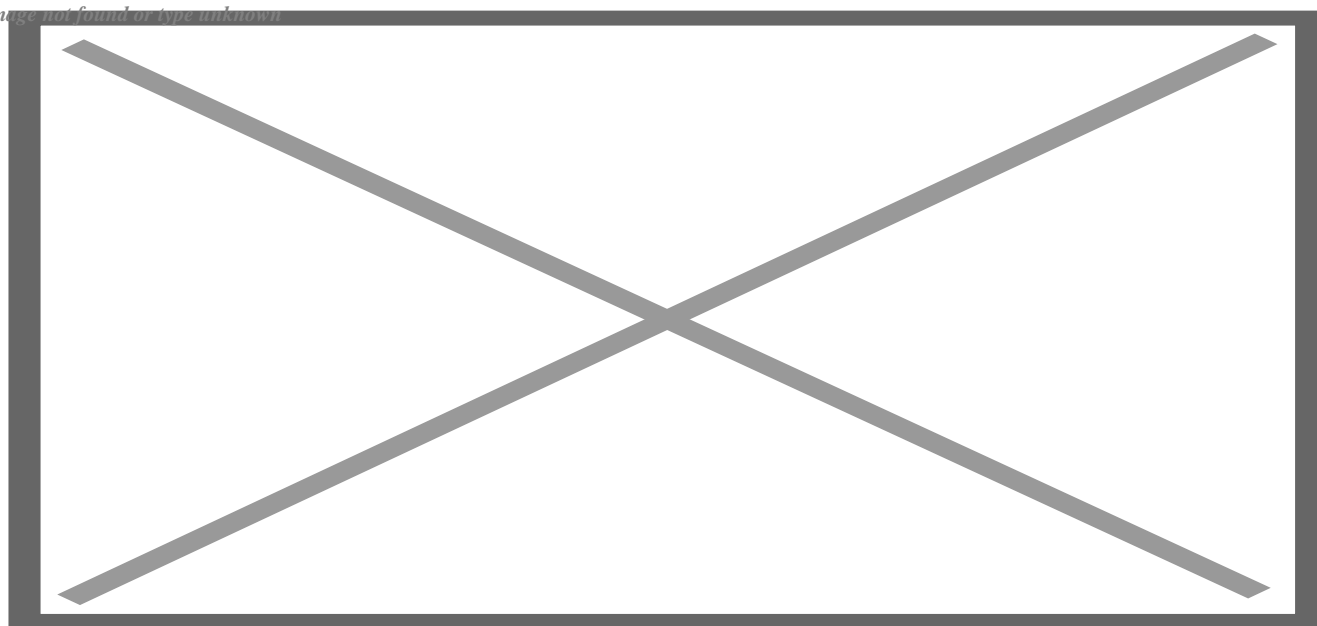


The urgency of a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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By María Josefina Arce

One month has passed since the current escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and every day that passes, a cease-fire to open the way to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution becomes more urgent, given the increase in the number of fatalities and the worsening of the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip due to Israel's ground operations and constant bombardments.

The number of Palestinians dead is rising by the hour and already exceeds 10,000, among them more than 4,000 children and 2,641 women, according to the Ministry of Health of the territory.

In a new appearance before the press, the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, warned that the continuous Zionist bombardments are affecting hospitals, refugee camps, mosques and facilities of the international organization, including shelters.

From Egypt, through the Rafah Crossing, but slowly humanitarian aid is arriving in Gaza. The first convoy entered only two weeks after the outbreak of the war, after being blocked for several days at the crossing by Israeli shelling.

However, this assistance is still too little; more food, water, medicine and fuel are needed to alleviate the critical situation of the inhabitants of the Strip, who have become displaced in their own territory and were already suffering from an iron blockade imposed by Israel since 2007.

In fact, before the current escalation of the conflict, eighty percent of the population of that area depended on international aid, according to UN data.

The situation is now so desperate that at the end of last month thousands of residents broke into UN warehouses and aid distribution centers in southern and central Gaza.

Hence, in the last few hours the UN has launched a humanitarian appeal for \$1.2 billion to help Palestinians in Gaza, and also in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where the escalating violence has also been felt.

But, said Guterres, this single access point, not directly controlled by Tel Aviv, is insufficient to channel the large-scale assistance needed to bring relief to the Palestinian civilian population.

Time is precious. Every day that the war continues to gain ground, the casualties, the pain and the despair increase. A just and lasting solution that demands the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and to build their own sovereign and independent state is urgent and cannot be postponed.

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