



SOS Alert Gaza #4

14 November 2023

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing a fourth SOS alert for the people in the besieged Gaza Strip.

As the Israeli military operation continues to strangle Gaza in its operation against Hamas, Thomas White, the Director of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Affairs in Gaza [announced](#) on 13 November 2023 at 12:30 PM GMT that their humanitarian operation would cease in 48 hours if no fuel was allowed to enter. [No fuel has entered Gaza](#) since 7 October 2023, and the reservoir fuel on the border of Egypt to which the Government of Israel granted UNWRA access [has been exhausted](#), White wrote on social media. Fuel is used not only to ferry humanitarian supplies across the Rafah border, but also to run desalination plants to produce drinking water, fuel generators that power basic needs such as sewage processing and waste removal, and provide electricity for hospitals and communication infrastructure.

UNRWA has been a staple of modern Palestinian life since before the current war began. Prior to the attacks of 7 October 2023, they provided food assistance to the 70% of Gaza's 2.2 million residents living under the poverty line. Each day, 500 supply trucks crossed into Gaza from Israel and Egypt, of which a hundred contained humanitarian supplies for UNWRA to maintain their operations. Since the beginning of hostilities, however, that number has dwindled dramatically. On 12 November 2023, a convoy of only 48 vehicles carrying medical supplies, food, and drinking water, was allowed in through the border with Egypt at Rafah, of which 22 were UNWRA trucks. However, those will be the last if the international community remains passive. "Our trucks have run out of fuel - we will not be able to receive aid coming thru the Rafah crossing tomorrow," [White](#) wrote on social media at 5:55 PM GMT on Monday, 13 November 2023.

UNRWA's importance to the survival of those in Gaza cannot be understated. As of 12 November 2023, 154 severely overcrowded UNWRA installations were sheltering around 787,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), 627,00 of whom are in 97 facilities in the south of the Strip. In their situation report from [13 November 2023](#), UNWRA states that these installations are accommodating far more people than their intended capacity. They are not designed to host such a large number of people and do not have adequate facilities to provide "safe and dignified living conditions."

The same report states that nine of 22 UNWRA health centers were still operational in the middle and south of the Gaza Strip. Communication breakdowns have severely hindered the information UNRWA can provide about its healthcare operation as registrations, once done online, have reverted to a pen-and-paper system, which makes reporting much more difficult. UNRWA estimates that there are 50.000 pregnant women in Gaza, with more than 180 giving birth every day. However, when the fuel runs out, their operations will depend on solar energy which is designed only to cater to minimum operations. "Functionality of the solar energy is not guaranteed as any malfunction and/or battery failure will cause [a] complete stop of all operation," they wrote.

Without fuel, the little potable water and sanitation services being provided to the people UNRWA cares for will cease to flow, causing an avalanche of problems. "As of 14 November, UNRWA sanitation work will start shutting down, causing environmental hazards with around 400 tons of solid waste per day accumulated in all camps and UNRWA managed and overcrowded IDP shelters. Combined with stopping public sewage pumping stations (see below), and the shutdown of municipality sanitation operations this will impose serious threats to public health, with a high risk of water contamination and disease outbreak," [UNRWA warns](#).

At the time of this statement, UNWRA itself has lost 101 personnel in Israeli attacks. The agency [says](#) at least one-third of those killed have died south of the Wadi-Gaza line, where Israel urged refugees to [flee](#). Israel has not spared UNWRA facilities from its fire. [To date](#), more than 60 have been impacted, including 10 directly hit. At least 70% of the facilities hit were in the middle and southern areas, to which Israel had directed people to go.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention implores the international community to impose a ceasefire and act immediately to help ensure that UNRWA is resupplied with fuel. The certainty of an unmitigated human catastrophe should far outweigh the [oft-cited risk](#) of Hamas fighters intercepting it. After all, [Israel claims](#) it offered fuel to Al Shifa Hospital,

allegedly only to have it refused by Hamas. If that is true, the Lemkin Institute demands the same offer be extended to UNRWA to support its operations. We also echo the call by the Principals for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for an [immediate humanitarian ceasefire](#). Without a ceasefire, the world knows what the future holds for the remaining civilians of Gaza and those who are giving everything to sustain them. The question is whether or not those in power have the courage to prevent genocide from intensifying in front of our eyes.