

# **Urge the Administration to Take Action Immediately to Address the Ongoing Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza**

***Groups Endorsing: J Street, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), OXFAM, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Friends Service Committee for Legislation (FCNL), Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ***

**Cosigners: Reps. Rashida Tlaib, Barbara Lee, Raúl Grijalva, Peter Welch, Peter A. Defazio, Jackie Speier, Bobby L. Rush, James P. McGovern, Betty McCollum, Danny K. Davis, Gwen S. Moore, Earl Blumenauer, and Pramila Jayapal.**

Dear Colleague:

As you know, the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate. The United Nations reported in 2012 that without significant changes, Gaza will be unlivable by 2020. As the year begins, conditions have not improved, they have gotten worse: 50 percent of children live below the poverty level and 95 percent of the tap water is not safe to drink.

While Congress recently voted to restore \$150 million in humanitarian aid and security for Palestinians, the Administration can and must do more to improve the declining situation in Gaza.

Please join us in urging the Administration to alleviate the ongoing crisis by restoring all humanitarian aid and pursing a solution to end to the blockade policy.

Sincerely,

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

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February XX, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to request that the administration take immediate action to alleviate the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza – and that you pursue a solution to the blockade policy that has contributed to this humanitarian and security crisis.

In 2012, the United Nations (U.N.) reported that without any significant changes, Gaza will be unlivable by 2020. As we enter the new year, the continued deterioration of water and electrical infrastructure, medical systems, and other basic economic and social services bring Gaza closer to complete collapse.

Since the decision to cut all U.S. humanitarian assistance to Palestinians, the U.N. and non-profit humanitarian organizations have struggled to meet the basic needs of Gazans. In fact, more than one million people in Gaza – half of the population – could face extreme hunger this winter.

These cuts to aid have only compounded the deterioration in Gaza over the past decade. In fact, today:

- 97% of all water in Gaza is undrinkable due to deterioration of its only aquifer;<sup>1</sup>
- Over 50% of people in Gaza are unemployed;<sup>2</sup>
- 50% of children live below the poverty line, living on less than \$2.00 per day;<sup>3</sup>
- 80% of the Gaza population depends on international assistance to survive; and
- 68% percent of Gaza's population experiences moderate or severe food insecurity.<sup>4</sup>

This immediate crisis can be avoided with a resumption of bilateral U.S. assistance to Gaza as well as funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

In addition to resuming U.S. assistance to Gaza, we also urge you to support an end to the blockade of Gaza. While Hamas bears some measure of responsibility for the deteriorating situation, Israel's continuing control of Gaza's air, sea and borders, and its restrictions on the freedom of movement of people, legitimate goods and equipment in and out of Gaza, make the humanitarian situation worse and contribute to continued instability. The U.S. should also encourage Egypt and the Palestinian Authority to engage in a constructive way to solve the crisis in Gaza.

Even former Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot has said a spiraling humanitarian crisis in Gaza increases the chance of violent conflict and is a threat to Israel's security.<sup>5</sup> Restoring aid to Palestinians will begin to alleviate the crippling poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and lack of access to adequate health, clean water, and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/01/01/un-predicted-gaza-would-be-uninhabitable-by-heres-what-that-actually-means/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/53-cent-palestinians-gaza-live-poverty-despite-humanitarian-assistance>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/food-insecurity-opt-13-million-palestinians-gaza-strip-are-food-insecure>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-chief-said-to-warn-gaza-war-likely-if-humanitarian-crisis-persists/>

electricity for the two million Palestinians in Gaza. With these changes, stability and hope for a better future can return, and security and safety will increase for both Palestinians and Israelis.

As we stated in our 2018 letter, we recognize the serious security and political challenges in Gaza. However, U.S. support for the basic human rights of Palestinians living in Gaza must not be conditioned on progress on those fronts. For this reason, we strongly urge you to immediately restore all U.S. funding for humanitarian aid in Gaza, including USAID and UNRWA funding. Further, we ask that you push our partners to end the blockade on the movement of people and legitimate goods and equipment in and out of the territory, especially for materials and supplies related to critical projects like medicine, hospital supplies and water treatment.

Sincerely,

Members of Congress