

GAZA: Starvation or Gunfire – This is Not a Humanitarian Response

1 July 2025

NGOs call for immediate action to end the deadly Israeli distribution scheme (including the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation) in Gaza, revert to the existing UN-led coordination mechanisms, and lift the Israeli government's blockade on aid and commercial supplies. The 400 aid distribution points operating during the temporary ceasefire across Gaza have now been replaced by just four military-controlled distribution sites, forcing two million people into overcrowded, militarized zones where they face daily gunfire and mass casualties while trying to access food and are denied other life-saving supplies.

Today, Palestinians in Gaza face an impossible choice: starve or risk being shot while trying desperately to reach food to feed their families. The weeks following the launch of the Israeli distribution scheme have been some of the deadliest and most violent since October 2023.

In less than four weeks, more than 500 Palestinians have been [killed](#) and almost 4,000 injured just trying to access or distribute food. Israeli forces and armed groups – some reportedly operating with [backing](#) from Israeli authorities – now routinely [open fire on desperate civilians](#) risking everything just to survive.

The humanitarian system is being deliberately and systematically dismantled by the Government of Israel's blockade and restrictions, a blockade now being used to justify shutting down nearly all other aid operations in favour of a deadly, military-controlled alternative that neither protects civilians nor meets basic needs. These measures are designed to sustain a cycle of desperation, danger, and death. Experienced humanitarian actors remain ready to deliver life-saving assistance at scale. Yet more than 100 days since Israeli authorities reimposed a near-total blockade on aid and commercial goods, Gaza's humanitarian conditions are collapsing faster than at any point in the past 20 months.

Under the Israeli government's new scheme, starved and weakened civilians are being forced to trek for hours through dangerous terrain and active conflict zones, only to face a violent, chaotic race to reach fenced, militarized distribution sites with a single entry point. There, thousands are released into chaotic enclosures to fight for limited food supplies. These areas have become sites of repeated [massacres](#) in blatant disregard for international humanitarian law. Orphaned children and caregivers are among the dead, with children harmed in over [half](#) of the attacks on civilians at these sites. With Gaza's healthcare system in ruins, many of those shot are left to bleed out alone, beyond the [reach of ambulances](#) and denied lifesaving medical care.

Amidst severe hunger and famine-like conditions, many families tell us they are now too weak to compete for food rations. Those who do manage to obtain food often return with only a few basic items – nearly impossible to prepare without clean water or fuel to cook with. Fuel is nearly depleted, bringing critical lifesaving services – including bakeries, water systems, ambulances, and hospitals – to a standstill. Families are sheltering under plastic sheets, operating makeshift kitchens amid the rubble, without fuel, clean water, sanitation, or electricity.

This is not a humanitarian response.

Concentrating more than two million people into further confined areas for a chance to feed their families is not a plan to save lives. For 20 months, more than two million people have been subjected to relentless bombardment, the weaponization of food, water and other aid, repeated forced displacement, and systematic dehumanization – all under the watch of the international community. The Sphere Association, which sets minimum standards for quality humanitarian aid, has [warned](#) that

the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's approach does not adhere to core humanitarian standards and principles.

This normalization of suffering must not be allowed to stand. States must reject the false choice between deadly, military-controlled food distributions and total denial of aid. States must uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, including prohibitions on forced displacement, indiscriminate attacks, and obstruction of humanitarian aid. States must ensure accountability for grave violations of international law.

We, the undersigned organizations, once again call on all third states to:

- Take concrete measures to end the suffocating siege and uphold the right of civilians in Gaza to safely access aid and receive protection.
- Urge donors not to fund militarized aid schemes that violate international law, do not adhere to humanitarian principles, deepen harm, and risk complicity in atrocities.
- Support the restoration of a unified, UN-led coordination mechanism—grounded in international humanitarian law and inclusive of UNRWA, Palestinian civil society, and the wider humanitarian community—to meet people's needs.

We reiterate our urgent calls for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the release of all hostages and arbitrarily detained prisoners, full humanitarian access at scale, and an end to the pervasive impunity that enables these atrocities and denies Palestinians their basic dignity.

Editor's Note

- [On 15 June](#), the Red Cross field hospital in Al Mawasi received at least 170 patients injured while trying to reach a food distribution site. The following day, 16 June, more than 200 patients arrived at the same facility – the highest number recorded in a single mass casualty incident in Gaza. Of that number, 28 Palestinians were declared dead. A WHO official underscored the deadly pattern: “The recent food distribution initiatives by non-UN actors every time result in mass casualty incidents.”
- These deaths add to the broader toll: since October 2023, over 56,000 Palestinians have [been killed](#) in Gaza, including at least 17,000 children.

