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Hamas Demands Halt to Airstrikes and Permanent Aid Corridors in Exchange for Hostage Relief

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Hamas has stated its willingness to coordinate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to deliver humanitarian assistance to hostages in Gaza, provided Israel agrees to two conditions: a complete cessation of airstrikes and the permanent opening of humanitarian corridors. The statement follows the release of disturbing footage showing a visibly emaciated Israeli hostage, intensifying calls for urgent international intervention.

The video, released on Saturday, features Israeli captive Eviatar David, who appears severely malnourished and is seen digging what he claims is his own grave. The release

of such footage, the second of its kind in as many days, has provoked strong condemnation from several Western nations, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the United States. In response, Israel has called for a special session at the United Nations Security Council to address the matter.

Israeli authorities estimate that 50 hostages remain in Gaza, with only 20 believed to be alive. Access by humanitarian groups has been strictly barred by Hamas, leaving families with little information about the condition of their relatives. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed he had contacted the ICRC to request direct humanitarian support for the hostages.

The Hostages Families Forum, which represents the relatives of those captured, issued a statement urging the immediate release of all hostages and condemned the conditions under which they are being held. The group insisted that Hamas is solely responsible for the well-being of the hostages and that any resulting deaths would be attributable to the group's actions.

Meanwhile, Gaza's health ministry reported that six more people died from starvation or malnutrition within the past 24 hours. This brings the death toll from hunger-related causes to 175, including 93 children, since the conflict began in October 2023. Humanitarian agencies have expressed concern over a growing famine in the region, exacerbated by limited aid access and ongoing hostilities.

Efforts to address the crisis include new fuel deliveries to Gaza. Egypt's state-affiliated Al Qahera News reported that two trucks carrying 107 tons of diesel were expected to enter the region. COGAT, the Israeli military body responsible for coordinating aid, later confirmed the entry of four United Nations fuel tankers to support hospitals, bakeries and essential services.

Despite these developments, conditions in Gaza remain dire. The local health ministry has warned that fuel shortages have crippled hospitals, limiting treatment to only the most severe cases. Fuel supplies have been minimal since March, following Israel's decision to tighten aid restrictions in a bid to pressure Hamas into releasing hostages taken during the October 7, 2023, attack, in which 1,200 Israelis were killed and 251 taken hostage.

In recent days, Israel has taken steps to increase humanitarian access, including temporary pauses in fighting and approval of airdrop operations. According to COGAT, over 1,200 trucks carrying more than 23,000 tons of aid entered Gaza last week.

However, delays in distribution have been attributed to logistical constraints and a lack of capacity among aid agencies.

The Belgian air force conducted its first aid drop into Gaza on Sunday in collaboration with Jordan, while France delivered 40 tons of humanitarian supplies via air on Friday.

The Hamas-run Gaza media office claimed nearly 1,600 aid trucks entered the enclave since the easing of restrictions in late July. However, eyewitness accounts and Hamas sources report widespread looting by armed gangs and displaced individuals, impeding effective aid delivery.

Palestinian health officials reported at least 80 casualties from Israeli strikes on Sunday, including individuals attempting to access aid centres. Among the dead was a member of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, which stated that an Israeli strike set part of its Khan Younis headquarters ablaze.

The conflict, which erupted following Hamas's coordinated assault on southern Israel, has led to continued heavy fighting. Gaza health officials estimate more than 60,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli air and ground operations to date, while displacement and infrastructure damage remain severe. As humanitarian conditions deteriorate further, international pressure continues to mount for both parties to secure the release of hostages and ensure the delivery of life-saving aid.