

## Israel-Hamas war

# Entire Gaza population at risk of famine, says UN

Latest warning on starving population comes as Hamas considers ceasefire proposal



UN spokesperson Jens Laerke: 'Gaza is the hungriest place on earth' © Haitham Imad/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

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Gaza's entire population is at risk of famine, the UN has said, as the rollout of a controversial US and Israeli-backed aid scheme using private companies caused chaos among starving Palestinians.

The warning came as Hamas was considering the latest Washington-backed ceasefire proposal, which provides for expanded aid distribution — including through the UN — but does not guarantee the militant group's key demand of permanently ending the war.

"Gaza is the hungriest place on earth," Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the UN's humanitarian arm OCHA, said on Friday, adding that it was nearly impossible to safely carry aid into the enclave because of security and bureaucratic obstacles.

"100 per cent of the population of Gaza is at risk of famine."

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OCHA spokesperson Jens Laerke warns of Gaza starvation © Reuters

The resumption of some aid deliveries into Gaza after a more than two-month long Israeli blockade has done little to ease starvation conditions, with new distribution hubs marked by chaos and almost no supplies reaching northern Gaza.

On Friday, one militarised distribution site was giving out food, according to its operator, while a person familiar with the situation said others were closed.



Israel issued a new set of displacement orders for almost all the enclave's north on Friday © Ebrahim Hajjaj/Reuters  
At least 47 Palestinians were reportedly wounded by gunshots while seeking to collect

At least 47 Palestinians were reportedly wounded by gunshots while seeking to collect food from a distribution hub on Tuesday, according to the UN human rights office.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, the little-known US and Israeli-backed group that aims to take over food distribution in Gaza from the UN, denied that anyone had been injured.

It said it had distributed more than 2mn meals to Gazans over the last four days.

“This is just the beginning . . . we look forward to continuing to scale and strengthen on our initial undertakings,” the GHF added.

Israel has intensified its military offensive across Gaza, on Friday issuing a new set of displacement orders for almost all the enclave’s north.

Some 632,000 people have been newly displaced since Israel resumed its attacks on March 18, according to the UN. Almost 4,000 people have been killed since March 18, according to the ministry of health.

The deepening desperation came as Hamas said it was reviewing a proposal for a 60-day ceasefire and hostage deal submitted by the US and approved by Israel.

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Gazans queue to receive food from a soup kitchen in Gaza city © Reuters

The Palestinian militant group played down prospects of accepting the latest offer. It



The Palestinian militant group played down prospects of accepting the latest offer. It has long maintained it would not accept ceasefire terms that lack a path to permanently ending the conflict.

Senior Hamas official Bassem Naim told Reuters on Friday that the proposal did not meet “the just and legitimate demands of our people”, including an immediate end to hostilities.

A draft framework agreement seen by the FT, specifies that the administration of US President Donald Trump will guarantee the continuation during the truce of “good faith negotiations” aimed at permanently halting the fighting, but the deal stops short of guaranteeing a lasting peace.



Israeli protesters blockade humanitarian aid trucks bound for Gaza near the Kerem Shalom crossing on Friday © Shafiek Tassiem/Reuters

It says the UN and Red Crescent would be allowed to distribute aid in the enclave during the ceasefire, a potential reversal of Israel’s current stance that has sought to phase out the decades-old system of humanitarian distribution, citing claims that Hamas was siphoning off supplies.

The UN and other agencies say they have never been presented with evidence that the militant group steals supplies in any orchestrated or widespread way.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently refused to end the war, saying previously that he would only “pause” the fighting to return some 58 hostages from Hamas captivity.

Speaking in Singapore on Friday, Macron threatened to “harden our collective position” if Israel did not change course. He also floated the possibility of Paris recognising a Palestinian state — under certain conditions — calling it “not only a moral duty, but a political necessity”.



“If we abandon Gaza . . . we kill our own credibility,” he added in a speech.

Israel's foreign ministry on Friday decried what it described as "Macron's crusade against the Jewish state".

“The facts do not interest Macron. There is no humanitarian blockade. That is a blatant lie . . . instead of applying pressure on the jihadist terrorists, Macron wants to reward them with a Palestinian state,” it said.

“No doubt its national day will be October 7,” the ministry said, referring to the date of Hamas’s 2023 attack on Israel that triggered the war.

Israeli defence minister Israel Katz also rejected threats made by “Macron and his friends” to recognise a Palestinian state, which he said would only be a state “on paper . . . thrown into the dustbin of history”.

*Additional reporting by Kathrin Hille in Singapore*

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