

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN GAZA

Key points

- The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic
 - More than 36,500 Palestinians have been killed [as of 5 June]
 - Around 1.7 million people [75 per cent] have been displaced, many several times over
 - Around 1.1 million people [50 per cent] are facing catastrophic food insecurity.
- The Israeli military operation in Rafah [since 7 May] has had a large impact, especially in the south
 - Close to 950,000 people have been displaced from Rafah, many having to flee for the fourth or fifth time
 - The areas they have fled to [near Khan Younis/Dier al Balah] lack adequate water, food, shelter, health and sanitation
 - There is a real risk of famine.
- Humanitarian access has again deteriorated, putting the entire humanitarian response at risk
 - Lifesaving supplies are not able to be distributed to those in need
 - » civil order is breaking down
 - » it is not safe for humanitarians to do their work
 - Rafah crossing [central to humanitarian operations] remains closed.
- Marginal improvements in northern Gaza are not making up for new impacts in the south.

Background

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is among the worst in the world. Since the conflict began on 7 October, civilian casualties have been widespread, including instances of military strikes against schools, hospitals, shelters for displaced people and aid workers. Humanitarian access has been severely constrained by Israeli security and customs requirements at border crossings, and a devastating lack of security on the ground, including targeting of humanitarian workers and infrastructure by Hamas and Israel, civil disorder, and looting of supplies.

The situation has worsened since Israel began a military operation in the Rafah area on 7 May, despite marginal improvements in northern Gaza through the Erez crossings (and Jordan humanitarian corridor). Previously, most immediate humanitarian needs were in northern Gaza, where most fighting was taking place and no crossings were directly entering. Many people fled from the north to the south and sought shelter in Rafah. Rafah therefore became the heart of humanitarian operations in Gaza, and the Rafah crossing with Egypt played a key role in rotating international aid workers and delivering fuel (required to sustain almost all aspects of the humanitarian response).

Israeli evacuation orders from 6 to 26 May resulted in the displacement of 945,000 people from Rafah north towards Khan Younis and Dier al Balah, where basic services and shelter are woefully inadequate.

On 7 May, Israel occupied the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing, causing Egypt to close it. It remains closed [as of 5 June]. The breakdown of civil order has increased significantly since the Rafah operation. Post reports suggest 70 per cent of cargo did not reach its intended destination in southern Gaza because of looting on 1 June, further preventing lifesaving aid reaching those most in need.

HAMAS-ISRAEL CONFLICT

ISSUES

Conflict in Gaza, including the humanitarian situation and assistance; Zomi Frankcom; ICJ; defence exports; assisted departures.

KEY MESSAGES

Australia's position on the Hamas-Israel Conflict and Gaza crisis

- Australia is gravely concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the number of civilian deaths, including of children
- including warnings from the World Food Program that there is full-blown famine in the north of Gaza and it is spreading south
- An immediate humanitarian ceasefire is urgently needed
 - hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally
 - and rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian relief provided.
- Australia sees a humanitarian ceasefire as a critical step towards a permanent and sustainable ceasefire
 - a ceasefire cannot be one-sided – Hamas must release all hostages and lay down its arms.
- Australia condemns Hamas's ongoing acts of terror; use of human shields; and use of civilian infrastructure to launch attacks on Israel.
- But Israel's actions to defeat Hamas cannot be without account for the protection and welfare of Palestinian civilians, which is paramount and a requirement under international law.

Tent camp strike in Al-Mawasi

- Deeply concerned by reports that twenty-one people were killed following an air strike on a tent camp in Al-Mawasi
 - we will continue to seek to clarify on what has occurred.
- We mourn every Israeli and Palestinian innocent life which has been lost in this conflict and will continue to use our voice to support steps towards peace in the region.

Israeli military activity in Rafah

- The events of 26 May underscore that we must see a humanitarian ceasefire now so that civilians can be protected.
- Israel's strikes have had horrific and unacceptable consequences.
- Australia has been very clear that Israel must not proceed with its operation in Rafah - where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people are sheltering.

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- Hamas must release all hostages, stop using Palestinian civilians as human shields and lay down its arms.
- Gravely concerned by the prospects of an Israeli offensive in Rafah
 - the humanitarian situation is already dire, and a major military offensive would bring devastation to civilians sheltering there.
- The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law
 - we expect Israel to act in accordance with the ICJ's ruling, including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance.
- Also concerned by the shelling at Kerem Shalom crossing by Hamas
 - the closures of Rafah and Kerem Shalom to all activity, including humanitarian deliveries and medical evacuations, complicates the already challenging humanitarian situation in southern Gaza.

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Death of Australian Zomi Frankcom [1 April]

- The deaths of Ms (Zomi) Frankcom and her six World Central Kitchen colleagues was outrageous, unacceptable and should not have occurred
 - humanitarian workers in a conflict zone delivering aid must be protected.
- Our deepest sympathies are with Ms (Zomi) Frankcom's family and loved ones
 - Zomi had dedicated her life to the service of others
 - she was an Australian we can all be proud of.
- The Government has made clear to Israel its expectation of a full, thorough and transparent investigation
 - and have demanded full accountability from Israeli authorities.

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 - hospitals, medical transport, medical staff and patients must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law

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- at a time civilian casualties are so high, it's imperative medical facilities operate and medical personnel can perform their work.
- Reiterate our strong calls for all parties to the Israel-Hamas conflict to protect civilians and observe international humanitarian law.
- Deeply concerned by recent reports of mass graves found at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis and Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City
 - seeking further information about these circumstances.

Humanitarian assistance

- Australia has committed \$62.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October
 - of which \$41 million is to support people affected by the Hamas-Israel conflict.
- Our humanitarian funding is being directed to conflict-affected people, with a focus on women and children
 - including to support nutrition, water, medicines and shelter
 - as well as the new UN mechanism led by Sigrid Kaag which seeks to facilitate expanded humanitarian access into Gaza.
- Australia has also supported efforts by Jordan and the UAE to deliver aid to civilians in Gaza by supplying 140 ADF aerial delivery parachutes for use in humanitarian assistance airdrops.

If raised: will Australia contribute to the delivery of humanitarian assistance via maritime routes?

- Australia supports reliable and safe efforts to increase humanitarian assistance into Gaza
 - we are closely monitoring maritime options
 - land routes remain critical and alternative access routes [maritime or air] should not supplant this.

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Assisted departures from Gaza

- Australia is doing all it can to support Australians and their immediate family members still in Gaza who wish to depart.
- The Australian Government does not control the Rafah border crossing nor determine who is approved or denied departure.
- It continues to be very difficult for people to depart Gaza and we have limited ability to assist.
- Meeting requirements for a visa does not mean an entitlement to consular assistance; nor does it mean that other authorities will automatically allow people to leave
 - people who obtain Australian visas are subject to appropriate identity, security and character checks.
- In line with the current approach to departure taken by local authorities, we are prioritizing Australian citizens, permanent residents and immediate family members to depart Gaza.
- At least 2,527 Australian citizens, permanent residents and their families have now left Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories
 - of the registered individuals that have departed 2,186 have returned to Australia (assisted and independently).
- As at 28 May, DFAT has assisted the departure of 268 people from Gaza.

