

World Health Organization warns Gaza children are in danger of polio outbreak



Geneva, February 20 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) says mass polio vaccination will resume in Gaza after the virus has been detected again in the war-ravaged territory.

WHO said on Wednesday that mass polio vaccination would resume in Gaza on February 22, targeting nearly 600,000 children, as the virus was circulating the war-torn Palestinian territory.

No more polio cases had been reported since a 10-month-old child was paralyzed in Gaza in August 2024, during the Israeli regime's genocidal war, the first case in the enclave in 25 years.

The virus has been found in wastewater samples taken in Gaza in December and January, "signaling ongoing circulation in the environment, putting children at risk," WHO said.

"The presence of the virus still poses a risk to children with low or no immunity, in Gaza and throughout the region." The organization therefore has aimed to vaccinate more than 591,000 children with oral Polio from February 22 to 26.

Gaza's Health Ministry confirmed that the three-day polio campaign will start on Saturday, in coordination with WHO, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

It is not clear how the Israeli regime's ban on UNRAWA and closing of its facilities across the occupied territories will affect the campaign.

Another problem is Israel's violation of the ceasefire agreement as the regime has allowed a very limited amount of medical supplies to enter the enclave.

Furthermore, during its 15 months of genocidal war against Gaza, the regime destroyed almost all of the enclave's medical facilities, and abducted, injured, or killed medical personnel.

As a result, the enclave's medical capabilities in order to deal with viral or microbial outbreaks are extremely limited, and the WHO's campaign seems to be a temporary solution to a permanent problem.

On January 15, the Israeli regime, failing to achieve any of its war objectives including the "elimination" of Hamas or the release of captives, was forced to agree to a ceasefire deal with the Palestinian resistance movements.

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