



Gaza and the West Bank

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For decades, Palestinians have lived [under occupation](#), facing violence, human rights abuses, systematic violations of [international humanitarian law](#), and denial of their [right to self-determination](#). After over a year of Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians in the aftermath of the October 7th, 2023 Hamas attack against Israelis, Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip have been subjected to one of the [most lethal campaigns of violence](#) in the 21st century.

As of March 25th, 1.9 million people are internally displaced in Gaza and more than 50,144 Gazans have been killed – including at least 15,613 children.

See CWS's [action alert](#) to urge your elected officials to restore humanitarian aid to Gaza, vote to stop the United States from selling weapons to Israel, and condemn ongoing violence in Gaza and the West Bank.

A Broken Ceasefire

On January 15th – after months of negotiations led by the U.S., Qatar, and Egypt – the Israeli government and Hamas announced a three-phase [ceasefire agreement](#). The first phase, which lasted until March 1st, stipulated that Hamas would release a number of Israeli hostages and the bodies of hostages who had died, and Israel would withdraw military forces from densely populated areas, release hundreds of imprisoned Palestinians, and allow

humanitarian aid to move freely during all three phases of the agreement.

By [March 2nd](#), Israel blocked all humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, in violation of the ceasefire agreement. On March 18th, Israeli forces further eroded the ceasefire by launching a deadly [attack on Gaza](#), killing over 400 Palestinians, including 174 children.

As of April 12th, Israeli forces have [completely encircled](#) Rafah. About a fifth of Gaza is now covered by evacuation orders.

Humanitarian Aid

Amid a devastating humanitarian crisis of [violence](#), [hunger](#), and [disease](#), the United States' [decision](#) to withhold funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine ([UNRWA](#)) has weakened the only organization equipped to provide the wide-scale humanitarian assistance that Gazans urgently need.

Once the largest donor to UNRWA, the United States' suspension of aid has further eroded humanitarian infrastructure and amounts to [collective punishment](#).

In response to unsubstantiated [allegations](#) that twelve UNRWA aid workers were involved in Hamas' attacks on Israeli civilians on October 7th, the Biden administration [suspended aid](#) to

the agency in February 2024, a move Congress subsequently codified via an appropriations bill that cut off aid to UNRWA. Upon taking office on January 20th, President Trump signed an executive order [reaffirming](#) the suspension of U.S. support for UNRWA.

An [outside review](#) of the agency found it has robust internal mechanisms to uphold the humanitarian principle of neutrality – mechanisms determined to be more advanced than those of other UN entities and non-governmental organizations. The suspension of U.S. aid to UNRWA continues even as [all other countries](#) that initially paused their assistance have resumed their funding for the agency, including Australia, Canada, Japan, the [European Commission](#), Sweden, Finland, Denmark, [Iceland](#) and France.

The UNRWA Funding Emergency Restoration Act of 2025 ([H.R. 2411/S. 898](#)) would repeal existing congressional prohibitions on U.S. support for UNRWA and urge the administration to immediately restore funding for the agency. Congress has a moral imperative to pass the legislation and restore U.S. support for UNRWA.

Mass Violence and Continued Arms Sales

Gaza's borders remain largely sealed, leaving desperate civilians with nowhere safe to go.

As Israeli forces restrict humanitarian aid, bombard [civilian populations](#), allegedly target [children](#) with sniper fire, and destroy life-sustaining infrastructure, the U.S. continues to provide weapons to the Israeli military, in direct violation of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. On February 28th, the Trump administration approved a nearly [\\$3 billion](#) offensive arms sale to Israel, bypassing the typical Congressional review process.

Starvation Amid Ongoing Aid Obstruction

Israel's attacks have destroyed almost all capacity to produce food in Gaza, meaning that Israel's blockade of food aid may lead to food [running out completely](#). [Ninety-one percent](#) of the population in Gaza are facing high levels of acute food insecurity, even as the World Food Programme says [tens of thousands of tons](#) of food could enter Gaza if Israel lifted its aid blockade.

Disease and Crumbling Health Care Infrastructure

On March 23rd, [Israeli forces killed](#) fifteen first responders working to save lives in Rafah. The deliberate targeting of healthcare [personnel](#) and [infrastructure](#) combined with [malnutrition](#), decimated [wastewater](#) systems, inadequate [safe drinking water](#), and Israel's [systematic obstruction](#) of aid have contributed to the rampant spread of infectious disease.

As long as the bombardment continues – and [schools](#), [hospitals](#), and [refugee camps](#) remain targets – infectious diseases present an existential threat to Palestinian civilians, [especially children](#). "Ultimately, a ceasefire and free-flowing aid are the only definite ways to protect people," says World Health Organization Secretary-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Escalating Violence in the West Bank

As Gazans continue to face hunger, illness, and bloodshed, Palestinians in the West Bank face [rising violence](#) at the hands of extremist settlers and the Israeli military. The violence has killed over [900 Palestinians](#) in the West Bank since October 7th, 2023. For more than nine weeks, Israeli forces have been carrying out a large-scale operation in the northern West Bank, [displacing tens of thousands of people](#), including about 16,600 people from Jenin refugee camp, 12,100 people from Tulkarm refugee camp, and 10,000 people from Nur Shams camp. Between [January 1st, 2024 and January 31st, 2025](#), there have been 1,580 settler attacks resulting in casualties or property damage. The number of people [displaced by the demolition of homes](#) this year has reached 431 – twice the figure recorded over the same period in 2024.

How You Can Take Action

[Contact your elected officials](#) to urge them to restore humanitarian aid to Gaza, vote to stop the sale of offensive weapons to Israel, and condemn ongoing violence against civilians.

Additional Resources:

- [Churches for Middle East Peace July 2024 Global Bishops and Christian Leaders Letter to World Leaders](#)
- [Letter from 100+ Refugee and Human Rights Organizations to U.S. Government: Withholding Funding to UNRWA a "Moral and Strategic Failure"](#)
- [InterAction Member CEOs Send Public Letter to President Biden to Address Crisis in Gaza](#)
- [March 2024 – Global Christian Leaders Call for Permanent Gaza Ceasefire](#)
- [InterAction Letter on Rafah Ground Invasion to President Biden](#)
- [Situation Report: Gaza Conflict](#)
- [InterAction Statement By Principals of the InterAgency Standing Committee on Gaza](#)
- [Churches for Middle East Peace Letter to Congress Calling For Ceasefire, Protection of Civilians, Release of Hostages](#)
- [CWS October 12th Statement Mourning Loss of Life and Calling for Cessation of Hostilities](#)
- [CWS October 18th Statement Calling for Humanitarian Corridors & Ceasefire](#)
- [CWS December 13th Statement Decrying U.S. Veto Of UN Resolution Calling for Ceasefire](#)
- [Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel](#)
 - [Invite an Ecumenical Accompanier to speak with your congregation or community](#)
- [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – reported impact | Day 150](#)
- [Two Months Later: Gaza Conflict Response](#)