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Background

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Humanitarian situation

The impact on civilians has been immense. The UN reports that as of 13 May 2024, nearly 35,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 78,000 have been injured. Of Gaza's 2.3 million people, approximately 1.7 million have been displaced.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is extremely dire. OCHA assesses that the entire population requires humanitarian assistance to some extent. On 18 March 2024, the Integrated Food-Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimated 'famine is now projected and imminent in the North Gaza and Gaza Governorates and is expected to become manifest during the projection period from mid-March 2024 to May 2024'. On 5 May, World Food Program Executive Director Cindy McCain said northern Gaza was in 'full-blown famine' and it was moving south.

On 18 March, the IDF took control of Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Gaza's Health Ministry said the raid, Israel's fourth since 7 October, caused multiple casualties. According to the IDF, approximately 180 Hamas 'terrorists' were killed and 800 suspects were apprehended during the operation. The IDF also claims to have located weapons and tunnel shafts in the hospital.

On 24 March, Israeli forces besieged Al-Amal and Nasser hospitals, pinning down medical teams under heavy gunfire and forcing the evacuation of patients and displaced people. Israeli forces say hospitals in the Gaza Strip have frequently been used as strongholds of Hamas militants harbouring bases and weapons. Hamas and medical staff deny this.

On 5 April 2024, a WHO mission to assess Al-Shifa hospital, once one of the largest hospitals in Gaza, found 'the scale of devastation has left the facility completely non-functional'.

On 7 April 2024, following withdrawal of some Israeli forces from southern Gaza, Palestinian Civil Defense workers reported mass graves at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis and Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Reports have claimed more than 500 bodies have been found, including women, children and the elderly. Some reports have claimed evidence of torture and execution.

On 8 May 2024, a third mass grave was discovered at Al-Shifa hospital. UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has called for an 'independent, effective and transparent investigation' into the graves.

On 12 May 2024, the IDF said it had opened a new humanitarian crossing, Western Erez, in coordination with the US.

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Rafah

On 15 February 2024, the prime ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada issued a joint statement urging Israel not to proceed with a planned ground offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah where about 1.7 million civilians displaced by the conflict are sheltering. The prime ministers said they were 'gravely concerned' by the proposal as the civilians had 'nowhere else to go'. They said Israel 'must listen to its friends and it must listen to the international community'. The leaders reiterated calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the release of hostages.

On 28 April 2024, US President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli PM Netanyahu and 'reiterated his clear position' on an operation in Rafah.

On 28 April 2024, Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, called on the US to ask Israel to not carry out the attack on Rafah, saying that it is the only country capable of doing so. He said that an attack on Rafah would be 'the biggest disaster in the history of the Palestinian people'.

On 29 April 2024, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said that the US had still not seen an Israeli plan for Rafah that prioritises protection of civilians already seeking shelter there. He said, 'We've said clearly, and for some time now on Rafah that, in the absence of a plan to ensure that civilians will not be harmed, we can't support a major military operation in Rafah'. Israel agreed to listen to the US and postpone the incursion into Rafah if a hostage deal is reached with Hamas.

On 5 May 2024, the IDF said that Hamas had fired a barrage of rockets from near an Emirati hospital in Rafah at the Kerem Shalom crossing. Four Israeli soldiers were killed.

On 6 May 2024, the IDF issued a call for residents of eastern Rafah to 'evacuate immediately' in preparation for a 'limited scope operation,' and would not say whether this was the beginning of a broader invasion of the city. OCHA estimates that more than 100,000 civilians have been displaced from Rafah since 6 May 2024. On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

On 7 May 2024, the IDF announced it had established operational control of the Gazan side of the Rafah crossing and closed it, including to deliveries of humanitarian supplies and medical evacuations from Gaza. The Israeli War Cabinet unanimously decided to continue operating in Rafah.

On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

Operations continued at pace but there has been no full scale ground operation in Rafah. Some 900,000 civilians have been relocated from Rafah to neighboring Khan Younis and Al Mawasi.

On 26 May 2024, Hamas fired eight rockets from Gaza at central Israel (the first such action on Tel Aviv since January 2024). In retaliation, the IDF targeted Hamas fighters and struck an IDP camp in Rafah, initial reports indicate more than 45 people have been killed (most of them women and children).

Humanitarian aid airdrops

On 2 March 2024, the US announced it had joined Jordanian forces to conduct combined airdrops of humanitarian air into Gaza. Many other countries have participated in humanitarian aid airdrops, including France, Germany, Indonesia, the UAE and the UK.

On 15 March 2024, Australia announced it would support efforts by Jordan and the UAE to assist with the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza by supplying 140 aerial delivery parachutes for use in airdrops. As of 13 May 2024, US Central Command has conducted 37 humanitarian airdrops into Gaza alongside partner countries.

Maritime corridor, including US temporary pier

On 7 March 2024, US President Joe Biden announced during his State of the Union address that the US would build a temporary floating pier off the coast of Gaza in the Mediterranean Sea. The pier would allow large ships to deliver urgently needed humanitarian supplies to the reported 2.4 million civilians in the Gaza Strip.

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On 8 March 2024, the European Commission, the Republic of Cyprus, the UAE, the US, the UK, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands released a joint statement endorsing the activation of the Cyprus-based maritime corridor to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gaza. On 16 March 2024, a Spanish-NGO owned vessel ('The Open Arms') offloaded 200 tonnes of food aid for Gaza in an undisclosed location (inspected by Israel pre-departure in Cyprus) to test the maritime corridor. The delivery of aid via the maritime corridor has faced logistical challenges and setbacks following the strikes that killed the seven WCK workers.

On 26 April 2024, the US confirmed that construction of a floating pier had begun in collaboration with the IDF. On 7 May 2024, the US announced that construction of the maritime pier was complete.

Ceasefire developments

On 6 May 2024, Hamas announced it had accepted a draft proposal, but Israel countered saying it was dramatically different from its original agreement. As of 13 May, negotiations were ongoing sporadically. Missile attacks on humanitarian deliveries at Kerem Shalom crossing and increasing Israeli military activity in Rafah are making negotiations difficult, while impacting humanitarian delivery.

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Australia's position on the Hamas-Israel Conflict and Gaza crisis

- Australia is gravely concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the number of civilian deaths, including of children
- including warnings from the World Food Program that there is full-blown famine in the north of Gaza and it is spreading south
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 - a ceasefire cannot be one-sided – Hamas must release all hostages and lay down its arms.
- Australia condemns Hamas's ongoing acts of terror; use of human shields; and use of civilian infrastructure to launch attacks on Israel.
- But Israel's actions to defeat Hamas cannot be without account for the protection and welfare of Palestinian civilians, which is paramount and a requirement under international law.

