

UN forced to suspend food distribution as Israel places 89 percent of Gaza under evacuation orders

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In the latest stage of the US-Israeli genocide and ethnic cleansing of Gaza, Israeli officials ordered the evacuation of parts of the city of Deir al-Balah, cramming the displaced and starving population of Gaza into an ever-smaller portion of the territory.

Gaza's population, which stood at over 2 million before the start of the genocide, is now crammed into an area that is just 41 square kilometers, or 11 percent of Gaza's total area, with the remaining 89 percent being placed on evacuation orders by the Israeli Defense Forces.

The United Nations warned, "The area is lacking critical infrastructure and basic services, while aid provision is limited due to access and security issues. The severe overcrowding, with a density of 30,000 to 34,000 individuals per square kilometer has exacerbated the dire shortage of essential resources such as water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, health services, protection and shelter."

As a result of the latest ethnic cleansing measure, announced over the weekend, the United Nations announced that it was suspending its food distribution efforts for a second time, after UN staff were forcibly expelled from the city of Rafah during the earlier military operations there.

"Where do we move now? ... The space to operate is being restricted more and more than ever," a UN official told Reuters on Monday. "As of this morning, we're not operating in Gaza" to deliver food and medical care because "we're unable to deliver today with the conditions that we're in."

Gilles Michaud, the UN's undersecretary-general for safety and security, added, "Mass evacuation orders are the latest in a long list of unbearable threats to UN and

humanitarian personnel." He said Israeli officials "gave just a few hours' notice to move more than 200 UN personnel out of their offices and living places in Deir el-Balah, a crucial humanitarian hub."

Louise Wateridge, senior communications officer at UNRWA, told Al Jazeera, "It is nothing short of a struggle to provide what people need here because we don't have enough aid. We don't have enough supplies coming in; we don't have enough access to distribute to people."

She added, "There are so many people dying in Gaza from things that can be treated, people can be saved, but we do not have the means to do this for them. We do not have the means to operate to our best ability."

Between August 23 and 26, 170 Palestinians in Gaza were killed and 390 were injured, amid non-stop bombing and ground offensives throughout the entirety of the Gaza Strip, according to the Ministry of Health. According to official statistics, 40,435 Palestinians were killed and 93,534 were injured since October last year. But this figure does not include 10,000 people thought to be killed and buried under the rubble.

According to the official figures, the death toll includes 17,000 children, meaning that 2.6 percent of all of Gaza's children have been killed, with an average of 53 children killed every day since October 7.

Once the victims of Israel's deliberate famine and promotion of disease are added, the real death toll could be 186,000 or more, according to an estimate published in the *Lancet* medical journal.

The latest ethnic cleansing operation in Deir al-Balah means yet another displacement for the Palestinians sheltering there.

Reuters interviewed one woman who said she and her

children had been displaced 11 times. “I left half of my children behind me near my furniture and I am now with my little ones and my daughter. Only God can help us ... I have no money for transportation, I will go to area 17, where my family is staying, on my feet. I took my kids and three are left behind. No idea where.”

Hundreds of thousands of people had sought refuge near Al-Aqsa Hospital, the main medical facility still in operation in central Gaza, and are now being displaced once again.

The hospital is in an area covered by the latest evacuation order, forcing those seeking shelter there to flee. “Our fate is to die,” one woman fleeing the hospital told the Associated Press. “There is no place for us to go. There is no safe place.”

Doctors Without Borders said in a statement that a bombing near the hospital was forcing it to consider suspending medical care there. “As a result, MSF is considering whether to suspend wound care for the time being, while trying to maintain life-saving treatment,” the charity said.

Israel intensified its bombardment of Deir el-Balah Tuesday, with at least 40 Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip.

“A missile by an F-16 came down on the area and destroyed the whole place—we can’t get the victims out of here. There are still lots of people in there, this house was full,” one resident told Al Jazeera.

Another resident added, “We are looking for a safe place, and truly there is no safe place in the entire Gaza Strip.”

Al Jazeera journalist Tareq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Deir el-Balah, added, “Israeli evacuation orders are making families desperate, as they look for somewhere to sleep. Soon, they’ll have another challenge: getting water. With 70 percent of desalination plants and water wells in Gaza located inside evacuation areas, they’ve been cut off from their main sources. Some Palestinians are even considering going back, at the risk of getting killed.”

According to the World Food Program, 96 percent of Gaza’s population face acute food insecurity, and nine out of 10 have spent 24 hours or more without food.

At least 50,000 children in Gaza require treatment for acute malnutrition, while more than 96 percent of infants from 6 to 23 months are not meeting their basic nutritional requirements.

Amid Israel’s protracted war on health care facilities, infectious disease is running rampant. In a statement, Human Rights Watch warned that Israel’s actions are leading to an outbreak of polio.

“If the Israeli government continues to block urgent aid and destroy water and waste management infrastructure, it will facilitate the spread of a disease that has been nearly eradicated globally,” said Julia Bleckner, a spokesperson for the organization. “Israel’s partners should press the government to lift the blockade immediately and ensure unfettered humanitarian access in Gaza to enable the timely distribution of vaccines to contain the unfolding polio outbreak,” she added.



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