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Intentionally Hampering the Humanitarian Aid Process: Another Act in Israel's Ongoing Genocide in Gaza

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As part of its genocidal campaign against Palestinians, Israel has intentionally hampered the process of humanitarian aid delivery to and distribution in Gaza through various measures and policies. This includes smear campaign against the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) and attacks against its personnel and facilities; closing off land crossings between Gaza and Israel, as well as the border crossing between Gaza and Egypt; the establishment of both permanent and spontaneous checkpoints inside Gaza; the construction of an alternative floating pier led by the United States (U.S.); opening fire on starving Palestinians; and

opting for dangerous, inefficient and dehumanising foreign air-dropped aid while crippling the work of existing humanitarian agencies on the ground by, *inter alia*, attacking or detaining aid workers, including truck drivers. These attacks and measures, coupled with impeding the work of humanitarian relief organisations in Gaza, amount to the genocidal act of deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of the Palestinian people.

While Israel has been [reporting](#) on its ‘humanitarian efforts’ in relation to Gaza through the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), alleging that “[t]he volume of humanitarian aid is determined, among other factors, by the ability of humanitarian organisations within the Gaza Strip to absorb the aid”, reports from the ground clearly show otherwise, as the United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, [declared](#) that “delivering aid has become almost impossible” in Gaza.

Israel’s so-called ‘humanitarian efforts’ only serve to shield it from criticism and ensure its long-enjoyed impunity, thereby adding yet another layer of “[camouflage](#)” to its genocidal campaign. Yet, in reality, Israeli officials, in their genocidal statements, have made their intentions to block humanitarian aid clear. For example, Israel’s Minister of Heritage, Amichai Eliyahu, [said](#) on Channel 14, “the absurdity is that because we need the US support, or [rather] are asking for the US support, we are allowing Hamas to continue to breathe. And I’m saying: there’s an alternative, and the alternative is: **stop all the humanitarian aid**. Literally stop it... It is possible to get out of international agreements in order to bring about the decisive victory, this decisive victory which would be so morally justified, which would be

so sensical, and which today we are stuck and don't reach".

Indeed, ten months on, some humanitarian aid is still being denied entry. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that, [since](#) 7 October 2023 [until](#) the end of [August](#), out of around 2,883 humanitarian assistance missions coordinated with the Israeli authorities in Gaza, around 1,026, or 35.5 percent, were denied or impeded, while the rest were 'facilitated' or 'cancelled' by humanitarian organisations due to logistical, operational, or security reasons.

Even the [insufficient aid](#) that enters is hampered by Israel's blocking of the UN and other relief agencies from 'absorbing the aid' on the ground, including through "[bottlenecks in movement](#)" processes, and continuous bombing and targeting by the Israeli military, including against humanitarian conveyances themselves – the last of which was on 27 August 2024, when a UN-marked humanitarian vehicle, part of a convoy fully coordinated with the Israeli military, was [struck](#) 10 times by Israeli gunfire.

Hampering the humanitarian aid process in Gaza is not an incidental outcome, but is a deliberate component of Israel's genocide, whose ultimate aim is to annihilate Palestinians and all elements essential for life in Gaza. Since as early as 9 October 2023, Israel has imposed a full siege on Gaza, restricting access of humanitarian aid and closing off several land crossings, effectively sentencing Palestinians to [starvation, epidemics and diseases](#), including [polio](#), and death. In May 2024, following the [ground invasion](#) of Rafah, the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) [closed](#) the last remaining land crossings in southern Gaza. The Karem Abu Salem crossing was closed on [5 May](#) then reopened mainly for access of goods and, in rare cases, medical patients. The Rafah crossing was seized and shut down by the IOF on 7 May. Between 17 and 19 June

2024, [footage](#) emerged showing the IOF destroying the Palestinian side of the crossing, thereby rendering it inoperable. The Rafah border crossing was regarded as the lifeline for humanitarian aid into Gaza and the sole passage for Palestinians to enter or exit Gaza.

Israeli policies and actions have set the stage for humanitarian space to collapse in Gaza, which indeed “[continues to further shrink](#)”. Israel’s continuous bombardment dangerously affects aid access and delivery, while Israel’s systematic displacement of Palestinians through so-called ‘evacuation orders’ cripple the functionality of life-sustaining facilities, and are severely [hindering](#) humanitarian agencies’ [ability to deliver](#) essential support and services. For example, between 1 and 26 August, Israel [issued](#) 16 displacement orders. Specifically, the order issued on 25 August targeting [Deir Al-Balah impacted](#) 15 UN and NGO premises, as well as four UN warehouses. Israeli displacement orders further impact the access of Palestinians to and the functionality of life-sustaining facilities. For example, displacement orders in central and western Gaza city in July have [forced](#) patients and medical staff to evacuate three hospitals in one week in fear of intensified Israeli military attacks. Notably, as of 30 August 2024, only 17 out of Gaza’s 36 hospitals are [partially functional](#), with the majority of those being [partially inaccessible](#).

Hampering the humanitarian aid process in Gaza also includes a pattern of attacking aid workers, [convoys](#), and [humanitarian relief operations](#). Since the start of its genocidal campaign, Israel has [killed](#) 294 aid workers in Gaza, the majority of whom were UN employees, including [212](#) of UNRWA’s — the highest number of UN aid workers killed in [history](#). Israel has also attacked Palestinians seeking aid in Gaza, such as the infamous ‘[Flour Massacre](#)’, which resulted in killing at least 112 Palestinians and

wounding 760 others. Alarming, Israeli citizens, including settlers living in illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, have deliberately blocked and [attacked](#) aid convoys bound for Gaza, burned trucks, attacked the drivers and vandalised aid supplies. This has remained unpunished and much tolerated, if not [encouraged](#), by the Israeli authorities.

