

SIEGE ON GAZA WILL BE A HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE - OXFAM

Press Releases

- Published: **10 Oct 2023**

- Short URL: <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/mc/juuh3c/>

For immediate release

Oxfam is warning that a total siege on Gaza will lead to a humanitarian catastrophe. Yesterday's announcement from the Israeli government, in response to the appalling attacks by Hamas, will stop all food, water, electricity and fuel from reaching an already vulnerable population. The siege adds to the ongoing blockade of Gaza, which has endured for 16 years.

The deadliest day in Israel's history has left over 1,500 people dead in Israel and Gaza, with many more injured. It comes in what has already been the deadliest year in the West Bank and now Gaza. Oxfam has suspended all of its humanitarian and development work in Gaza due to the ongoing airstrikes and violence.

Mustafa Tamaizeh, Oxfam Acting Country Director in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel said:

"Oxfam is horrified by the recent attacks. Violence never paves the way for peace. The international community must use all diplomatic tools at its disposal to secure an immediate ceasefire.

"The decision to implement a 'total siege' by the Israeli government, in addition to the ongoing blockade, will further deny Gazan civilians essentials like food, water and electricity. This constitutes collective punishment of a population that bears no responsibility for the

violence and is illegal under international law. It will not contribute to peace and security, instead, it will further fan the flames of this crisis.”

The UN has reported there are over 180,000 people currently displaced within Gaza; 135,000 of those are taking refuge in already crowded UN relief agency schools. Families are facing dire shortages of food, water and sanitation facilities, many are trapped in their homes, with nowhere to flee.

Gaza’s sole power plant, crucial for running essential services such as water and sanitation, was already operating for just four hours a day before the escalation of hostilities. Without fuel, it is on the brink of complete shutdown, which will have dire consequences for hospitals and healthcare facilities that rely heavily on generators for vital medical equipment such as life-support systems.

Damage from airstrikes have disrupted services to already scarce water and sanitation facilities for over 400,000 people. The wastewater treatment plant in northern Gaza has stopped, leading to the discharge of raw sewage into the sea.

Tamaizeh said: “It is long past time to break the cycle of war followed by temporary truces and pledges of humanitarian aid, which are only sticking plasters. Instead, the international community must now finally tackle the root causes of injustice and violence that is being perpetrated under the occupation.”

Ends

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Notes to editor

Before this weekend, the [UN](#) and humanitarian partners estimate that 2.1 million Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) - including 80% of the population in Gaza - depended on humanitarian assistance.

Figures on the number of people displaced within Gaza are from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) [10th October](#) Situation Report.

Oxfam has been working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel since the 1950s and established a country office in the 1980s. We work with the most vulnerable communities in

Gaza, East Jerusalem, and Area C, the 61 per cent of the West Bank where the government of Israel maintains full military and civil control.

In Gaza, Oxfam works with Palestinian women, men and youth to improve their livelihoods and increase economic opportunities, combat gender-based violence and inequality and ensure access to basic needs and fundamental rights through our humanitarian work.

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