Latest ceasefire deal

- We welcome the ceasefire proposal from President Biden and we urge parties to agree to its terms.
- The situation in Gaza is catastrophic.
- What we have seen in Rafah underlines why Australia and the international community have been united in opposition
 - the death and destruction is horrific
 - this human suffering is unacceptable
 - we reiterate to the Netanyahu Government: this cannot continue.
- We must see an immediate humanitarian ceasefire so that civilians can be protected.
- Israel must allow aid to flow at scale, as ordered by the International Court of Justice.
- Hamas must release hostages.

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Israeli military activity in Rafah

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- Hamas must release all hostages, stop using Palestinian civilians as human shields and lay down its arms.
- Gravely concerned by the prospects of an Israeli offensive in Rafah
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- The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law
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 - the closures of Rafah and Kerem Shalom to all activity, including humanitarian deliveries and medical evacuations, complicates the already challenging humanitarian situation in southern Gaza.

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Maritime corridor, including US temporary pier

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On 26 April 2024, the US confirmed that construction of a floating pier had begun in collaboration with the IDF. On 7 May 2024, the US announced that construction of the maritime pier was complete.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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HAMAS-ISRAEL CONFLICT

ISSUES

Conflict in Gaza, including the humanitarian situation and assistance; Zomi Frankcom; latest ceasefire deal; ICJ; defence exports; assisted departures.

KEY MESSAGES

Australia's position on the Hamas-Israel Conflict and Gaza crisis

- Australia is gravely concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and the number of civilian deaths, including of children
- Australia welcomes President Biden's ceasefire proposal and the subsequent UN Security Council resolution 2735 [10 June 2024] in support of a comprehensive ceasefire, a permanent end to hostilities and the start of reconstruction in Gaza
 - Australia continues to work with countries that support peace to press for agreement to this proposal
 - any delay will only see more lives lost.
- Australia has been pressing for an urgently-needed ceasefire, the protection of civilians and the immediate and unconditional release of hostages
 - and stressing that rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian relief must be provided to civilians.
- Australia condemns Hamas's ongoing acts of terror; use of human shields; and use of civilian infrastructure to launch attacks on Israel.
- But Israel's actions to defeat Hamas cannot be without account for the protection and welfare of Palestinian civilians, which is paramount and a requirement under international law.
- Israel must allow aid to flow at scale
 - we expect Israel to comply with the International Court of Justice's rulings on provisional measures of 26 January and 24 May, including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel

- Australia is gravely concerned by the findings of the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.
- Throughout this conflict, Australia has consistently reiterated that all parties to the conflict must comply with international humanitarian law
 - the human suffering in Gaza is unacceptable and this war must end
 - civilians must be protected.
- We are pressing for a ceasefire, for aid to flow at scale and for hostages to be released
 - Australia will continue to work with countries that support peace to press for agreement to President Biden's ceasefire proposal, endorsed by the United Nations Security Council on 10 June
 - any delay to implementing a ceasefire will only see more lives lost.
- s 22(1)(a)(ii)

The rulings of provisional measures in South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- We note the ICJ's further rulings on provisional measures including about halting an Israeli military offensive in Rafah
 - more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million population have sought refuge in Rafah from the fighting elsewhere.
 - Australia has been clear about our objections to a major Israeli ground offensive into Rafah since it was first proposed months ago.
- Australia has been clear that Israel must comply with the binding orders of the International Court of Justice, including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance at scale.
- We respect the independence of the Court and its critical role in upholding international law and the rules-based order.
 - Australia is not a party to the case.

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Death of Australian Zomi Frankcom [1 April]

- The deaths of Ms (Zomi) Frankcom and her six World Central Kitchen colleagues was outrageous, unacceptable and should not have occurred
 - humanitarian workers in a conflict zone delivering aid must be protected.
- Our deepest sympathies are with Ms (Zomi) Frankcom's family and loved ones
 - Zomi had dedicated her life to the service of others
 - she was an Australian we can all be proud of.
- The Government has made clear to Israel its expectation of a full, thorough and transparent investigation
 - and have demanded full accountability from Israeli authorities.

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Humanitarian

- Australia remains deeply concerned about the dire catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza
 - around 1.7 million people have been displaced, many several times over
 - and 1.1 million people (half the population) are experiencing catastrophic food insecurity.
- We continue to call for safe, unimpeded and sustained access for humanitarian supplies to enable lifesaving support for civilians in Gaza.

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- Australia has committed \$72.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October 2023
 - including an additional \$10 million for the World Food Programme announced on 11 June 2024
- Of this, Australia has committed \$51 million to directly support people affected by the Hamas-Israel conflict
 - \$11.5 million to refugee programs in Lebanon and Jordan to address the ongoing regional refugee crisis
 - and \$10 million to address the humanitarian situation in Syria.
- Our funding is being directed to conflict-affected people with a focus on women and children
 - including to support food, water, medicines and shelter.

If raised: will Australia contribute to the delivery of humanitarian assistance via maritime routes?

- Australia supports reliable and safe efforts to increase humanitarian assistance into Gaza
 - we are closely monitoring maritime options
 - land routes remain critical and alternative access routes [maritime or air] should not supplant this.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Assisted departures from Gaza

- Australia is doing all it can to support Australians and their immediate family members still in Gaza who wish to depart.
- The Australian Government does not control the Rafah border crossing nor determine who is approved or denied departure.
- It continues to be very difficult for people to depart Gaza and we have limited ability to assist.
- Meeting requirements for a visa does not mean an entitlement to consular assistance; nor does it mean that other authorities will automatically allow people to leave
 - people who obtain Australian visas are subject to appropriate identity, security and character checks.

Background

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Humanitarian situation

The impact on civilians has been immense. The UN reports that as of 13 May 2024, nearly 35,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 78,000 have been injured. Of Gaza's 2.3 million people, approximately 1.7 million have been displaced.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is extremely dire. OCHA assesses that the entire population requires humanitarian assistance to some extent. On 18 March 2024, the Integrated Food-Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimated 'famine is now projected and imminent in the North Gaza and Gaza Governorates and is expected to become manifest during the projection period from mid-March 2024 to May 2024'. On 5 May, World Food Program Executive Director Cindy McCain said northern Gaza was in 'full-blown famine' and it was moving south.

On 18 March, the IDF took control of Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Gaza's Health Ministry said the raid, Israel's fourth since 7 October, caused multiple casualties. According to the IDF, approximately 180 Hamas 'terrorists' were killed and 800 suspects were apprehended during the operation. The IDF also claims to have located weapons and tunnel shafts in the hospital.

On 24 March, Israeli forces besieged Al-Amal and Nasser hospitals, pinning down medical teams under heavy gunfire and forcing the evacuation of patients and displaced people. Israeli forces say hospitals in the Gaza Strip have frequently been used as strongholds of Hamas militants harbouring bases and weapons. Hamas and medical staff deny this.

