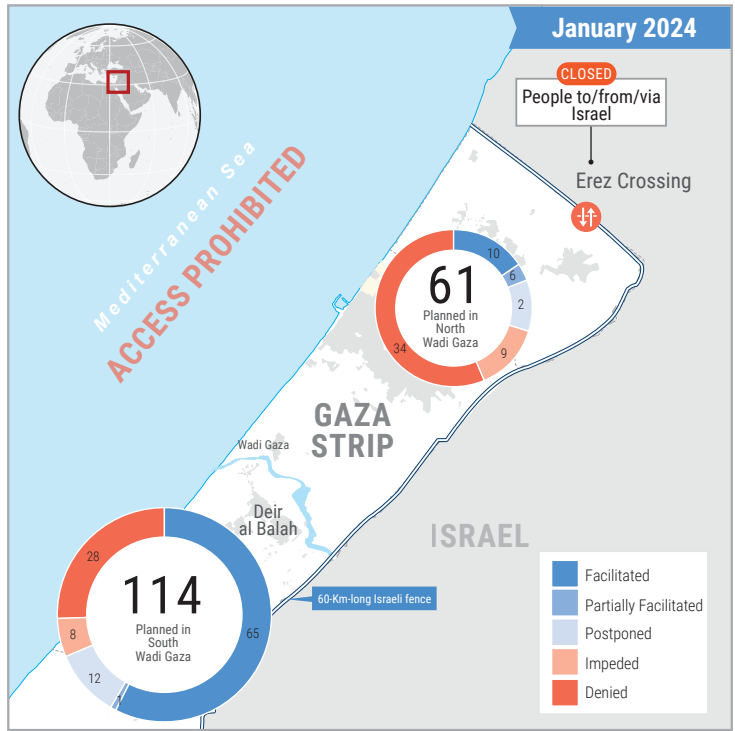
**0 of 22 requests for military checkpoints to open early materialized.** To facilitate aid and mitigate security risks in a congested environment, where people desperate for support gather around UN warehouses or trucks, multiple main supply routes must remain accessible, particularly by dawn, when operational conditions are optimal. It is thus critical that Israeli checkpoints open at 6:00. While a formal mechanism to facilitate early openings has been established, it has not materialized even once. Checkpoints at Wadi Gaza were typically scheduled to open at 9:00 or later, but opened consistently after the announced hour (only one checkpoint at a time). In a single case, an early opening was coordinated in advance, but it too did not operationalize, resulting in a convoy waiting for over an hour at the closed checkpoint, ultimately having to turn back as people gathered around it. Overall, on eight occasions, the UN was unable to facilitate missions due to extensive delays at checkpoints.

**Fuel to North Wadi Gaza: 2 (10%) of 21 planned missions were facilitated.** Unimpeded access would allow for the delivery of at least 386,400 litres, based on allocations for the planned missions, whereas in reality only 38,400 litres could be delivered. Both deliveries were facilitated to a single hospital, leaving other hospitals and WASH facilities unfueled. Among the planned convoys that were not facilitated, there were 13 consecutive access denials for missions destined to water and wastewater pumping stations. Fuel numbers should be considered indicative only, as some missions were denied multiple times.

**Fuel to South Wadi Gaza: 15 (71%) of 21 planned missions to areas requiring coordination were facilitated.** A total of 300,600 litres were delivered. However, convoys to Nasser hospital were denied access five times in a row. Fuel shortages in hospitals force them to cease most operations and could lead to preventable deaths. Not fueling or repairing water and sewage pumps would likely result in immediate and long-term health and environmental hazards spreading in Gaza and across borders.

**Rising programmatic interference.** Aid is delivered on the basis of independent assessments of humanitarian needs and prioritization. In some cases, Israeli forces interfered with mission programmes, often forcing their cancellation. At times, the Israeli military required the provision of justifications for fuel quantities for health facilities. In other cases, it facilitated access under the condition that no delivery is made to hospitals. In some instances, it imposed reductions on the volume of assistance, such as the quantity of food. Finally, it repeatedly denied access to Nasser hospital for the delivery of fuel, even as other aid missions to the same location were facilitated. The coordination mechanism, which was developed to improve security to aid missions, is undermined when used to restrict their operations. Should agencies move away from coordinating with parties to the conflict, it would expose them further; whereas agencies are already vulnerable due to Israeli restrictions on the import of critical equipment, including those related to communications.

**Incidents impacting humanitarian compounds.** Since 7 October, over 375 internally displaced persons and humanitarian staff have been killed and 1,350 injured in over 290 incidents that directly or collaterally impacted humanitarian compounds which had been notified to parties to the conflict. These include impacts by munitions as well as the use of such facilities by conflict actors. Such incidents undermine the efficacy and credibility of the notification system by compromising the safety of humanitarian operations.



## PLANNED AID MISSIONS

