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Humanitarian Strategy in the Israel-Hamas War

Dr. Einav Levy*
July 2024

This document discusses the significance of developing a strategic policy for the humanitarian response in Gaza, emphasizing its importance as a vital Israeli interest. Humanitarian strategy is overall management of the humanitarian issue while maintaining a long-term vision and partnership with other players in the field, based on the humanitarian knowledge and experience from around the world, in order to satisfy the basic needs of life in the region and as an integral part of the efforts to achieve a stability and security. First, this document presents the principles of humanitarian aid in general, followed by the specific case of Gaza and its complexities. Then, it presents Israel's actions in view of the humanitarian situation and presents the principles that should be considered as significant cornerstones in the strategic planning of humanitarian response moving forward. Finally, the document proposes the establishment of two central and coordinated mechanisms that will conduct the humanitarian response. One will be a political mechanism entrusted with the making of the strategic decisions that will shape humanitarian policy and will be composed of state entities and central aid agencies.

The other will be an operative-executive mechanism entrusted with the implementation of the humanitarian policies and activities on the ground. The document emphasizes that Israel's security rests on a number of factors, including the promotion of a political solution, international legitimacy, a positive moral identity, and a stable environment - and that proper management of the humanitarian response in Gaza may contribute to all of these. Therefore, it is very important that Israel be a central and influential factor in this process and make sure that it is coordinated with its political and security efforts.

This document is one of a series of studies and policy documents that examine the relations between the local climate and foreign policy, as part of a project by the Mitvim Institute and with the support of the Glazer Foundation. The document was written in collaboration with SID-Israel, the umbrella organization of the Israeli professional community in the fields of humanitarian aid and international development. SID-Israel incorporates civil society organizations, government institutions, academic and research programs, private companies, consultants, and independent experts, and works to create a supportive professional environment, based on the exchange of knowledge and experience. Sid-Israel was established and operates thanks to the generous and ongoing support of Pears Foundation.

***Einav Levy, Ph.D., is the head of the Israeli School for Humanitarian Action and the Head of Stress, Trauma and Resilience program at Tel Hai Academic College. The proposed outline is based on data and trends that were collected over several months and a review of publications from various sources, as well as a series of meetings with Israeli and international bodies and organizations which are involved directly or indirectly with humanitarian aid in Gaza.**

Introduction

Following Hamas's barbaric massacre of Israeli citizens on October 7, 2023, Israel launched a war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Nine months of war in Gaza resulted in an acute humanitarian crisis and unprecedented damage. In March 2024, a joint report by the United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union assessed the extent of the crisis at that moment. Several figures from the report illustrate the magnitude of the crisis: at least 1.7 million Palestinians have been displaced from their homes, and approximately 1 million have lost their homes altogether; all Palestinians in Gaza are exposed to food insecurity, and more than half suffer from varying levels of hunger; approximately 84% of health facilities have been destroyed or damaged; the education system has completely collapsed, and 100% of the children have no educational setting. About 17,000 children have been separated from their families and lack sufficient support.¹ Those figures indicate that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is one of the largest crises the world has faced in recent times.

For Israel, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is not only a severe humanitarian issue. Beyond the moral aspects, the humanitarian crisis affects the reality of life and the course of the war in numerous ways. The humanitarian situation affects the international support that Israel receives for its actions against Hamas, and its position and perception around the world. It affects global public opinion and international law, which play an important role in international relations, links between the legitimacy of used force, and the proportional and minimal harm to the lives of the uninvolved. In addition, the humanitarian crisis affects the achievement of the war's objectives. It endangers the lives of the Israeli hostages who are still alive and the lives of Israeli soldiers fighting in the Gaza Strip. The consequences of the humanitarian crisis and the collapse of life-sustaining infrastructures in Gaza, including air, soil, and water pollution, the spread of diseases and the loss of hope, also threaten the long-term security of routine life in the Western Negev. The humanitarian crisis is an unstable situation that prompts and strengthens forces and organizations interested in promoting instability, such as Hamas and Iran. All these and more make the humanitarian crisis in Gaza a strategic issue of the highest importance for the State of Israel. Therefore, Israel must develop a humanitarian strategy.

Humanitarian strategy means overall management of the humanitarian issue, in partnership with other players, with a long-term vision, based on humanitarian knowledge and experience from around the world, to satisfy the basic needs of life in the region and as an integral part of the diplomatic efforts to achieve political solution and security.

A humanitarian strategy requires diplomatic-political management, and not just operative-reactive management. The goal of a humanitarian strategy is not only to deal with a crisis but to end it. It must change fundamentally the conditions that produce and preserve the

¹ [GAZA STRIP INTERIM DAMAGE ASSESSMENT](#), The World Bank, The European Union, The United Nations, 29/3/24

crisis. Therefore, when planning a humanitarian strategy, it is necessary to address the restoration of life-sustaining infrastructures, the restoration of the social fabric, the creation of independent management of resources, and the prevention of the continued threat to the lives and well-being of the citizens. A humanitarian strategy acknowledges that the operative measures taken during fieldwork should also serve as means to deal with the conditions which were created by the humanitarian crisis or to create new conditions that will help stop and prevent the crisis--and not just respond to the immediate needs. That is, the operative measures on the ground must serve the promotion of stability, independence and sustainability.

There are different estimates regarding the length of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, meaning the period the civilian population will have to rely on external humanitarian aid and stay in temporary shelters. Some estimate it will last about three years, others claim that this is a crisis that will last at least a decade, and there are even those who predict that the crisis will endure for the next thirty years. Those estimations reinforce the necessity to manage it in a comprehensive and strategic manner, while referring to the long-term political significance of the humanitarian rehabilitation measures, and the way in which they shape the relations among Israel, the Palestinians, and the international system. Formulating a humanitarian strategy is a critical need for Israel's defense. Therefore, it must manage a proper exit plan from the humanitarian crisis to a life of well-being and security, to prevent chaos which may be a breeding ground for the rise of extremist forces, to ensure that the other players operating in Gaza (states and organizations) create alliances and partnerships which benefit Israel, and to promote a moderate Palestinian government that acknowledges the State of Israel.

A humanitarian strategy is in fact an integral part of the attempts to achieve security and other national goals. This document seeks to analyze the Israeli and international ways of dealing with the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and to propose guiding principles for a benevolent humanitarian strategy that will respond to the needs of the population in the immediate term and build a moderate governing alternative for the long term. The document combines political and humanitarian knowledge.

First, the document defines humanitarian aid and presents the unique challenges of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip. Then it reviews the various players operating in the field and in the international arena, while focusing on analyzing Israel's activity. Finally, it offers guiding principles for the formulation and implementation of a humanitarian strategy.

What is Humanitarian Aid?

Humanitarian aid is granted to meet the immediate and acute needs of populations in a disaster or crisis area, such as natural disasters, famine, and conflict zones. As such, humanitarian aid will often include the provision of medical services and equipment, food,

water, sanitation, shelter, and psycho-social assistance. Humanitarian aid is often provided by countries, UN agencies, international organizations, or local emergency organizations.

The principles of humanitarian aid are based on international human rights law, and the direct aid actions are carried out by the principles of protection, which encompass the actions that can be taken in order to maintain the basic human rights of aid recipients.² The prevailing approach today in the world of humanitarian aid is that ample space should be given to approaches which match the required aid to the time, the place, and the context. Therefore, the aid agencies must adopt diversity and inclusion mechanisms that work to adapt the aid to the needs of the community while referring to gender, status, ethnic identity, and physical or mental difficulties. Other important mechanisms are methods for vulnerability assessments and approaches that promote localization of the humanitarian response which focuses on the affected community and on strengthening its resilience resources, to improve the effectiveness of aid through existing community infrastructures with relevant knowledge and access to communities in need of aid.³

The professionals who work in crisis situations and who seek to help the weakest populations, attribute importance to maintaining ethical practices. A common language and uniform standards optimize the provision of the response, and include, among other things, the code of ethics of the aid organizations (Code of Conduct), standards for carrying out the humanitarian response (Core Humanitarian Standard),⁴ and an agreed and inclusive use of the Sphere manuals, which contain definitions and guidelines to enable a dignified life.⁵

One of the central principles in humanitarian aid is the recognition that the primary responsibility for citizens' lives lie with the state or the sovereign entity under which they live. Therefore, in most cases, there is humanitarian coordination at a political level on behalf of the affected population, while maintaining an aspiration to allow the ruling sovereign entity to exhaust its capabilities and to regulate the aid to the best of its understanding, before acting on external intervention.

