

Israeli suspension of humanitarian aid to Gaza is nothing less than a war crime



Aid trucks carrying humanitarian supplies enter Gaza through the Kerem Shalom border crossing on Feb 23 Credit: Anadolu

Gaza City, March 2 (RHC)-- The Israeli regime has suspended the entry of humanitarian aid supplies to the Gaza Strip amid the termination of the first phase of the January 19th ceasefire agreement, with the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas denouncing the move as a "war crime" against the besieged territory.

Palestinian media's live footage broadcast from the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah showed a road often used by aid-delivering trucks remaining empty on Sunday after Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced a halt on the entry of all goods and supplies into the blockaded enclave.

The office claimed that the move was prompted after Hamas's refusal to accept an American proposal to extend phase one of the ceasefire through Ramadan and Passover holidays and alongside more releases of Israeli captives in exchange for Palestinian abductees.

"With the end of Phase 1 of the [exchange] deal and in light of Hamas's refusal to accept the [US special envoy Steve] Witkoff outline for continuing talks – to which Israel agreed – Prime Minister Netanyahu has decided that, as of this morning, all entry of goods and supplies into the Gaza Strip will cease," the office said in a statement.

"Israel will not allow a ceasefire without the release of our [captives]," Netanyahu's office added, warning of "further consequences" if Hamas insists on its decision.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said Israel's blockage of aid entry into Gaza would impact the ceasefire talks, adding that the resistance movement "doesn't respond to pressures."

Israel's public broadcaster Kan said Netanyahu is not interested in discussing the second phase of the ceasefire deal and opts for ratcheting up pressure on Hamas by resuming its aggression on the besieged Palestinian territory.

"He is considering briefly resuming military assault on Gaza to put pressure on Hamas or maintaining the ceasefire without further prisoners' exchanges, allowing mediators more time to push Hamas for additional concessions despite that this is violating the overall ceasefire deal," the broadcaster said.

Smotrich: We must open gates of hell as fast as possible

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich defended Netanyahu's blocking of humanitarian aid to Gaza and resumption of attacks on the strip. "The decision we made last night to completely halt the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza until Hamas is destroyed or surrenders completely and all our [captives] are returned is an important step in the right direction—'standing at the gates of hell,'" Smotrich said.

"Now, we must open these gates as quickly and as lethally as possible."

Following the statement of Netanyahu's office, the occupation closed the Kerem Abu Salem crossing and forced the return of all aid trucks.

Hamas on Sunday insisted on the implementation of the second phase of the ceasefire in the besieged Gaza Strip after the Israeli regime unilaterally endorsed a temporary extension of its initial phase.

The Palestinian resistance movement said any further captive-abductee exchanges with Israel would only be possible after the two sides engage in the second phase of Gaza ceasefire negotiations.

Continuation of genocidal war on Gaza

Gaza's Government Media Office said Israel's move to block the entry of essential aid to Gaza represents a continuation of the genocidal war on the Palestinian people.

"The occupation's announcement of halting the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip is yet another confirmation of its failure to uphold its commitments and its evasion of obligations under the ceasefire agreement. This reflects its ugly criminal face and constitutes a continuation of the genocide against our people, as well as an act of blackmail targeting an entire population by depriving them of food, water, and medicine," the office said in a statement.

"Once again, the occupation demonstrates its disregard for international law and its blatant violation of the International Charter of Human Rights," it added.

"Preventing the entry of aid effectively amounts to a starvation war against the people of Gaza, who rely entirely on humanitarian assistance for their survival due to the collapse of all work and production sectors as a result of the occupation's atrocities."

The office called on the mediators, as guarantors, to pressure the occupation to fulfill its obligations under the agreement in all its phases, implement the humanitarian protocol, and allow the entry of shelter and relief supplies, as well as rescue equipment and machinery into Gaza.

"We demand a unified Arab and Islamic stance and a firm international position to pressure the occupation and its supporters to stop this latest crime—another crime against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide through starvation, targeting over 2.4 million people."

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