

Children in Gaza need life-saving support



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 Statement

Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on the situation in the Gaza Strip

24 July 2024



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NEW YORK, 24 July 2024 - “With each passing week, children and families face new horrors in the Gaza Strip. The devastating attacks on schools and internally displaced sites continue, reportedly killing hundreds more Palestinians, many of them women and children, and leaving already overwhelmed hospitals buckling under the strain.

“We see children who withstood previous injuries only to be hurt again. Doctors and nurses with no resources, struggling to save lives. Thousands of boys and girls sick, hungry, injured, or separated from their families. The violence and deprivation are leaving permanent scars on their vulnerable bodies and minds. And now, with a breakdown in sanitation and sewage treatment, the polio virus joins the list of threats, especially for the thousands of unvaccinated children.

“As families are repeatedly forced to move to escape the immediate violence, the humanitarian situation is beyond catastrophic.

“Humanitarian agencies, including UNICEF, are doing everything we can to respond, but the dire situation and attacks against humanitarian personnel continue to obstruct our efforts. Just yesterday, a clearly marked UNICEF vehicle was hit by bullets while waiting at a designated holding point near the Wadi Gaza checkpoint. It was one of two vehicles on the way to pick up five young children to reunite them with their father after their mother was killed. Fortunately, no one was injured, and the team managed to reunite the family. Yet in this incident, like others before it, the humanitarian consequences could have been horrific, for the children we serve, and for our teams.

“Simply put - we do not have the necessary conditions in the Gaza Strip for a robust humanitarian response. The flow of aid must be unimpeded and access must be regular and safe.

“For almost nine months, aid has trickled into Gaza. Civilians have been deprived of supplies. The commercial sector has been decimated. This has led to growing competition for what little is available, the smuggling of goods into the Gaza Strip and now the increasingly organized looting of aid supplies. This not only impedes



our efforts to reach vulnerable families but puts our teams and the civilians we are supporting at risk.

“The challenge is exacerbated by the operating conditions on the ground. At least 278 aid workers in the Gaza Strip have already been killed – a record number – while others are put in harm’s way, or prevented from doing their jobs.

“We need an immediate improved security environment, including security for aid delivery trucks, to allow aid workers to safely reach the communities they intend to serve.

“Most critically, we need an immediate and sustainable ceasefire. We call on all parties to this conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. They must protect civilians and the infrastructure they rely on. This includes ensuring civilians receive the essentials they need to survive – food, water, nutrition treatment, shelter, and health care – through safe and unimpeded humanitarian operations.

“It is long past time for this crisis to end, for hostages to be returned to their families and for the children of Gaza to have a healthy and secure future.”

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