

Arab nations and rights groups condemn Israel's decision to block Gaza aid

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A Palestinian family breaks the Ramadan fast on the rubble of their house at the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, March 2, 2025 [Mahmoud Issa/Reuters]

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Ramallah, March 4 (RHC)-- Several Arab nations and rights organisations have condemned Israel's decision to halt aid deliveries to the Gaza Strip, calling it a blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement and international law by using starvation as a weapon.

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.

In a statement, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it "strongly condemns the Israeli government's decision to block humanitarian aid and close crossings used for relief efforts".

The ministry said the actions violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, and "all religious principles." The Fourth Geneva Convention, adopted in 1949, provides humanitarian protections for civilians in war zones.

On Sunday night, Qatar also condemned Israel's decision to block aid into Gaza and emphasised a "firm rejection of the use of food as a weapon of war and the starvation of civilians."

"We call on the international community to oblige Israel to ensure the safe and sustainable entry of humanitarian aid without obstacles," Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "The Kingdom condemns and denounces the decision by the Israeli occupation government to halt humanitarian aid to Gaza, using it as a tool of blackmail and collective punishment." It said the decision was "a direct assault on the principles of international humanitarian law amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by the Palestinian people."

Jordan said the Israeli move threatens "to reignite the situation in the sector." "We stress the need for Israel to stop using starvation as a weapon against Palestinians and innocent people," its Foreign Ministry said.

Reporting from Gaza City, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said Israel is once again using "food and water as a weapon of war for political gain." "When it comes to water, for example, 80 percent of Gaza's reservoirs have been completely destroyed along with the desalination infrastructure. So there is full reliance on the trucks that are carrying water supplies," Mahmoud said.

"Hospitals, meanwhile, are still struggling. And with the decision to hold all aid coming into Gaza, including medical supplies, they are likely to continue to struggle to provide care for vulnerable groups," he added.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said: "Without access to aid, people's lives are on a knife-edge once again."

The Norwegian Refugee Council's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Angelita Caredda, also said blocking aid to Gaza would push its civilian population "beyond collapse."

"The Government of Israel must immediately reverse this decision. International actors must do everything in their power to ensure access to Gaza resumes, so that aid reaches those in need without any further delay or disruption," Caredda said in a statement.

Hamas on Monday accused Israel of trying to derail the next phase of ceasefire talks and called Israel's decision to cut off aid "a war crime and a blatant attack" on a truce that took a year of negotiations before taking hold in January.

On Sunday, Israel said it would back a new proposal by the United States that calls for extending the ceasefire through Ramadan and the Jewish Passover holiday, which ends on April 20.

Under that proposal, Hamas would release half the captives on the first day and the rest when an agreement is reached on a permanent ceasefire, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

But Hamas rejected the proposal, saying it would only release captives according to the original terms of the agreement, which stipulated that Israeli forces would permanently withdraw from Gaza and bring an end to the war.

The ceasefire deal halted Israel's war on Gaza, which killed more than 48,380 people, mostly women and children, and left the enclave in ruins. Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and REUTERS]

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