On 5 April 2024, a WHO mission to assess Al-Shifa hospital, once one of the largest hospitals in Gaza, found 'the scale of devastation has left the facility completely non-functional'.

On 7 April 2024, following withdrawal of some Israeli forces from southern Gaza, Palestinian Civil Defense workers reported mass graves at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis and Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Reports have claimed more than 500 bodies have been found, including women, children and the elderly. Some reports have claimed evidence of torture and execution.

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On 8 May 2024, a third mass grave was discovered at Al-Shifa hospital. UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has called for an 'independent, effective and transparent investigation' into the graves.

On 12 May 2024, the IDF said it had opened a new humanitarian crossing, Western Erez, in coordination with the US.

On 6 June 2024, Israel bombed an UNRWA school in Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing at least 40 (according to UN and Palestinian Health ministry reports), after claiming Hamas militants were sheltering there. On 8 June Israeli forces rescued four hostages in a raid on the densely populated Nuseirat refugee camp, which the Palestinian Health ministry claims left more than 270 Palestinians dead.

On 11 June 2024, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, the Hon Dr Anne Aly, travelled to Amman, Jordan on behalf of the Foreign Minister to attend an international conference (International Call to Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza) convened by Egypt, Jordan and the UN on the urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza. At the conference, Minister Aly announced an additional \$10 million in humanitarian assistance for Gaza to be directed to WFP, bringing Australia's total contribution to the OPTs and the region to \$72.5 million since 7 October.

Rafah

On 15 February 2024, the prime ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada issued a joint statement urging Israel not to proceed with a planned ground offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah where about 1.7 million civilians displaced by the conflict are sheltering. The prime ministers said they were 'gravely concerned' by the proposal as the civilians had 'nowhere else to go'. They said Israel 'must listen to its friends and it must listen to the international community'. The leaders reiterated calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the release of hostages.

On 28 April 2024, US President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli PM Netanyahu and 'reiterated his clear position' on an operation in Rafah.

On 28 April 2024, Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, called on the US to ask Israel to not carry out the attack on Rafah, saying that it is the only country capable of doing so. He said that an attack on Rafah would be 'the biggest disaster in the history of the Palestinian people'.

On 29 April 2024, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said that the US had still not seen an Israeli plan for Rafah that prioritises protection of civilians already seeking shelter there. He said, 'We've said clearly, and for some time now on Rafah that, in the absence of a plan to ensure that civilians will not be harmed, we can't support a major military operation in Rafah'. Israel agreed to listen to the US and postpone the incursion into Rafah if a hostage deal is reached with Hamas.

On 5 May 2024, the IDF said that Hamas had fired a barrage of rockets from near an Emirati hospital in Rafah at the Kerem Shalom crossing. Four Israeli soldiers were killed.

On 6 May 2024, the IDF issued a call for residents of eastern Rafah to 'evacuate immediately' in preparation for a 'limited scope operation,' and would not say whether this was the beginning of a broader invasion of the city. OCHA estimates that more than 100,000 civilians have been displaced from Rafah since 6 May 2024. On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

On 7 May 2024, the IDF announced it had established operational control of the Gazan side of the Rafah crossing and closed it, including to deliveries of humanitarian supplies and medical evacuations from Gaza. The Israeli War Cabinet unanimously decided to continue operating in Rafah.

On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

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Operations continued at pace but there has been no full scale ground operation in Rafah. Some 900,000 civilians have been relocated from Rafah to neighboring Khan Younis and Al Mawasi.

On 26 May 2024, Hamas fired eight rockets from Gaza at central Israel (the first such action on Tel Aviv since January 2024). In retaliation, the IDF targeted Hamas fighters and struck an IDP camp in Rafah, initial reports indicate more than 45 people have been killed (most of them women and children).

Humanitarian aid airdrops

On 2 March 2024, the US announced it had joined Jordanian forces to conduct combined airdrops of humanitarian air into Gaza. Many other countries have participated in humanitarian aid airdrops, including France, Germany, Indonesia, the UAE and the UK.

On 15 March 2024, Australia announced it would support efforts by Jordan and the UAE to assist with the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza by supplying 140 aerial delivery parachutes for use in airdrops. As of 13 May 2024, US Central Command has conducted 37 humanitarian airdrops into Gaza alongside partner countries.

Maritime corridor, including US temporary pier

On 7 March 2024, US President Joe Biden announced during his State of the Union address that the US would build a temporary floating pier off the coast of Gaza in the Mediterranean Sea. The pier would allow large ships to deliver urgently needed humanitarian supplies to the reported 2.4 million civilians in the Gaza Strip.

On 8 March 2024, the European Commission, the Republic of Cyprus, the UAE, the US, the UK, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands released a joint statement endorsing the activation of the Cyprus-based maritime corridor to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gaza. On 16 March 2024, a Spanish-NGO owned vessel ('The Open Arms') offloaded 200 tonnes of food aid for Gaza in an undisclosed location (inspected by Israel pre-departure in Cyprus) to test the maritime corridor. The delivery of aid via the maritime corridor has faced logistical challenges and setbacks following the strikes that killed the seven WCK workers.

On 26 April 2024, the US confirmed that construction of a floating pier had begun in collaboration with the IDF. On 7 May 2024, the US announced that construction of the maritime pier was complete.

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HAMAS-ISRAEL CONFLICT

ISSUES

Conflict in Gaza, including the humanitarian situation and assistance; Rafah; Annual Report of the UN Secretary General; Zomi Frankcom; latest ceasefire deal; ICJ; defence exports; assisted departures.

KEY MESSAGES

Australia's position on the Hamas-Israel Conflict and Gaza crisis

- Australia is gravely concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and the number of civilian deaths, including of children
 - We have committed \$72.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October 2023.
 - s 22(1)(a)(ii)
-
- Australia has been pressing for an urgently-needed ceasefire, the protection of civilians and the immediate and unconditional release of hostages
 - and stressing that safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access must be ensured for aid to reach those in need.
 - Israel must allow aid to flow at scale to address the imminent risk of famine, and ensure civilians and aid workers are protected
 - Gaza is the most dangerous place in the world to be an aid worker
 - we expect Israel to comply with the International Court of Justice's rulings on provisional measures, including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance.
 - Australia condemns Hamas' ongoing acts of terror; use of human shields; and use of civilian infrastructure to launch attacks on Israel.
 - But Israel's actions to defeat Hamas cannot be without account for the protection and welfare of Palestinian civilians, which is paramount and a requirement under international law.

