

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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**REMARKS TO CALL FOR ACTION:
URGENT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE FOR GAZA**

Dead Sea, Jordan, 11 June 2024

[As delivered]

Your Majesty King Abdullah [ibn Al Hussein],

Your Excellency President [Abdel Fattah] el-Sisi,

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for coming together for this urgent Call to Action for lifesaving relief to the people of Gaza that are under fire in the most dramatic circumstances.

It is now 8 months since the horrific Hamas terror attacks of 7 October and the abduction of Israeli men, women, and children to Gaza.

But 8 months of relentless suffering for Palestinian civilians in Gaza, the speed and scale of the carnage and killing in Gaza is beyond anything in my years as Secretary-General.

At least 1.7 million people – 75 per cent of Gaza’s population – have been displaced, many times over by Israel military attacks.

Nowhere is safe.

Conditions are deplorable.

The public health situation is beyond crisis levels.
Gaza’s hospitals lie in ruins.

Medical supplies and fuel are scarce or non-existent.

More than one million Palestinians in Gaza do not have enough clean drinking water and face desperate levels of hunger.

Over 50,000 children require treatment for acute malnutrition.

And despite the ocean of needs, at least half of all humanitarian aid missions are denied access, impeded, or cancelled due to operational or security reasons.

On top of all this, since the attack on the Rafah border crossing one month ago, the flow of critical humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza – which was already woefully inadequate – has plummeted by two-thirds.

Excellencies,

In the face of this calamity, the world has tried its best to save lives.

And I want to express my gratitude to Egypt and Jordan for all their efforts.

Your Majesty, through you, allow me to thank the people of Jordan for the relief provided -- including through aid convoys, airdrops, and field hospitals.

We all appreciate immensely your personal commitment to mobilize the international community and your persistent call for a robust coordination mechanism for the unimpeded and safe flow of sufficient aid to the people of Gaza. I urge the international community to support Jordan's efforts as it undertakes its critical role assisting the people of Gaza and serving as a key regional humanitarian hub.

President el-Sisi, I also want to commend your critical leadership and that of the government and people of Egypt -- not only in supporting humanitarian relief to the people of Gaza in so many ways, but also for your pivotal role in seeking an end to this tragic conflict and building a foundation for sustainable peace.

And, of course, we all salute the brave humanitarians in Gaza working in nightmare conditions to stem the suffering.

Our Palestinian humanitarian colleagues, in particular, are working against enormous obstacles and near impossible conditions.

Imagine their lives and circumstances.

Showing up for work when their homes are destroyed and their loved ones killed.

Putting themselves in humanitarian convoys, even when they have been fired upon.

Without those courageous individuals, the aid operations in Gaza would collapse.

And UNRWA is the backbone of this humanitarian response, and it has suffered intolerably alongside the people it supports.

I express my deepest condolences to the families and friends of the 193 UNRWA staff members who have been killed.

There must be full accountability for each and every one of these deaths.

Attacks on UN personnel and premises are unacceptable.

Excellencies,

The horror must stop.

It is high time for a ceasefire along with the unconditional release of hostages.

I welcome the peace initiative recently outlined by President Biden and urge all parties to seize this opportunity and come to an agreement.

And I call on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

This includes facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid both into and inside Gaza, as they have committed.

All available routes into Gaza must be operational.

And the land routes are absolutely crucial.

I also welcome all coordinated efforts to fully operationalize the mechanism to facilitate aid into Gaza as mandated by Security Council Resolution 2720.

The work of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator to accelerate and expand the rollout of the mechanism remains critical. I commend governments and people across the region and the world for supporting it.

The security of UNRWA and our humanitarian partners is vital to moving lifesaving aid over the border and where it needs to go within Gaza.

Deliveries require safe routes and effective deconfliction mechanisms to ensure their security.

They require unimpeded access for security and communications equipment, commensurate with the risks of working in a war zone.

They require immediate efforts to clear routes inside Gaza, which are littered with mines and unexploded ordnance.

Civilians must be allowed to seek safety. And civilians and the infrastructure they rely on must never be militarized or targeted.

Excellencies,

I also call for the world to stand united to safeguard UNRWA in the face of outrageous and relentless attacks.

UNRWA's role will remain critical not only during the conflict, but afterwards.

Over a million deeply traumatized children in Gaza need psychosocial support and the safety and hope their schools used to provide.

Around 60 per cent of all residential buildings and at least 80 per cent of commercial facilities have been damaged by Israeli bombardment. Health facilities and educational institutions are in rubble.

Only UNRWA has the capacity, skills, and networks needed to support the Palestinian people to face the immense challenge on health, on education and so much more.

Excellencies,

Ultimately, the solution to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is political.

The only way forward is through a political solution that opens a path to sustained peace, based on two states, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security, on the basis of the pre- 1967 lines and the relevant United Nations resolutions, previous agreements and international law, with Jerusalem as capital of both states.

Let us keep working to make that a reality – as we work to answer today's call to action for Palestinians in Gaza in such profound and immediate need.

And I thank you.