

*European nations say Israel's  
Gaza aid blockade could breach  
humanitarian law*

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London, March 6 (RHC)-- The blockade of aid to the Gaza Strip announced by Israel last week would risk violating international humanitarian law, three European foreign ministers have said in a statement.

In a joint statement published on Wednesday, the foreign ministers of the United Kingdom, France and Germany called on the government of Israel to abide by its international obligations, and “to ensure full, rapid, safe and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance to the population in Gaza”.

Israel blocked the entry of aid shipments to Gaza on Sunday, hours after the first phase of its ceasefire deal with the Palestinian group Hamas expired, raising fears of hunger and more hardships during the holy month of Ramadan that began over the weekend.

“A halt on goods and supplies entering Gaza, such as that announced by the Government of Israel would risk violating International Humanitarian Law,” the three ministers said.

“Humanitarian aid should never be contingent on a ceasefire or used as a political tool,” the statement added, calling on all parties to uphold the ceasefire.

Separately, on Wednesday, five European members of the United Nations Security Council, including the UK and France, called on Israel to “immediately let humanitarian aid flow into the Gaza Strip”, urging parties “to find a way forward to the next phases of the ceasefire agreement and hostage release deal”.

Rights groups have accused Israel of crimes against humanity and violations of international laws for blocking aid in Gaza. Nearly 50,000 Palestinians have been killed and 70 percent of Gaza’s buildings and roads are damaged after 15 months of nonstop Israeli bombardment.

Hamas has accused Israel of reneging on the ceasefire that ended the Gaza war. Israel now wants to extend the first phase of the deal by 50 days instead of entering into the second phase as agreed originally. Israel was supposed to withdraw its forces from the Philadelphi Corridor at the end of the first phase on March 1, but it has refused to do so. Trump’s Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff is reportedly expected to visit the region in the coming days to end the deadlock.

#### Desperate need for aid

On Wednesday, the World Food Programme (WFP) said it has food supplies for the Palestinian enclave to keep public kitchens and bakeries open for less than two weeks.

Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Gaza, said the blockading of aid was having “a massive negative impact across the Gaza Strip.” “People have been going hungry here ... and the market is depleting,” he said.

“We see many of the items that used to be available and common, like flour, medicine and other basic necessities, are now either expensive or unavailable.”

Rosalia Bollen, a spokesperson for the UN’s children’s agency, said the block on humanitarian aid, including vaccines and ventilators for pre-term babies, “will have devastating real-life consequences” for children and their parents.

“If we’re unable to bring that in, routine vaccination will come to a standstill,” she said. “Neonatal units won’t be able to care for preterm babies, so this is a real-life consequence that we’ll be dealing with very, very soon if we’re unable to resume the aid supplies coming in.”

Bollen, who is in Gaza, said existing supplies have already been largely distributed throughout the enclave.

“The first phase of the ceasefire wasn’t just a pause in hostilities ... it really was a lifeline for families here,” she added. “The mood here is very depressed; families that I speak with are deeply worried about what the future is going to hold.”

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