

# Gaza faces imminent starvation amid Israeli bombing, blockade

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UN officials warned yesterday that Gaza will run out of water and electricity today, due to the blockade the Israeli state imposed amid the uprising against its 16-year illegal blockade of Gaza. The unprecedented humanitarian crisis unleashed in the densely populated area of 2.3 million people, half of whom are under 18, exposes the genocidal character of the Israeli war on Gaza supported by the NATO imperialist powers.

“There is an electricity crisis, water crisis, a crisis of everything,” Eyad Abu Mutlaq told Reuters in Khan Younis in the south of the Gaza Strip. He said he had not found any bread in four bakeries in the city, towards which thousands of Palestinians are fleeing after Israel issued an order demanding that over 1.1 million Gazans abandon their homes around Gaza City and flee into the south of the Gaza Strip.

“I was looking for basic food, eggs, rice, canned food, even milk for the children and I could not find them,” said Um Salem, a resident of Khan Younis. “This is how Israel is fighting us, through starvation of our children. They either kill our children by bombs or soon by starvation.”

Mass protests are building in the working class internationally against the genocidal policies of the Israeli state, which has the full backing of Washington and its European allies. Israel’s blockade of water, food and fuel on Gaza is leading to mass starvation and a collapse of health care and amounts to collective punishment of Gaza’s civilian population—a crime under international law.

Over 1 million Gazans, nearly half Gaza’s population, have already fled their homes under relentless Israeli bombing that has claimed over 2,800 lives and left over 10,000 wounded. Some 600,000 Gazan refugees have arrived in the more sparsely populated middle and south of the Gaza Strip. The

Israeli evacuation order would also compel Gazans to abandon 23 hospitals in northern Gaza with a capacity of 2,000 hospital beds—over half of the area’s 3,500 total hospital beds.

UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) official Philippe Lazzarini gave a press conference in the occupied West Bank, warning of the imminence of mass deaths due to lack of drinking water and the cut-off of electricity to hospitals in Gaza and appealing for a cease-fire.

“Before the war, Gaza was under a blockade for 16 years, and basically, more than 60 percent of the population was already relying on international food assistance,” he said. Now, however, he said: “There is not one drop of water, not one grain of wheat, not a liter of fuel that has been allowed into the Gaza Strip for the last eight days.” He added that UNRWA operations in Gaza “are on the verge of collapse,” with UNRWA staff issued one liter of water per day for drinking, washing, and all other purposes.

Lazzarini called for an end to the Israeli siege and for fuel to be sent to operate fuel desalination plants, food refrigeration facilities, and hospital incubators and generators. He said, “We need to truck fuel into Gaza now. Fuel is the only way for people to have safe drinking water. If not, people will start dying of severe dehydration, among them young children, the elderly, and women...I appeal for the siege on humanitarian assistance to be lifted now.”

UNRWA spokeswoman Juliette Touma said the agency is concerned about the spread of water-borne diseases in Gaza, as Gazans in desperation drink fouled water. She said, “We are very concerned about the spread of waterborne diseases if water continues not to be available in Gaza because we do know that people are resorting to dirty water sources, including wells.”

World Health Organization director for the Eastern Mediterranean Ahmed al-Mandhari warned that Gaza has “24 hours of water, electricity, and fuel left.” He added that if the Israeli blockade were not lifted immediately, doctors would have to “prepare death certificates for their patients.” He added that overcrowding and energy shutoffs have placed “intensive care units, operating rooms, emergency services, and other wings” on the brink of collapse.

In violation of international law, however, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are relentlessly bombing Gaza hospitals and murdering Gazan health personnel. Al-Mandhari said 111 health facilities have been attacked, 12 health care workers killed, and 60 ambulances bombed so far. The result is a collapse of medical care in Gaza, he noted: Doctors “have to triage the patients who are coming in. They have no other choice. There are too many people, so some are left to die slow deaths.”

In Egypt, across the border from Gaza, convoys of international aid are waiting to travel to the devastated enclave. However, the Egyptian military junta of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi refuses to open the Rafah border crossing, which the IDF have bombed together with roads leading to it. Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry blamed Israel, noting: “Until now the Israeli government has not taken a position on opening the Rafah crossing from the Gaza side to allow the entrance of assistance and exit of citizens of third countries.”

However, the Sisi regime itself is working with the Israeli regime, for its own reasons, to keep the border crossing closed. The Sisi junta fears that, if Palestinians fled en masse into Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, Islamist fighters from Gaza’s ruling Hamas party could join the ongoing Islamist insurgency in the Sinai.

US and European officials, facing mounting mass protests at home against the Israeli war on Gaza, are making insincere statements calling for humanitarian aid to Gaza. As the European Union pledged it would try to launch a humanitarian airlift to Gaza, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met the Israeli war cabinet yesterday in Tel Aviv. Blinken reportedly told Israeli officials that some statement on humanitarian aid to Gaza was necessary to try to prevent an eruption of mass anger against the NATO powers’ complicity in the war on Gaza.

In a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu, Blinken called “allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza critical for keeping up global support for IDF operations,” the *Times of Israel* reported, citing a senior Israeli military source as saying: “The Biden administration understands the need to dismantle Hamas and stresses that one of the ways to make sure there is enough time to do it is by avoiding a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.”

This is a pack of lies, first of all because the crimes of the Netanyahu regime have already launched a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Moreover, Blinken, while proposing to help limit the political fallout of the war on Gaza, made no criticisms of Israeli government statements making clear that Netanyahu does not intend to allow any relief to Gaza. That is, Blinken’s statements were empty, insincere political cover for the continued policy of Washington and the European powers to back Netanyahu’s genocidal war on Gaza.

Indeed, earlier in the day, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office had issued a brief statement denying that any truce was in place allowing for humanitarian aid to Gaza. It said, “There is currently no truce and humanitarian aid in Gaza in exchange for getting foreigners out.”

The IDF also explicitly denied that any talks were underway for a truce that could allow relief supplies into Gaza. “There are no such efforts under way at this time. If anything changes, we will inform the public. We are continuing our fight against Hamas,” IDF spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said.

These statements expose the far-right Netanyahu regime, and US and European officials who pose as concerned friends of the Gazans while backing Netanyahu and repressing or banning solidarity protests for Gaza at home. The major NATO powers are fully complicit in the genocidal policies of the Netanyahu regime. The only way forward to stop the slaughter is through the mobilization and unification of the working class internationally in opposition to imperialist war, Zionism, and capitalism.



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