

# As Palestinians starve, Netanyahu government attempts face-saving gesture following US-Israel murder of aid workers

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In the aftermath of Monday's targeted killing of seven World Central Kitchen (WCK) aid workers by the Israel Defence Forces, the White House and media outlets internationally have gone into overdrive to convince everyone that a significant shift in Israel's policy towards Gaza's Palestinians is taking place.

Friday's announcement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that an additional border crossing for aid deliveries to the north of the Gaza Strip will be opened and temporary deliveries will be allowed to depart Israel's Ashdod port was widely reported as a newfound humanitarian commitment to 2.3 million starving Gazans.

In reality, the move is a face-saving gesture aimed at quelling an eruption of popular outrage around the world to Israel's barbaric war crimes, while allowing US imperialism to hypocritically posture as a restraining force in the ongoing genocide. Netanyahu's announcement was closely coordinated with Washington, coming just hours after a phone call between Biden and Netanyahu.

Media reports presented the call as tense, with Biden supposedly urging the adoption of "specific, concrete and measurable" steps to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. However, leading Biden administration officials, including National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, made clear that there would be no change to the supply of weaponry to Israel and that Washington's support was "iron clad." Referring to Netanyahu's announcement later Friday, Biden bluntly told a reporter, "I asked them to do what they're doing."

The opening of an extra border crossing and a temporary maritime route into Gaza is a moot point if there are no aid workers to deliver desperately needed food and medical supplies. The Israel Defence Forces stopped all aid deliveries to northern Gaza by the UN Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) last week.

Following the massacre of the World Central Kitchen aid workers, WCK, American Near East Refugee Aid

(ANERA), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have suspended aid operations in Gaza. WCK was supposed to have played a central part in the maritime aid corridor from Cyprus that was touted by the Biden administration in March, when it announced plans to construct a floating dock off the enclave's coast. The Cypriot government stated Monday that a ship organised by WCK returned from Gaza without offloading the 332 tons of humanitarian aid it was carrying.

Data from the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, the Israeli government agency that controls access to Gaza, reveal that WCK was responsible for 60 percent of non-governmental aid deliveries in Gaza before it suspended its operations. ANERA reportedly delivered an average of 150,000 meals each day since October. The UAE has supplied 25 percent of all aid from foreign countries.

Other aid organisations still operating have underscored that it is more or less impossible to maintain their activities. "We go on a mission where we are told we would be safe and then we are delayed for hours, our staff is interrogated, they are put in harm's way or they are killed and that's not acceptable," commented Tess Ingram, a spokeswoman for UNICEF, the UN children's agency.

Even if one accepts Israel's propaganda about aid deliveries under Netanyahu's latest announcement, they will continue to fall well short of what is required. Israel Army Radio reported that 350 aid trucks could now reach Gaza each day, up from the current level of 200. This would amount to just 70 percent of the 500 aid trucks that arrived in Gaza each day prior to Israel's assault. The claim that 200 trucks are currently arriving each day is rejected by independent sources, with Oxfam stating that an average of 105 trucks reach Gaza daily.

Since the beginning of Israel's genocidal onslaught, government officials have made no secret about their intention to ethnically cleanse Gaza and use starvation as a weapon of war. From Defence Minister Yoav Gallant's

infamous remark describing Palestinians as “human animals ,” to former Israeli National Security Council head Giora Eiland’s statement that “severe epidemics in the south of the Gaza Strip will bring victory closer and reduce casualties among IDF soldiers,” and Finance Minister Bezalil Smotrich’s demand for “the voluntary emigration of the Gaza Arabs to the countries of the world,” the Zionist regime has left no doubt about its determination to kill a large portion of Gaza’s population and forcibly expel the rest.

In this context, the most plausible explanation is that the massacre of the WCK workers was a carefully considered decision taken at the highest levels of the Israeli state in consultation with Washington aimed at sabotaging aid supplies into Gaza and thereby escalating the genocide. The three clearly marked vehicles were struck separately along a 2.4-kilometre stretch of road. Biden and Netanyahu are now trying to manage the diplomatic fallout.

According to Oxfam, the approximately 300,000 people believed to be stranded in northern Gaza have been surviving on just 12 percent of the recommended daily calorie intake since January. The 245 calories consumed on average equate to less than a can of fava beans. For the Gaza Strip as a whole, aid deliveries allowed in by Israel since the start of its bombardment account for just 41 percent of the recommended calories required by the entire population.

The aid organisation’s 3 April press release noted:

The Israeli government has known for nearly two decades exactly how many daily calories are needed to prevent malnutrition in Gaza, calculating this according to both age and gender within its Food Consumption in the Gaza Strip - Red Line document. Not only did it use a higher calculation of 2,279 calories per person, it also took into account domestic food production in Gaza, which the Israeli military has now virtually obliterated.

Figures from the UN and Palestinian Red Crescent Society estimate that 50,000 children are acutely malnourished. Malnourishment has claimed the lives of 31 children so far, with the figure expected to rise as famine sets in.

Oxfam International executive director Amitabh Behar stated what is becoming increasingly obvious to millions of people around the world:

Israel is making deliberate choices to starve civilians. Imagine what it is like, not only to be

trying to survive on 245 calories day in, day out, but also having to watch your children or elderly relatives do the same. All whilst displaced, with little to no access to clean water or a toilet, knowing most medical support has gone and under the constant threat of drones and bombs.

The bombs supplied to Israel by US imperialism and its European allies continue to rain down on Gaza. At least 54 Palestinians were confirmed dead in the previous 24 hours Friday, taking the official death toll to 33,091. A strike that demolished a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza later in the day killed three. According to UNRWA’s latest figures, 62 percent of all residences in Gaza have either been destroyed or damaged since the genocide began.

Amid such horrific crimes, the imperialist powers remain fully committed to participating in the “final solution” of the Palestinian question. American imperialism supports the genocide as part of a broader plan to wage a region-wide war with Israel’s support against Iran with the aim of consolidating its dominance over the energy-rich Middle East.

At a meeting of the UN Human Rights Council Friday, both the United States and Germany voted against a resolution calling for a halt of arms sales to Israel. The non-binding declaration, which passed by 28 votes to 6 with 13 abstentions, also urged that Israel be held accountable for possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Washington and Berlin cannot support such propositions because any genuine war crimes tribunal would have to include President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, Chancellor Scholz, and Foreign Minister Baerbock alongside Netanyahu in the dock.

While the Biden administration has delivered over 100 shipments of high-powered weaponry to Israel since October, Germany increased its weapons shipments ten-fold to Israel after Netanyahu’s fascistic government launched the genocide. On Monday and Tuesday next week, the International Court of Justice in The Hague will hold hearings in a case brought by Nicaragua accusing Germany of complicity in genocide due to its arms shipments to Israel and declarations by government officials of unconditional support for the Zionist regime as it massacred civilians.



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