

'Well-being of two million' in Gaza at stake as emergency fuel runs dry: UN humanitarian coordinator

To avert hospital closures and raw sewage overflowing onto the streets of Gaza, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator on Wednesday called on Israeli authorities to allow UN-purchased emergency fuel back across the border of the Palestinian enclave.

“Restricting the entry of emergency fuel to Gaza is a [dangerous practice](#), with grave consequences on the rights of people in Gaza,” Jamie McGoldrick, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Palestine said in a statement.

“The well-being of 2 million people, half of whom are children, is at stake. It is unacceptable that Palestinians in Gaza are repeatedly deprived of the most basic elements of a dignified life,” he added.

In the context of tightened import and export restrictions, Israel has prohibited fuel into the Gaza Strip since 2 August – following an earlier restriction that lasted from 16–24 July. According to the Israeli authorities, the intensified measures were in response to the continuing launch of incendiary kites launched from Gaza into Israel, which have sparked multiple fires.

Meanwhile, the fuel, which is being held up at the Israeli border, is urgently needed to power back-up generators which are in huge demand due to Gaza’s chronic energy crisis.

To ensure that hospitals, water and sanitation services function properly over the next four days, the respective humanitarian partners have indicated that at least 60,000 litres of emergency fuel must be delivered as soon as possible, to some 46 facilities across the strip.



OCHA

Garbage accumulated in the Ash Sheikh Radwan area in Gaza City, 2 March 2018.

According to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), around 40 of Gaza's 132 water and sanitation facilities have enough fuel for between one and two days – leaving 1.2 million Palestinians at imminent risk of sewage overflow.

To avoid sewage flooding into populated areas, Gaza City has reportedly had to direct the equivalent of four Olympic-sized swimming pools of sewage each day towards a storm water lagoon in the city's north, placing those surrounding communities at risk of overflow.

Gaza City sewage treatment has also reduced solid waste collection, leaving around 15,000 tons of garbage accumulating in the streets and increasing the risks of waterborne disease.

Hospitals and other health services are reducing operations, with five hospitals in danger of closing, placing more than 2,000 patients who rely on electrical devices at highest risk.

Moreover, medical services for over 1.6 million others may suffer at Gaza's main health facilities.

Compounding the situation, emergency fuel funding will run out for all critical facilities in mid-August, with \$4.5 million required to keep a minimum level of essential services running through the end of the year.

"Gaza desperately needs longer-term solutions so we can move past this cycle of repeated or worsening crises, including that Palestinian authorities prioritize provision of fuel for essential services," said Mr. McGoldrick.

"Until that happens, Israel must reverse the recent restrictions, including on the entry of emergency fuel, and donors must step in and fund emergency

fuel, in order to avoid a disease outbreak or other major public health concern," he concluded.