

UN relief agency director warns summer heat has deepened humanitarian crisis in Gaza

Kevin Reed
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The director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) said on Sunday that rising summer temperatures have heightened the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the urgent need for access to “basic necessities,” such as tents, food, clean drinking water and medical care.

In an interview with CBS News “Face the Nation,” Scott Anderson, who is directing the UN’s Palestinian refugee support operations, said that the inability of aid organizations to get needed supplies into Gaza has meant that they have been “perpetually playing catch-up,” while many displaced Palestinians are “sleeping outside, still, eight months after the start of the conflict.”

The shutdown of the eight-mile-long border crossing with Egypt at Rafah, the Gaza city which has been under siege by the Israeli military for the past month, is the primary cause of the lack of humanitarian assistance reaching Palestinians. The Israeli regime seized the border crossing in early May, and then Egypt responded by closing its side of the border.

Anderson said the lack of clean drinking water is the number one concern because “it’s getting hot, you know, it’s summer, it’s—essentially, you’re in a desert. And if people don’t have access to clean drinking water, that’s a problem for dehydration, as well as for disease.” As the World Health Organization has warned, cases of hepatitis A and diarrhea are rising, and other diseases like cholera could quickly rise without access to clean water.

The UN director also went on to say that the destruction in Gaza “just really defies description, and it looks like something out of a post-apocalyptic movie. Most places you’re looking at 90 to 100 percent destruction with the infrastructure suffering much worse.”

Anderson also said that 2.2 million people had been displaced in Gaza at least once and that UNRWA is feeding a little more than half of the population, or between 1.3 and 1.4 million people, each day.

Negotiations in Cairo that included Israel, Egypt and the US over reopening the border crossing were reported on Sunday by Egyptian state news media. However, the border remains closed. According to a report in the *New York Times* on Monday, “Details on the discussion or any outcome were not immediately available.”

On Tuesday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights chief Volker Türk reported that violence in the occupied West Bank had reached the deadly milestone of more than 500 Palestinians killed since October 7. The killings have been carried out by Israeli occupation forces, as well as Zionist settlers.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that two of the latest killings were 16-year-old Ahmed Ashraf Hamidat and 17-year-old Mohammed Musa Al Bitar, who were both shot “at a distance of about 70 metres [230 feet] while running away after throwing stones and/or Molotov cocktails towards a[n Israeli] military post outside a settlement near Aqabat Jaber, CCTV footage shows.”

The deaths of the teenagers, along with the four more Palestinians killed by the Israeli army on Monday, brings the total Palestinian West Bank deaths to 505, the OHCHR said. During the same period, 24 Israelis, including eight who were Israeli Security Forces members, were killed in the West Bank and Israel in alleged attacks by Palestinians from the West Bank.

High Commissioner Türk said the people of the occupied West Bank are being subjected day after day to “unprecedented bloodshed.” He added, “The killing,

destruction and widespread human rights violations are unacceptable, and must cease immediately. Israel must not only adopt but enforce rules of engagement that are fully in line with applicable human rights norms and standards. Any allegation of unlawful killings must be thoroughly and independently investigated and those responsible held to account.”

Al Jazeera said that the Palestinian News & Information Agency (Wafa) reported on Tuesday afternoon that 22 Palestinians had been arrested since dawn. The arrests were accompanied by raids and threats against families of the detained and carried out in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus, Salfit, Tubas, Jericho and East Jerusalem. For a second consecutive day, Israeli forces have also imposed a blockade on Jericho.

The US corporate news media continues to push the topic of Biden’s Gaza ceasefire proposal unveiled last Friday as though it were real. Biden’s “three-phase” plan is part of a White House propaganda campaign aimed at extending the Israeli assault on Gaza while pretending to be against it.

The Israeli regime of Benjamin Netanyahu has no intention of letting up on the Gaza genocide. The prime minister’s repeated assertions, including on Saturday, that the “conditions for ending the war have not changed,” including “the destruction of Hamas military and governing capabilities,” are nothing more than a restatement of the Zionist goal of ethnically cleansing Palestinians from Gaza.

The statement by National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby on Monday exposed the truth of the relationship between US imperialism and the Zionist state. Kirby said, “And they [Hamas] still have a capability down there, and Israel has every right to go after them. They are, and they’re doing it in keeping with the plans that they shared with us, and they’re doing it with capabilities that we continue to provide them to use.”

Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Forces launched a new wave of airstrikes and ground raids on Bureij in central Gaza, which included hitting a UN school building where it claimed Hamas fighters were “embedded.”



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