

# Storm Byron compounds catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza

Jean Shaoul

21 December 2025

Just when it seemed that living conditions in Gaza could not get any worse, Storm Byron, with its biting winds and twice the average rainfall for the time of year hit, causing death, destruction and havoc.

The worst affected areas of Gaza are those that suffered the greatest damage in the war.

Heavy rains flooded the tents of people living in more than 200 displacement sites—nearly 900,000 Palestinians are living in flimsy tents—while high winds swept away or tore them apart, affecting about 55,000 families. At least 13 damaged buildings, where thousands were sheltering from the harsh weather, have collapsed and many more could collapse at any moment due to rain and strong winds.

The floods have turned torn-up roads to mud and brought sewage onto the streets, overwhelming the already badly damaged sanitation system. With electricity in short supply, only limited fuel entering Gaza and much of the public infrastructure in ruins, waste collection has fallen, toilets are few and far between and water supplies are contaminated, threatening the rapid spread of disease.

At least 17 Palestinians have died due to the storm, including at least 11 people killed when damaged buildings collapsed on those sheltering inside and a 29-day-old baby and three small children from severe hypothermia. With people freezing in tents “as thin as a sheet of paper”, medical officials are warning of more tragedies to come.

Children, who account for around one third of the 70,000 killed since the start of Israel’s genocidal war more than two years ago, with thousands more missing and presumed dead, are the most at risk. According to UNICEF, 9,300 children were treated for acute malnutrition in October.

The severe shortage of nourishing food, freezing temperatures and stark shortage of medicine—over half of vital medications are unavailable—have contributed to the spread of diseases.

Last week, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) warned that Gaza needs at least 300,000 tents and prefabricated housing units just to meet the most basic shelter needs of Palestinians after two years of Israeli

bombardment that destroyed more than 120,000 buildings and damaged tens of thousands more—in all, about 81 percent of the structures in the enclave.

In contrast, while Storm Byron caused severe flooding in Israel, bringing down trees and flooding roads and leading to the deaths of three people, there was little or no structural damage. The government had placed the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on high alert and issued public safety instructions and warnings of “unprecedented rain” as the storm approached. It had prepared emergency teams and launched search and rescue operations, including a search for four Israelis missing on a yacht en route to Cyprus and multiple rescues of flooded vehicles and missing persons and treatment of hypothermia cases.

Erika Guevara Rosas, Amnesty International’s Senior Director for Research, Advocacy, Policy and Campaigns commented, “The writing was on the wall; this was no accident; it was an utterly preventable tragedy.”

She continued, “The devastating scenes of flooded tents and collapsed buildings in Gaza that have emerged in recent days cannot be blamed solely on ‘bad weather’. They are the foreseeable consequences of Israel’s ongoing genocide and deliberate policy of blocking the entry of shelter and repair materials for the displaced...”

“The knowledge that the extent of this disaster could have been prevented had Israeli authorities allowed the entry of shelter and other materials essential for repairing life-sustaining infrastructure is deeply distressing.”

Amnesty International said, “The devastation caused by torrential rain in the occupied Gaza Strip, which led to the flooding of thousands of tents and makeshift shelters and the collapse of buildings, was fuelled by Israel’s ongoing restrictions on the entry of critical supplies needed to repair vital infrastructure.”

Amnesty International’s call for the genocidaire to lift its “cruel” blockade on Gaza and “ensure unfettered access for essential goods, repair materials and humanitarian supplies” fell on deaf ears. Not one of Israel’s ministers or politicians even made a public statement on Storm Byron’s impact on

Gaza, while the Israeli military continued its air strikes during the storm.

Despite the supposed ceasefire agreed at Sharm el-Sheikh on October 10, there had, according to *Al Jazeera*, been 738 Israeli violations up to 17 December 2025, with least 394 Palestinians killed, 1,075 more injured and 43 detained. There were 205 shootings at civilians, 37 raids beyond the yellow line, 358 bombings/shelling and 138 property demolitions. The Trump administration insists that the “ceasefire” is holding.

While the ceasefire stipulated that “full aid will be immediately sent into the Gaza Strip”, only half the required food aid is currently reaching the enclave, according to the World Food Programme (WFP), with Palestinian relief agencies saying that no more than one quarter of the agreed aid is entering. Between October 10 and December 16, only 8,521 trucks reached their intended destinations, with truck drivers and aid deliveries facing significant delays due to Israeli inspections taking much longer than expected.

Less than half (around 39 percent) of the 37,200 trucks waiting to enter Gaza were able to enter the enclave over the same period. According to the Gaza Government Media Office, over a 62-day period just 14,534 trucks entered Gaza out of 37,200, averaging 234 trucks per day. The UN says it has tents, blankets and other essential supplies ready to enter Gaza, but the Israeli authorities have denied its trucks entry.

Israel has blocked essential and nutritious foodstuffs, including meat, dairy, and vegetables, while greenlighting ultra-processed foods such as snacks, chocolate, crisps, and soft drinks.

While the cost of food has fallen for many items, following two years of hyperinflation, they remain unaffordable for most Gazans who have been without work, income or support from overseas remittances, thanks to Israel’s destruction of the banking infrastructure, cash shortages and the freezing of accounts by international payment platforms.

On Friday, the UN warned that levels of hunger and the humanitarian situation remained critical. The threat of famine, first declared in August after Israeli restrictions of food aid into the territory led to mass starvation, with at least 450 people starving to death, had eased somewhat now that humanitarian aid deliveries were trickling into the territory.

The UN said that almost one in eight people still face food shortages, with persistent hunger made worse by the flooding and cold weather. The situation remained dire, with “the entire Gaza Strip classified in emergency”. This is just one step below famine and occurs when households have “very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality” due to lack of food.

This is in line with Israel’s declared policy of starving the

Palestinians as part of its “final solution” of the Palestinian problem first outlined by the then Defence Minister Yoav Gallant at the outset of the war when he declared a “complete siege of Gaza: no power, food or fuel”. Since then, far right groups have repeatedly blocked aid convoys while police stood by. In August 2024, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared, “Perhaps it’s moral to starve two million Gazans”, while a group of retired security officials promoted the “Generals’ Plan” to use famine to push northern Gaza residents to flee.

A few days ago, IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir announced that the “yellow line” demarcated by the Trump administration “is a new border line, serving as a forward defensive line for our communities and a line of operational activity.” Israel would hold on to its current military positions, “We have operational control over extensive parts of the Gaza Strip and we will remain on those defence lines”.

The IDF has seized and destroyed large areas inside the Yellow Line, built more than a dozen concrete outposts along and even beyond the 53 percent originally demarcated under the ceasefire agreement, to fortify its positions and declared it a lethal boundary

Israel intends to retain control of Gaza, pushing its people into ever smaller areas of the enclave—internment camps reminiscent of the worst excesses of the colonial era and World War II—that will be controlled by the IDF. At the same time, the IDF is carrying out provocations, including the assassination of dozens of senior commanders of Hamas’s military wing, with the aim of inciting a direct confrontation that will enable it to evade the second stage of the illusory ceasefire.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**