

WEST BANK: SETTLERS AND SOLDIERS CONTINUE TO HARASS HUMANITARIANS, DESTROY VITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

15 out of the 40 surveyed NGOs operating in the West Bank reported that their staff faced at least one of the following:

- Harassment
- Intimidation
- Threats
- Beatings
- Arbitrary searches
- Questioning

These incidents were carried out: often at gunpoint, repeatedly and over the course of several instances, by Israeli settlers, and/or soldiers, or drones. One organization alone reported approximately 20 to 25 incidents by Israeli forces and settlers over the reporting period, including searching aid storage facilities, harassing and delaying staff at checkpoints and during distribution, and damaging or destroying aid supplies.

These attacks resulted in delays in aid delivery and, in some cases, the complete inability to reach certain communities, leaving hundreds of aid recipients without the necessary assistance. The targeting of aid storage and distribution efforts has significantly hindered the ability to provide timely support to vulnerable populations.

Military operations by Israeli forces in the northern West Bank have caused severe damage to water and sanitation infrastructure, disrupting access to water to tens of thousands of people and heightening public health concerns.

HUMANITARIAN PRESENCE REDUCED, SERVICES FROZEN: AID DOES NOT REACH PEOPLE IN NEED

Almost all of surveyed NGOs operating in Gaza (95%, 41 out of 43) said they had to suspend or dramatically reduce their activities, limiting movements to only the most critical necessities, to mitigate risk exposure for aid recipients and staff. For the same reasons, the UN announced it would be reducing its international staff presence.

The impact of these difficult decisions is very high, as reported by surveyed organizations:

- Only the most vital services are maintained: food parcels, hot meals, water trucking, some shelter assistance, and vital medical care. As supplies have already started to run out due to the complete siege, even these services are becoming more scarce, or have already completely shut down.
- Most surveyed NGOs implementing mental health, psychosocial support, recreation or education activities, have reported full suspension of those services. A few are attempting to provide support remotely using messaging apps, but they face major connectivity challenges. As a result, hundreds of thousands of children, women, people living with disabilities or illnesses, as well as older people, have lost access to assistance that was essential to their survival, well-being and basic dignity.
- Protection and accountability are also under threat as the overall law-and-order situation has deteriorated, looting incidents are increasing, monitoring activities have largely been paused, and international presence is reduced.

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These strikes are increasingly indiscriminate and unpredictable, which can make distributions dangerous for staff, partners and civilians. Our staff have also been affected by the new forced displacement orders since 18 March, meaning many of them have been displaced again.

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- Humanitarian worker, Gaza

**CHECKPOINTS, CORRIDORS, NO-GO ZONES, DISPLACEMENT ORDERS:
ACCESS DENIED**

Since 18 March, the Israeli military has issued at least 15 displacement orders across Gaza that affect 36% of the Gaza Strip. By 3 April, two-thirds of Gaza was within “no-go” areas or under displacement orders, and by 15 April, 70%.

Twenty-four surveyed organizations reported increased movement restrictions in Gaza, impeding their ability to deliver aid. At least 25 organizations working in Gaza reported having faced challenges accessing fuel in the reporting period, and another 29 reported challenges accessing cash.

Most attempts to coordinate humanitarian movements to the areas of the Gaza Strip territory designated as “no-go” zones or placed under displacement orders have been denied, according to UN reports.

In the West Bank, 95% of surveyed NGOs faced a sharp increase in movement restrictions throughout the reporting period that impeded their ability to deliver aid, including:

- increased waiting times at existing checkpoints,
- more frequent and unpredictable road closures,
- new checkpoints, gates or military roadblocks restricting movement,
- violence or intimidation at the checkpoints by Israeli forces,
- attacks against staff by Israeli forces or settlers at home or on the way to or from work.



As of 15 April 2025, 70% of the Gaza Strip has been marked as “no-go” areas or under displacement orders.

SHRINKING MOVEMENT CAPACITY, SHRINKING AID DELIVERY

For 18 months in Gaza, humanitarian agencies and their staff have been forced to repeatedly dismantle, replan, relocate, and re-settle themselves (tents, warehouses, guesthouses, distribution and medical points...), facing constant road closures, lack of information, radical shifts in accessible or inaccessible areas. All this renders aid delivery logistically complex, increasingly costly, and unpredictable, limiting aid’s ability to reach people and people’s ability to reach aid.

Given that two-thirds of Gaza is too dangerous to access without coordination with the military and that most coordination requests are denied, there are no clear estimates of the number of people who remain in these areas.

Additionally, restricted humanitarian movements are hindering critical tasks, such as the delivery of chemicals for desalination plants and picking up commodities that entered Gaza prior to 2 March at crossings.

The areas under displacement orders since 18 March include dozens of humanitarian facilities and aid distribution points, including half of Gaza’s water and sanitation facilities.

Many aid workers are affected by the displacement orders themselves, which along with the heavy toll this carries on their mental health and well-being, in turn, affects service delivery for other affected Palestinians.

The creation of another corridor to split the Gaza Strip will further hamper humanitarian movements and Palestinians’ ability to access the agricultural areas of the Rafah governorate, with severe impacts on food security.

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Operational independence and needs-based aid delivery

ACTIONS AGAINST AID

TIGHTENED CONTROL

On 9 March, the Israeli authorities issued new visa and registration rules for international NGOs wishing to operate in the oPt. Conditions are based on vague and politicized criteria, and include staff vetting, as well as alarming constraints on humanitarian advocacy that restrict fact-based humanitarian assessments and reporting.

