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US must do more to ensure humanitarian aid reaches people in Gaza

A joint submission by humanitarian organizations under National Security Memorandum 20.

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WASHINGTON, DC, March 23, 2024—Two million civilians in [Gaza](#) are suffering hunger, displacement, and risk of death on an unprecedented scale. Their appalling situation is the responsibility of all parties to the conflict.

As humanitarian organizations working in Gaza, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [International Rescue Committee](#), and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have repeatedly urged the use of all means available to relieve the suffering, in accord

with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. But our ability to save lives is jeopardized by severe constraints on our operations.

Under a new policy directive from President Biden, National Security Memorandum 20, US security partners must now provide written assurances that they will use US security assistance in accordance with international law and facilitate humanitarian assistance. In the coming weeks,

therefore, the US government will assess these assurances from Israel. Palestinians collect water from MSF's distribution point in Rafah, southern Gaza. | Palestine 2023 ©

Mohammed Abed

As humanitarian organizations operating in Gaza, it is our experience that the humanitarian response in Gaza, including US funded humanitarian assistance, has been consistently and arbitrarily denied, restricted, and impeded by the Israeli authorities. Bureaucratic constraints are preventing a humanitarian scale up, on top of the conduct of the conflict. These constraints include the continued closure of vital border crossings, including crossings into northern Gaza; rejections of aid items for entry based on arbitrary, opaque, and shifting justifications, including definitions of dual use; lengthy delays and unpredictable processes for the inspection of trucks; and denial of movement requests within Gaza. In addition, there have been repeated attacks on aid workers, convoys, distributions, and humanitarian sites, including those submitted to the Israeli authorities as part of the humanitarian notification ("deconfliction") process.

Our organizations and partners have experienced these blockages of aid and attacks firsthand, and they are costing Palestinian lives.

These findings are also supported by the additional organizations below, including human rights and civilian protection organizations.

Please consider this a formal submission as part of National Security Memorandum 20. Sufficient public information is available to the US government that documents these constraints on humanitarian access and violations of international humanitarian law. Given the tempo of the conflict in Gaza, rapid deterioration in the humanitarian crisis, and impending famine, we urgently request that the US government speed up its assessment timeline and demand full and unimpeded humanitarian access into and across Gaza, adherence to international humanitarian law, and an [immediate and sustained ceasefire](#).

Signatories:

- Action Against Hunger
- American Friends Service Committee
- Anera
- CARE USA

- Catholic Relief Services
- Doctors Without Borders-USA / MSF-USA
- The Episcopal Church
- Humanity & Inclusion, U.S.
- International Rescue Committee
- MedGlobal
- Mercy Corps
- Oxfam America
- Norwegian Refugee Council USA
- Save the Children US

Additional organizations supporting these findings:

- Amnesty International USA
- Arms Control Association
- Avaaz
- Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
- Center for Victims of Torture
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Government Information Watch
- InterAction
- Peace Action
- Refugees International
- September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

- US Campaign for Palestinian Rights Action (USCPR Action)
- Win Without War