

New import restrictions risk triggering 'dramatic deterioration' in Gaza, says UN Humanitarian Coordinator

Following further restrictions on goods and supplies that can be moved across the border of the Gaza Strip, the top United Nations humanitarian official there has called for urgent measures to prevent an already critical humanitarian situation from getting worse.

"As events over the weekend demonstrate, the situation in Gaza is extremely [precarious](#)," said Jamie McGoldrick, Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, after visiting the Gaza Strip.

"I am deeply concerned about the imposition of further restrictions at Kerem Shalom, which is the lifeline for Gaza's population," he added, referring to the key border crossing with Israel. "Should they continue, these additional restrictions risk triggering a dramatic deterioration in an already fragile situation and desperate humanitarian conditions, particularly for the health sector," said Mr. McGoldrick, who is also the [Deputy Special Coordinator](#) for the Middle East Peace Process.

On 9 July, Israel imposed new restrictions on goods going into Gaza, tightening them further on Monday, to prohibit all goods except medical and food supplies. Fishing along the Gaza coast was also limited to just three nautical miles offshore.

According to media outlets, no fuel will now be allowed to enter through Kerem Shalom until Sunday. Reports say that Israel imposed the measures in response to the flying of incendiary kites and balloons from Gaza towards Israel that have resulted in over 750 fires, burning more than 7,000 acres of Israeli land.

Particularly worrying is the impact that shortfalls in fuel will have on providing critical water, hygiene and sanitation services in Gaza, which depend on donor-funded emergency fuel to power back-up generators, according to the UN humanitarian affairs office for the Palestinian Territory ([OCHA](#)).

Currently, water and sanitation facilities have only a seven to 10-day supply, while health facilities have less than seven days of emergency fuel supplies.

"These developments come against the backdrop of a worrying escalation in hostilities in recent days," said OCHA, with "some 15,000 Palestinian injuries since 30 March in the context of demonstrations; a health system on the verge of collapse; and an 11-year humanitarian crisis created by an Israeli blockade that has raised concerns over collective punishment and an internal Palestinian political divide."

At present, the humanitarian funding appeal for the occupied Palestinian Territory, 70 per cent of which targets Gaza, is only 23 per cent funded. Moreover, \$4.5 million is urgently needed for emergency fuel, which runs out in early August.

“We are steps away from a disastrous deterioration, with potential broad impacts not only on Palestinians in Gaza, but the region,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “Everyone with the ability to improve the situation must take a step back, prevent further escalation and reduce the suffering of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza.”

The UN spokesperson said on Tuesday that the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) was implementing various schemes to help boost employment opportunities and mitigate the harsh socio-economic conditions in Gaza.

First, over a 12-month period, UNDP will create more than 2,500 immediate and short-term jobs, directly benefiting nearly 3,000 people – with the aim of women filling 40 per cent of the jobs.

Second, a recently launched rapid employment scheme is offering short- to medium-term employment opportunities to some 1,500 young men and women, including persons with disabilities.