



[Israel Elicits Widespread Condemnation for Its Blockade of Humanitarian Aid into Gaza](#)

This week, Israel has faced large-scale criticism for its decision to block the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Rights groups and state officials were quick to condemn the move, highlighting how it is a deeply troubling violation of international law which also threatens to upend the prospects of sustaining the ceasefire in Gaza. As many pointed out, humanitarian aid is a fundamental right for civilians in war zones, with no exceptions, and parties to a conflict are legally obligated to facilitate the delivery of essential aid to those in need. By stopping the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, Israel is using starvation as a weapon of war – something that it is again being accused of engaging in, and not for the first time. Israel's decision to block aid was coordinated with the Trump administration, and thus rights advocates have noted that the U.S. and Trump officials are also complicit in the siege and the banning of entry of food, medicine, and other essential aid to Gaza. All of this comes as uncertainty looms over the Gaza ceasefire deal, and with aid agencies warning that Israel's recent action will only serve to exacerbate the already dire humanitarian crisis amid a period when relief efforts are greatly needed in order to alleviate the devastating impact of more than 15 months of war.

Humanitarian organizations have cautioned that the cutoff of aid risks plunging civilians back into despair and offsetting the positive gains and momentum that have been seen during the past six weeks since the implementation of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. In this time, every day that food and medicine were allowed to reach those in need, lives have been saved. Throughout the course of the Gaza War, Israel was regularly criticized by United Nations agencies and aid groups for failing to facilitate enough humanitarian aid into the besieged territory, and as a result, Israel's recent move has been described as a mere return to this. Back in late November, the International Criminal Court (ICC) expressed that there was reason to believe that Israel had used starvation as a method of warfare when it issued its arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. Additionally, South Africa's ongoing genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) includes evidence documenting this as a core theme of its filings as well. Thus, various observers have conveyed that with its latest decision to block the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, Israel is resuming its war crime starvation tactic which brought about both the ICC and ICJ charges to begin with.

The situation in Gaza was already grim for the vast majority of its inhabitants. Over 90% of the population faces food insecurity, and the war has left more than 2 million reliant on humanitarian assistance. For months before the ceasefire went into effect, experts were warning of potential famine. Three weeks after the ceasefire began, the fear had been mostly averted following a surge of humanitarian aid entering the region. Since the initiation of the ceasefire, groups like the World Food Programme have been able to scale up their reach to those in need of life-saving food assistance. This and other humanitarian relief efforts would have been near impossible without the ceasefire. Now, UN humanitarian officials are alerting that if the ceasefire breaks, then famine-like conditions will very quickly re-emerge.

Under the terms outlined in the Gaza ceasefire agreement that was implemented back in mid-January, this was meant to be the week when Israel should be pulling its troops from the Philadelphi corridor along the Egypt-Gaza border to pave the way for its full withdrawal from Gaza and the release of the remaining living hostages during a second phase of the deal. Talks regarding the second phase were supposed to begin on Day 16 of the 42-day first

phase that has now ended, but with these not taking place as planned, many were unsurprised that a seamless transition from phase one to phase two failed to materialize. Israel has been accused of seeking to evade the stipulations of the agreement, and the mediating entities have emphasized that “there is no alternative to the faithful and full implementation by all parties of what was signed last January.” While the ceasefire deal is in peril and at an impasse, Arab leaders met in Egypt this week and endorsed an alternative plan to President Trump’s highly-criticized Gaza takeover proposal. The plan would involve three stages aimed at interim measures, reconstruction, and eventual governance over a span of four to five years. However, without a continued and lasting cessation of hostilities in Gaza, there is no opportunity for this plan or any other to begin to take place.

In the aftermath of Israel’s blocking of humanitarian aid entry, UN agencies state that food prices in Gaza have spiked and that aid parcels could soon run out. The surge is being caused by uncertainty amid the blockage, and various relief groups are working to try and understand the level of availability regarding the vital supplies that remain in Gaza.