



15 October 2023

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by

17 October 2023

Israel and Gaza conflict: Humanitarian Support

BRIEFING Decision Submission

PURPOSE We provide advice on a humanitarian contribution in response to the current conflict in Israel and Gaza.

Recommended referrals

Prime Minister

For concurrence by

15 October 2023

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
s9(2)(g)(ii)		Partnerships, Humanitarian, and Multilateral	s9(2)(a)
s9(2)(g)(ii)		Middle East and Africa	s9(2)(a)

Minister's Office to complete

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Referred |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs amendment | <input type="checkbox"/> Declined | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events | <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes | |

Comments

Israel and Gaza conflict: Humanitarian Response

- On 7 October, Palestinian militants led by Hamas launched coordinated terrorist attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing more than 1,300 Israelis and injuring more than 3,400.
- In its initial response, Israel has launched retaliatory airstrikes against Hamas targets in Gaza. At least 2,215 Palestinians have been killed in the attacks, and over 8,700 injured. Access into Gaza is highly constrained, limiting the movement of humanitarian supplies and personnel.
- Current humanitarian needs are significant. More than 2.1 million people in Gaza and the West Bank are in need of humanitarian assistance, with over 420,000 Palestinians displaced.
- With Israel having signalled that its response will further intensify, including through a possible ground-based military operation into Gaza, we expect humanitarian needs to intensify significantly over the coming days and weeks.

Current international humanitarian efforts

- On 13 October, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released a flash appeal seeking US\$294 million for 77 humanitarian partners to address the most urgent needs of 1.26 million people in Gaza and the West Bank. The appeal covers a 90 day time period, with approximately half targeted at food security.
- On 13 October, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) issued a revised appeal for its 2023 operations in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT¹) amounting to CHF 49.8 million (approximately US\$55 million).
- Three close partners have announced their initial humanitarian contributions:
 - Australia announced AUD\$10 million for civilians affected by the conflict in Gaza. It will provide \$3 million to the ICRC, and \$7 million to the UN OCHA appeal.
 - Canada announced a contribution of CAD\$10 million. The funding will support the Canadian Red Cross and local partners, with details on further partners to follow.
 - s6(b)(i)
- Given the intensifying humanitarian crisis, and given that other close partners have announced humanitarian contributions, we recommend an initial New Zealand contribution of NZ\$5 million, with NZ\$2.5 million to the ICRC, and NZ\$2.5 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) under the umbrella of the UN OCHA appeal.
- The ICRC will prioritise s6(b)(ii), clarifying the fate of hostages (there are presently an estimated 100 Israeli hostages being held in Gaza), distributing cash and other assistance to displaced people, strengthening health-care services, and continuing to provide medical supplies.

¹ The OPT includes the West Bank (of the Jordan River), governed by the Palestinian Authority, and Gaza, in theory under the mandate of the Palestinian Authority but de facto governed by Hamas. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is led by Fatah, a bitter rival to Hamas. The two factions fell out publicly following the 2006 Palestinian elections, when Hamas assumed control of Gaza and severed formal links with the Palestinian Authority, which still claims responsibility for Gaza. Both Hamas and Fatah are vying for leadership pre-eminence among Palestinians.

Israel and Gaza conflict: Humanitarian Response

- A contribution to WFP under the UN OCHA appeal will support the delivery of food assistance, and cash-based assistance for the purchase of food locally.
- Delivery of humanitarian assistance is constrained due to the conflict. However, early contributions will enable the agencies to deliver what assistance they can now, and position them to scale-up as access improves.
- Both the ICRC and WFP act with full independence and neutrality. Each have strong systems and controls to guard against diversion, and to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the intended civilian beneficiaries.
- To remain in-step with our likeminded partners, we recommend that New Zealand make an announcement of a humanitarian contribution within the next 24-48 hours.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Europe, Middle East and Africa, and Australia Group

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Israel and Gaza conflict: Humanitarian Response

