

Fact sheet: Aid into Gaza

12 May 2025



More than 1,000 truckloads of aid waiting to be picked up inside Gaza at the Kerem Shalom crossing on June 18, 2024 (Source: COGAT)

Key Points

- Warring parties have an obligation not to impede humanitarian aid to affected civilians, but can restrict that aid if it is advantaging the enemy
- Hamas has stolen much of the aid that has gone into Gaza during the war, both for its own purposes, and to profit from on-selling the aid
- Because of this, and because Gaza received and stockpiled substantial deliveries of aid during the January to February 2025 ceasefire, Israel has prevented aid entering Gaza since March 2
- Israel has recently revealed (and is now implementing) a plan to provide aid to civilians directly, in a way that is designed to prevent Hamas from stealing the aid

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Summary

In early March, in the context of the expiry of the January 2025 ceasefire, Israel announced it had cut off all humanitarian aid and fuel deliveries as well as electricity to Gaza. This move was not only meant to exert pressure on the Hamas terrorist organisation, but to prevent it from stealing, hoarding, taxing and reselling aid, reportedly its primary source of income and political power. Israel is now implementing a new aid delivery mechanism aimed at preventing Hamas' profiteering and thereby undermining its stranglehold on Gazans, and its ability to pay salaries and recruit new operatives. This fact sheet will address the legal and logistical issues involved, the aid delivered during the war and ceasefire as well as the current humanitarian situation.



Palestinians distribute drinking water to displaced people in Gaza City (Image: Anas Mohammed/Shutterstock)

International legal obligations

International humanitarian law (IHL, often also called the law of armed conflict, or LOAC) seeks to limit the impact of armed conflict on uninvolved civilians. This includes measures regarding the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians.

[Article 23 of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention](#) insists that parties must not prevent the provision of humanitarian aid to civilians, unless that aid benefits the enemy. The relevant text is:

Each High Contracting Party shall... permit the free passage of all consignments of essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases.

The obligation of a High Contracting Party to allow the free passage of the consignments indicated in the preceding paragraph is subject to the condition that this Party is satisfied that there are no serious reasons for fearing:

- a) that the consignments may be diverted from their destination,
- b) that the control may not be effective, or
- c) that a definite advantage may accrue to the military efforts or economy of the enemy through the substitution of the above-mentioned consignments for goods which would otherwise be provided or produced by the enemy or through the release of such material, services or facilities as would otherwise be required for the production of such goods.

The Power which allows the passage of the consignments indicated in the first paragraph of this Article may make permission conditional on the distribution to the persons benefited thereby being made under the local supervision of the Protecting Powers.

Such consignments shall be forwarded as rapidly as possible, and the Power which permits their free passage shall have the right to prescribe the technical arrangements under which such passage is allowed.

As will be discussed below, previous aid consignments into Gaza a) have been diverted from their destinations, b) were not under effective control and c) advantaged Hamas. As such, Israel is legally justified in preventing aid from entering Gaza until these conditions are rectified. Israel has created a plan, explained in this fact sheet, to prevent these conditions being breached.

There are many other treaties that provide obligations to warring parties. Many countries create their own military manuals on the laws of armed conflict, to interpret IHL for their troops. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) created a two-volume set of rules of customary international humanitarian law. These are 'rules' that the ICRC has distilled from treaty law as being universally accepted.

The ICRC's [Rule 55](#) of customary IHL states:

The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction, subject to their right of control.

In its commentary on this rule, the ICRC repeats on numerous occasions the requirement that a party not impede the delivery of humanitarian aid. While the ICRC mentions a party's right to "take a number of measures to control the content and delivery of humanitarian aid," such as "the search of relief consignments and their delivery under supervision," it does not directly refer to the provisions under the Fourth Geneva Convention that delivery of humanitarian supplies can be conditioned on that aid not providing advantage to the enemy.

To be clear, the ICRC's commentary ignores these conditions; it doesn't reference them, either to dismiss them or endorse them. However, the Fourth Geneva Convention is considered customary – universally accepted – international law.

While deliberate starvation of a civilian population is prohibited under all circumstances, blockades and embargoes intended to achieve a military victory and not starve a civilian population [are permissible](#), as long as the civilian population's humanitarian needs are provided for.

As below, Israel has enforced a limited blockade on military and dual-use materials entering Gaza since 2007. In March 2025, it ceased allowing humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. At all times, Israel's position was that Gazan civilians had adequate humanitarian supplies and there was no danger of starvation. Gaza's small size and Egypt's refusal to allow Gazans to take refuge there, combined with Hamas' strategy of using civilian infrastructure for military purposes, has increased the Gazan civilian population's exposure to war. Israel has attempted to reduce this by providing advance warning of areas in which it is about to operate, and encouraging civilians to flee these areas ahead of time. Israel has also designated areas ('humanitarian zones') where humanitarian aid is delivered.