Humanitarian aid has a direct relation to aspects of exit strategy, development, and political objectives. In recent years there has been a wide discussion about the complex connections between humanitarian aid, development, and conflict resolution. Humanitarian aid is designed to satisfy the basic needs that enable a dignified life, until the stage where the assisted population no longer needs aid, and the acute stage progresses to a phase which can be defined as the rehabilitation and development phase. The acute stage in which aid

² Reliefweb. (2008). *Glossary of Humanitarian Terms*.

https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2014/02/ReliefWeb_GlossaryOfHumanitarianTerms.pdf

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2022). *Localization*.

<https://www.unocha.org/localization>

⁴ CHS Alliance, Groupe URD, & Sphere Association. (2024). *The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability*. <https://handbook.hspstandards.org/en/chs/2024/#ch001>

⁵ Sphere. (2024). *Why the World needs Sphere*. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from <https://spherestandards.org/>

is provided and the rehabilitation and development stage are phases that integrate with each other and exist in one sequence, which requires the planning of an exit strategy already in the acute phase. This means that in the very act of providing aid there is a paradox, which indicates that a central role of the aid agency is to help establish infrastructures which will make this aid unnecessary.

When humanitarian aid is given in areas and contexts where there is no local capacity to develop independent rehabilitation, the aid becomes chronic. Chronic humanitarian aid includes many challenges, one of the main ones being the fixation of dependence on external aid that minimizes the chance of sustainable local reconstruction and development.

On the contrary, proper planning of the aid process can be a significant key in creating a rehabilitation infrastructure that will lead to the independent development of the aided population and thus the cessation of aid. Therefore, when emergency aid planning includes the identification and locating of reliable local partners and establishes a growing reliance on local resources, while planning and considering cultural and political challenges, the chance of reducing aid to a minimum or eliminating it, increases.

Aid provided in conflict zones can sometimes be a means to reduce conflict between rival parties. For example, the creation of a mechanism that reduces the interest in conflict, such as the design of commerce, with suppliers and customers on both sides. Although this channel can be challenged, to the extent that one side stops its activity, thus leaving the other side vulnerable, its advantages outweigh its disadvantages. In this way, although humanitarian aid is defined as aid given without political interest, but as an independent fulfillment of need, it is possible to plan the aid infrastructure so that, in addition to its effectiveness, it will allow the creation of political ties between parties and may lead to the building of basic trust and the reduction of friction and conflict.

Humanitarian aid in Gaza: activities and key players

Even before October 7, the everyday situation in Gaza required a humanitarian response. After the war broke out and as it continues, the need has deepened to its current dimensions. Attempts to deal with the humanitarian needs and look for channels of action to end the crisis widened. These efforts included the involvement of many countries from the region and the world, local forces among the Palestinians, as well as the Israelis, and humanitarian aid organizations of various types. In the following lines, the main players and the efforts they have made so far will be presented briefly.

1. State players

States are a central factor in the management of humanitarian policy. The presence of moderate countries allows the use of diplomatic means for mediation, exerting pressure and reaching agreements between different players. States are often the ones who shape the

policy and are committed to financial and diplomatic support for the aid organizations. However, sometimes the humanitarian involvement of countries is aimed at serving diplomatic needs or matters of visibility and is less reflected in the delivery of humanitarian aid on the practical level. In the complex Israeli-Palestinian reality and alongside the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas, it is important to understand that each country has different interests and motives for engaging in humanitarian aid. Therefore, it is possible to point to several channels of support or intervention in the humanitarian issue--the financing of international organizations and direct financial aid, presence and satisfaction of needs on ground, transfer and introduction of equipment (the logistics front), and diplomacy.

A central and widely acceptable channel of support is by donation (by the state or by a body associated with the state) to central aid organizations operating on the ground. The USA, for example, is a major contributor to many aid organizations, such as the WFP or UNICEF. So is the European Union, Germany, Australia, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, etc.⁶ There are also cases in which a country joins an aid organization to finance a defined humanitarian activity. For example, United Arab Emirates joined the American organization WCK (World Central Kitchen) to buy food in Cyprus and transfer it to Gaza via a temporary floating dock established by the Americans. Sometimes countries donate aid directly and not through aid organizations. For example, there were countries that airdropped humanitarian aid from planes, like France, Jordan and the USA. However, beyond visibility, these efforts had little value in changing the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

Another significant channel is aid through presence on ground. Jordan⁷ and United Arab Emirates,⁸ for example, have established field hospitals. The Emirates even operates water and desalination infrastructures within the Gaza Strip and a desalination facility in Egypt that supplies water to Gaza. The Emirates is the only country on whose behalf trucks are allowed to move within the territory of Israel. Because there are representatives from the Emirates on the ground, there is a direct and ongoing coordination relationship between them and the IDF.

Countries geographically close to the disaster zone and which sometimes border it, constitute a politically significant channel that influences humanitarian aid. These countries play a significant role as a necessary interface point in the transfer of humanitarian aid. Egypt is a key example in this context and has an important role due to its proximity to the combat zone and being the only non-Israeli land border with Gaza. Its control over the Rafah Border Crossing, through which goods passed until the IDF took over the Philadelphi Corridor, required Egypt to logistically control the process and handle the entry of the trucks

⁶ Extensive detail in Appendix 1.

⁷ The Jordan Times (11.6.2024) [Jordan field hospitals in war-torn Gaza receive over two million patients-JAF.](#)

⁸ Arab News (1.6.2024) [UAE field hospital in Gaza provides medical aid for patients.](#)

in coordination with Israel. Its location led Egypt to be a receiving country for aid transferred from around the world; as a result, a logistics center was established in North Sinai.⁹ Another land corridor passing through Israel comes directly through the Allenby Bridge from Jordan, and in the last month there has also been aid coming from the West Bank. At the same time, part of the aid in recent months came by sea (from April 2024 until now, intermittently). The Americans, in cooperation with the Europeans and the Emirates, opened a sea corridor from Cyprus to the floating dock in Gaza, so Cyprus also became a logistical center for humanitarian aid. It is important to note that Israel is the country that controls almost entirely the aid which enters the Gaza Strip, and the active and continuously functioning crossings pass through it. At the same time, the logistical centers of humanitarian aid that exist in Egypt and Jordan (and that are trying to exist in Cyprus as well) are critical in their very presence for the continuation of the process.

The issue of humanitarian aid became an important factor in Israel's relations with the international system from the beginning of the war and even more so as it continues. Many countries act on the issue of humanitarian aid with diplomatic tools, and use diplomatic pressure on Israel, sometimes using even sanctions or incentives, to push it into humanitarian action. The USA is undoubtedly the most influential on Israel's conduct on the humanitarian subject. It should be noted that diplomatic activity sometimes refers to the humanitarian issue only, but when it comes to defining the involvement of strategic players such as the USA, it also links between the humanitarian issue to the planning for the day after, to a ceasefire, to the return of the Israeli hostages and the construction of a political horizon.