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **Agree** to make an initial contribution totalling NZ\$5 million to help meet growing humanitarian needs in Gaza and the West Bank, comprising:
 - 1a A contribution of NZ\$2.5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide protection and humanitarian assistance; and **Yes / No**
 - 1b A contribution of NZ\$2.5 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) to help meet immediate food security concerns. **Yes / No**
- 2 **Agree** that New Zealand should make an announcement of humanitarian assistance as soon as possible. **Yes / No**
- 3 **Note** that, if recommendations one and two are approved, we will work with your office on a press release. **Yes / No**
- 4 **Note** the Prime Minister has determined that the Leader of the Opposition should be consulted prior to a final decision being made, on the basis that a decision should not be deferred until the next Government is formed. **Yes / No**

Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Minister of Foreign Affairs / Minita Take Aorere

Date: / /

Rt Hon Chris Hipkins
Prime Minister

Date: / /

Israel and Gaza conflict: Humanitarian Response

Report

The early stages of a major humanitarian crisis

1. Following the terrorist attacks launched by Hamas, and Israel's initial response, humanitarian needs, particularly in Gaza, are growing. Gaza's sole power plant has stopped functioning, cutting the only electricity source to the Gaza strip. As of 13 October, most residents in Gaza no longer have access to drinking water. Health facilities are overwhelmed, medical stocks are in short supply, and access to hospitals and medical care is being hindered by the ongoing hostilities and damaged roads. An estimated 88 education facilities have been struck in the conflict.
2. It is widely expected that Israel will launch a ground military operation into Gaza soon, targeting Hamas leadership, military capabilities, and infrastructure. People in Northern Gaza have been advised to evacuate south of the Wadi Gaza stream in anticipation of this. We therefore expect humanitarian needs to worsen significantly over the coming days and weeks.

Current options for New Zealand to support the humanitarian response

3. The scale and severity of humanitarian need as a result of the conflict justify New Zealand humanitarian support. To help meet growing needs, significant appeals for funding have been released by international organisations.
4. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released a Flash Appeal on 13 October seeking US\$294 million from humanitarian partners to address the most urgent needs of 1,260,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank.
5. The appeal covers a 90 day time period, with approximately half of requirements for food security. It also targets coordination and support services, shelter, cash assistance, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), protection, and education. The appeal is a consolidation of needs from 77 humanitarian partners operating in Gaza and the West Bank, including UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
6. Under the UN flash appeal, the World Food Programme (WFP) requests USD\$74 million to provide emergency assistance to 995,000 people for three months. WFP has been working in shelters in Gaza to provide fresh bread for 137,000 displaced persons, and has also provided a cash-based transfer (voucher) of US\$5 for 164,000 vulnerable Palestinians across Gaza and the West Bank to purchase food. It plans to expand this cash-based support, and is rapidly replenishing its emergency food stock and repositioning food parcels in Egypt for immediate dispatch to Gaza once access is guaranteed.
7. Countries that were already contributing to WFP's activities in Palestine prior to the conflict include Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Spain and the United States.
8. On 13 October, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) issued a revised appeal for its 2023 operations in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories amounting to approximately US\$55 million. Given the rapidly evolving situation, it expects this amount to increase and it will reassess the appeal regularly.
9. The ICRC is working to ensure humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. The ICRC works with its Red Cross

Israel and Gaza conflict: Humanitarian Response

Movement partners in Israel and Palestine; the Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent Society respectively. Countries that contributed to ICRC's 2023 appeal earlier in 2023 include Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