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Israeli military activity in Rafah since early May

- Gravely concerned by Israel's military activity in Rafah
 - the events in Rafah underscore the need for all parties to agree to a ceasefire now to protect civilians, see hostages released and address the humanitarian situation.
- Military activity in Rafah has further impacted the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza
 - Israeli evacuation orders and strikes have caused about a million people to flee Rafah since early May
 - they have been forced into areas which lack shelter, water and sanitation, and food
 - and the Rafah crossing remains closed [as of 23 June].
- Australia has been very clear in its opposition to Israel's operation in Rafah
 - and its expectation that Israel act in accordance with international humanitarian law
 - Hamas must release all hostages, stop using Palestinian civilians as human shields and lay down its arms.

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Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel

- Australia is gravely concerned by the findings of the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.
- Throughout this conflict, Australia has consistently reiterated that all parties to the conflict must comply with international humanitarian law
 - the human suffering in Gaza is unacceptable and this war must end
 - civilians must be protected.
- We are pressing for a ceasefire, for aid to flow at scale and for hostages to be released
 - Australia will continue to work with countries that support peace to press for agreement to President Biden's ceasefire proposal, endorsed by the UNSC on 10 June
 - any delay to implementing a ceasefire will only see more lives lost.
- [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

Annual Report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict

- The suffering of children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as detailed in the report, is horrific and unacceptable.
- The report's findings underline why Australia has been resolute in calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire
 - we welcomed the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 2735 [11 June] supporting President Biden's ceasefire proposal as the best pathway out of this conflict
 - and continue to urge all parties to agree to its terms
 - this war which has had a devastating impact on children must end.
- Australia has committed \$72.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October 2023

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- in recognition of the conflict's disproportionate impact on children, our funding is being directed with a focus on women and children, including to support food, water, medicines and shelter.

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Death of Australian Zomi Frankcom [1 April]

- The deaths of Ms (Zomi) Frankcom and her six World Central Kitchen colleagues was outrageous, unacceptable and should not have occurred
 - humanitarian workers in a conflict zone delivering aid must be protected.
- Our deepest sympathies are with Ms (Zomi) Frankcom's family and loved ones
 - Zomi had dedicated her life to the service of others
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- The Government has made clear to Israel its expectation of a full, thorough and transparent investigation
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Humanitarian

- Australia is gravely concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza
 - around 1.7 million people have been displaced, many several times over
 - famine is imminent, with 1.1 million people (half the population) experiencing catastrophic food insecurity
 - ongoing lack of humanitarian access continues to drive terrible hunger and deny the population human dignity
 - and the number of UN aid workers killed in the conflict is the highest in history [197 as of 21 June].
- We continue to call for an immediate ceasefire
 - to enable safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to Gaza so lifesaving assistance can reach those in need.
- Israel must comply with the binding orders of the ICJ
 - including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance at scale.
- Australia has committed \$72.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October 2023.
- Of this, Australia has committed \$51 million to directly support people affected by the Hamas-Israel conflict
 - \$11.5 million to refugee programs in Lebanon and Jordan to address the ongoing regional refugee crisis
 - and \$10 million to address the humanitarian situation in Syria.
- Our funding is being directed to conflict-affected people with a focus on women and children
 - including to support food and nutrition, water and sanitation, health and shelter.

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If raised: will Australia contribute to the delivery of humanitarian assistance via maritime routes?

- Australia supports reliable and safe efforts to increase humanitarian assistance into Gaza
 - we are closely monitoring maritime options
 - land routes remain critical and alternative access routes [maritime or air] should not supplant this.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Assisted departures from Gaza

- Australia is doing all it can to support Australians and their immediate family members still in Gaza who wish to depart.
- The Australian Government does not control the Rafah border crossing nor determine who is approved or denied departure.
- It continues to be very difficult for people to depart Gaza and we have limited ability to assist.

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- Meeting requirements for a visa does not mean an entitlement to consular assistance; nor does it mean that other authorities will automatically allow people to leave
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Background

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Humanitarian situation

The impact of the conflict on civilians has been immense. As of 19 June 2024, the UN reports over 37,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 85,000 have been injured. Of Gaza's 2.3 million people, approximately 1.7 million have been displaced, many several times over. Israeli military activity in Rafah has displaced 1 million people, many for the fourth or fifth time, forcing them to flee to areas around Khan Younis and Dier al Balah that lack adequate shelter, water and sanitation, and food.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic. OCHA assesses Gaza's entire population requires humanitarian assistance. On 18 March 2024, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimated 'famine is now projected and imminent in the North Gaza and Gaza Governorates and is expected to become manifest during the projection period from mid-March 2024 to May 2024'. An updated IPC report is expected in late June, and is likely to find food security has worsened given the deterioration of humanitarian access in southern Gaza since May. UN agencies continue to warn of the imminent risk of famine.

Humanitarian access to Gaza remains grossly inadequate. Rafah crossing, one of two major southern crossings into Gaza, has been closed since 7 May. Despite being open, the other major crossing in the south, Kerem Shalom crossing, remains heavily militarized and largely unsafe for humanitarian operations. Daily 'tactical pauses' for humanitarian purposes around Kerem Shalom crossing (effective from 15 June) are yet to have a material impact. In northern Gaza, however, sustained access through Erez West crossing (opened 12 May) has marginally improved the humanitarian situation.

The maritime corridor across the US-built temporary pier has faced major operational challenges since its operationalization on 7 May and is yet to deliver the quantities of aid promised. Since 17 May, only 2,500 metric tonnes of aid have been delivered across the pier; it is not clear how many of these supplies have actually been distributed to those in need. On 11 June, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced it had temporarily suspended distribution of supplies from the corridor to undertake a UN security assessment. As of 20 June, the UN's assessment is ongoing.

Jordan humanitarian conference

On 11 June 2024, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, the Hon Dr Anne Aly, travelled to Amman, Jordan on behalf of the Foreign Minister to attend an international conference (International Call to Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza) convened by Egypt, Jordan and the UN on the urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza. At the conference, Minister Aly announced an additional \$10 million in humanitarian assistance for Gaza to be directed to WFP, bringing Australia's total contribution to the OPTs and the region to \$72.5 million since 7 October.

Nuseirat refugee camp bombing

On 6 June 2024, Israel bombed an UNRWA school in Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing at least 40 (according to UN and Palestinian Health ministry reports), after claiming Hamas militants were sheltering there. On 8 June Israeli forces rescued four hostages in a raid on the densely populated Nuseirat refugee camp, which the Palestinian Health ministry claims left more than 270 Palestinians dead.

Attacks on Al-Shifa and other hospitals

On 5 April 2024, a WHO mission to assess Al-Shifa hospital, once one of the largest hospitals in Gaza, found 'the scale of devastation has left the facility completely non-functional'.

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On 7 April 2024, following withdrawal of some Israeli forces from southern Gaza, Palestinian Civil Defense workers reported mass graves at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis and Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Reports have claimed more than 500 bodies have been found, including women, children and the elderly. Some reports have claimed evidence of torture and execution.

On 8 May 2024, a third mass grave was discovered at Al-Shifa hospital. UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has called for an 'independent, effective and transparent investigation' into the graves.