Despite the attempts of the state players, it can be estimated that none of the countries is interested in promoting a chronic humanitarian situation. However, for the main international players, stabilizing the humanitarian situation and reaching a permanent settlement stems from the need to achieve broader policy goals. For example, the USA is trying to prevent the escalation of the conflict in Gaza into a regional war, and Egypt is trying to prevent a situation in which Gazan immigrants flood it and undermine its stability.

2. Palestinian players

For the Palestinian National Authority, involvement in humanitarian efforts is a possible political tool for its return to control of Gaza, and for strengthening its position in the political process vis-à-vis Israel. The Palestinian National Authority perceives itself as the authority responsible for the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population, but at the same time, also sees this as an opportunity to weaken Hamas and replace it as the ruler in Gaza. For Hamas, it is estimated that the humanitarian plight of the residents of Gaza, is another tool in the war against Israel. The humanitarian crisis allows Hamas to turn itself into a victim,

⁹ It should be noted that Egypt benefits large political and economic dividends from this role.

and thus to direct international pressure on Israel, which affects the management of the military campaign and moderates it. Furthermore, international pressure requires Israel to cooperate in humanitarian aid and take responsibility for the situation in the Strip, while harming Israel's status and legitimacy. In addition, Hamas is using the humanitarian crisis for military benefits and to strengthen its position among society in Gaza, albeit it's taking over the aid distribution mechanisms.

Along with the Palestinian National Authority and Hamas, there are other Palestinian players involved in the humanitarian effort, or those who are able to play a certain role in it. Local Palestinian community organizations, for example, in the form of associations, youth movements and educational organizations, can form a specific organizational structure that links the local communities to the aid organizations. Alongside them there are unofficial players in the community, such as clan heads or women's associations, who can also have a role. Even the municipal system may have a key role as an independent entity in most of the Strip and an essential tool for rebuilding life-sustaining infrastructures, as well as for distributing aid, and locating and monitoring community needs. These players are focused on the local community action and have familiarity with the local dynamics, and as such can provide information for the optimal way of making the humanitarian aid accessible to its end customers.

Other relevant players are Arab-owned business companies from the West Bank or from Israel, as well as business owners from other Arab countries. Humanitarian aid efforts in Gaza are expected to generate billions of dollars over many years. This fact creates strong incentives for business companies to take part in them. Additionally, combining business companies and economic logic can sometimes help in optimizing the response provided and in demanding compliance with standards that a voluntary approach sometimes finds difficult to demand. Economic logic also makes it possible to leap over national borders more easily, thus, to drive the economy in all of Gaza, while creating necessary connections at the level of the physical and organizational infrastructures. Although this logic is insufficient insofar as it relies only on the idea of profitability, and it must be ensured that unprofitable but necessary efforts are not delayed. In addition, it must be made sure that economic action encourages equality and reduces disparities and does not give additional power to those who already possess it.

3. Aid organizations

Other important players, alongside the states and the local Palestinian players, are the humanitarian aid organizations operating on ground. Aid organizations can be divided into two main groups: UN agencies, and international aid organizations that are not associated with the UN. UN agencies include organizations such as UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, WHO, UNWOMEN, OCHA and others, each of which focuses on a specific issue, serves as policy bodies, and coordinates and budgets operations on the ground. A unique UN organization

for the Palestinians that operated before the war, is the United Nations agency UNRWA - a UN aid organization for Palestinian refugees.¹⁰ UNRWA has been involved for years in the management of civilian life in the Gaza Strip and even performed 'governmental' functions, and therefore, from the perspective of the UN, this organization is one of the leaders of humanitarian activity and most of the distribution of aid relies on its logistical infrastructure. The challenges related to UNRWA will be discussed later in the text. Today, their operation expresses an international presence that obliges the warring parties to maintain the safety of all humanitarian players operating on ground as neutral players. The activity of these organizations preserves Palestinian dependence to some extent. However, in the current crisis, there is no alternative to the external factors, especially when their presence and activity allow Israel to act and work with entities that are not affiliated with Hamas, but have access and connection to the Palestinian population, and thus have a certain effectiveness.

International aid organizations that are not associated with the UN include organizations such as MSF, CARE, SAVE THE CHILDREN, RED CRESCENT, ICRC, etc. Their presence enables professional humanitarian activity to be carried out on ground, which may be an important factor for the existence of humanitarian activities such as food distribution, building and management of shelters, medical response, and other life-sustaining aid. They are essential as a factor that carries out the activity under the coordination of a comprehensive body, one of the channels for the action of some aid organizations such as MSF or AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, including promoting awareness and policies for the need for aid. The promotion of awareness is done through communication channels, collecting and publishing data and creating lobbies to promote and strengthen aid. However, the involvement of these organizations also largely preserves the population's dependence on foreign aid.

The aid organizations work in coordination under the umbrella of the UN. At the head of the coordination mechanism is a humanitarian coordinator on behalf of the UN with professional clusters working under him. Among them are the clusters dealing with (1) water, sanitation and hygiene (Wash), (2) health, (3) food and (4) shelter,¹¹ with the relevant aid organizations working in each of the clusters. Appendix 1 presents details and expansion on the aid organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, their role and source of funding.

The aid organizations described several major difficulties accompanying the humanitarian efforts in Gaza. These difficulties include, among others, the need to coordinate any transportation of aid, anywhere, with the army, a gap between the coordination and the forces on ground, unprofessional attitude of the elements on ground towards the aid

¹⁰ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2024). *UNRWA Situation Report #107 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem*. <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-107-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-Jerusalem>

¹¹ [Cluster approach](#). UNACR

workers, lack of clarity regarding the equipment that is not allowed to be brought into the Gaza Strip, difficulty in obtaining visas, as well as difficulties in obtaining permits to repair transport trucks. At this stage it is difficult to determine to what extent these challenges are the product of a deliberate policy or of an operational reality on the ground. Although it should be noted that during the months of May and June, actions were taken to alleviate the challenges mentioned above.

Unique characteristics of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is one of the most complex crises the humanitarian aid community has faced in the last decade. The variety of interested players operating on ground indicates some of its complexity. In addition to this, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza includes several unique characteristics that must be known and understood when planning and implementing a humanitarian strategy. Those are some of the key characteristics:

- **The absence of an agreed upon body that will coordinate the humanitarian effort for the benefit of the Gaza residents** - UNRWA, the aid organization of the United Nations for Palestinian refugees,¹² has been involved for years in the management of civilian life in the Gaza Strip and even performed 'governmental' functions. However, the evidence of the involvement of its members in the October 7 massacre and the frequent use of the organization's infrastructure by Hamas, led the organization to lose its legitimacy in the eyes of Israel and some of the funding countries. Several attempts have been made on the part of Israel to end the organization's funding, to disband it and to replace it with other aid organizations. Nevertheless, even though other organizations have succeeded in generating humanitarian activity in the Gaza Strip coordinated with Israel, UNRWA remains the largest and most significant aid organization in Gaza.

- **Sovereign vacuum** - The lack of a political strategy and a plan for the end of the war, creates a situation in which, in areas where the IDF succeeds in expelling Hamas (at least from the visible layer), a governmental vacuum is created and there is no substitute responsible for the management of civilian life. Such a situation of governmental chaos, alongside the presence of armed militias (those associated with Hamas and others), makes it difficult for the effective distribution of humanitarian aid, for the activities of the aid organizations, for the sterility of the recognized humanitarian areas, and for the ability to plan for the long term. All the reasons mentioned above make the challenge of humanitarian relief for the residents difficult and almost impossible to implement. Usually, the humanitarian aid organizations in disaster areas work with the sovereign government to manage and distribute aid, but in Gaza there is no sovereign government, only a controlling

¹² United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2024). *UNRWA Situation Report #107 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem*. <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-107-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>

terrorist organization, and Israel is considered a fighting force. Therefore, there is no comprehensive civil government with which the organizations can work on the ground to ensure the distribution of aid.