10. The ICRC is deploying additional staff to provide emergency aid as the conflict and related humanitarian needs intensify. ICRC will prioritise s6(b)(ii), clarifying the fate of hostages, distributing cash and other assistance to displaced people, strengthening health-care services and continuing to provide medical supplies, and restoring essential services. There will be also be a focus on ensuring that people are aware of the threats posed by explosive remnants of war.
11. To help meet the growing humanitarian needs, we recommend an initial New Zealand humanitarian contribution totalling NZ\$5 million, with NZ\$2.5 million to the ICRC, and NZ\$2.5 million to WFP. The contribution will come out of the humanitarian allocation of New Zealand's International Development Cooperation programme.
12. All humanitarian agencies and personnel face major constraints in providing humanitarian assistance. The insecurity is preventing safe access to people in need and essential facilities, such as warehouses. While agencies have strong safety and security procedures in place to minimise this risk, at least 23 humanitarian staff have been killed since the start of hostilities. Operations have also been impeded by movement restrictions, the barring of imports, shortages of electricity, fuel, water, and other essential materials.
13. A contribution to the ICRC and WFP now will support the agencies to do what they can under the current circumstances, and position them to scale-up their activities as conditions allow.
14. s6(b)(ii), s9(2)(f)(iv)
15. This is a very complex situation. The key risk to making a humanitarian contribution is the possibility of the diversion of aid. s6(a)

Both the ICRC and WFP act with full independence and neutrality. Each have strong systems and controls to guard against diversion, and to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the intended civilian beneficiaries. s6(b)(ii)

Other international partners' responses

16. On 13 October, Canada announced an initial contribution of CAD\$10 million for humanitarian assistance. A portion of the funding will support the Canadian Red Cross and its partners - Palestine Red Crescent Society and Magen David Adom. The funding will help provide food, water, emergency medical assistance, protection services and other life-saving assistance.

Israel and Gaza conflict: Humanitarian Response

17. On 14 October, Australia announced an initial AUD\$10 million in humanitarian assistance for civilians affected by the conflict in Gaza. It will provide \$3 million to the ICRC, and \$7 million to the United Nations Flash Appeal Fund. s6(b)(i)

18. s6(b)(i)

Next steps

19. To remain in-step with our partners, we consider that New Zealand should make an announcement of a humanitarian contribution within the next 24-48 hours.

20. We recommend proceeding with announcing an initial NZ\$5 million contribution shared between the ICRC and WFP.

21. Officials recommend that an announcement of New Zealand's humanitarian funding uses language that emphasises the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian actors, and does not comment on the political situation. s6(b)(ii)

22. Officials will continue to monitor the humanitarian impacts of the conflict, and how other countries are responding in the humanitarian space. As conditions allow, and as humanitarian partners are able to further scale-up their operations, we will provide advice on possible further contributions.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



2 November 2023

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by

6 November 2023

Israel and Gaza Conflict: Further Humanitarian Support

BRIEFING Decision Submission

PURPOSE To seek approval for a further humanitarian contribution in response to the worsening humanitarian crisis as a result of the current conflict in Israel and Gaza.

Recommended referrals

Prime Minister

For concurrence by 7 November 2023

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
s9(2)(a), s9(2)(g)(ii)			

Minister's Office to complete

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Comments

Israel and Gaza Conflict: Further Humanitarian Support

Key points

- The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), especially in Gaza, has worsened dramatically. Across Gaza 1.4 million people, of a population of 2.2 million, are displaced and struggling to meet basic needs. Essential services, including the provision of safe water, electricity, education, emergency and life-saving healthcare, and digital communications, are heavily degraded or not functioning.
 - Due to border restrictions, and ongoing hostilities, humanitarian assistance is not getting into Gaza at the level required to relieve widespread shortages of basic items including medical supplies, food, water and fuel. In addition, the operating environment for humanitarian organisations is highly unsafe and constrained. While the volume of aid getting into Gaza is slowly increasing, it is a desperate situation, with humanitarian responders unable to meet rapidly growing needs.
 - On 17 October, New Zealand announced an initial \$5 million package of humanitarian support, comprising contributions to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Whilst the responses of both organisations are presently constrained due to the restrictive operating environment, they remain active and are delivering urgently needed protection and assistance to affected people:
 - The ICRC continues to engage with key parties to the conflict, including on international human rights obligations and hostages. It is also providing essential medical services and humanitarian supplies where it can, with a surgical team and its latest convoy of aid arriving in Gaza on 27 October.
 - The WFP is providing emergency food and cash assistance to those in need and has reached over 630,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank since 7 October.
 - Both the ICRC and WFP are pre-positioning supplies in Egypt in preparation for a significant scale-up of their responses when conditions allow.
 - Due to the significant spike in need, we recommend a further commitment of NZ\$2.5 million to each of the ICRC and WFP to support their ongoing responses (a total of \$5 million). This would bring New Zealand's total contribution to the crisis to NZ\$10 million.
 - This is a credible contribution from New Zealand, including relative to likeminded partners s9(2)(f)(iv) The scale of the proposed contribution reflects the scope, severity and immediacy of humanitarian needs, and would not affect our ability to respond to Pacific emergencies.
 - Both the ICRC and WFP act with full independence and neutrality. Each have strong systems and controls to guard against diversion, and to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the intended civilian beneficiaries.
- Funding will be sourced from within existing baselines, and is drawn from the non-departmental International Development Cooperation Appropriation within Vote Foreign Affairs.
- A number of international partners have recently announced follow-up humanitarian contributions, including: Australia (total contribution now NZ\$27 million), Canada (NZ\$74 million), Norway (NZ\$20 million) and the United Kingdom (NZ\$36 million).

