

Israel fails to meet U.S. deadline to increase Gaza aid, but nothing happens

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Geneva, November 13 (RHC)-- International rights groups say Israel has failed to meet a deadline set by the United States to allow more humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip or face unspecified restrictions on military assistance.

The conditions in the war-ravaged enclave are worse than at any point in a war that started in October 2023, eight groups said on Tuesday when the 30-day deadline was set to expire.

On October 13, the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden told Israel to increase the flow of humanitarian supplies into Gaza, failing which Washington would scale back military support to its key ally.

“Israel not only failed to meet the U.S. criteria that would indicate support to the humanitarian response, but concurrently took actions that dramatically worsened the situation on the ground, particularly in northern Gaza,” said the groups, which include the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Refugees International and Save the Children.

“That situation is in an even more dire state today than a month ago,” they said in a statement after the humanitarian agencies assessed Israel’s measures. They added: “Israel has failed to comply with its ally’s demands – at enormous human cost for Palestinian civilians in Gaza.”

After analysing the 19 requirements outlined by the United States, the rights groups said Israel failed “to take meaningful action” and “actively worsens the humanitarian situation” in 15 of them, including enabling the entrance of at least 350 aid trucks per day into Gaza.

On Tuesday, the Israeli military said hundreds of food and water packages were delivered to Jabalia and Beit Hanoon in besieged northern Gaza in coordination with COGAT, the Israeli military body responsible for Palestinian civil affairs. It also claimed that since October, 741 aid trucks have made deliveries to northern Gaza, where Israeli forces have pursued a major offensive.

The United Nations has said the amount of aid entering Gaza has plummeted to its lowest level in a year and has repeatedly accused Israel of blocking attempts to deliver humanitarian supplies, particularly to the north of the enclave.

Under the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act, the president is required to halt security assistance to any country that restricts U.S. humanitarian aid. The U.S. is Israel’s key political and military backer and recently deployed the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, along with soldiers to operate it.

A committee of global food security experts warned of a “strong likelihood that famine is imminent in areas” of northern Gaza. “Immediate action, within days not weeks, is required from all actors who are directly taking part in the conflict, or have influence on its conduct, to avert and alleviate this catastrophic situation,” the independent Famine Review Committee said.

The eight rights groups said Israel’s failure to address urgent humanitarian needs raises questions about its adherence to international humanitarian law and its obligations as an occupying power.

“The U.S. government once again laid out basic measures for how the government of Israel must follow international law and allow for aid delivery in Gaza,” Oxfam America President and CEO Abby Maxman said. “Since then, we have seen Israeli forces accelerate their efforts to bombard, depopulate, deprive, and erase the Palestinian population of the North Gaza governorate. We are witnessing a campaign of ethnic cleansing.”

Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza has killed at least 43,603 Palestinians and wounded 102,929 since October 7, 2023, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

Since October this year, the Israeli military has escalated its shelling and ground incursions in northern Gaza, claiming its aim is to avoid Hamas fighters from regrouping.

The UN said in a report that nearly 70 percent of the Gaza war dead were women and children. The youngest was just a day old and the oldest was a 97-year-old woman, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said, having verified 8,119 of the people reportedly killed during the first six months of the war.

The report warned that “widespread or systematic” attacks on civilians could amount to “crimes against humanity.” “And if committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, they may also constitute genocide,” it said.

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