- **High intensity crisis** - The humanitarian crisis in Gaza developed very quickly. The displacement of the residents of the north of the Gaza Strip and their pushing towards the south of the Gaza Strip happened at once. In identical scenarios around the world, this displacement occurs in waves and over time, but the entry of the IDF into the Gaza Strip led to this displacement almost overnight. Moreover, the Sisyphean nature of the fighting, which is characterized by intense urban fighting against the Hamas members, does not include many lulls. These population movements are joined by the activity of Hamas members, who prevent the citizens of the Gaza Strip from safe passage between the various areas, in order to use the citizens as human shields and as a bargaining chip on the Hamas propaganda front, due to the assessment that the IDF will slow down and reduce its activity in areas where there are concentrations of civilian population.

- **The continuation of the combat and the reduction of humanitarian areas** - The evolving and changing nature of the event subjects the decision-makers to a very challenging reality, one that dictates dynamic decision-making management of daily policy. This reality includes military moves, like entering and leaving urban areas, and sometimes returning to those areas due to a changing military reality. The military indecision and the non-existence of an influx policy from a political point of view, leads the IDF to continue fighting while trying to push Hamas into smaller areas. These areas, which before were humanitarian safe areas, are becoming less and less safe for the Gazan citizen, both due to the approach of combat to these areas and due to the growing crowding of citizens in more and more limited areas.

- **The lack of ability to monitor and collect valid and reliable data from the field over time and frequently** - There are several officials who issue reports and data on the situation in the Gaza Strip. The website of The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) is updated daily and includes updates by category on the situation in the Gaza Strip. The various UN agencies, like WHO, OCHA, UNRWA, WFP, UNICEF, IOM, issue weekly or periodical reports on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the aid efforts. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Mechanism (OCHA) issues a detailed bi-day update. It should be noted that the OCHA reports do not detail the aid received from the Arab world to the Strip.¹³ The European Union also issues periodical reports on the situation in the Strip. In addition, some of the NGOs that operate in the Strip (MSF, Save the Children, CRS ICRC, NRC) also issue reports. However, there are large gaps between the reports of each party, and the players testify to the lack of a significant

¹³ https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/score_gaza_2024.pdf

neutral overall mapping ability, and therefore to a gap in the ability to understand and assess the situation to its approval, thus determining the required measures.

- **An ongoing crisis between Israel and UN agencies** - In crisis areas around the world, a humanitarian coordinator on behalf of the UN manages the humanitarian integration and the communication with the country or the entity that controls the territory. Even though there is a humanitarian inclusion of the UN in Gaza, and coordination work is done between the army and the UN and the other aid organizations, findings from the field show that the relationship is characterized by mistrust and mutual fear. Israel is sometimes seen as the originator of the humanitarian crisis due to its military activities, and from the Israeli point of view, the aid organizations are seen as collaborating with Hamas and as those who harm Israel's image in the world by their criticism, similar to the perception of The International Red Cross and its conduct in the mediation of the hostages' case. This mutual distrust makes the necessary cooperation between the parties difficult.

- **Humanitarian aid as weapon** - The massacre on October 7, with its unimaginable cruelty and the abduction of hundreds of Israelis to Gaza, contributed to the distancing of the Israeli public and political discourse from the serious humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the need to provide humanitarian aid. At the beginning of the war, the policy of the Israeli government was to create a humanitarian crisis, and even contribute to the intensification of the crisis, as a means of pressure on Hamas. Israel acted to damage life-sustaining infrastructures, and stopped the introduction of water, food, and energy into the Gaza Strip. The media in Israel avoided presenting the humanitarian crisis in Gaza to the Israeli public, and did not discuss its consequences, except in relation to international legitimacy. At the same time, Hamas also cynically exploits part of the activities of the aid organizations for its own needs, which contributes to the distrust of the citizens of Israel in the aid organizations and, at times, their perception as just another tool of the “enemy.”

- **Humanitarian aid has become a controversial political issue in Israel** - As the war continues, the issue of humanitarian aid has become a political issue that divides the Israeli public. Members of the government continue to oppose the granting of humanitarian aid to Gaza, even at the cost of international criticism and the damage to the legitimacy of the continuation of the combat. Others see the granting of humanitarian aid only as a means of obtaining international legitimacy, and do not consider the security, strategic and moral aspects that accompany the humanitarian crisis. Organizations of right-wing activists even began to block aid shipments leaving Israel for Gaza. And the Israeli government, which has begun to promote humanitarian aid, sometimes chooses not to publish its efforts, and even to conceal them, out of internal political considerations.

A consideration of the unique characteristics explained here, along with the identity of the relevant players and their interests and capabilities, is an important condition for the construction of an efficient and effective humanitarian strategy from Israel's point of view.

Israel's actions on the humanitarian issue

From the beginning of the war, Israel's policy on the humanitarian issue was reactive. When American and international pressure was applied or considering a catastrophic humanitarian incident, specific and limited steps were taken to respond to a definite problem. This is what happened with the opening of the border crossings following American pressure, with the establishment of the Coordination Center in cooperation with the IDF Southern Command after the death of foreign aid workers, and in other cases.

The Israeli government has so far shown an abject unwillingness to consider, let alone plan and implement, a humanitarian strategy. It should be noted that the various government ministries act on the humanitarian issue only if the COGAT raises a specific need it seeks response to. The lack of strategic thinking is evident by the fact that since the war started, there has not yet been a single discussion in the Knesset on the humanitarian issue, as an issue that has implications for Israel, except the discussions on UNRWA's status. This illustrates lack of professional examination of various issues (health, energy, water, sanitation, foreign relations, etc.), and that the relevant professional ranks are not regularly involved in the issues that have practical and immediate consequences for Israel. These tendencies illustrate the absence of humanitarian-political discourse among elected officials and in the Knesset. In the lack of strategic thought on the subject, a significant part of the current leadership activities is transferred to the civil administration in the army or in its official name, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).

Indeed, the Israeli entity that manages today's humanitarian activity is COGAT. The characteristics of COGAT allow it to work with civilian organizations and speak the "civilian language," despite being a military body. Another positive feature of COGAT is its ability to coordinate aid on the ground while considering security aspects. The COGAT recognizes the complexities of security versus humanitarian considerations. Thus, during the development of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and especially after the death of the aid workers of the WCK organization, a joint array was created in collaboration with the IDF's Southern Command, as a platform for coordination between the army and the aid organizations.

Despite these positive characteristics, by virtue of COGAT being a military body, it is subject to policy limitations set by the political arena. Furthermore, COGAT does not have the tools to deal with diplomatic issues that the crisis creates, and it does not engage in long-term strategic planning. COGAT is also seen by some of the aid organizations as the representative of the generator of the humanitarian crisis. Considering all this, the relationship between the army and the aid organizations frequently suffers from mutual suspicion and lack of trust.

Alongside the mutual suspicion and the challenges of trust, there are also challenges at the field level, both as detailed above on the part of the aid organizations, and because of the claims of COGAT, that point to the challenges of dividing and streamlining the humanitarian system within Gaza. The mutual claims include the transfer of humanitarian resources to Hamas and The Islamic Jihad, the reliance of the entire humanitarian aid system on UNRWA's limited logistical infrastructure and the UN's deliberate avoidance of expanding this infrastructure, the carrying out of targeted attacks or the lack of immunity from attacks to aid agencies, intentional interference with the distribution of aid or alternatively inefficiency in the distribution of it.

Despite these challenges, between April and June 2024, mutual attempts were made to promote trust and cooperation between COGAT and the humanitarian organizations, including Israeli organizations. Additional efforts are reflected in the attempts to create joint infrastructures for decision-making and coordination between the various players. Various civil society organizations are beginning to play a key role in these attempts.

