

The Secretary-General – remarks to the press on Gaza

08 Apr 2025

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More than an entire month has passed without a drop of aid into Gaza.

No food. No fuel. No medicine. No commercial supplies.

As aid has dried up, the floodgates of horror have re-opened.

Gaza is a killing field – and civilians are in an endless death loop.

Certain truths are clear since the atrocious October 7 terror attacks by Hamas.

Above all, we know ceasefires work.

The ceasefire allowed for the release of hostages.

The ceasefire ensured the distribution of lifesaving aid.

The ceasefire proved that the humanitarian community can deliver.

For weeks – guns fell silent, obstacles were removed, looting ended – and we were able to deliver lifesaving supplies to virtually every part of the Gaza Strip.

That all ended with the shattering of the ceasefire.

Hope sank for Palestinian families in Gaza and families of hostages in Israel – and I was reminded yesterday when I met again with hostage families.

That is why I have consistently been pushing for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, a permanent ceasefire, and full humanitarian access.

In times like this, we must be crystal clear clear about the situation.

With crossing points into Gaza shut and aid blockaded, security is in shambles and our capacity to deliver has been strangled.

And as the heads of UN humanitarian organizations declared in a joint statement yesterday: “assertions that there is now enough food to feed all Palestinians in Gaza are far from the reality on the ground, and commodities are running extremely low”.

We must also be clear about the obligations.

As the occupying power, Israel has unequivocal obligations under international law – including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Article 55, paragraph 1, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring food and medical supplies of the population”.

Article 56, paragraph 1, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining... the medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene in the occupied territory”.

It further states that medical personnel of all categories shall be allowed to carry out their duties.

And Article 59, paragraph 1, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “if the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population, and shall facilitate them by all means at its disposal”.

None of that is happening today.

No humanitarian supplies can enter Gaza.

Meanwhile, at the crossing points, food, medicine and shelter supplies are piling up, and vital equipment is stuck.

International Humanitarian Law also includes the obligation to respect humanitarian relief personnel.

I want to say a special word about those humanitarian heroes in Gaza. They are under fire and yet doing all they can to follow the path they chose – to help people.

UN agencies and our partners are ready and determined to deliver.

But the Israeli authorities newly proposed “authorization mechanisms” for aid delivery risk further controlling and callously limiting aid down to the last calorie and grain of flour.

Let me be clear: We will not participate in any arrangement that does not fully respect the humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

Unimpeded humanitarian access must be guaranteed.

And humanitarian personnel must be given the protection that they are accorded under international law.

The inviolability of United Nations premises and assets must be respected.

I call once again for an independent investigation into the killing of humanitarians – including UN personnel.

We must stick to our core principles. Member States of the United Nations must adhere to their obligations under international law.

And there must be justice and accountability when they do not.

The world may be running out of words to describe the situation in Gaza, but we will never run away from the truth.

The current path is a dead end – totally intolerable in the eyes of international law and history.

And the risk of the occupied West Bank transforming into another Gaza makes it even worse.

It is time to end the dehumanization, protect civilians, release the hostages, ensure lifesaving aid, and renew the ceasefire.

Thank you.