

# Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on the announcement of a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip

15 January 2025



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**NEW YORK, 15 January 2025** – “UNICEF welcomes the announcement today of a ceasefire deal between the parties to the conflict in the Gaza Strip. This is long overdue for the children and families of Gaza who have endured more than a year of bombardment and deprivation, and for the hostages in Gaza and their families in Israel who have suffered so much.

“The war has exacted a horrific toll on Gaza’s children – reportedly leaving at least 14,500 dead, thousands more injured, an estimated 17,000 unaccompanied or separated from their parents, and nearly one million displaced from their homes.

“The scale of humanitarian needs is enormous, and UNICEF and partners are ready to scale up our response. The ceasefire must, finally, afford humanitarian actors the opportunity to safely roll out the massive response inside the Gaza Strip that is so desperately needed. This includes unimpeded access to reach all children and families with essential food and nutrition, health care and psychosocial support, clean water, and sanitation, education, and learning, as well as cash assistance and the resumption of commercial trucking operations.

“With the collapse of essential services across Gaza, we must act urgently to save lives and help children recover.

“Less than half of Gaza’s 36 hospitals are functional, increasing the risk of infectious disease outbreaks and putting children at risk. Water production is at less than 25 per cent capacity. Nearly all of the territory’s 2.1 million people are facing high levels of food insecurity. And 95 per cent of Gaza’s school buildings have been damaged or destroyed.

“It is imperative that the parties fully adhere to the ceasefire and allow the necessary level of aid into the Gaza Strip through all reliable entry points. The security environment must also be urgently addressed. This will allow UNICEF to increase the screening and treatment of children suffering from malnutrition, facilitate vaccination catch-up for 420,000 children under 5 years, and support the prevention of disease outbreaks, including polio, measles, and cholera.

“In addition, UNICEF strongly urges the parties to urgently forge a lasting political resolution that prioritizes the rights and well-being of this and future generations of children.

“The war in Gaza has already cost children so much. We must act now and work together for a better future for all children.”

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