Overall, it is important to remember that humanitarian reality requires the observance of international law, ethics and the rights of uninvolved citizens. Alongside, it must be recognized that the humanitarian issue serves as a lever to achieve defense and political goals, and therefore, the planning of the aid policy must also be seen to realize long-term goals that will enable the reduction of the conflict, through the various players, the peacekeeping forces and the agreed decision-making mechanisms. Creating this infrastructure at the present time will allow the construction of trust and of long-term working relationships.

Israel's attitude towards UNRWA

Since the beginning of the war, several discussions were held in the Knesset on UNRWA. The guiding principle on the political level was that UNRWA should be seen as an executive force of Hamas that must be neutralized. Three bills have been submitted on the subject so far (for more information, see Appendix 2). Accordingly, the goal of the Israeli government is to put an end to the agency's activities in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, and already today it is trying to reduce its power and activity in the Gaza Strip. Israel is working to promote other organizations that will act instead of UNRWA on specific issues.¹⁴ However, attempts to decentralize humanitarian activity and transfer it to several other organizations with expertise in certain fields, encounter a complex reality on ground. Faced with Israel's activities on the issue, the UN Secretary General is pressing the various aid agencies to decide that they will work exclusively with UNRWA. Concurrently, some are calling for immediate reforms in UNRWA's mechanisms, while the countries that fund the organization are exerting pressure on it.

¹⁴ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/news/pressreleases/pages/press22052024h.aspx>

As of today, there is an inherent conflict between the need to work with a networked player in the field to promote the optimization of aid, and the fact that this player is an entity perceived as hostile to Israel, and as one that was a significant factor in maintaining the conflict even before the events of October 7. Moreover, and regardless of the Israeli position, there are claims that the very existence and manner of operation of UNRWA over the years, negate the ability of the Gazans to rebuild and develop independently.

All described above paints a challenging picture for Israel in its attempt to integrate into the humanitarian effort, while harnessing it to advance the country's security interests.

Guiding principles for a humanitarian strategy for Israel

Humanitarian strategy means overall management of the humanitarian issue, in partnership with other actors, with a long-term vision and based on humanitarian knowledge and experience from the world, to satisfy the humanitarian needs of the population and as an integral part of the political efforts to achieve political order and security. A humanitarian strategy requires diplomatic, political and strategic management and not just operative, reactive and tactical management.

1. **Exiting the chronic humanitarian situation and shifting to local independence** - The basic purpose of international humanitarian aid is to lead the population in need of aid to a situation where they no longer depend on it. It can be estimated that the goals of the countries and most of the organizations involved in the humanitarian management mechanisms in Gaza is similar. Local independence, whether it is led by local Palestinian forces, or by the Palestinian National Authority, is a goal to strive for. However, part of the role of the political apparatus is to make sure that the Palestinian partners in the process can accept governmental responsibility in a full, legitimate and effective manner.

Handling the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a long-term and gradual task. The process of handling and moving from the humanitarian crisis to the reality of Palestinian well-being and independence will take many years, and it must be prepared and built as a long-term task that includes several stages:

- **First step - Stabilization of the humanitarian situation.** At this stage, it must be ensured that the entire population has access to water, hygiene, food, shelter, education and health, as determined by The Sphere International Index. Working with the principles of the Sphere will allow linking the findings of the continuous assessment with the standard that is required to meet the needs, while working according to agreed indicators. Therefore, it is recommended to define the standard as uniform and acceptable to all parties, to integrate the Sphere into the work culture and to use experts with experience to make contextual adjustments.

- **Second stage - Establishment of residential spaces.** At this stage, temporary housing solutions will be built that will allow a comfortable stay for a limited time until moving to a permanent settlement. This phase includes the construction of life-supporting systems - local economy, education, welfare, agenda management, community life and mental health.
 - **Third stage - Transition to permanent residences and development.** At this stage, the population will settle in their permanent residences. Alongside maintaining a routine life, emphasis will be placed on the continued development of economic activity and the restoration of infrastructure, open spaces, industry and agriculture, both within Gaza and in connection to other countries in the region.
 - **Fourth stage - "Passing the baton" stage.** At this phase, the civilian population will take responsibility for the management of residences, the infrastructure and the environment, as well as the continuation of development efforts and regional connections. This phase includes the development of local management mechanisms, transition to paid services and the stabilization of the economy, while reducing the external supporting mechanisms, up to their total disappearance.
2. **Connecting the political-strategic humanitarian effort with the operative-humanitarian one, while building effective and efficient mechanisms** - There are two main mechanisms that must be improved and adjusted in the humanitarian context and ensure that they operate in sync. One is a strategic decision-making mechanism that shapes humanitarian policy and consists of state players and central aid agencies. The second is an operative-executive mechanism which is entrusted with the implementation of the humanitarian policy and the activity on the ground. Each of these mechanisms already exists today on some level but requires improvement. Regular coordination meetings are held at the political level between the COGAT and the American coordinator, the Egyptians, the Jordanians and the UN. However, the COGAT is the only Israeli delegation, and it is a professional and not a political entity. In addition, many countries that could be relevant and contribute do not participate in these meetings. At the operative level, the UN has professional clusters divided into topics (food, shelter, health, water and hygiene), where the aid organizations meet daily. Nevertheless, the UN refuses to include Israeli representatives in these discussions, and in most of the other discussions, certainly those held by the COGAT, there is no Palestinian representation. This fact contributes to the formation of many gaps on ground.
- **The Political-strategic mechanism** - The main functions of this mechanism are to define the goals of aid and its appropriate use, while relying on the principles of protection, as recognized in the field of humanitarian aid. The essential roles of the mechanism are to carry out a comprehensive planning of the goals and roles

of the humanitarian aid process; to distribute the responsibilities between the various agencies, including coordination between the UN agencies and non-governmental organizations; to promote local civil management; to locate resources and budgets; and to determine the standards and measures for the delivery of the aid. Another essential part of the mechanism is to plan and promote the transition from the emergency aid phase to the reconstruction and development phase. This mechanism will deal with the guidance and control of the operative mechanism and the creation of partnerships with various countries in the humanitarian field, as well as the establishment of procedures and the assimilation of a positive organizational culture. It is important that in this mechanism, will cooperate the State of Israel, the Palestinian National Authority, a representative of the Gaza Transitional Authority (see below), the USA, Egypt, Jordan, other countries in the region who are agreed upon by the parties, UN agencies (WHO, OCHA, etc.), central aid agencies responsible for managing camps, food distribution, medicine, etc., and other relevant players in the field. This mechanism is entrusted with the labeling of the information and communication channels between the various organizations, between the mechanism itself and the operative mechanism subordinate to it, and the preservation of the professionalism and efficiency of these channels.

- **The operative mechanism** - This mechanism is subordinate to the strategic mechanism and its role is to implement the policy and maintain humanitarian activity on the ground. In this mechanism should participate the various aid agencies, the COGAT, a representative of the Gaza "Transition Authority", and other relevant professionals should take part. This mechanism will be divided into different professional clusters, like health, nutrition, shelter, water and hygiene, infrastructure, camp management and education. Furthermore, this mechanism will deal with the issues of the supply and distribution of aid, equipment, welfare in the camps, etc. The integration of the peacekeeping force in the process as a whole and in the operative mechanism should be considered. It is important that Israeli civil society organizations with knowledge in the humanitarian field and with relevant professional knowledge, and Israeli experts in the relevant fields, should be in continuous communication with the professional clusters for the purpose of exchanging information, formulating tailored recommendations and mediating between the various parties. Strengthening the relationship between the professional parties at the field level in the immediate time frame, can also lay the foundation for a professional network and trusting relations.

For the political-strategic mechanism to function and receive international support, it is of great importance to back up the mechanism's mandate and the nature of its decision-making in a UN Security Council resolution. It is also necessary to define the relationship between its activity and the summarized political directive of the day after the war, and

the parties leading the general political effort. Both mechanisms should include working groups in which the business, academic, professional, and civil sectors will be integrated.

