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Only a permanent ceasefire can bring an end to Gaza's suffering

22 November 2023



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The agreement between Israel and Hamas for a four-day truce in Gaza will bring some limited respite for Palestinians who have endured 46 days of devastating bombardment, but is far below what is needed to end Gaza's humanitarian calamity. Only a permanent ceasefire can bring an end to Gaza's suffering, and allow people to rebuild their lives and communities.

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)'s CEO, Melanie Ward, said: *"We welcome that families of some hostages and detainees will be reunited with their loved ones, however urgent efforts are needed to ensure the survival of more than two million people in Gaza whose lives continue to be at risk. This includes a massive mobilisation of aid - including fuel, food and medical resources - and working to rapidly restore the functioning of hospitals, schools, telecommunications, and essential services like shops and bakeries."*

"But most of this will be impossible in the space of the few short days of this truce. States including the UK must therefore use this opportunity to push rapidly to attain a sustainable ceasefire and an end to the siege so that aid can flow to all who need it."

"A return to hostilities would be a mark of failure against the international community, condemning many more Palestinian families to death as bombs start falling once again on homes, schools and hospitals. Israel's systematic dismantling of Gaza's health system will resume, thousands more will be forcibly displaced from their homes into overflowing shelters, and the looming health catastrophe of hunger, dehydration and infectious disease will deepen."

"These are horrors which must be permanently ended, not briefly paused. Political leaders must seize this moment to change the course of this conflict. At a minimum, they should make it clear that a

resumption of attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure will not be tolerated. Anything else will be received as a green light to atrocities."

MAP's team in Gaza, who have lived through multiple Israeli military offensives, say they worry that the coming hours will be particularly destructive, as bombardment tends to intensify before truces.

Israel's military assault has killed more than 14,000 Palestinians, including at least 5,840 children, and injured more than 33,000 people. Since 7 October, the World Health Organization (WHO) has documented 178 attacks on healthcare in Gaza.

This temporary truce will also not bring an end to violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, where more people have been killed by Israeli forces and settlers since 7 October than the whole of last year, and the use of air strikes and drone attacks have intensified. Here too, states must ensure that violations of international law are met with meaningful consequences.

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