

# *Saudi Arabia calls for maximum pressure on Israel as UN warns of longest Gaza blockade*

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Palestinian children receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip (Photo: Reuters)

Riyadh, April 13 (RHC)-- Saudi Arabia has called for pressure to be put on Israel to ensure the steady flow of aid into the besieged Gaza Strip. Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan made the remarks after a meeting with regional counterparts in southern Turkey over the weekend.

"I demand the exercise of maximum pressure to ensure the continuous and sufficient flow of aid into the Strip," Farhan said. The call was made as U.S. President Donald Trump has claimed that Saudi Arabia did not condition normalization with Israel.

But Saudi Arabia has reaffirmed its stance that it will not normalize relations with Israel without the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Israel has imposed an all-out blockade on the entry of crucial humanitarian supplies into Gaza since early March. On March 2nd, the regime closed off all crossings into Gaza and blocked the entry of essential supplies, including food, medicine, and water.

Gaza Health Ministry has warned that "the lack of adequate nutrition and drinking water will compound health challenges, with the continued ban on vaccinations for children, especially polio vaccinations."

The ministry has warned that at least 60,000 children suffer from severe malnourished and related health complications. The siege has resulted in the closure of 21 nutrition centers and has disrupted care for the already severely malnourished children of Gaza.

Humanitarian agencies have warned that famine is imminent if aid deliveries are not urgently restored. The UN and other organizations say that without food, clean water and medical supplies, Gaza's population, already pushed to the brink, faces the risk of mass starvation.

Fuel is critically needed to power hospitals, water pumps, bakeries, telecommunications, and aid trucks. Without it, large parts of the strip are facing a total breakdown in basic services.

Local authorities say most Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced from their homes, and many are living in makeshift shelters. In tandem, relentless Israeli bombardment has destroyed 72 percent of homes and most of the besieged region's schools and hospitals.

With tens of billions of dollars in arms supplied by the US, Israel has killed at least 50,886 people and wounded more than 115,875, the majority of them women and children.

Thousands more are believed to be trapped under the rubble of flattened buildings.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said nearly 400,000 people have been displaced in Gaza following the breakdown of the ceasefire and also called for a renewal of the truce deal. "They are now also enduring by far the longest blockage of aid and commercial supplies since the start of the war," UNRWA said in a post on X, as it shared testimony of a Palestinian woman who has been displaced five times since the beginning of the war.

A ban by Israel on UNRWA came into effect early this year, impacting the organization's life-saving work in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Since its creation in 1949 to serve and handle the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians forcibly displaced by Israel's creation a year earlier, UNRWA has symbolized the hope of refugees to return home.

The organization – employing 30,000 staff, primarily Palestinian refugees along with a small number of international employees – delivers emergency relief, education, healthcare and social services to at least 5.9 million Palestinians within Palestine and neighboring countries.

[ SOURCE: AP and REUTERS ]

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