Rafah

On 15 February 2024, the prime ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada issued a joint statement urging Israel not to proceed with a planned ground offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah where **about half of Gaza's population** are sheltering. The prime ministers said they were 'gravely concerned' by the proposal as the civilians had 'nowhere else to go'. They said Israel 'must listen to its friends and it must listen to the international community'. The leaders reiterated calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the release of hostages.

On 28 April 2024, US President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli PM Netanyahu and 'reiterated his clear position' on an operation in Rafah.

On 28 April 2024, Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, called on the US to ask Israel to not carry out the attack on Rafah, saying that it is the only country capable of doing so. He said that an attack on Rafah would be 'the biggest disaster in the history of the Palestinian people'.

On 29 April 2024, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said that the US had still not seen an Israeli plan for Rafah that prioritises protection of civilians already seeking shelter there. He said, 'We've said clearly, and for some time now on Rafah that, in the absence of a plan to ensure that civilians will not be harmed, we can't support a major military operation in Rafah'. Israel agreed to listen to the US and postpone the incursion into Rafah if a hostage deal is reached with Hamas.

On 5 May 2024, the IDF said that Hamas had fired a barrage of rockets from near an Emirati hospital in Rafah at the Kerem Shalom crossing. Four Israeli soldiers were killed.

On 6 May 2024, the IDF issued a call for residents of eastern Rafah to 'evacuate immediately' in preparation for a 'limited scope operation,' and would not say whether this was the beginning of a broader invasion of the city. OCHA estimates that more than 100,000 civilians have been displaced from Rafah since 6 May 2024. On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

On 7 May 2024, the IDF announced it had established operational control of the Gazan side of the Rafah crossing and closed it, including to deliveries of humanitarian supplies and medical evacuations from Gaza. The Israeli War Cabinet unanimously decided to continue operating in Rafah. On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

Military activities have continued, but there has been no full-scale ground operation in Rafah. Around 1 million civilians have been relocated from Rafah to neighboring Khan Younis and Al Mawasi.

On 26 May 2024, Hamas fired eight rockets from Gaza at central Israel (the first such action on Tel Aviv since January 2024). In retaliation, the IDF targeted Hamas fighters and struck an IDP camp in Rafah, initial reports indicate more than 45 people have been killed (most of them women and children).

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HAMAS-ISRAEL CONFLICT

ISSUES

Conflict in Gaza, including the humanitarian situation and assistance; Rafah; **Strikes (21-24 June); West Bank Incident; Smotrich Comments;** Annual Report of the UN Secretary General; Zomi Frankcom; latest ceasefire deal; ICJ; defence exports; assisted departures.

KEY MESSAGES

Australia's position on the Hamas-Israel Conflict and Gaza crisis

- Australia is gravely concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and the number of civilian deaths, including of children
- We have committed \$72.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October 2023.
- Australia welcomes President Biden's ceasefire proposal and the subsequent UN Security Council resolution 2735 [10 June 2024] in support of a comprehensive ceasefire, a permanent end to hostilities and the start of reconstruction in Gaza
 - Australia continues to work with countries that support peace to press for agreement to this proposal
 - any delay will only see more lives lost.
- Australia has been pressing for an urgently-needed ceasefire, the protection of civilians and the immediate and unconditional release of hostages
 - and stressing that safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access must be ensured for aid to reach those in need.
- Israel must allow aid to flow at scale to address the imminent risk of famine, and ensure civilians and aid workers are protected
 - Gaza is the most dangerous place in the world to be an aid worker
 - we expect Israel to comply with the International Court of Justice's rulings on provisional measures, including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance.
- Australia condemns Hamas' ongoing acts of terror; use of human shields; and use of civilian infrastructure to launch attacks on Israel.
- But Israel's actions to defeat Hamas cannot be without account for the protection and welfare of Palestinian civilians, which is paramount and a requirement under international law.

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West Bank Incident (video of wounded Palestinian on IDF Vehicle)

- I've seen these reports [a video circulated 22 June].
- We condemn that behaviour without reservation.
- And you can be assured that we have registered how appalled we are with the Netanyahu Government.

Strikes (21 - 24 June)

- Over the last 72 hours we have seen a number of strikes in Gaza that have resulted in significant civilian casualties, including two near aid facilities.
- This cannot continue
 - it's completely unacceptable
 - all parties must comply with international law.
- We must see an immediate ceasefire
 - there is a deal on the table endorsed by the UNSC
 - it must be fully implemented by both parties
 - the ongoing delay is costing lives
 - Australia is working with countries that support peace to press all parties to agree to the terms immediately.
- Civilians must be protected, the catastrophic humanitarian situation must be addressed and the hostages must be released

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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- Australia continues to work with countries that support peace to press for agreement to this proposal
 - any delay will only see more lives lost
 - civilians must be protected, aid must flow at scale and hostages must be released.

Israeli military activity in Rafah since early May

- Gravely concerned by Israel's military activity in Rafah
 - the events in Rafah underscore the need for all parties to agree to a ceasefire now to protect civilians, see hostages released and address the humanitarian situation.
- Military activity in Rafah has further impacted the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza
 - Israeli evacuation orders and strikes have caused about a million people to flee Rafah since early May
 - they have been forced into areas which lack shelter, water and sanitation, and food
 - and the Rafah crossing remains closed [as of 23 June].
- Australia has been very clear in its opposition to Israel's operation in Rafah
 - and its expectation that Israel act in accordance with international humanitarian law
 - Hamas must release all hostages, stop using Palestinian civilians as human shields and lay down its arms.

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Annual Report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict

- The suffering of children in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as detailed in the report, is horrific and unacceptable.
- The report's findings underline why Australia has been resolute in calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire
 - we welcomed the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 2735 [11 June] supporting President Biden's ceasefire proposal as the best pathway out of this conflict
 - and continue to urge all parties to agree to its terms
 - this war which has had a devastating impact on children must end.
- Australia has committed \$72.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October 2023
 - in recognition of the conflict's disproportionate impact on children, our funding is being directed with a focus on women and children, including to support food, water, medicines and shelter.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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- We respect the independence of the Court and its critical role in upholding international law and the rules-based order
 - Australia is not a party to the case.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Death of Australian Zomi Frankcom [1 April]

- The deaths of Ms (Zomi) Frankcom and her six World Central Kitchen colleagues was outrageous, unacceptable and should not have occurred
 - humanitarian workers in a conflict zone delivering aid must be protected.
- Our deepest sympathies are with Ms (Zomi) Frankcom's family and loved ones
 - Zomi had dedicated her life to the service of others
 - she was an Australian we can all be proud of.
- The Government has made clear to Israel its expectation of a full, thorough and transparent investigation

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- and have demanded full accountability from Israeli authorities.
- s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Humanitarian

- Australia is gravely concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza
 - around 1.7 million people have been displaced, many several times over
 - famine is imminent, with 1.1 million people (half the population) experiencing catastrophic food insecurity
 - ongoing lack of humanitarian access continues to drive terrible hunger and deny the population human dignity
 - and the number of UN aid workers killed in the conflict is the highest in history [197 as of 21 June].
- We continue to call for an immediate ceasefire

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- to enable safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to Gaza so lifesaving assistance can reach those in need.
- Israel must comply with the binding orders of the ICJ
 - including to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance at scale.
- Australia has committed \$72.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October 2023.
- Of this, Australia has committed \$51 million to directly support people affected by the Hamas-Israel conflict
 - \$11.5 million to refugee programs in Lebanon and Jordan to address the ongoing regional refugee crisis
 - and \$10 million to address the humanitarian situation in Syria.
- Our funding is being directed to conflict-affected people with a focus on women and children
 - including to support food and nutrition, water and sanitation, health and shelter.

