

AUSTRALIAN HUMANITARIAN SECTOR ON INITIAL PHASE OF GAZA CEASEFIRE

The Australian Council for International Development, alongside 24 Australian humanitarian and development organisations, welcomes the initial phase of a ceasefire in Gaza and calls on all parties to ensure that the terms are implemented in full. We hope that this is the first step toward a safe and peaceful future for all people in the region and for those who are now being reunited with loved ones across Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

As Gazans return to what remains of their homes, families and communities, this will be a time of grief, pain, injury, despair and searching for remnants of a life which they will now aim to rebuild.

The humanitarian needs are massive, and Australian NGOs are calling for generous support from the public and the Australian government to help ensure they can provide essential aid through partnership with trusted local networks.

Throughout this phase, it is essential that the world focuses all diplomatic efforts on a permanent ceasefire and a long term, durable solution for peace for the region to ensure a definitive end to the violence so many have endured. This is crucial to help ensure the swift and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid and to allow people to return to their homes and start rebuilding their lives.

Next week, the ban of the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was passed by the Israeli Knesset, is due to come into effect. This will be a devastating blow to relief efforts. UNRWA must be able to continue its work. It plays a unique and crucial role in providing life-saving humanitarian aid and essential social services in Palestine, as well as Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. In Gaza, UNRWA notably plays a key role in the delivery and distribution of fuel and aid across the Strip.

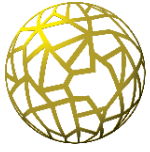
Importantly, humanitarian workers who have battled through their own grief and loss throughout the conflict, will now be relied on for ensuring a surge of desperately needed relief for civilians in Gaza. Their well-being and continued perseverance must be supported by all of us, including through unhindered access for international aid workers into Gaza so that they can relieve and assist them with some of the overwhelming work that lies ahead.

The United Nations and partners estimate that at least US\$6.6 billion is required to address the humanitarian needs of 3.3 million people in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

We acknowledge the contributions of the Australian Government to the region throughout the conflict and prior.

As an initial response to the ceasefire, and as a matter of urgency, the Australian humanitarian sector calls on the Australian Government to:

- Fund an initial surge in timely and flexible humanitarian assistance of \$50 million through Australian humanitarian agencies to support the immediate humanitarian response needs in Gaza, which should also consider:
 - supporting humanitarian agencies to provide shelter assistance and protection programming, especially for women and children.
 - psychosocial support for all people including local and national humanitarian aid workers.
 - a contribution towards efforts to clear unexploded ordinance.
- Contribute to all efforts towards a permanent ceasefire and long-term sustainable solutions for all people in the region.
- Provide a humanitarian exemption across counterterrorism and autonomous sanctions frameworks applying to Israel and the Palestinian territories to ensure that Australian agencies can provide immediate and effective humanitarian relief so that Australia can holistically respond in a principled manner.
- Engage diplomatically with the Israeli Government and international partners to advocate for:
 - The continued work of UNRWA for the essential provision of humanitarian assistance across Gaza and the West Bank.
 - Unrestricted access for international media agencies and journalists into Gaza and the West Bank.
- In line with its work on the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, and to show tangible commitments to this effort:
 - Advocate to Israeli counterparts on the fast and successful provision of visas to international humanitarian workers as required.
 - Advocate for guaranteed safe and secure access for humanitarian workers, including ensuring that humanitarian convoys and facilities are safe, and that the movements of humanitarian personnel can be planned in a predictable and fast manner.
- Sustain its diplomacy for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.



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