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**Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in Gaza**

*New York, 16 October 2024*

**[AS DELIVERED]**

Madam President, Members of the Security Council,

Thank you for this opportunity to brief you on the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Since we last briefed the Council on 9 October – just one week ago – the people of Gaza have suffered multiple mass casualty incidents due to Israeli airstrikes.

In just one week, nearly 400 Palestinians have reportedly been killed in Gaza and almost 1,500 injured.

The world has seen the images of patients and displaced persons, sheltering near Al Aqsa hospital, burning alive.

Scores of others, including women and children, are suffering the excruciating pain of severe lifechanging burns. There is no way to get them the urgent care they need to survive and manage such injuries.

If such horror does not awaken our sense of humanity and propel us to action, what will?

Some 20 families lost both their shelter and belongings in the fire.

Just hours before, a strike on a school serving as a shelter in Nuseirat killed more than 20 people and injured scores of others, according to local sources.

Israel's military offensive is intensifying in the north. Heavy fighting in and around Jabaliya, which is under siege, continues to be reported, as does indiscriminate rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups toward Israel.

Since the beginning of October, we estimate that over 55,000 people have been displaced from the Jabaliya area, while others remain stranded in their homes with water and food running out.

Thirteen members of a family were killed yesterday after rescue workers were again prevented from reaching the wounded trapped under the rubble who were calling for help after their home was hit.

The images emerging from the camp show a traumatized population, running for their lives, with no safe place to go.

Madam President,

Only three of the ten hospitals in North Gaza Governorate are now operational – and those only at minimum capacity.

The facilities are facing dire shortages of fuel, blood, trauma treatment and medications.

Women are giving birth under heavy bombardment.

For the 155,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women in Gaza, it is an exhausting and traumatizing experience, not knowing where and how to give birth, or whether their child will survive.

There is no antenatal care. There is no medication. And then there is hunger. Some 11,000 pregnant women are suffering hunger and malnutrition, putting not just their lives at risk, but also the lives of their newborn babies.

On 12 October, an inter-agency team – from the United Nations, an international, non-governmental organization and the Palestine Red Crescent Society – was finally able to reach the Kamal Adwan and Al-Sahaba hospitals in northern Gaza,

after nine separate attempts where they were denied or impeded by Israeli forces. Nine.

The team eventually transferred more than a dozen critical patients from Kamal Adwan to Al-Shifa hospital. Additional patients and their companions – who had earlier been transferred to Kamal Adwan from Al-Awda Hospital – were also taken to Al Shifa.

The team delivered fuel to keep Kamal Adwan and Al-Awda functioning, as well as fuel and blood units to Al-Sahaba Hospital. But humanitarian aid cannot be provided in one-off batches.

The World Health Organization has warned that Kamal Adwan hospital is overwhelmed, receiving between 50 and 70 newly injured patients each day.

These missions were completed amid fierce ongoing hostilities. Drivers from the United Nations and the Palestine Red Crescent Society were subjected to humiliating treatment during security screening and temporary detention at a checkpoint.

Medical staff kept one child alive by hand pumping oxygen for over seven hours until they made it through the checkpoint.

This gives just a glimpse of the daily work of humanitarians in Gaza.

Madam President,

No food aid entered northern Gaza from October 2 to October 15, when a trickle was allowed in, and all essential supplies for survival are running out.

Distributions of existing food supplies to people in need continue, but these stocks are quickly dwindling.

In Gaza city, more than 110,000 meals are distributed each day by at least 10 kitchens, including to support an influx of people displaced from North Gaza Governorate.

In North Gaza Governorate, between 11 and 13 October, our partners distributed more than 1,500 food parcels and 1,500 bags of wheat flour to displaced people who were trapped or sheltering in and near schools in Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahya.

However, there is now barely any food left to distribute, and most bakeries will be forced to shut down again in the next several days without additional fuel.

Given the abject conditions and intolerable suffering in north Gaza, the fact that humanitarian access is nearly non-existent is unconscionable.

During the first two weeks of October, just one out of 54 coordinated movements to the north via the Al Rashid checkpoint was facilitated by Israeli authorities, while another four were impeded but eventually accomplished. Eighty-five percent of the movements were denied, and the rest were impeded or canceled, due to security or logistical issues.

Throughout Gaza, less than a third of the 286 humanitarian missions coordinated with Israeli authorities in the first two weeks of October were facilitated without major incidents or delays.

Every time a mission is impeded, the lives of people in need and humanitarians on the ground are put at even greater risk.

This woeful and unacceptable trend must change.

Madam President,

Thankfully, since we last briefed the Council, the second round of the polio vaccination campaign began in central Gaza.

WHO reports that on 14 and 15 October, nearly 157,000 children under 10 received the vaccination.

The campaign once again underscored the critical role of UNRWA, whose teams vaccinated 43 per cent of the children reached on the first day.

It is now critical that the parties continue to respect the agreed humanitarian pauses and that access be granted throughout Gaza to ensure that we can reach all children in need of the vaccine, including in the north.

As we have previously said, the success of the polio campaign shows what can be achieved when obstacles to humanitarian access are removed.

Madam President,

The level of suffering in Gaza defies our ability to capture it in words, or even to comprehend its scale.

Reality is brutal in Gaza and it gets worse every day, as the bombs continue to fall, as fierce fighting continues unabated, and as supplies essential for people's survival and humanitarian assistance are blocked at every turn.

International humanitarian law must be respected and this Council, and all Member States, must exert all their influence to ensure it.

Civilians must be protected, and their essential needs must be met, whether they move or stay.

Civilians must be allowed to seek protection elsewhere, and they must be guaranteed the right to voluntarily return, as international law demands.

The wounded and sick must receive the care they need, and hospitals and medical personnel must be protected.

Humanitarian operations must be facilitated both into and throughout Gaza, including to the north, to reach all civilians in need.

Hostages must be immediately released, and, until they are, they must be allowed visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Indiscriminate rocket fire towards Israel must stop.

The provisional orders and determinations of the International Court of Justice must be respected.

There must be accountability for international crimes.

The atrocities in Gaza must end, but this cannot happen through words; it must happen through action – urgent, unequivocal action.

We renew our call for urgent diplomatic efforts from across the international community to de-escalate the situation, ensure respect for international law, achieve an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and agree a path towards sustainable peace.

Thank you.