

# *UNRWA pauses aid through key Gaza crossing as bombardments and widespread hunger stalk Palestinians*

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Karem Abu Salem, December 1 (RHC)-- The UN agency for Palestinian refugees has halted the delivery of aid through the Karem Abu Salem (known as Kerem Shalom to Israelis) crossing between Israel and Gaza because of security concerns, its chief said, as widespread hunger and deadly Israeli

bombardments continue.

“We are pausing the delivery of aid through Kerem Shalom, the main crossing point for humanitarian aid into Gaza. The road out of this crossing has not been safe for months. On 16 November, a large convoy of aid trucks was stolen by armed gangs,” UNRWA head Philippe Lazzarini said in a post on X.

“Yesterday, we tried to bring in a few food trucks on the same route. They were all taken,” he added, warning hunger was “rapidly deepening” in Gaza. Lazzarini listed how the humanitarian operation had become “unnecessarily impossible” due to “the ongoing siege, hurdles from Israeli authorities, political decisions to restrict the amounts of aid, lack of safety on aid routes and targeting of local police”.

The UNRWA chief called on Israel to ensure aid flowed to Gaza and said the country “must refrain from attacks on humanitarian workers.”

On Thursday, the UN agency said “out of the 91 attempts the agency has made to deliver aid to besieged north Gaza between October 6 and November 25, 82 have been denied and 9 impeded.”

Israel has been accused of using starvation as a weapon of war as it has restricted supplies of food, medicine and other essential items into Gaza since launching the war last October. More than 44,000 Palestinians have been killed in nonstop Israeli bombardment since then.

#### Targeting of aid convoys

Louise Wateridge, the UNRWA emergency officer, told Al Jazeera that the targeting of aid convoys has been happening since May. “That has led to desperation of people, who don’t have what they need and it has led and forced criminal activities,” she stressed.

The pause in the delivery of aid also follows an Israeli attack on Saturday that killed three contractors of the US charity World Central Kitchen (WCK). The Israeli military claimed one of the contractors was involved in Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack.

However, the WCK said it had “no knowledge that any individual in the vehicle had alleged ties” to the Hamas attack. The UN said last month that 333 aid workers had been killed since the start of the war in October of last year, 243 of them employees of UNRWA.

Israel, which imposed a total siege on Gaza in the early stages of the war last year, blames the inability of relief organisations to handle and distribute large quantities of aid.

Hamas’s Interior Ministry in Gaza have responded to the looting, saying more than 20 of the gang members suspected of carrying out the robbery had been killed by its security forces acting in coordination with tribal committees.

Meanwhile, Palestinians in Gaza have told Al Jazeera of their confusion over how, in one of the most heavily surveilled territories on the planet, the presence of so many armed men could have gone undetected by Israeli forces.

The Washington Post had previously reported that an internal UN memo from October said the gangs in Gaza “may be benefitting from a passive if not active benevolence” or “protection” from the Israeli army.

One gang leader, the memo said, had established a “military-like compound” in an area “restricted, controlled and patrolled by the IDF (Israeli army).” As this developed, Gaza’s civil defense agency reported that nearly 100 people were killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza in the last 24 hours.

The casualties include those killed in an Israeli strike on a home belonging to the al-Araj family in the Tal az-Zaatar neighbourhood, which housed more than 40 people.

Israel's genocide in Gaza has killed at least 44,382 Palestinians and wounded 105,142 since October 7, 2023.

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