Israel's current strategy – described below – is to ensure aid is delivered to Gazan civilians in designated safe zones.



Aid trucks at the Kerem Shalom crossing (Image: Shutterstock)

Aid stolen by Hamas

Since the very start of ground operations in Gaza, Israel has produced evidence that Hamas was stealing and hoarding aid or reselling it to civilians at exorbitant prices in order to enrich itself, pay salaries and attract new recruits. Worse, Hamas has used aid access as a carrot, and aid deprivation as a stick, to ensure loyalty and a steady flow of recruits, [similar to](#) the Houthis in Yemen.

A 2025 [investigation](#), published by Israeli Hebrew-language daily *Makor Rishon*, revealed that humanitarian aid was Hamas' primary source of funds and political power, with claims that Hamas was also stealing aid and equipment directly from UNRWA warehouses:

According to estimates, Hamas seizes 25 to 30% of the humanitarian aid entering the Strip... Some of the aid Hamas steals, it immediately resells to residents, the victims of the theft. Its revenue from this channel is estimated at US\$50 to US\$100 million (A\$78 to A\$157m) per month, totalling nearly a billion dollars since the war began... Even when Hamas doesn't take goods by force, it ensures it profits from them. It collects protection money on every truck entering or moving within the Strip, even for essential aid to hungry residents. This sort of extortion has continued unabated through the current ceasefire.

"The average payment per truck is about 30,000 shekels [A\$13,000], and it can reach 50,000 [A\$22,000]," Eyal Ofer, a Hamas economy expert, tells us. "If you multiply that by 70,000 trucks

that have entered since the war began, you reach about 2 billion shekels (A\$880 million). Add to that the goods that reached them, and those they sold at high prices – and we’re talking about four billion shekels [A\$1.765b] accumulated in the past year.”

However, revelations that Hamas has stolen aid significantly predate this. In October 2023, then-US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [told Congress](#) about Hamas’ stockpile of fuel, which it refused to share with civilians. Hamas also [stole fuel](#) from hospitals.

Hamas regularly [forcibly commandeered trucks](#) of aid entering Gaza.

[By April 2024](#), Fatah, the ruling party of the Palestinian Authority (PA), was also blaming Hamas for stealing and hoarding aid. Gazans interviewed by the pro-Hamas *Al-Jazeera* accused Hamas of the same thing.

In September 2024, Hamas operatives [complained](#) that they’d stolen so much aid that they couldn’t find space in their warehouses to store it.

Lower-level Hamas operatives were [complaining](#) that aid was only going to more senior officials and not them, and that their wives were beaten for their criticism.

This year, a *Wall Street Journal* [report](#) on April 17, citing Arab, Israeli and Western officials, stated “Hamas had been seizing and selling [some aid] to raise funds” and had “used the flow of humanitarian and commercial goods to build new income streams.” Anti-Hamas activist and Palestinian lawyer Moumen a-Natour was quoted as saying Hamas was “mainly dependent on humanitarian aid sold in black markets for cash.”

On May 2, PA President Mahmoud Abbas released a [statement](#) condemning “Hamas-affiliated gangs” for looting aid.



The content of 700 aid trucks waiting to be picked up by aid agencies in Gaza (image: X/COGAT)

Recently revealed Israeli plans

When fighting resumed after the expiry of the January 2025 Hamas–Israel ceasefire, Israel declared, on March 2, that [no humanitarian aid would be allowed to enter](#). Israel argued that Gaza had enough supplies to sustain it for several months – that the aid that had poured into Gaza during the two-month pause in fighting was adequate for this purpose.

Israel’s reasoning was that Hamas had stolen aid for both its own military and political purposes, and to sell for profit. As Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said in a cabinet meeting at the time:

Hamas is currently taking control of all supplies and goods sent to the Gaza Strip. It is abusing the Gazan population who are trying to receive the aid, it is shooting at them, and is turning humanitarian aid into a terrorist budget directed against us.

In early April, Israel confirmed that aid would be restarted “in the coming weeks.” The objective of the plan is to deliver aid to Palestinian civilians in a way that will prevent Hamas from stealing supplies *en masse*. Israel intends to set up hubs at which individual Gazans can collect enough aid for their family.