List of signatory organizations:

ABCD Bethlehem, ACT Alliance, Act Church of Sweden, Action Against Hunger (ACF), Action Corps, ActionAid, Age International, Agricultural Development Association – PARC, Al Ard for Agricultural Development, Al-Najd Developmental Forum, American Friends Service Committee, Amnesty International, Amos Trust, Anera, Anti-Slavery International, Arab Educational Institute – Pax Christi Bethlehem, Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz, Asociación de Solidaridad Internacional UNADIKUM, Association for Civil Rights Israel (ACRI), Association Switzerland Palestine, B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Beesan Charitable Association, Bimkom – Planning and Human Rights, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Botswana Watch Organisation, Breaking the Silence, Broederlijk Delen, CADUS e.V., Caritas Germany, Caritas International Belgium, Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Jerusalem, Caritas Middle East and North Africa, Center of Jewish Nonviolence, CESIDA – Spanish Coordinator of HIV and AIDS., Children Not Numbers, Choose Love, Christian Aid, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), CIDSE – International Family of Catholic Social Justice Organisations, CNCD-11.11.11, codepink, Combatants for Peace, Comité de Solidaridad con la Causa Árabe, Congregations of St Joseph, COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION, Cordaid, Council for Arab-British Understanding (Caabu), Coventry Friends of Palestine, Cultures of Resistance,

DanChurchAid, Danish Refugee Council, DAWN, Diakonia, Ekō, Embrace the Middle East, Emmaüs International, Entraide et Fraternité, Episcopal Peace Fellowship Palestine Justice Network, EuroMed Rights, FÓRUM DE POLÍTICA FEMINISTA, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA), Fund for Global Human Rights, Fundación Mundubat, Gaza Culture and Development Group (GCDG), Gaza Society for Sustainable Agriculture and Friendly Environment (SAFE), German Platform of Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs (VENRO), Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, Glia, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), Greenpeace, HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual, Hands for Charity, HEKS/EPER (Swiss Church Aid), HelpAge International, Human Security Collective, Humanité Solidarité Médecine (HuSoMe ONG), Humanity & Inclusion – Handicap International, Humanity Above All, INARA, Independent Catholic News, Indiana Center for Middle East Peace, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), INTERSOS, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Jewish Network for Palestine, Jüdische Stimme für Demokratie und Gerechtigkeit in Israel/Palästina, JVJP, Just Foreign Policy, Just Treatment, Kairos Ireland, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, Martin Etxea Elkarte, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Médecins du Monde International Network, Médecins Sans Frontières, MedGlobal, Medical Aid for Palestinians, Medico International, medico international schweiz, Medicos sin fronteras (MSF – Spain), Mennonite Central Committee, Middle East Children's Alliance, Mothers Manifesto, MPower Change Action Fund, Muslim Aid, Mwatana for Human Rights, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian People's Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam International, Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF), Palestine Justice Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Palestinian American Medical Association (PAMA), Parents Against Child Detentions, Partners for Palestine, Partners for Progressive Israel, PAX, Pax Christi Australia, Pax Christi England and Wales, Pax Christi International, Pax Christi Italy, pax christi Munich, Pax Christi Scotland, Pax Christi USA, Peace Direct, Peace Watch Switzerland, Penny Appeal Canada, Physicians for Human Rights Israel, Plan International, Plataforma de Solidaridad con Palestina de Sevilla, Plateforme des ONG françaises pour la Palestine, Polish-Palestinian Justice Initiative KAKTUS, Première Urgence Internationale, Presbyterian Church (USA), Quixote Center, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary – NGO, ReThinking Foreign Policy, Right to Movement, Rumbo a Gaza-Freedom Flotilla, Saferworld, Saskatoon Chapter of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, Save the Children, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Justice Team, Solsoc, Stichting Heimat International Foundation, STOPAIDS, Støtteforeningen Det Danske Hus i Palæstina, Terre des Hommes International Federation, Terre des hommes Lausanne, Terres des Hommes Italia, The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET), The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD UK), The Palestine Justice Network of the Presbyterian Church USA Bay Area, The Rights Forum, Union of Agricultural Work Committees-UAWC, United Against Inhumanity (UAI), Universities Allied for Essential Medicines UK, US-Lutheran Palestine Israel Justice Network, Vento di Terra, War Child Alliance, War on Want, Welthungerhilfe, and Yesh Din.