

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
REMARKS TO THE PRESS ON GAZA
New York, 8 April 2025

More than an entire month has passed without a drop of aid into Gaza.

No food. No fuel. No medicine. No commercial supplies.

As aid has dried up, the floodgates of horror have re-opened.

Gaza is a killing field – and civilians are in an endless death loop.

Certain truths are clear since the atrocious October 7 terror attacks by Hamas.

Above all, we know ceasefires work.

The ceasefire allowed for the release of hostages.

The ceasefire ensured the distribution of lifesaving aid.

The ceasefire proved that the humanitarian community can deliver.

For weeks -- guns fell silent, obstacles were removed, looting ended – and we were able to deliver lifesaving supplies to virtually every part of the Gaza Strip.

That all ended with the shattering of the ceasefire.

Hope sank for Palestinian families in Gaza and families of hostages in Israel – and I was reminded yesterday when I met again with hostage families.

That is why I have consistently been pushing for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, a permanent ceasefire, and full humanitarian access.

In times like this, we must be crystal clear clear about the situation.

With crossing points into Gaza shut and aid blockaded, security is in shambles and our capacity to deliver has been strangled.

And as the heads of UN humanitarian organizations declared in a joint statement yesterday: “assertions that there is now enough food to feed all Palestinians in Gaza are far from the reality on the ground, and commodities are running extremely low”.

We must also be clear about the obligations.

As the occupying power, Israel has unequivocal obligations under international law – including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Article 55, paragraph 1, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring food and medical supplies of the population”.

Article 56, paragraph 1, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining...the medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene in the occupied territory”.

It further states that medical personnel of all categories shall be allowed to carry out their duties.

And Article 59, paragraph 1, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “if the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population, and shall facilitate them by all means at its disposal”.

None of that is happening today.

No humanitarian supplies can enter Gaza.

Meanwhile, at the crossing points, food, medicine and shelter supplies are piling up, and vital equipment is stuck.

International Humanitarian Law also includes the obligation to respect humanitarian relief personnel.

I want to say a special word about those humanitarian heroes in Gaza. They are under fire and yet doing all they can to follow the path they chose – to help people.

UN agencies and our partners are ready and determined to deliver.

But the Israeli authorities newly proposed “authorization mechanisms” for aid delivery risk further controlling and callously limiting aid down to the last calorie and grain of flour.

Let me be clear: We will not participate in any arrangement that does not fully respect the humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

Unimpeded humanitarian access must be guaranteed.

And humanitarian personnel must be given the protection that they are accorded under international law.

The inviolability of United Nations premises and assets must be respected.

I call once again for an independent investigation into the killing of humanitarians – including UN personnel.

We must stick to our core principles. Member States of the United Nations must adhere to their obligations under international law. And there must be justice and accountability when they do not.

The world may be running out of words to describe the situation in Gaza, but we will never run away from the truth.

The current path is a dead end – totally intolerable in the eyes of international law and history.

And the risk of the occupied West Bank transforming into another Gaza makes it even worse.

It is time to end the dehumanization, protect civilians, release the hostages, ensure lifesaving aid, and renew the ceasefire.

Thank you.

****Questions and Answers**

Question: Thank you for the opportunity. Secretary-General, this is Serife Cetin from Anadolu Agency. I actually have a question about the press conference between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Trump yesterday. If you may recall, they once again reiterated President Trump's vision to relocate the Gazans to countries who are willing to take them. So I just want to know if you think this is forced displacement, and isn't that a war crime? And if I may just ask one additional question. Prime-minister Netanyahu, actually, in a rather pitiful way, said that the Gazan people are locked in Gaza. And, I just want to know, in your opinion, who is locking the Gazan people in there? For example, is the UN able to, you know, carry out urgent medical evacuations, if they want to? Is this a possibility right now in Gaza? Thank you.

Secretary-General: Palestinians must be able to live in a Palestinian state, side by side with an Israeli state. That is the only solution that can bring peace to the Middle East. Medical evacuations are absolutely essential, and everything must be done to increase the number of medical evacuations.

Question: And forced displacement?

Secretary-General: Sorry?

Question: Forced displacement? I mean, sending the Gaza people to other countries?

Secretary-General: As I said, Palestinians have the right to live in Palestine, in a Palestinian state, side by side with an Israeli state. To be forced to be moved away is something that is against international law.

Question: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary-General. As I'm sure you have been reading, President Trump has imposed widespread tariffs on almost every country in the world. I wonder if you could give us your reaction to this, and are you concerned that this could lead to a global economic recession?

Secretary-General: I've been clarifying my position about this issue time and time again. Trade wars are extremely negative. Nobody wins with a trade war. Everybody tends to lose. And I'm particularly worried with the most vulnerable developing countries, in which the impact will be more devastating. I sincerely hope that we will have no recession, because a recession will have dramatic consequences, especially for the poorest people in the world.

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, Gabriel Elizondo from Al Jazeera English. In your remarks just now, you said the world may be running out of words to describe the situation in Gaza. However, much of the world does have a word to describe what's happening in Gaza, and that word is genocide. You have been consistent over the last 18 months that you feel it's up to a relevant international court to determine if a genocide is taking place in Gaza. However, my question, sir, is do you understand how so many people around the world do look at what's happening in Gaza as a genocide?

Secretary-General: I think that the situation is sufficiently horrible not to be worried with the semantics. There is a competence of the International Court of Justice, and the International Court of Justice was seized exactly in relation to that. And the International Court of Justice is a body of the UN, and I respect the decisions of the International Court of Justice. But as I said, the situation is absolutely horrible. There is no doubt about that.

Question: Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General. Abdelhamid Siyam from the Arabic daily Al Quds al-Arabi. Mr. Secretary-General, you keep saying nothing justifies October 7. You keep repeating that all the time that nothing justifies what happened on October 7. Is there anything justifies 56 years of occupation? Is there anything justify the settlement activities? Is there anything justified bulldozing many thousands of Palestinian homes? Is there anything justifies the invasion of Jerusalem and not allowing Palestinians to go to the Holy Mosque? Why you keep repeating that, as if history started on October 7? Thank you.

Secretary-General: You listen carefully to what I say. I always say, when I say nothing justifies the October 7 horrible terror attacks by Hamas, I always have [said:] And nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. And all the things that you have been described correspond exactly to the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Thank you very much.