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Israel and Gaza Conflict: Further Humanitarian Support

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **Agree** to make a further contribution totalling NZ\$5 million to help meet worsening humanitarian needs, comprising:
 - 1a A contribution of NZ\$2.5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide protection and humanitarian assistance in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel; and **Yes / No**
 - 1b A contribution of NZ\$2.5 million to the World Food Programme to help meet immediate food security concerns in Gaza and the West Bank. **Yes / No**
- 2 **Note** that, if approved we propose to work with your Office on an announcement. **Yes / No**
- 3 **Refer** a copy of this submission to the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Chris Hipkins, including for sharing with the Leader of the Opposition. **Yes / No**

Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Minister of Foreign Affairs / Minita Take Aorere

Date: / /

Rt Hon Chris Hipkins
Prime Minister

Date: / /

Israel and Gaza Conflict: Further Humanitarian Support

Report

A rapidly escalating humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories

1. Since the 7 October terrorist attacks, the humanitarian situation in Gaza has worsened dramatically and is now widely described as catastrophic. Destruction or damage to housing and essential infrastructure, the collapse of basic services, and a severe shortage of essential items (including food and water) is threatening people's safety, living standards and dignity. On 31 October, an agreement was brokered to allow an increase of up to 100 trucks to enter Gaza each day. Although this is an improvement on the 230 trucks that have entered since 21 October (averaging 20 trucks a day), it is significantly down from the pre-conflict average of 500 trucks per day.
2. Around 1.4 million people (62% of Gaza's population) are internally displaced, with most sheltering in schools, hospitals, United Nations (UN) facilities, or with host communities. Shelters are overwhelmed, posing significant public health and protection risks, including as the lack of clean water and sanitation services heightens the risk of disease outbreaks.
3. Fuel is desperately needed to generate electricity, including for water purification systems; hospital generators; bakeries (bread is a staple food in Gaza); ambulances; and to enable the delivery of aid to where it is most needed. The UN reports that, at present, all six of Gaza's wastewater treatment plants are non-operational due to the lack of fuel or power.
4. Access to healthcare for the wounded, and for individuals that require ongoing medical treatment (including cancer patients and neonates in incubators), is increasingly challenging. Hospitals are overwhelmed by the rising numbers of casualties, a shortage of supplies and insufficient fuel. Twelve of Gaza's 35 hospitals have ceased operations.
5. In the West Bank, 123 civilians have been killed, incidents of settler violence have increased, and over 860 Palestinians have been displaced. In addition, the UN reports that the suspension of permits for 150,000 to 175,000 Palestinians from the West Bank to work in Israel and settlements is causing significant damage to the West Bank economy.

Humanitarian partners are responding to the extent possible

6. A response from humanitarian actors is under way. Currently only a small but increasing amount of aid is entering Gaza, and the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver assistance remains constrained by the ongoing hostilities, restrictions on freedom of movement, communications blackouts, the lack of fuel and electricity, and the shortage of supplies.
7. Despite these conditions, both of New Zealand's funding partners – the ICRC and WFP – remain active and are scaling up to provide more assistance as conditions allow.