3. **Relying on security and social goals to plan an exit from crisis to independence (the transition stages)** - In planning the process and the transition between the four detailed stages, conditional goals must be defined, the achievement of which indicates the readiness to move to the next stage. These goals will be measured in light of two key aspects: security-human and social-economy. The security aspect refers to the possibility of transferring aid in a way that does not harm human life, to the presence of terrorist elements on ground, to the degree of efficient and transparent coordination between the various parties, and to the degree of trust developed between those parties. The socioeconomic aspect refers to the number of people living in a housing unit, the degree of morbidity, the number of children participating in the education system, employment indicators, the existence and functioning of institutional infrastructures and the increase in the number of community initiatives. Another element that must be achieved in the process is the implementation of an organizational culture with an accountability concept, which includes measurement, monitoring and evaluation, transparent conduct and reliability of the operative mechanism and the aid organizations.
4. **The establishment of a "Transition Authority" of a selected Gazan delegation (as part of the mechanism)** - There is great importance in adapting the humanitarian response to the needs of the population and the leadership of the local community. To that end, it is necessary to appoint a selected Gazan representative to serve as a "Transition Authority". There are various mechanisms that can support the formation of this management, and partners in it will include political representatives from existing factions and from the municipal government, professional unions, independent associations, civil society organizations, and others. The directorate will be part of the management and supervision of the humanitarian response, will take part in the reconstruction planning, will maintain a coordinating mechanism with the Palestinian Authority, and will establish and lead a mechanism that will ensure the monitoring and supervision of the distribution of resources. The representatives of the administration will participate both in the political and the operational mechanisms. Local involvement in the aid and reconstruction processes is important not only in improving the efficiency of the process, but also has political significance - it enables Palestinian involvement in the important processes and in preparation for a future passing of the baton to an experienced and committed body of local professionals and leaders, as part of the renewal of Palestinian control over the Gaza Strip.
5. **The integration of Israel as an inherent component in the humanitarian mechanism and the definition of governmental, professional and civil mechanisms to support this process** - Israel's participation in the new humanitarian mechanism is critical to its activity. Moreover, Israel's choice to be a significant part of the humanitarian mechanisms

will grant it tools to influence the processes and take responsibility for shaping the reality. Its participation in the mechanisms will give her a significant influence on the policy, the ability to call periodic meetings, the possibility to shape the organizational culture, including determining the procedures and means of measurement and evaluation, and even more importantly, to take part in the selection of the partner parties (whether state players or aid organizations). Such involvement would even allow Israel to focus the entry of goods through Israel's border crossings, and thus maintain, for a start, Israeli and international control over the type of equipment entering Gaza. As part of the definition of responsibilities and roles within the mechanisms, Israel's obligations will be defined, which include sharing relevant information, participation in meetings, security coordination for assistance, training of IDF units to work with the civilian population, etc. It is important to define Israeli officials from the government, and representatives of non-government organizations, as partners in the humanitarian mechanisms. In addition, there should be intra-Israeli coordination between the various representatives who participate frequently in the mechanisms. It is also proposed to support Israeli activities by establishing an Israeli advisory forum, which includes representatives of the business sector, academic experts, civil society organizations, etc. Civil society in Israel has a lot of knowledge in the field of humanitarian aid and international development, and it is important to harness it to these efforts.

6. **Modular spatial planning** - It is likely that in different geographic areas in the Gaza Strip, the pace of progress will be different in the stages of transition from crisis to independence, and it will be necessary to provide a regionally adapted response to the transition between the stages in different regions. Adopting a modular concept enables an earlier entry into significant treatment of the humanitarian challenge in certain areas, even when in other areas it is still not possible to make progress, and in a situation where a comprehensive solution for the entire area has not yet been found. In addition, this approach allows us to learn from experiences on a local scale, and to adapt the responses that will be given in the future to other regions.
7. **Implementing tools from the world of humanitarian aid, maintaining the safety of aid workers, synchronizing between the headquarters and the army operating on ground, and strengthening relations with the UN** - In the process of planning and implementing the humanitarian strategy, guiding principles from the world of humanitarian aid must be incorporated. The aid organizations rely on years of experience in the aid sector and reflect both common values and practical practices that enable the optimization of aid, while minimizing the potential damage to the local population. The main principles that focus on neutrality and responsibility are realized through measurable protocols that help build independent markets, minimizing dependence, standardizing the response in the core areas of aid, etc. These principles also indicate how to build mechanisms for planning and implementing aid, while strengthening the roles of the coordinating parties. These principles include a significant improvement in

the coordination of distribution and activities with the aid organizations. For example, through the transfer of permanent lists of products that are prohibited from being brought in so that trucks are not rejected outright, dealing with the randomness in which the military rank on ground affects the approval of the entry of trucks, approvals for the entry of critical materials in specified cases despite being dual use, ensuring the safety of aid workers and more. The security of the aid and its providers is at the heart of the process. Therefore, it is necessary to promote security support for aid within the framework of the operative mechanism. It must be ensured that the humanitarian space, including the distribution of aid and its use, will be safe for all those involved. Actions that support the creation of a safe space must be implemented, such as creating transparency, recognizing and agreeing upon procedures, and conducting periodic situation assessments. Subsequently, the humanitarian response must be planned as one that encourages and generates confidence and trust. Thus, any joint activity will lead to building long-term capabilities of cooperation between the parties, both in parallel humanitarian channels and in other arenas. To map the channels of action, the operative mechanism must hold a risk analysis that integrates the analysis of the situation by all the organizations that participate in the mechanism, thus allowing the findings to be brought to the forum. As part of the risk analysis, contributors, connections to action, and mapping of interests must be outlined, as part of the responsibility of the parties managing the mechanism (whether it be a multinational body, a state or a UN agency). Alongside the assessment of the immediate security risks as presented by the defense authorities, this assessment will refer to the axes and locations, the security of the staff and of the mission, and the preservation of the reputation, which will allow the continuation of the humanitarian activity. In addition, environmental and contextual threats that may interfere with the continuation of the work must be examined, regardless of the physical threat.

8. **The creation of a reliable database, that is acceptable by all parties** - The acute discrepancies between the UN reports and Israel's reports and the clear statement of all the factors operating on ground, stating that there is no broad understanding of the reality, harm the ability to make decisions, and to plan the humanitarian aid and future actions. Therefore, establishing a multidimensional information system is a critical task. The system will include a detailed and complete description of the situation, along with data and sources of information about the humanitarian aid, the possibility of using it (cooking conditions, water, etc.), and the stability of access to it. It is also required to monitor morbidity, general health status and environmental conditions. A neutral scientific body must be appointed and given broad information, the ability to collect it independently on ground, and monitoring capabilities, while requiring the publication of the information on a regular basis and a commitment to transparency when it is unable to obtain it.

9. **Changing the discourse within Israel regarding the necessity of a humanitarian strategy to promote and preserve the interests of the State of Israel** - Public opinion polls show that the Israeli public is disconnected from the humanitarian reality in the Gaza Strip and is largely unaware of the humanitarian crisis. To promote the concept that, alongside the immediate human need, the humanitarian response serves the interests of the State of Israel, awareness and information must be promoted among the Israeli public. To that end, the discussions about the humanitarian response should be channeled not as a lever of pressure, but as a means of achieving the long-term goals of the state through the introduction of the humanitarian issue onto the political and public agenda. This can be done by convening debates in the Knesset, media exposure, public opinion polls, expanding the perspectives on the humanitarian issue, etc.
10. **A humanitarian strategy can and should serve Israel's political and defense objectives, both in the immediate and in the long term** - Israel must see the humanitarian effort as a diplomatic-political issue as well and employ international and local efforts for the benefit of forging partnerships, so that they constitute the first step in the effort to create a political solution to the conflict, independent local capabilities, and regional partnership.

