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## Hamas Ties Hostage Aid to Israeli Halt in Airstrikes and Permanent Humanitarian Access

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– Categories: Breaking News



Hamas has stated it is prepared to facilitate aid to hostages held in Gaza under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but only if Israel agrees to permanently open humanitarian corridors and suspend airstrikes during aid distribution. The announcement came after the release of a video showing Israeli hostage Evyatar David in an emaciated condition, prompting widespread condemnation from Western governments.

According to Israeli officials, an estimated 50 hostages remain in Gaza, with only 20 believed to be alive. Hamas has repeatedly denied humanitarian organisations access to

the captives, leaving families with minimal information. On Saturday, the group released a second video in two days featuring David, who appeared severely malnourished and stated he was digging his own grave. The footage has triggered outrage across the international community, including from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the United States. In response, Israel's foreign ministry announced that the United Nations Security Council would convene a special session on Tuesday to address the hostage situation.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed that he had appealed to the Red Cross to assist the hostages during discussions with the ICRC's local delegation. Meanwhile, the Hostages Families Forum, which represents relatives of those held captive, demanded the unconditional release of the hostages and emphasised that Hamas remains responsible for their welfare. "Every hostage who dies will be on Hamas's hands," the Forum said in a statement.

Gaza's health ministry reported that six individuals died from starvation or malnutrition in the past 24 hours, bringing the total to 175 deaths linked to hunger since the onset of the conflict, including 93 children. The situation continues to deteriorate amid fuel shortages, which have severely impacted hospital operations, limiting care to the critically ill or injured.

In an attempt to alleviate the crisis, Egypt's Al Qahera News reported that two trucks carrying 107 tons of diesel were expected to enter Gaza. Israel's Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) later confirmed that four United Nations fuel tankers had entered the enclave to support hospitals, bakeries, and public kitchens. However, it remains unclear whether the Egyptian trucks reached their destination.

Fuel deliveries have been scarce since March, when Israel tightened aid restrictions in an effort to pressure Hamas into releasing the hostages captured during its attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023. That assault resulted in the deaths of over 1,200 people and the abduction of 251, according to Israeli sources.

Responding to growing international concern, Israel announced new measures last week to allow increased humanitarian access. These steps include limited pauses in combat, the establishment of protected aid routes, and approval of targeted air drops. While over 23,000 tons of aid in 1,200 trucks reportedly entered Gaza last week, COGAT stated that hundreds of those vehicles had not yet been moved to distribution hubs by United Nations and partner agencies.

Nevertheless, aid delivery remains inconsistent. The Gaza-based Hamas administration reported that nearly 1,600 aid trucks had entered since late July. However, both eyewitnesses and Hamas sources said large numbers of these trucks were looted by displaced civilians and armed groups.

International assistance continues to arrive via air drops. On Sunday, the Belgian air force, in cooperation with Jordan, carried out its first supply drop into Gaza. France began its own operations on Friday, delivering 40 tons of humanitarian supplies.

Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians persist across the region. On Sunday, local Palestinian health officials reported that at least 80 individuals were killed by Israeli airstrikes and gunfire, including people attempting to access aid distribution points. Among the fatalities was a staff member of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, who died following an Israeli strike that ignited a fire at the organisation's Khan Younis headquarters.

The conflict, now approaching its second year, has taken a severe toll on Gaza. Health officials in the territory report that more than 60,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its military campaign in response to Hamas's October 2023 attack. With much of the population displaced and infrastructure in ruins, the humanitarian crisis continues to deepen.