

## UK Moves to Airdrop Aid into Gaza as Pressure Mounts

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The United Kingdom has announced plans to coordinate with Jordan on the airdropping of humanitarian aid into Gaza and to evacuate critically ill children from the war-torn territory. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer revealed the initiative during a weekend call with French President Emmanuel Macron and Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

With international criticism mounting over the dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza, the UK appears keen to demonstrate action. According to a Downing Street summary of the call, the leaders agreed on the importance of preparing robust frameworks to turn any potential ceasefire into lasting peace.

While the UK government has insisted its focus remains on delivering aid, critics argue that more effective strategies are being overlooked. “The Prime Minister set out how the UK will also be taking forward plans to work with partners such as Jordan to air drop aid and evacuate children requiring medical assistance,” a government spokesperson said.

However, scepticism toward the airdrop strategy is growing. Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), voiced strong concerns, warning that airdrops are not a solution to the worsening crisis. “Airdrops will not reverse the deepening starvation. They are expensive, inefficient and can even kill starving civilians,” he said in a statement. Lazzarini added that these measures are a “distraction and screensmoke” from addressing the political realities on the ground.

Despite these warnings, the Israeli government has confirmed it will permit both UN aid convoys and coordinated airdrops. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) also announced that power has been restored to a Gaza-based desalination plant, aiming to improve access to clean water. “Airdrops of aid will resume,” the IDF said, noting the inclusion of flour, sugar, and canned food in the most recent delivery. “Safe movement of UN convoys delivering food and medicine” would also be allowed, though the military emphasised that combat operations remain ongoing.

Calls continue to grow for the UK to formally recognise Palestinian statehood, particularly after President Macron confirmed France would do so at the United Nations in September. However, Downing Street remains cautious. In contrast to Macron’s move, the UK government maintains that any recognition must occur as part of a wider peace process, a position that has drawn fire from MPs across multiple parties.

A letter signed by several Members of Parliament, including figures from Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish National Party, and even some Conservative members, has urged the government to shift its stance. Among the signatories are senior Labour MPs Liam Byrne and Dame Emily Thornberry, Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey, and long-serving Conservative MP Sir Edward Leigh.

Still, the government has emphasised that its current priority is addressing the urgent humanitarian situation. Speaking recently, former Home Secretary Dame Priti Patel criticised the lack of clarity from Foreign Secretary David Lammy, saying, “The British Government needs to be leveraging its influence and the UK’s considerable aid expertise to bring about practical solutions that alleviate the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.”

Patel added, “The priority must be to get as much aid in as possible, delivered safely and exclusively to innocent civilians. Diplomacy is about finding solutions, not just issuing condemnations.”

Meanwhile, Israel’s ambassador to the UK strongly pushed back against calls for immediate recognition of a Palestinian state. In an op-ed published by The Telegraph, she warned that such recognition, in light of the October 7 attacks by Hamas, “would be nothing less than a reward for terrorism.”

Ceasefire negotiations remain stalled, with both U.S. and Israeli negotiators having recently withdrawn from talks. According to U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, Hamas has shown a “lack of desire to reach a ceasefire.”

As pressure builds, the UK’s ability to balance humanitarian aid with geopolitical pragmatism will be closely scrutinised not only by its international partners but by its lawmakers. Whether this latest initiative amounts to meaningful action or merely symbolic optics remains to be seen.