Response of the International Committee of the Red Cross

8. ICRC contributions to the response so far have included the following:
 - 8.1. Ten specialised staff – including a six person surgical team to support trauma care – and six ICRC trucks with essential supplies that entered Gaza on 27 October.
 - 8.2. Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC helped facilitate the release of two hostages on 20 October and another two on 24 October. The ICRC continues its attempts to clarify the fate of people captured/detained in relation to hostilities and of those reported missing.

Israel and Gaza Conflict: Further Humanitarian Support

- 8.3. The provision of medical supplies including body bags and chlorine tablets, and some fuel for hospital generators and ambulances.
- 8.4. Mobilising 60 tons of humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, close to the Rafah crossing ready to enter Gaza.
9. The ICRC will expand its response as security conditions allow, and a sustainable supply line materialises. The next phase of its response is expected to include: strengthening emergency healthcare in Gaza and Israel; supporting the restoration of essential services in Gaza (including water and power); documenting allegations of international humanitarian law (IHL) violations; reminding parties to the conflict of their IHL obligations; monitoring conditions of detention; and multi-disciplinary support to people in the West Bank.
10. The ICRC has revised its appeal for Israel and the oPt up to US\$76 million (NZ\$132 million). Its experience in operating in areas of conflict, as well as its longstanding presence and acceptance as a neutral intermediary in both Israel and the oPt, positions it well to respond to the growing crisis. We recommend a further contribution of NZ\$2.5 million to support its ongoing operations, and to enable it to continue to scale up as conditions allow. Others funding ICRC include: Australia; Denmark; France; Germany; Japan; and the Netherlands.

Response of the World Food Programme

11. The WFP's response since 7 October has included the following:
 - 11.5. Emergency food and cash assistance programmes that have reached over 630,000 people across Gaza and the West Bank.
 - 11.6. On average, 200,000 people in shelters were receiving bread provided by WFP every day; this recently dropped to 150,000 people per day due to a shortage of fuel.
 - 11.7. Nine WFP trucks carrying 141 tons of food supplies have crossed into Gaza since the opening of the Rafah crossing on 21 October.
 - 11.8. WFP has prepositioned 5,000 tons of emergency food in Egypt, Gaza and the West Bank including high-energy biscuits, ready-to-eats, date bars and food parcels. This is enough to feed 1.3 million people for 15 days.
12. WFP is predicting it will need at least 50 WFP trucks to cross daily into Gaza to meet escalating needs until the commercial supply can be restored. In line with rising needs, WFP has revised its appeal up to US\$112 million (NZ\$190 million) to continue its response for 1.1 million people at pace and scale for the next 30 days.
13. Given the significant need for emergency food, and noting that more than half of Gaza's population was food-insecure prior to the escalation, the WFP's response is particularly important. The WFP has a demonstrated ability to move quickly and operate at a significant scale. We recommend a further contribution of NZ\$2.5 million to support its ongoing response and scale-up. Others funding the WFP include: Canada, Germany, France, and the Netherlands.

Other options

14. s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv)

Israel and Gaza Conflict: Further Humanitarian Support

s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv)

15. s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv)

16. s6(a)

17. s9(2)(f)(iv)

Risks

18. This is a very complex situation. The key risk to making a humanitarian contribution remains the possibility of the diversion of aid. s6(a), s6(b)(ii)

. Our previous assessments of ICRC and WFP systems, including their controls to prevent diversion, remain the same.

Finance

19. Funding for this activity will be sourced from within existing baselines. Funding is drawn from the non-departmental International Development Cooperation Appropriation within Vote Foreign Affairs. There remains sufficient funding to respond to humanitarian emergencies in the Pacific, including over the Pacific Tropical Cyclone season which ends in April 2024.

Next steps

20. Should you agree to a further humanitarian contribution, officials propose to work with your Office on an announcement.

21. Advocating strongly for parties involved in the conflict to act in accordance with international humanitarian law will remain a central pillar of our international response.