

UN reports more than 100 incubator babies at risk due to Israel's fuel cuts to Gaza:



United Nations, October 22 (RHC)-- The United Nations says the lives of at least 120 newborn babies in incubators in Gaza's hospitals are at risk as fuel runs out in the Palestinian enclave under renewed Israeli blockade in the wake of the October 7 deadly Hamas attack in Israel.

"We have currently 120 neonates who are in incubators, out of which we have 70 neonates with mechanical ventilation, and of course this is where we are extremely concerned," UNICEF spokesperson Jonathan Crickx said.

About 160 women give birth every day in Gaza, according to the UN Population Fund, which estimates there are 50,000 pregnant women across the territory of 2.3 million people.

The first batch of 20 trucks carrying humanitarian aid entered Gaza via Rafah crossing with Egypt on Saturday, but Israel continues to block fuel and electricity supplies critical to running hospitals and support several other essential services.

Since October 7, hospitals have been facing a dire lack of medicines, fuel and water not only for the thousands wounded in more than two weeks of the Israeli bombardment since the Hamas attack but also for routine patients.

Power is one of the main concerns for the seven specialist wards across Gaza treating premature babies. These wards help the babies breathe and provide critical support, for example when their organs are not developed enough. Gaza's Health Ministry has said 130 premature babies are in danger due to the lack of fuel.

“If they [babies] are put in mechanical ventilation incubators, by definition, if you cut the electricity, we are worried about their lives,” Crickx told the AFP news agency. Moreover, evacuation orders sent to hospitals in north Gaza in recent days have generated further concern.

Since Saturday, Palestinians in Gaza have said they have begun receiving renewed warnings from Israel’s military to move from north Gaza to the south of the Strip, with the added warning that they could be identified as sympathisers with a “terrorist organisation” if they stayed put.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X, formerly known as Twitter, “It is impossible for these overcrowded hospitals to safely evacuate patients.” “They must be allowed to perform their lifesaving functions. They must be protected,” he added.

UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said the supply of fuel is essential for humanitarian purposes. Besides the urgent need for fuel, UNICEF’s Executive Director Catherine Russell also called for sustained humanitarian access in Gaza.

She noted that the UN agency was able to send only about 44,000 bottles of drinking water to Gaza through the Rafah crossing and no fuel.

“With one million children in Gaza now facing a critical protection and humanitarian crisis, the delivery of water is a matter of life or death. Every minute counts,” Russell said. “This first, limited water will save lives, but the needs are immediate and immense – not just for water, but for food, fuel, medicine, and essential goods and services,” Russell added.

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