Israel's tactics to intentionally hamper the humanitarian aid process also include the creation of alternatives to circumvent the existing processes of aid delivery in Gaza, most evident in Israel's efforts to eliminate UN agencies on the ground, notably the UNRWA, the agency that supports Palestinian refugees throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, and the main humanitarian agency operating in Gaza. This is particularly evident in the ongoing smear campaign against UNRWA, leading to substantial [funding cuts](#) by donor states, and more recently, the legislative efforts within the Israeli parliament to classify UNRWA as a '[terrorist organisation](#)'. Moreover, Israel and the U.S. have [created](#) a floating pier at a reported cost of 3.2 million USD, which is allegedly intended for aid delivery by sea, as a substitute for land deliveries, despite the fact that land delivery is faster, cheaper and can ensure access to larger volumes of aid. Notably, in the few days after the first sea delivery of aid, part of the pier was [disconnected](#) and swept away by waves, amid criticism that this project was "[bound to fail](#) in the first place".

Instead of paying its financial contribution to the UNRWA, estimated at around 300 million USD which it decided to [suspend](#), the U.S. opted for building a more expensive and unreliable route for aid delivery that does not answer to the root cause of the problem: Israel's ongoing genocide and continued blockage of sufficient aid to Palestinians throughout

Gaza. This move further solidifies Israel's control over the territory, and emboldens its systematic crackdown on the UNRWA. The U.S. actions render it complicit in sliding the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza deeper into the abyss, and supports Israel's clear intention to sever the few remaining [lifelines](#) providing essential aid to the besieged Palestinians.

The [Nuseirat massacre](#) committed by the Israeli military, perfidiously killing at least 274 Palestinians and injuring around 698 others, raises serious concern about the purpose of the floating pier and the U.S.'s involvement in the attack. On 8 June 2024, the IOF infiltrated the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza in civilian vehicles, including a truck similar to those used for humanitarian aid delivery, through the [reported](#) utilisation of the U.S.-built pier and based on U.S. intelligence and logistics support. By supporting the feigning of civilian status to kill or injure Palestinians, the U.S. may be directly participating in committing violations of international law, including the war crime of [perfidy](#). The prohibited methods employed in this genocidal massacre pose [grave risks](#) to the work and safety of relief workers and operations, and further hamper the humanitarian aid process in Gaza.

Another alternative to land delivery has been the Israeli-approved foreign air-dropped aid. Air-dropped aid has proven to be [dangerous](#), inefficient and expensive, and is considered a [last resort](#). As foreign airdrops, such as those provided by the U.S., UK, France and Jordan, are signed off by Israel, this method gives Israel more control to frustrate aid delivery and aggravate a crisis it has created over the past ten months. In lieu of adhering to their international obligations and responsibility to prevent atrocity crimes and take effective concrete measures to impose a ceasefire, Third States are hiding behind

frivolous efforts that do not fulfil the needs of a population of 2.3 million people.

These various measures and attacks on aid delivery and humanitarian assistance must be understood as a deliberate attempt to further starve Palestinians in Gaza, deny them access to basic and vital supplies and thus prompt their destruction. On 28 March 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) [determined](#) that famine was setting in Gaza, accordingly, it ordered Israel to “[t]ake all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay [...] the unhindered provision at scale by all concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, [...] including by increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points and maintaining them open for as long as necessary”. As a result of Israel’s failure to comply with ICJ’s provisional measures orders, and denial of access to humanitarian aid, northern Gaza is suffering a “[full-blown famine](#)”, where one in three children under two years of age are [acutely malnourished](#), while famine [deepens](#) in southern Gaza. The World Health Organisation (WHO) [reported](#) on 11 July that “almost the entire population of Gaza now faces high levels of acute food insecurity. Almost one in four are facing starvation, and another one in three face acute malnutrition.” Citing the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the WHO reported on 9 July 2024, that 34 Palestinians, mostly children, have [died](#) of malnutrition and dehydration since 7 October 2023.

Israel’s attacks on humanitarian relief operations, including by crippling existing aid processes, constitute another tool of its genocidal campaign in Gaza. Indeed, actions deliberately inflicting conditions of life on a people calculated to bring about its physical destruction [amount](#) to genocidal acts under the Genocide Convention provided that they are committed with the intent to destroy the targeted group. Fuelled by international inaction and

prolonged impunity, Israel carries on with its attempt to [push](#) and force humanitarian organisations to cease their life-saving operations in Gaza, using starvation as a weapon of war, and an act of genocide intended to destroy Palestinians in Gaza.

These efforts should also be seen as a means to further entrench control over Gaza and Palestinians therein, subjecting them to domination and oppression, which qualifies as inhuman acts of apartheid under the Apartheid Convention, and a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Israel's impunity stands in sharp contrast with Third States' obligations, including the *erga omnes* obligation to prevent and end the crime of genocide. Third States that are knowingly contributing to Israel's intentionally wrongful acts, by providing military or diplomatic support to Israel, may be [held responsible](#) for their complicity in genocide as well as a number of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As Israel's staunchest ally, the U.S. is by far the biggest accessory to Israel's ongoing genocide, demonstrated through its arms transfers to Israel and its involvement in restricting and hampering the humanitarian aid process in Gaza by building the floating pier. Per its international obligations, the U.S. must, but fails to, use its substantial leverage over Israel to end the ongoing genocide by reinstating funding to UNRWA, imposing a [two-way arms embargo](#) on Israel, and forcing Israel to open land crossings and agree to an immediate ceasefire.