If raised: will Australia contribute to the delivery of humanitarian assistance via maritime routes?

- Australia supports reliable and safe efforts to increase humanitarian assistance into Gaza
 - we are closely monitoring maritime options
 - land routes remain critical and alternative access routes [maritime or air] should not supplant this.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Assisted departures from Gaza

- Australia is doing all it can to support Australians and their immediate family members still in Gaza who wish to depart.
- The Australian Government does not control the Rafah border crossing nor determine who is approved or denied departure.
- It continues to be very difficult for people to depart Gaza and we have limited ability to assist.
- Meeting requirements for a visa does not mean an entitlement to consular assistance; nor does it mean that other authorities will automatically allow people to leave
 - people who obtain Australian visas are subject to appropriate identity, security and character checks.

Background

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Humanitarian situation

The impact of the conflict on civilians has been immense. As of 19 June 2024, the UN reports over 37,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 85,000 have been injured. Of Gaza's 2.3 million people, approximately 1.7 million have been displaced, many several times over. Israeli military activity in Rafah has displaced 1 million people, many for the fourth or fifth time, forcing them to flee to areas around Khan Younis and Dier al Balah that lack adequate shelter, water and sanitation, and food.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic. OCHA assesses Gaza's entire population requires humanitarian assistance. On 18 March 2024, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimated 'famine is now projected and imminent in the North Gaza and Gaza Governorates and is expected to become manifest during the projection period from mid-March 2024 to May 2024'. An updated IPC report is expected in late June, and is likely to find food security has worsened given the deterioration of humanitarian access in southern Gaza since May. UN agencies continue to warn of the imminent risk of famine.

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Humanitarian access to Gaza remains grossly inadequate. Rafah crossing, one of two major southern crossings into Gaza, has been closed since 7 May. Despite being open, the other major crossing in the south, Kerem Shalom crossing, remains heavily militarized and largely unsafe for humanitarian operations. Daily 'tactical pauses' for humanitarian purposes around Kerem Shalom crossing (effective from 15 June) are yet to have a material impact. In northern Gaza, however, sustained access through Erez West crossing (opened 12 May) has marginally improved the humanitarian situation.

The maritime corridor across the US-built temporary pier has faced major operational challenges since its operationalization on 7 May and is yet to deliver the quantities of aid promised. Since 17 May, only 2,500 metric tonnes of aid have been delivered across the pier; it is not clear how many of these supplies have actually been distributed to those in need. On 11 June, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced it had temporarily suspended distribution of supplies from the corridor to undertake a UN security assessment. As of 20 June, the UN's assessment is ongoing.

Jordan humanitarian conference

On 11 June 2024, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, the Hon Dr Anne Aly, travelled to Amman, Jordan on behalf of the Foreign Minister to attend an international conference (International Call to Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza) convened by Egypt, Jordan and the UN on the urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza. At the conference, Minister Aly announced an additional \$10 million in humanitarian assistance for Gaza to be directed to WFP, bringing Australia's total contribution to the OPTs and the region to \$72.5 million since 7 October.

Nuseirat refugee camp bombing

On 6 June 2024, Israel bombed an UNRWA school in Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing at least 40 (according to UN and Palestinian Health ministry reports), after claiming Hamas militants were sheltering there. On 8 June Israeli forces rescued four hostages in a raid on the densely populated Nuseirat refugee camp, which the Palestinian Health ministry claims left more than 270 Palestinians dead.

Attacks on Al-Shifa and other hospitals

On 5 April 2024, a WHO mission to assess Al-Shifa hospital, once one of the largest hospitals in Gaza, found 'the scale of devastation has left the facility completely non-functional'.

On 7 April 2024, following withdrawal of some Israeli forces from southern Gaza, Palestinian Civil Defense workers reported mass graves at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis and Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Reports have claimed more than 500 bodies have been found, including women, children and the elderly. Some reports have claimed evidence of torture and execution.

On 8 May 2024, a third mass grave was discovered at Al-Shifa hospital. UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has called for an 'independent, effective and transparent investigation' into the graves.

Rafah

On 15 February 2024, the prime ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada issued a joint statement urging Israel not to proceed with a planned ground offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah where about half of Gaza's population are sheltering. The prime ministers said they were 'gravely concerned' by the proposal as the civilians had 'nowhere else to go'. They said Israel 'must listen to its friends and it must listen to the international community'. The leaders reiterated calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the release of hostages.

On 28 April 2024, US President Joe Biden spoke with Israeli PM Netanyahu and 'reiterated his clear position' on an operation in Rafah.

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On 28 April 2024, Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, called on the US to ask Israel to not carry out the attack on Rafah, saying that it is the only country capable of doing so. He said that an attack on Rafah would be 'the biggest disaster in the history of the Palestinian people'.

On 29 April 2024, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said that the US had still not seen an Israeli plan for Rafah that prioritises protection of civilians already seeking shelter there. He said, 'We've said clearly, and for some time now on Rafah that, in the absence of a plan to ensure that civilians will not be harmed, we can't support a major military operation in Rafah'. Israel agreed to listen to the US and postpone the incursion into Rafah if a hostage deal is reached with Hamas.

On 5 May 2024, the IDF said that Hamas had fired a barrage of rockets from near an Emirati hospital in Rafah at the Kerem Shalom crossing. Four Israeli soldiers were killed.

On 6 May 2024, the IDF issued a call for residents of eastern Rafah to 'evacuate immediately' in preparation for a 'limited scope operation,' and would not say whether this was the beginning of a broader invasion of the city. OCHA estimates that more than 100,000 civilians have been displaced from Rafah since 6 May 2024. On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

On 7 May 2024, the IDF announced it had established operational control of the Gazan side of the Rafah crossing and closed it, including to deliveries of humanitarian supplies and medical evacuations from Gaza. The Israeli War Cabinet unanimously decided to continue operating in Rafah. On 11 May 2024, the IDF said it had evacuated 300,000 residents from Rafah.

Military activities have continued, but there has been no full-scale ground operation in Rafah. Around 1 million civilians have been relocated from Rafah to neighboring Khan Younis and Al Mawasi.