Conclusion

This document points to the necessity of developing a humanitarian strategy, recognizing that there is an essential connection between the necessary humanitarian action and the political-diplomatic arena. These two arenas are not disconnected. They influence each other, and they can hinder the achievement of the goals and objectives in each arena or, on the contrary, serve the achievement of the goals and objectives in each arena. Developing a humanitarian strategy and the principles that should guide it will contribute to them serving each other, and not the other way around.

The regulation of the policy and strategy in question must include planning for transitional stages, from emergency response to rehabilitation and development, and finally to local independence. This requires advanced preparation and long-term planning, while creating mechanisms that will ensure the stabilization of the humanitarian situation, the development of infrastructure, and the promotion of life with dignity and security. Israeli and international trust and cooperation are an important basis for the humanitarian strategy. Furthermore, changing the Israeli discourse on the issue of humanitarian aid will allow Israel to act openly and with full commitment to the humanitarian aid. Therefore, the understanding must be inculcated, both among the public and among decision makers at all levels, that managing the situation and reducing the humanitarian crisis serve Israel's defense and political interests.

Israel's significant involvement in the comprehensive international humanitarian management mechanism will grant Israel a foothold in the field through aid agencies and civil management. The involvement in the mechanism will allow a certain control over the process of selecting the various factors that will operate on the ground and in creating partnerships. In addition, Israel will be allowed access and a deeper understanding of the reality on the ground.

Cooperation on the urgent issue of preventing a humanitarian crisis and rebuilding basic infrastructure in Gaza can serve as ground for creating Israeli-international-regional-Palestinian cooperation and planning a political vision for the day after. The planning and construction of a humanitarian strategy involve political decisions on the issues of participation in the management and the strengthening of Palestinian capacities. The practical infrastructure can be a basis for political cooperation both in shaping the reality in Gaza and in broader issues of the Israeli-Palestinian political agreement.

From an ethical point of view, this will strengthen the personal and social resilience based on the perception of our moral identity, strengthen the sense of justice and help in reducing the Israeli internal conflict. These are critical aspects that serve the continued existence of Israel as an independent and secure sovereign entity.

Appendix 1

All aid organizations are financially supported by state or state foundations, private foundations and private individuals. Most of the donations come from countries like the USA, countries in Europe and the European Union, Australia and Canada.¹⁵ Japan and India also contribute to some organizations.¹⁶ The European Union and its member states deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip in cooperation with those organizations as well.¹⁷ Since October 7, the EU transferred 790.5 million euros in humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.¹⁸

A mapping of the aid organizations in Gaza from June 2024 shows that the aid organizations operating in the Gaza Strip are UNRWA, WFP, UNICEF, WHO, and IOM.¹⁹ In addition, twenty-four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work in the Gaza Strip and for its

¹⁵ Stoddard Abby, Harvey Paul, Czwaro Monica, Breckenridge Meriah-Jo, & Duque-Díez Mariana. (2024). *Humanitarian Access SCORE Report: Gaza – the first six months*.

https://humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/score_gaza_2024.pdf

¹⁶ **The main donors to the WHO (as of 2023)** – the USA (over \$367 million), the United Kingdom (over \$189 million), the European Commission (over \$189 million), Canada (over \$65 million), Norway (over 64 million dollars), the Netherlands (over 44 million dollars), France (over 43 million dollars), Australia (over 38 million dollars), India (over 33 million dollars), Switzerland (over 28 million dollars).

The main donors to the WFP (as of 2023) – the USA (over 3 billion dollars), Germany (over 1 billion dollars), the European Commission (over 500 million dollars), Canada (over 300 million dollars), the United Kingdom (over 290 million dollars), Benin (over \$200 million), Norway (over \$200 million), Japan (over \$200 million), Sweden (over \$200 million), France (over \$180 million).

The main donors to UNICEF (as of 2022) – the USA (\$134 million), the Japanese Council for UNICEF (\$133 million), Germany (\$98 million), the Korean Council for UNICEF (\$86 million), German Council for UNICEF (\$79 million), Sweden (\$63 million), Spanish Council for UNICEF (\$61 million), French Council for UNICEF (\$51 million), Italian National Council for UNICEF (\$44 million), Norway (\$44 million).

The main donors to UNRWA (as of 2023 and before the end of funding) – the USA (over \$400 million), Germany (over \$200 million), the European Union (over \$120 million), France (over \$60 million), Sweden (over \$48 million), Japan (over \$48 million), Norway (over \$45 million), Netherlands (over \$40 million), Canada (over \$39 million), United Kingdom (over \$35 million).

The main donors to IOM (as of 2022) – USA (\$942 million), European Commission (\$514 million), Germany (\$275 million), Canada (\$133 million), United Kingdom (\$101 million), Australia (\$80 million), Japan (\$80 million), Italy (\$68 million), Netherlands (\$61 million).

The main donors to the ICRC (as of 2023), are required to contribute at least 10,000 Swiss francs to remain in donor status - Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA.

¹⁷ Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). (2023). *EU coordinating 6 new humanitarian aid flights for Gaza*. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/eu-coordinating-6-new-humanitarian-aid-flights-gaza-2023-10-27_en

¹⁸ European Council of the European Union. (2024). *EU humanitarian support for Palestinians*.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-humanitarian-support-to-palestinians/#0>

¹⁹ Stoddard Abby, Harvey Paul, Czwaro Monica, Breckenridge Meriah-Jo, & Duque-Díez Mariana. (2024). *Humanitarian Access SCORE Report: Gaza – the first six months*.

https://humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/score_gaza_2024.pdf

See also: Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

(2023). *EU coordinating 6 new humanitarian aid flights for Gaza*. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/eu-coordinating-6-new-humanitarian-aid-flights-gaza-2023-10-27_en

benefit, but less than half of them is present on ground. Among the main organizations that operate are WCK, CRS, MSF, IMC, Save the Children, UK-Med, Med MAP, Anera, NRC, Global Communities and IRC.²⁰ In addition, the ICRC also operates in the Gaza Strip. According to the COGAT, the humanitarian contribution of some of these international organizations to the Gaza Strip is divided as follows, with the percentages referring to the volume of aid by weighing the weight of the aid in tons, which is estimated at about 250 thousand tons since the beginning of the war (including food, energy and equipment): WFP(54%), UNRWA(35%), UNICEF(7%), WHO(1%), IOM (2%), others (1%). As for organizations not associated with the UN, the distribution is: ICRC (16%), WCK (53%), Save the Children, CRS, IMC and others (31%).²¹

The WHO deals with the procurement and distribution of health products worth over 28 million dollars for the benefit of the Gaza Strip, including medicines, emergency trauma kits, and more. In addition, the organization supports the transfer of patients and the deployment of medical teams, food and water throughout the Strip.²² UNICEF deals with the transfer of emergency supplies of water, medicine and life-saving equipment, as well as mental assistance to children, families and specifically to pregnant women. The organization provides tents and equipment to children and their families that have been displaced from their homes and participates in the construction of sanitation facilities in light of the deteriorating sanitary situation in the shelters and leads education and welfare programs for displaced children.²³

UNRWA, which operates regularly in the Gaza Strip in the field of education, logistics and health, is engaged in the current war in building temporary residences, opening health centers throughout the Gaza Strip and providing workers for their benefit (doctors, psychologists and consultants), as well as continuing the education services provided before the war. In addition, the agency provides food vouchers for the returnees to the Gaza Strip and supports the supply of sacks of flour to the various regions.²⁴ The WFP is engaged in

²⁰ Stoddard Abby, Harvey Paul, Czwarono Monica, Breckenridge Meriah-Jo, & Duque-Díez Mariana. (2024). *Humanitarian Access SCORE Report: Gaza – the first six months*.

https://humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/score_gaza_2024.pdf

See also: Simpson, M. (2024). 'Survival, Resilience and Solidarity': Our Relief Efforts in Gaza.

