

UN relief chief calls on international community to "break the cycle of violence" in Gaza

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Statement by Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, on the Occupied Palestinian Territory

(Amman): I have spent the past week in the Middle East, meeting UN colleagues, partners, authorities and communities in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Idlib, Ankara, Beirut, Nabatieh, and Amman.

As I conclude this trip – my first to the region as Humanitarian Chief – I have also been meeting our humanitarian teams in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In January 2024, the International Court of Justice issued the first set of provisional orders, in the case on the application of the Genocide Convention in the Gaza Strip.

Less than a year later, the sustained intensity of violence means that there is nowhere that civilians in Gaza are safe. Schools, hospitals and civilian infrastructure have been reduced to rubble.

North Gaza has been under a near-total siege for more than two months, raising the spectre of famine. South Gaza is extremely overcrowded, creating horrific living conditions and even greater humanitarian needs as winter sets in. Across Gaza, Israeli airstrikes on densely populated areas continue, including on areas where Israeli forces have ordered people to move, causing destruction, displacement and death.

We deal with tough places to deliver humanitarian support. But Gaza is currently the most dangerous, in a year when more humanitarians have been killed than any on record.

As a result, despite the massive humanitarian needs, it has become almost impossible to deliver even a fraction of the aid that is so urgently required. The Israeli authorities continue to deny us meaningful access – over 100 requests to access North Gaza denied since 6 October. We are also now seeing the breakdown of law and order and the systematic armed looting of our supplies by local gangs.

Meanwhile, in the [West Bank](#) the situation continues to deteriorate, and the death toll is the highest we have recorded. In the past year, Israeli military operations resulted in the destruction of essential infrastructure such as roads and water networks, especially in refugee camps from which families have been displaced. Rising settler violence and home [demolitions](#) have resulted in displacement and growing needs. [Movement restrictions](#) are impeding people's livelihoods and access to essential services – especially healthcare.

In the face of these challenges, the UN and humanitarian community continue to try to stay and deliver, against mounting odds. We help survivors, and continue to seek practical humanitarian solutions. I call on the international community to defend international humanitarian law, demand protection of all civilians, insist that Hamas release all hostages, defend UNRWA's vital work, and break the cycle of violence.

I pay tribute to the humanitarians working to save the lives of civilians in these conditions.