On 26 May 2024, Hamas fired eight rockets from Gaza at central Israel (the first such action on Tel Aviv since January 2024). In retaliation, the IDF targeted Hamas fighters and struck an IDP camp in Rafah, initial reports indicate more than 45 people have been killed (most of them women and children).

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Strike on northern Gaza UNRWA aid center – 24 June

Reports of at least eight people killed in the Gaza Strip by an Israeli air attack near an aid center (formerly the main headquarters for UNRWA). The facility was currently being used as an aid distribution center. UNRWA has said it is looking into the details of the reported attack. The IDF have said: *'...in a precise strike, IAF fighter jets struck infrastructure in which Hamas and the Islamic Jihad have been operating from.... Prior to the strike, many precautionary measures were taken to reduce the risk of harming civilians, including aerial surveillance, the use of precise munitions, and additional intelligence measures.'*

Strikes on Shati refugee camp and Tuffah neighborhood – 23 June

Reports of at least 43 people killed by Israeli airstrikes on northern Gaza. The strikes were aimed at assassinating 'a very senior Hamas commander', Raad Saad (Saad is considered to be among Hamas's top military commanders in the Gaza Strip). They targeted a Shati refugee camp (24 dead) and the neighborhood of Tuffah (19 dead). Reports indicate dozens of casualties, including some still buried under the rubble, the IDF said in a statement it had struck Hamas 'military infrastructure sites'.

Wounded Palestinian strapped to bonnet of IDF vehicle – 22 June

A video circulating on social media shows a man, identified as Mujahid Azmi from Jenin, tied to the front of an off-road vehicle that is seen passing two ambulances. According to a source in the IDF, soldiers were trying to bring the wounded man to a point where they could

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transfer him to an ambulance but had no room inside their vehicles. The Israeli army said the footage was in violation of its orders and procedures, 'The conduct seen in the video is not consistent with the IDF's directives and what is expected of its soldiers'. The IDF said, 'the incident is being investigated and dealt with accordingly.' Francesca Albanese, the United Nations' special rapporteur to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, called it 'human shielding in action'.

Strike on International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) facilities in al Mawasi – 21 June

The ICRC has reported 22 people killed in a shell attack that damaged its office in the Gaza Strip. The office is surrounded by hundreds of displaced persons living in tents. In an official statement, the IDF said, 'following an initial inquiry, there was no direct attack carried out by the IDF against a Red Cross facility'. It added 'the incident will be quickly examined and its findings will be presented to our international partners.' The ICRC has not attributed responsibility for the attack to any party.

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BACKGROUND BRIEF: MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
FOR NSC ON 11 JUNE 2024

PROPOSAL SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES

Update colleagues on developments in the Middle East.

KEY POINTS

- Today (11 June) Minister Aly will attend the 'Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza' Conference in Jordan on behalf of the Prime Minister and I
 - latest effort by Jordan to focus international attention on the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- I continue to lend Australia's voice to efforts to press Israel to cease the Rafa operation and encourage both Israel and Hamas to agree a ceasefire
 - while calling for release of hostages, protection of civilians and a major increase in aid flows
 - through public statements **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

BACKGROUND

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Humanitarian update

Humanitarian need in Gaza continues to grow (over 36,000 Palestinians killed, 1.1 million people facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity). Between 6 and 26 May,

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Date cleared: 6/06/2024

Consultation: HPD, LGD



Australian Government
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Israeli evacuation orders displaced around 950,000 people from Rafah, the majority displaced several times.

s 33(a)(iii), s 47E(d)

. Separately, when operational, the maritime corridor was hindered by distribution issues in Gaza, including looting.

Australia has provided \$62.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

United Nations

**Security Council**Provisional
9 June 2024

Original English

United States of America: draft resolution*The Security Council,**Reaffirming* the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,*Recalling* all its relevant resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question,*Underscoring* the importance of the ongoing diplomatic efforts by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States aimed at reaching a comprehensive ceasefire deal, consisting of three phases,

1 *Welcomes* the new ceasefire proposal announced on May 31, which Israel accepted, *calls upon* Hamas to also accept it, and *urges* both parties to fully implement its terms without delay and without condition,

2 *Notes* that the implementation of this proposal would enable the following outcomes to spread over three phases

(a) Phase 1 an immediate, full, and complete ceasefire with the release of hostages including women, the elderly and the wounded, the return of the remains of some hostages who have been killed, the exchange of Palestinian prisoners, withdrawal of Israeli forces from the populated areas in Gaza, the return of Palestinian civilians to their homes and neighborhoods in all areas of Gaza, including in the north, as well as the safe and effective distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale throughout the Gaza Strip to all Palestinian civilians who need it, including housing units delivered by the international community,

(b) Phase 2 upon agreement of the parties, a permanent end to hostilities, in exchange for the release of all other hostages still in Gaza, and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and

(c) Phase 3 the start of a major multi-year reconstruction plan for Gaza and the return of the remains of any deceased hostages still in Gaza to their families,

3 *Underlines* that the proposal says if the negotiations take longer than six weeks for phase one, the ceasefire will still continue as long as negotiations continue, and *welcomes* the readiness of the United States, Egypt, and Qatar to work to ensure negotiations keep going until all the agreements are reached and phase two is able to begin,

4 *Stresses* the importance of the parties adhering to the terms of this proposal once agreed and calls upon all Member States and the United Nations to support its implementation,

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5 *Rejects* any attempt at demographic or territorial change in the Gaza Strip, including any actions that reduce the territory of Gaza,

6 *Reiterates* its unwavering commitment to the vision of the two-State solution where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, consistent with international law and relevant UN resolutions, and in this regard stresses the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority,

7 *Decides* to remain seized of the matter



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FOR NSC ON 11 JUNE 2024**

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KEY POINTS

- Today (11 June) Minister Aly will attend the 'Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza' Conference in Jordan on behalf of the Prime Minister and I
 - latest effort by Jordan to focus international attention on the Gaza crisis
 - Minister Aly will announce another \$10 million in humanitarian assistance, bringing Australia's total humanitarian contribution to Gaza and the region to \$72.5 million since 7 October 2023.
- I continue to lend Australia's voice to efforts to press Israel to cease the Rafa operation and encourage both Israel and Hamas to agree a ceasefire
 - while calling for release of hostages, protection of civilians and a major increase in aid flows
 - through public statements **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Humanitarian update

Humanitarian need in Gaza continues to grow (over 36,000 Palestinians killed, 1.1 million people facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity). Between 6 and 26 May, Israeli evacuation orders displaced around 950,000 people from Rafah, the majority displaced several times.

s 33(a)(iii), s 47E(d)

Separately, when operational, the maritime corridor was hindered by distribution issues in Gaza, including looting.

Australia has provided \$62.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the region since 7 October, and will announce a further \$10 million on 11 June for World Food Programme efforts in Gaza, bringing the total to \$72.5 million (of which \$51.5 million to those affected by the conflict).

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