In February, Israeli authorities presented a plan to humanitarian organizations, including the UN, to restructure aid delivery in Gaza and place relief operations under full Israeli military control—from dispatch to delivery—with aid reaching only pre-approved Palestinians in tightly controlled zones and through pre-approved staff. Such a system would eliminate any space for an independent, principled humanitarian response. According to the UN Secretary-General, “the Israeli authorities’ newly proposed ‘authorization mechanisms’ for aid delivery risk further controlling and callously limiting aid down to the last calorie and grain of flour.”

THE IMPACT

INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY AFFECTED

Both these decisions set an alarming precedent for humanitarian responses worldwide. They carry serious risks for humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality, which require assistance to be delivered based on needs alone, independent from political or military motivations. They would also jeopardize humanitarian agencies’ neutrality whereby humanitarian assistance should not be used to provide an advantage to a party to conflict.

Any staff and/or aid recipient vetting requirements, in a context where aid workers and civilians are repeatedly under attack, would present serious legal, privacy, data protection and security concerns.

Palestinian civil society organizations would be particularly at risk, which in turn would have very negative repercussions for Palestinians.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS



As the occupying power, the Government of Israel has unequivocal obligations under international law - including international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL).

Articles 55, 56 and 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), require the occupying power to ensure food and medical supplies for the occupied population and to ensure and maintain medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene. Medical personnel of all categories shall be allowed to carry out their duties. If the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population, and shall facilitate them by all means at its disposal.

In addition, Customary IHL rules 1, 14, and 15, require parties to a conflict to apply the principles of distinction, proportionality, precaution when conducting hostilities.

The International Court of Justice's (ICJ) Advisory Opinion (2024) concluded that Israel’s continued presence in the oPt is unlawful and that the Government of Israel must bring its presence to an end as rapidly as possible. It also states that third States also have an obligation not to recognise as legal the unlawful presence of Israel in occupied territory, nor to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation.

The West Bank is currently policed under a law enforcement paradigm set forth by international human rights law, as there are currently no active hostilities. Deliberate lethal force can only be used as a method of last resort to prevent an imminent threat to life.

At least 15 UN Security Council resolutions, which are legally binding, have been adopted calling for Israel to end all settlement activity in the oPt, protect civilians, protect humanitarian personnel and access, and expedite the delivery of humanitarian assistance including fuel. The list includes resolutions 242 (1967), 449 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008), 2334 (2016), 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023), 2728 (2024), 2730 (2024), 2735 (2024).

What can and must be done urgently

1. ENSURE A PERMANENT CEASEFIRE IS IMMEDIATELY IMPLEMENTED

All States must take concrete actions to ensure an immediate and permanent ceasefire, including immediately halting the transfer of weapons, parts, and ammunition to parties to prevent their use in violations of international law, as prescribed by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution ES-10/24 on the ICJ's Advisory Opinion on Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territory.

2. URGENTLY UNBLOCK AID ACCESS

All States with influence must use all possible measures to:

- Ensure all parties to the conflict guarantee and facilitate safe, unhindered access for humanitarian aid across the oPt.
- Ensure Israeli authorities reopen all crossings into Gaza for humanitarian and commercial goods, as well as machinery and supplies needed for (re)construction, and patients requiring urgent medical evacuations outside of Gaza, such as to the West Bank including East Jerusalem, with no restrictions on the return of those seeking to reenter.
- Ensure that Israeli authorities lift all movement restrictions, and guarantee safe, unrestricted passage for Palestinians and humanitarian organizations. The safety and security of humanitarian actors must be guaranteed as they respond to the humanitarian imperative to assist communities, including Palestinian staff of INGOs, Palestinian NGOs, Civil Defence, and the Palestinian Red Crescent.
- Urge the Government of Israel to revoke its laws banning UNRWA, and ensure its mandate is respected, including by immediately ceasing all attacks on the agency and its operations.
- Call to rescind any measures that restrict humanitarian and civic space, including the recent decisions on INGO registration and visa requirements, and proposed legislation imposing financial and operational restrictions on Israeli NGOs receiving foreign funding. They must reject any aid authorization and delivery plans presented by the Israeli authorities that do not fully respect humanitarian principles.
- Ensure that the Government of Israel, the occupying power, upholds its obligations under international law, protects and upholds the rights of Palestinians, and refrains from excessive and unlawful use of force.

3. ENSURE THE END OF THE UNLAWFUL PRESENCE IN THE OPT

All States must uphold their legal obligations, including under the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territory, reinforced by the UNGA resolution, and take concrete actions to:

- Halt Israel's annexation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to end Israel's unlawful presence in the oPt.
- Use all lawful measures to stop forcible transfers, including demolitions and forced evictions, and ensuring Palestinians' right to remain on their land is upheld.
- Prevent Israel's announced additional fragmentation of Gaza and unlawful presence in the territory, and call for the full withdrawal of troops.

4. BOOST FUNDING FOR THE RELIEF RESPONSE IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK

Donors, private companies and wealthy individuals across the world must provide direct, flexible, quality, and sufficient funding for the humanitarian response, including to UNRWA, Palestinian NGOs and CSOs. Recent funding cuts have had devastating consequences for a humanitarian response that was already on its knees following 18 months of unbridled destruction and obstruction on humanitarian infrastructure, assets, goods, tools and facilities.

Widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure in Jabalia and Beit Lahiya, North Gaza.

Photo credit: Gavin Kelleher/NRC
04 February 2025



HUMANITARIAN ACCESS SNAPSHOT #11
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

19 JAN – 15 APR 2025