

# **JUST TWELVE TRUCKS DISTRIBUTE FOOD AND WATER IN NORTH GAZA GOVERNORATE IN 2.5 MONTHS**

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***Barefoot children forced to search through rubbish for food  
scraps across Gaza***

Of the meagre 34 trucks of food and water given permission to enter the North Gaza Governorate over the last 2.5 months, deliberate delays and systematic obstructions by the Israeli military meant that just twelve managed to distribute aid to starving Palestinian civilians. For three of these, once the food and water had been delivered to the school where people were sheltering, it was then cleared and shelled within hours.

Oxfam and other international humanitarian agencies have been continually prevented from delivering lifesaving aid in the North Gaza Governorate since 6 October when Israel escalated its military siege of Jabalia, Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun, bar an extremely limited amount of stock already stored there.

Thousands of people are estimated to still be cut off, but with humanitarian access blocked it's impossible to know exact numbers. At the beginning of December, humanitarian organisations operating in Gaza were receiving calls from vulnerable people trapped in homes and shelters that had completely run out of food and water.

From 6 October, Israel has permitted just 34 UN trucks of food and water to enter the North Gaza Governorate. A convoy of 11 trucks last month was initially held up at the holding point by the Israeli military at Jabalia, where some food was taken by starving civilians. After the green light to proceed to the destination was received, the trucks were then stopped further on at a military checkpoint. Soldiers forced the drivers to offload the aid in a militarised zone, which desperate civilians had no access to.

The following week, Israel permitted 14 more trucks. Due to the delay in receiving the final authorisation from the Israeli authorities, only three trucks were able to enter. They carried ready-to-eat rations, wheat flour and water and reached the intended destination of Mahdia al-Shawa school in Beit Hanoun where displaced families were sheltering. While the aid was distributed, within hours soldiers and quadcopters fired on the school and people were ordered to leave. The next day the Israeli military returned and shelled the school, burning down the buildings.

On 20 December, Israel finally permitted a further 9 UN trucks to deliver food and water to an aid distribution point in Beit Hanoun, where civilians sheltering in schools were able to collect it. People said that they were barely surviving and had so little to eat, they were eating leaves.

Last month the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) warned that there is a strong likelihood that famine is already occurring in the north and the risk of famine persists across the whole of Gaza. People are being pushed to unimaginable, desperate measures to survive. Children and women are searching through piles of rubbish for food scraps, bare-handed and often barefoot, risking disease and injury from sharp metal and exposed to the threat of unexploded bombs. Gaza now has the highest number of child amputees in the world with the healthcare system decimated and little critical supplies, including anaesthetic.

Sally Abi-Khalil, Oxfam's Middle East and North Africa Director said:

“The situation in Gaza is apocalyptic and people are trapped, unable to find any kind of safety. The absolute desperation of having no food or shelter for your family in the biting cold of winter. It is abhorrent that despite international law being so publicly violated by Israel and starvation being used relentlessly as a weapon of war, world leaders continue to do nothing.

“Gaza has been widely destroyed and the entire population is suffering. The public sector has collapsed and the humanitarian system is on its knees. We plead with the entire international community – stop this, now. You have the diplomatic and economic levers to make Israel stop. Every day that passes without a ceasefire is a death sentence for hundreds more civilians.”

Constant shelling also continues in the north - the Palestinian Civil Defence (PCD) estimates that more than 2,700 people have been killed in the North Gaza governorate since the siege. The bodies of half of those killed have not been able to be recovered and more than 10,000 have been injured.

Around 130,000 people have now been forcibly displaced from the North Gaza Governorate, 70 per cent - 91,000 - are women and girls,

who are trying to survive in abandoned buildings and overcrowded shelters in Gaza City. The mass displacement of people has further strained resources and complicated aid delivery in already dire conditions.

Across Gaza, aid deliveries continue to be blocked, deliberately hampered and targeted by Israel's military. All crossings are barely functional, with only Erez West (Zikim) operating with any consistency. Oxfam staff said this week that humanitarian access everywhere is at an all-time low. Winter weather conditions are expected to affect more than 1.6 million people living in makeshift shelters, including half a million in flood-prone areas. The UN reported that so far, only 23 per cent of displaced people across the Gaza Strip have received support to help protect them from the rain and cold, leaving over 900,000 people at risk of exposure.

People have told Oxfam about trying to survive with their families amidst crippling hunger. A man who was forced to evacuate with his family from Al-Maghazi refugee camp in the centre of Gaza with little notice last week said "Adults tell the kids not to play so they don't get dizzy. One pack of biscuits is all we have for 15 grandchildren. We need shelter but a simple plastic tarpaulin costs \$180 and we would need at least five to make a basic tent. There's no chance of light or power. We're doing everything we can, but it's not enough."

Soaring food prices and scarcity across Gaza mean that people are no longer able to buy food by the kilogram, for example buying a single tomato or green pepper for their family. An Oxfam staff member described how the entire family searched Deir al-Balah for one egg to try and provide calcium for a relative with a broken bone. The egg cost nearly \$6. Only five bakeries out of nineteen are operational, and many people are risking their lives in overcrowded queues, sometimes waiting from as early as 3am just to secure basic supplies.

Oxfam is demanding an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire and the release of all hostages and unlawfully detained Palestinians. The obstruction of humanitarian aid efforts must end, with protection of civilians and unhindered access for all lifesaving aid to the Gaza Strip, including the North Gaza Governorate. Palestinians

must be given the freedom to move home, rebuild, and live in peace and dignity, free of occupation or blockade.

## **Ends**

**For more information and interviews, please contact Oxfam's Media Unit on + 44 (0) 7748 761 999 / [media.unit@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:media.unit@oxfam.org.uk)**

## **Notes to editor**

Please note that the original version of this story stated that just three UN trucks had managed to distribute food and water within the North Gaza Governorate, which was correct when the release went out on 19th December, under embargo for 23rd December. On 21st December, Oxfam was informed that an additional nine UN trucks of food and water were allowed in on Friday 20th December. None were planned for Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd. Even though 12 trucks of food and water in 2.5 months is still wholly inadequate, for accuracy, we have amended the headline and included this detail within the release.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) confirmed that since 6 October to 16 December 2024 (most up to date figures available), the UN and partners had tried to coordinate 137 missions to the North Gaza Governorate. More than 90 per cent – 124 – were denied outright. Two were approved; the WFP convoy of 11 trucks carrying food and water on 7 November and the WFP convoy of 14 trucks – of which only three were able to enter – on 11 November. The other 11, which were all medical evacuation/assessment missions at Kamal Adwan Hospital, were approved but one could not reach the hospital due to military activity and the rest all faced impediments along the way.

The Mahdia al-Shawa school was shelled by the Israeli military on **12 November**

The OCHA **flash update** on 10 December confirmed there were still 65-75,000 people still in the North Gaza Governorate. This number is thought to be significantly lower now, but due to access restrictions, no accurate estimates are available

A **Protection Cluster report** on 2 December detailed how vulnerable people were calling protection charities operating in Gaza and women and children are being forced to increasingly resort to searching piles of rubbish barefoot and without gloves for food scraps. A copy is available on request.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) prohibits the use of starvation as a method of warfare. As the occupying power in Gaza, Israel is bound by IHL to provide for the needs and protection of the population of Gaza. In 2018, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2417, which unanimously condemned the use of starvation against civilians as a method of warfare and declared any denial of humanitarian access a violation of international law.