



November 1, 2023

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

CC: President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I am writing to express my gratitude for the recent supplemental funding request announced on October 20, 2023, intended to address humanitarian needs of innocent civilians impacted by the war in Israel and in Gaza and to urge the administration to take additional steps to ensure the safety of civilians during this conflict.

I am horrified by the attacks perpetrated by Hamas on October 7, 2023 and call for the immediate and safe return of the hostages. I unequivocally condemn these reprehensible acts and, even as I mourn those deaths, I am further horrified by the rising civilian casualty count as this crisis continues.

I value the lives of Israelis and the lives of Palestinians, and our foreign policy must continue to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of their background or nationality. To that end, I urge the administration to do everything in its power to prevent further civilian deaths by:

1. Expediting the delivery of additional humanitarian assistance including fuel
2. Pushing for a humanitarian pause in Israel's aerial bombing and a halt to a ground offensive pending measures to spare civilians.
3. Pushing for the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to enable safe passage for Palestinian civilians to evacuate northern Gaza and/or the strip itself.
4. Pushing for the establishment of "no bomb zones" inside the Gaza Strip, which would serve as safe havens for civilians.
5. Demanding that Israel follow international law as it conducts its operations.
6. Ensuring that United States military assistance is used only in a manner that respects existing US law.

The Palestinian people are not synonymous with Hamas. They are a diverse population with varied backgrounds, beliefs, and aspirations. Providing humanitarian aid to Palestinians reflects the values of compassion and humanity that the United States stands for.

The humanitarian crisis facing the people of Gaza is untenable and, with each passing day, the situation becomes more dire. As of October 17, water production in Gaza was at 5% of normal levels, with Gazans living on less than 3 liters of water a day –a fraction of the World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) daily recommendation of 50 liters¹. Doctors are unable to sanitize their surgical tools and people are resorting to drinking unsanitary salt water, increasing the risk of civilians contracting waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery.

At the same time, hospitals teeter on the brink of collapse due to the severe shortage of medicine, sanitation supplies, and fuel to power life-saving technologies like infant incubators and ventilators. The lack of these essential supplies puts countless lives at risk, especially those of vulnerable infants and patients in critical condition. Additionally, the scarcity of food supplies has created an alarming crisis, leaving a significant portion of the population without adequate nutrition. While a few trucks have managed to enter the region, this effort is insufficient given the scale of the crisis.

At the heart of this escalating humanitarian crisis lies a critical issue: the severe shortage of fuel in Gaza. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)’s fuel reserves have reached a dire state, and without a timely resupply of fuel from outside Gaza, the entire United Nations humanitarian operation in the region is on the verge of a complete halt. This includes essential agencies like WHO and UNICEF, as UNRWA plays a pivotal role by providing fuel not only to power water sanitation plants and hospitals but also to facilitate the distribution of the limited aid that manages to enter the region. Fuel is vital for offloading trucks, ensuring the operation of facilities, and maintaining the logistics necessary for delivering assistance to those in need. Without an adequate supply of fuel to UNRWA, the humanitarian assistance permitted to enter Gaza essentially becomes worthless, exacerbating the suffering of the already vulnerable population. I understand the painful reality that during times of crisis humanitarian aid can sometimes be diverted by bad actors from the intended recipients. However, immediate and sustained action to address this crisis is imperative to prevent a complete breakdown of the humanitarian efforts in the region. UNRWA’s extensive footprint in Gaza positions the organization as the most capable entity possessing the necessary infrastructure, expertise, and knowledge to guarantee the effective delivery of aid to those in need and I strongly urge that the funds be channeled through this trusted actor.

The significant allocation of assistance outlined in the President’s proposal reflects a deep commitment to alleviating the suffering of civilians impacted by this crisis and I urge the administration to continue its unwavering commitment to these principles through additional diplomatic measures to protect civilian lives.

Sincerely,



Hadar Susskind
President and CEO
Americans for Peace Now

¹ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-17>