



## [Have U.S. Humanitarian Airdrops Been Sufficient in Providing Much-Needed Aid to Civilians in Gaza?](#)

Over the past week, United States military cargo planes have conducted humanitarian airdrops into Gaza, as civilians there face dire shortages of food, water, and medicine. However, aid groups have pointed out that this does not do enough to alleviate the crisis, noting that the root cause of the worsening humanitarian circumstances is Israeli restrictions preventing aid supplies from being delivered on the ground and reaching those that are in need. This is especially the case in the face of Israel's military offensive, and its destructive and indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza. As such, observers have outlined that the airdrops on their own are not sufficient, and should purely be intended as a supplement to aid brought in via land, as opposed to something that is forced to try and replace it altogether. Israel's barriers to the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid to Gaza has resulted in civilians – many of whom are children – dying of malnourishment, and the UN Security Council has expressed the serious risk of famine unless aid is massively scaled up. Thus, a cessation of hostilities and the restoration of humanitarian space to deliver aid and supplies is urgently required.

The United States-led airdrops on their own have been labeled ineffective. A former director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Dave Harden, remarked that the plan to do so is not sufficient enough to alleviate the major humanitarian need on the ground in Gaza. For context, the United States airdropped less than a single truck load equivalent of aid during its first one this past Saturday – a quarter of the amount that small NGOs attempt to deliver daily. Not only do airdrops provide smaller amounts of aid than truck convoys, they are also more costly and require a significant level of ground coordination in the delivery zones. Harden went on to comment that the use of airdrops was the Biden administration's efforts "to paper over a massive policy failure" on what has transpired in Gaza over the preceding months, and that what really needs to happen instead is to allow for more humanitarian aid to come through via land crossings. He emphasized that the United States has the leverage to force Israel to open up border crossings, and should therefore be focused on that. President Biden himself even acknowledged that more humanitarian assistance should be getting into Gaza. In a recent social media post, Biden said that "In addition to the United States' expansion of aid deliveries by air, land, and sea, we're continuing to push hard for more trucks and routes to get more aid to people...There are no excuses...The aid flowing into Gaza is nowhere near enough – and nowhere fast enough." Other U.S. officials agree on the need to do more to deliver humanitarian aid on the ground and that airdrops alone are a mere "drop in the bucket" to what is needed, while some have applauded the overall message that they send: the United States is fed up with Israel's restricting of humanitarian assistance into Gaza to the point where the U.S. has to resort to airdropping aid.

Above all, in order to effectively help alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the United States and other members of the international community should exert more pressure on Israel to allow additional aid trucks to enter Gaza by land. As aid groups and human rights organizations have consistently stressed, the airdropping of food does not address the core problem at hand, which is the need to open up crossings and pave the way for humanitarian convoys and medical assistance to enter the Gaza Strip. Over the past several months, Israel has barred the entry of food, water, medicine, and other critical supplies, except for a miniscule trickle of aid from two crossings. UN officials, including France's Ambassador to the UN, Nicholas de Rivière, have stated that Israel's blocking of humanitarian access is unjustifiable. Additionally, others have demanded that Israel open land, sea, and

air access routes to ensure the needed delivery of aid, lamenting the lack of safe and sufficient access points where humanitarian aid workers can operate. In fact, the argument that Israel is deliberately obstructing the entry of aid into Gaza is a key component of South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). One of the ICJ's provisional rulings ordered that Israel "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance." It is also vital that efforts are made to restore health services, water and sanitation pipelines, and electricity networks.

This week, Israeli minister Benny Gantz was subjected to scathing criticism about the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Israel's military offensive, during meetings with U.S. officials at the White House. Analysts underscore how this supports the belief that the United States has grown irritated with Israel's actions, and is ramping up the pressure. Biden administration officials have even disclosed that last week's killing of more than 100 Palestinians while they were seeking humanitarian aid served as a major turning point and was a source of outrage because it epitomized all of the Israeli policy failures in Gaza. Thus, in a positive development, there is beginning to be more realization across the board regarding Israel's culpability for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Recently, President Biden also announced that the U.S. military plans to construct a temporary port on the Gaza coast to get more humanitarian aid into the enclave by sea. This is expected to take a number of weeks to set up, and like the airdrops, does not serve as a sufficient source of bringing in humanitarian aid – and as such, focus should still remain on pressuring Israel to allow more aid trucks to enter Gaza by land.