The IDF will not hand out the aid directly, but [will delegate](#) the task to private companies. [A Times of Israel article](#) described the Israeli plan on May 2:

The plan is to transition away from wholesale distribution and warehousing of aid and to instead have international organizations and private security contractors hand out boxes of food to individual Gazan families, according to [Israeli] officials. Each family will have a designated representative tasked with reaching an Israel Defense Forces security zone in southern Gaza, where aid will be distributed after going through several rounds of inspection. Each box will have enough food to last several days until family representatives will be allowed to return to the security zone to receive another parcel... The IDF will not be directly involved in the distribution of aid... but troops will be tasked with providing an outer layer of security for the private contractors and international organizations handing out the assistance... There is no exact timeline for when the new system will become operational but the IDF believes that it only has several weeks before a major humanitarian crisis.

According to various reports, Israel will build four to five distribution hubs in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. It will create a temporary hub in northern Gaza, but is attempting to have all Gazan civilians move to safe zones in the south. This will enable it to definitively defeat Hamas in other parts of the Strip. The safe zones in southern Gaza will be entered by civilians that have been identified by Israel as not being fighters. Measures will be implemented to prevent weapons from entering the safe zones.

The plan [will reportedly involve](#) US companies distributing the aid while the IDF provides general security. US envoy Steve Witkoff [unveiled](#) the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, the concrete form of the new humanitarian aid mechanism to prevent Hamas abusing aid, before the UN Security Council on May 8. The plan envisions four distribution sites across Gaza under the direct supervision of independent safety and security teams, but without any military presence. Food packages, hygiene kits, medicine and water will be distributed based solely on need.

There are currently high-level [consultations](#) between the US and Israel for a US-led provisional authority pending the disarming and stabilisation of Gaza and the establishment of a legitimate Palestinian replacement for Hamas.

Israel has yet to finalise or publish all aspects of the plan. Numerous commentators – not least humanitarian organisations that have long had a difficult relationship with Israel – have called into question the feasibility of parts of the plan, and/or rejected the plan *in toto*.



Aid trucks heading into Gaza (Image: Shutterstock)

Aid that has gone into Gaza

Israel has said enough aid has entered Gaza between January and February to prevent a humanitarian crisis. Israeli security officials were [quoted](#) on April 7 in the *Times of Israel* as saying:

There is no starvation or no beginning of diseases in Gaza, but we are about 40-50 days [i.e. 17-27 May] away from a situation where the food warehouses will be emptied. Last week, there were incidents when Gazans broke into warehouses with flour we brought in and transferred them to Hamas control.

That article also stated that the IDF “made it clear to the political leadership” that, as aid supplies run out, there would be no choice but to resume the supply of food, fuel and medicine to Gaza.

From the ceasefire on January 19 to the aid cutoff on March 2, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) says 25,200 aid trucks entered Gaza carrying 447,538 tons of aid. The UN [said](#) in mid-February that around 600 aid trucks were entering per day, although some days it said it was far more. More than 10,000 aid trucks had entered Gaza by February 6, [according to](#) the UN (although there is some evidence that the UN was failing to count all aid trucks).

COGAT's [calculations](#) for average daily trucks per month from October 2023 to April 2024 are:

- October 2023: 30
- November 2023: 103
- December 2023: 115
- January 2024: 184
- February 2024: 152
- March 2024: 191
- April 2024: 271

In May 2024, Israel began an operation in Rafah, with aid delivery dropping precipitously over the following months and daily averages ceasing to be calculated by COGAT.

[According to](#) the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the daily average number of trucks entering Gaza from October 2023 to December 2024 are:

- October 2023: 9
- November 2023: 83
- December 2023: 97
- January 2024: 130
- February 2024: 91
- March 2024: 137
- April 2024: 165
- May 2024: 88
- June 2024: 81
- July 2024: 80
- August 2024: 67
- September 2024: 54
- October 2024: 37
- November 2024: 65
- December 2024: 76

The [discrepancies](#) in the way Israel and the UN count the number of trucks are partially because the OCHA does not count commercial trucks after May 7, 2024, and fuel trucks are not included.

Humanitarian agencies have recently been releasing contradictory statements regarding the amount of food available in Gaza. For instance, on April 1, the World Food Programme (WFP) [announced](#) that all 25 WFP-supported bakeries in Gaza had

closed, and on March 27 [said](#) it only had enough food stores inside Gaza “to support WFP operations for a maximum of two weeks.” On April 28, the WFP’s Antoine Renard [said](#), “Our remaining stocks were directed to a hot meal kitchen, which are continuing to serve people in need. But these, too, are expected to run out by the end of the month.” However, on April 29, Gazans [received text messages](#) from the WFP that they could pick up food packages the following day.

Read more: [Counting – and miscounting – Gaza aid trucks](#)