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**Israel-Hamas war**

## Aid to Gaza delayed by wrangle over inspection regime

UN officials had hoped to start flow of water, food and medicine to stricken enclave on Friday



Humanitarian aid for Palestinians at an airport in Egypt © Amr Abdallah Dalsh/Reuters

**Heba Saleh** in Al Arish, **James Shotter** in Jerusalem, **Donato Paolo Mancini** in London and **Henry Foy** in Brussels 8 MINUTES AGO

The long-awaited delivery of aid to the besieged Gaza Strip has been delayed by disagreements over how to ensure the supplies cannot be used by Hamas, according to three people familiar with the matter.

US president Joe Biden on Wednesday secured an agreement with Israel to let water, food and medicine into Gaza, which has been subjected to an Israeli siege since Hamas's deadly assault on the country on October 7.

However, people familiar with the matter said aid may not enter [Gaza](#) on Friday as had been hoped because a process for verifying the supplies had not yet been agreed.

Israel has demanded the UN inspect aid entering Gaza to ensure it cannot be used for military purposes by Hamas, according to a senior UN official. The discussions are centred on the movement of aid from Egypt to Gaza via the Rafah crossing on the enclave's southern border.

The people added that another concern was that UN officials wanted to ensure a steady flow of aid, rather than a one-off delivery of 20 truckloads.

Before the war, about 450 trucks entered the strip from Egypt on a daily basis, according to a UN official. There are currently about 100 trucks from UN agencies

and other donors ready to cross into Gaza, according to people familiar with the matter.

The discussions come as Biden urged the US Congress to approve a [security package for Israel and Ukraine](#) worth tens of billions of dollars on Thursday. “We cannot and will not let terrorists like Hamas and tyrants like [Vladimir] Putin win — I refuse to let that happen,” he said.

The US president did not specify how much money he was seeking but people familiar with the matter said the request was likely to involve \$60bn for Ukraine and \$14bn for Israel. In all, the package is expected to exceed \$100bn.

Biden’s request came after the US held talks with Israeli and Egyptian officials on Thursday over aid delivery to Gaza. The state department said afterwards that it was working to thrash out “exact mechanisms” to get supplies into the enclave.

The UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said on Friday it was “encouraged by [internal] reports that the different sides are nearing an agreement on the modalities and that a first delivery is due to start in the next day or so”.

“We are in deep and advanced negotiations with all relevant sides to make sure that an aid operation into Gaza starts as quickly as possible and with the right conditions,” it added.

The UN has also asked Egypt to help evacuate some sick and injured people, according to one of the people familiar with the diplomatic efforts.

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As global powers seek to prevent the conflict from escalating into a broader conflagration, Egypt will on Saturday host a summit aimed at discussing “current developments and the future of the Palestinian cause and the peace process”, according to people briefed on the discussions.

A large number of leaders from the Middle East are expected to attend, but many European capitals are unwilling to participate due to a push by the hosts to include a call for a ceasefire in the draft summit statement and no explicit reference

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to Israel's right to self-defence.

According to two people familiar with the matter, French foreign minister Catherine Colonna plans to attend instead of president Emmanuel Macron, while German chancellor Olaf Scholz will be represented by foreign minister Annalena Baerbock.

EU leaders agreed a joint position this week, which “strongly emphasise[s] Israel’s right to defend itself in line with humanitarian and international law”.

Israeli jets have been bombarding the Gaza Strip, which is home to 2.3mn Palestinians, since Hamas carried out the deadliest-ever attack on Israeli soil nearly two weeks ago. The assault killed more than 1,400 people and injured more than 3,500, according to Israeli officials, while at least 203 were taken hostage.

Israel has also cut off deliveries of electricity, fuel and goods, and severely restricted water supplies, exacerbating the already [dire humanitarian conditions](#) in the coastal enclave. Gaza has been subjected to a crippling blockade by Israel and Egypt since Hamas seized control there in 2007.

Palestinian officials said on Thursday that 3,785 people have been killed and more than 12,400 injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza, while the UN said on Thursday that hundreds more bodies were believed to be under the rubble left by the Israeli bombardment.

Aid groups estimate that more than 1mn people in Gaza have been displaced since the fighting started on October 7. The UN’s humanitarian arm said on Thursday that “at least 30 per cent” of homes in the territory had been destroyed, rendered uninhabitable or damaged, citing data from the Hamas-run housing ministry in Gaza.

On Friday Israel said it would evacuate citizens from the northern town of Kiryat Shmona, amid fears that its war with Hamas could escalate into a broader regional confrontation.

The Iran-backed Hizbollah group in southern Lebanon and Israeli forces have been exchanging cross-border fire in recent days, with the Israeli army hitting targets in Lebanon after Hizbollah fired at least 20 rockets into northern Israel on Thursday.

US warship in the northern Red Sea on Thursday shot down three cruise missiles and several drones fired by Iran-backed rebels in Yemen that the Pentagon said might have been aimed at Israel.

*Additional reporting by James Politi and Felicia Schwartz*

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