

# STOPAIDS. UNITING UK VOICES ON THE GLOBAL RESPONSE

The Rt Hon. the Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH  
United Kingdom

27th March 2024

Dear Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton,

We write as a group of UK-based organisations and individuals working on and committed to health rights. With mass starvation setting-in and a ground invasion of Rafah looking imminent, we urgently call for the UK Government to implement the UN Security Council resolution for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. In practice this means halting all arms exports, restoring funding to UNRWA and putting direct pressure on the Israeli Government to ensure sufficient access to health and humanitarian assistance to all people in the besieged enclave. We insist that the UK Government use all means possible to ensure this immediate ceasefire is permanent.

We wrote to James Cleverly on the 25th of October 2023 after the first health facility, Al-Ahli Arab hospital, had been bombed, killing hundreds of people. The WHO now estimates that there have been nearly 600 attacks on healthcare in Gaza and the Westbank since October 7th with 26 of the 36 hospitals in Gaza damaged.<sup>1</sup> Over 31,000 people have been killed in Gaza - the majority of them women and children - and over 70,000 people have been injured. Miscarriage rates have increased by 300%<sup>2</sup> and newborns are dying from preventable causes such as diarrhoea, hypothermia, dehydration and infection.<sup>3</sup> Caesarean sections and amputations are being performed without anaesthetic, Save the Children estimate 10 children a day have lost one or both limbs.<sup>4</sup> On top of this, Israel has been accused of using starvation as a weapon of war.<sup>5</sup> The US Secretary of State says 100% of people in Gaza are facing famine<sup>6</sup>, in an 'entirely man-made disaster' as described by the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/01/1145317#:~:text=Hundreds%20of%20facilities%20hit&text=The%20attacks%20affected%2094%20health,affected%20along%20with%20212%20ambulances>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.care.org/news-and-stories/news/the-long-shadow-of-starvation-in-gaza/#:~:text=A%20skyrocketing%20miscarriage%20rate,attacks%20began%20three%20months%20ago>

<sup>3</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/babies-dying-preventable-causes-besieged-gaza-oxfam>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-more-10-children-day-lose-limb-three-months-brutal-conflict>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam-in-action/oxfam-blog/the-world-cannot-stand-by-as-starvation-is-used-as-a-weapon-of-war-in-gaza/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-68605401#:~:text=Mr%20Blinken%20added%3A%20%22We%20also,%3B%20Afghanistan%2C%20about%2070%25>

UN Secretary General.<sup>7</sup> This is the highest number of people facing catastrophic hunger ever recorded by the Integrated Food Security Classification system, which informs the UN.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the catastrophic scale of this humanitarian crisis the UK Government has still not revoked, or even made conditional, the export of arms to Israel. Components for the F35 jets that the Israeli military use to blanket bomb civilian populations are made here in the UK.<sup>9</sup> The ICJ ruling of January 2024, which states that there is a prima facie evidence of a case of genocide in Gaza,<sup>10</sup> indicates there is a 'clear risk' that military equipment and technology exported by the UK is being used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international law. Last week Canada halted arms sales to Israel, and Spain, the Netherlands, Japan and Belgium have already done the same.<sup>11</sup> As a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty and according to its own domestic law - UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC) - the UK must halt all arms licences or risk being complicit in these violations.<sup>12</sup> Lord Cameron, you have indicated you will do this if Israel begins a military offensive on Rafah, where 1.4 million people are sheltering. We urge the Government not to wait and halt all arms sales now, without delay, to avoid further catastrophic loss of life.

In addition to this refusal so far to halt arms licences, the UK has also cut funding to UNRWA. The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is completing an investigation into the alleged involvement of its staff in the October 7th attacks in Israel which killed 1,200 people and took 253 hostages. UNRWA is the largest humanitarian agency in Gaza and coordinates the broader humanitarian effort due to its network and infrastructure. Without funding being resumed soon it will have to cease services. The Canadian Government, on seeing the interim report of the OIOS, has announced it will reinstate funding to UNRWA.<sup>13</sup> The UK Government must immediately do the same.

We want to emphasise how important it is that the UK puts pressure on the Israeli Government to let sufficient aid in. Prior to October 7th, 2 thirds of the population of Gaza depended on humanitarian assistance and 500-600 aid trucks entered each week. There are now only 112 entering.<sup>14</sup> The Israeli military's checks and arbitrary refusals to let aid in is contravening the legal obligations set out within the ICJ ruling, highlighted in an open letter by a group of 12 Israeli humanitarian organisations.<sup>15</sup> The letter states that aid has reduced by 50% since the ruling in January.

Without access to health and humanitarian assistance, there will be additional deaths now and for many years to come. The extreme overcrowding, inadequate water and food, poor sanitation and hygiene conditions (compounded by malnutrition) is worsening the situation. Last month's report from The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, John Hopkins and Health in Humanitarian Crises Centre<sup>16</sup> has outlined the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147656>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/dec/11/uk-factories-weapons-idf-gaza-protest-movement>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203447>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/15/which-countries-have-stopped-supplying-arms-to-israel?mc\\_cid=77f3f46246&mc\\_eid=88b0283dee](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/15/which-countries-have-stopped-supplying-arms-to-israel?mc_cid=77f3f46246&mc_eid=88b0283dee)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/arms-exports-israel-must-stop-immediately-un-experts>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-unrwa-funding-confirmed-1.7137991>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/22/obstacles-to-gaza-aid-deliveries-visual-guide>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/11/israeli-human-rights-groups-icj-gaza-aid-ruling#:~:text=Twelve%20of%20Israel's%20most%20prominent,of%20humanitarian%20aid%20into%20Gaza>

<sup>16</sup> [https://gaza-projections.org/gaza\\_projections\\_report.pdf](https://gaza-projections.org/gaza_projections_report.pdf)

alarming current and projected impact on the war on the health of people in Gaza. The report's projections starkly highlight the desperate need for an immediate ceasefire to reduce further mortalities in Gaza.

We urgently call on the UK Government to act on the UN Security Council resolution to protect the health rights of all those in Gaza and ensure the release of all hostages. This ceasefire must be permanent. The UK has an obligation, under the Genocide Convention, to prevent genocide by halting all arms sales and put pressure on the Israeli Government to ensure safe routes for critical humanitarian assistance. Ultimately the UK Government must formally recognise a Palestinian state, as you have indicated they will consider, and stop the illegal occupation and blockade to avoid further escalation and catastrophe in the region.

Signed

**Organisations**

STOPAIDS

Action for Global Health Network

ACT-UP London

The Borgen Project

Global Justice Now

Harm Reduction International

International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD)

Just Treatment

Nurses United

Plan International UK

Students for Global Health

Universities Allied for Essential Medicines UK

UK Community Advisory Board (UK-CAB)

**Individuals**

Dr Alice Welbourn, Founding Director, Salamander Trust

Dr Ameen Kamlana, NHS Doctor

Lizzie O'Brien, Medical Student

Marge Berer, Jewish Voice for Labour member

Dr. Mohga Kamal-Yanni MBE, Global Health and Access to Medicines Consultant

Monty Dunn, Student Doctor