

Doctors Without Borders says Gaza is a mass grave for Palestinians and those helping them



A Palestinian woman reacts as others carry the body of their relative, killed in an Israeli air raid,

Gaza City, April 16 (RHC)-- Palestinian lives are being systematically destroyed as Israel's continued bombardment of the Gaza Strip shows a "blatant disregard" for the safety of humanitarian workers, according to medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

Amande Bazerolle, MSF's emergency coordinator in the enclave, said in a statement on Wednesday, "Gaza has been turned into a mass grave of Palestinians and those coming to their assistance."

Last month, Israeli forces opened fire on ambulances in Gaza, killing 15 medics and rescuers in an incident that prompted international condemnation. "We are witnessing in real time the destruction and forced displacement of the entire population in Gaza," she said.

Medical facilities are not exempt from attacks and evacuation orders by Israeli forces. MSF teams have had to leave many facilities, while others continue operating with staff and patients trapped inside, unable to leave safely for hours at a time, the charity said.

"With nowhere safe for Palestinians or those trying to help them, the humanitarian response is severely struggling under the weight of insecurity and critical supply shortages, leaving people with few, if any, options for accessing care," Bazerolle said.

Israel resumed aerial bombardment and ground operations in the Palestinian territory in March after it reneged on a two-month-old ceasefire. Thousands of people have since been killed, with many more displaced. Israel has also blocked humanitarian aid from entering Gaza since March 2nd.

On Wednesday, Defense Minister Israel Katz said Israel's "policy is clear and no humanitarian aid will be allowed into Gaza" as it is "one of the main pressure tools" against Hamas. "In the current reality, no one is going to allow any humanitarian aid into Gaza, and no preparations are being made to allow any aid of this kind," he said.

Israeli forces "will remain in the security zones as a buffer between the enemy and [Israeli] communities in any temporary or permanent situation in Gaza", he said.

Al Jazeera's Nour Odeh, reporting from Jordan's capital, Amman, said the ongoing mediated efforts to get Israel and Hamas to agree on a new ceasefire seem to have reached "a dead end".

"Israel is trying to extort a temporary ceasefire deal in exchange for allowing critically needed aid back to Gaza. Israel will also only promise to discuss ending its genocidal war on Gaza if Hamas agrees to disarm and exile up to 200 of its members from the Strip," she said.

"Hamas has shown flexibility on many issues, but the movement says laying down its arms without ending the occupation is a red line. But Hamas is running out of options. Gaza is in ruins. People are running out of hope and patience," Odeh added.

Israeli forces have taken over large areas of Gaza in recent weeks. Together with the blockade, continued fighting has worsened the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

At least 51,000 people, most of them children and women, have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 2023.

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