<https://globalcommunities.org/blog/survival-resilience-and-solidarity-our-relief-efforts-in-gaza/>

See also: World Health Organization. (2024). *oPt Emergency Situation Update*.

https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/Sitrep_-_issue_30.pdf?ua=1

²¹ Israel National Digital Agency. (2024). *Discrepancies in UN aid data collection*. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from <https://govextra.gov.il/cogat/humanitarian-efforts/home/#anchor-33479268>

²² World Health Organization. (2024). *oPt Emergency Situation Update*. https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/Sitrep_-_issue_30.pdf?ua=1

²³ Ferguson, S. (2024). *UNICEF Aid Is Reaching Gaza — But Full, Safe Access Is Urgently Needed*. Forbes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/unicefusa/2024/03/21/unicef-aid-is-reaching-gaza---but-full-safe-access-is-urgently-needed/?sh=66eb645a204f>

See also: United Nations Children's Fund. (2024). *Children in Gaza need life-saving support*.

<https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/children-gaza-need-lifesaving-support>

²⁴ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2024). *UNRWA Situation Report #107 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem*.

improving food security throughout the Strip, distributing hot meals and basic nutritional resources in central areas where the displaced have no money.²⁵ Since the beginning of the war, the financial and nutritional aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip has increased three times more than planned,²⁶ and the organization is having difficulty in increasing the aid and expanding it in the Rafah region, in view of the situation in the region.²⁷ IOM deals with the supply of food and basic services, medical equipment, direct medical care and supports the protection of displaced Palestinians.²⁸ The ICRC has established several field hospitals in the Gaza Strip and supports the local health providers (the Palestinian Red Crescent, for example), while protecting civilians and medical facilities and responding to the humanitarian needs of displaced persons.²⁹

As for the main NGOs that operate in the Strip, we can mention the work of Save the Children, which focuses on providing critical aid to children and their families, including food, water, hygiene kits and medical equipment, as well as psycho-social support.³⁰ The WCK is a central food distribution channel for the residents of the Gaza Strip. The organization established several field kitchens in the Gaza Strip, a support center for displaced families from the north of the Strip and created a network of community kitchens led by local organizations.³¹ CRS provides humanitarian aid and, in particular, food, establishment of shelters and rehabilitating houses, while providing hygiene equipment and cash financial aid.³² IMC is engaged in the maintenance and operation of two field hospitals throughout the Strip, providing health and mental services and basic services (nutrition, protection and water, sanitation and hygiene).

<https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-107-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>

²⁵ United Nations. (2024). *Gaza updates: WFP responds to hunger crisis as Rafah incursion cuts access to warehouse*. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/gaza-updates-wfp-responds-to-hunger-crisis-15may24/>

²⁶ World Food Programme. (2023). *Annual Country Report 2023 State of Palestine*.

https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report?operation_id=PS02&year=2023#/27151

²⁷ World Food Programme. (2024). *WFP Palestine Emergency Response External Situation Report 20*.

https://reliefweb.int/attachments/f2e80d74-23d5-4bdb-bf1f-16f6a5d119ce/WFP%20Palestine%20Emergency%20Response%20External%20Situation%20Report%200_16%20May%202024.pdf

²⁸ The International Organization for Migration. (2024). *Regional Response To The Crisis In Occupied Palestinian Territory*. https://mena.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl686/files/documents/2024-05/regional-response-to-the-crisis-in-occupied-palestinian-territory_sitrep_23-18-april-1.pdf

²⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross. (2024). *Israel and the occupied territories: Key Facts and Figures from 7 October 2023 to 31 March 2024*. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/israel-and-occupied-territories-key-facts-and-figures-october-january-2024>

³⁰ Save the Children. (2024). *War in Gaza - Children Are Paying The Heaviest Price Of This War*.

<https://www.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/emergencies/war-gaza>

³¹ World Central Kitchen. (2024). *Feeding families impacted by the conflict in the Middle East*.

<https://wck.org/relief/middle-east-2023>

³² Catholic Relief Services. (2024). *Six Months On, Crs Expands Humanitarian Operations In Gaza; Calls For Immediate End To Violence*. <https://www.crs.org/media-center/news-release/six-months-crs-expands-humanitarian-operations-gaza-calls-immediate-end>

In addition, the organization deals with the procurement and supply of medicines, essential equipment for hospitals and health facilities.³³ MSF includes local and international doctors and nurses who help treat the wounded throughout the Strip and install water points.³⁴ Med operates nine medical centers, one health center and two centers for stabilization of malnutrition throughout the Strip, while providing support and psycho-social assistance.³⁵ Med UK operates a field hospital that treats about 200 patients a day, with the ability to perform surgical operations and provide essential medical care. In addition, the organization operates six mobile health clinics throughout the Strip.³⁶ The organizations IRC and MAP work in cooperation to provide emergency and life-saving medical care, including direct medical care, distribution of medical equipment and medicines.³⁷ Anera is engaged in providing emergency aid to families in the Gaza Strip affected by the conflict. Medically, the organization supports local health facilities and the provision of medical supplies and equipment, and the improvement and restoration of water and sanitation infrastructure.³⁸ NRC works to protect the rights of the displaced and provide essential services for them, including shelter, legal aid and education.³⁹ Global Communities deals with providing emergency aid such as food, water and medical supplies, while supporting the restoration of infrastructure and psychological support for people with trauma.⁴⁰

³³International Medical Corps. (2024). *Israel and Gaza Crisis*.

<https://internationalmedicalcorps.org/emergency-response/israel-gaza-crisis/>

³⁴Doctors Without Borders. (2024). *Gaza-Israel war*. <https://www.msf.org/gaza-israel-war>

³⁵MedGlobal. (2024). *Crises in Gaza*. <https://medglobal.org/gaza/>

³⁶UK-Med. (2024). *Gaza Health Crisis Appeal*. <https://www.uk-med.org/gaza-crisis-appeal/>

³⁷International Rescue Committee. (2024). *Gaza Crisis*. <https://www.rescue.org/topic/gaza-crisis>

³⁸Anera. (2024). *Gaza*. <https://www.anera.org/where-we-work/palestine/gaza/>

³⁹Norwegian Refugee Council. (2024). *NRC in Palestine*. <https://www.nrc.no/palestine>

⁴⁰Global Communities. (2024). *Supporting Palestinian Resilience*.

<https://globalcommunities.org/country/west-bank-gaza/>

Appendix 2 - UNRWA - Infrastructure and status of the organization in the war and Israeli legislative processes regarding UNRWA

Since the beginning of the Iron Swords War, a total of 118 facilities of the agency have been damaged, of which eighty-three are schools and ten health centers.⁴¹ As for the losses among the agency's employees, 168 employees out of a total of 13,000 employees in Gaza have been killed, representing approximately 1.3%. This is the highest death toll of UN employees in the organization's history.⁴² Since the revelation that at least twelve agency employees were involved in the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, many countries have suspended their aid to the agency.⁴³ Since then, most have already renewed the funding: the European Union and its member states (1.3),⁴⁴ Canada (8.3),⁴⁵ Sweden (9.3),⁴⁶ Australia (15.3),⁴⁷ Finland (18.3),⁴⁸ France (28.3),⁴⁹ Iceland (1.4),⁵⁰ Japan (2.4),⁵¹ Germany (24.4),⁵² Switzerland (partial return)⁵³, Estonia (8.5),⁵⁴ and Austria (18.5).⁵⁵ The countries that have

⁴¹ <https://www.unrwa.org/2014-gaza-conflict>

⁴² <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/maps-and-graphics/2024/03/21/behind-numbers-gaza-unprecedented-aid-worker-death-toll#:~:text=The%20proportion%20of%20UNRWA%20staff,the%207%20October%20Hamas%20attacks.>

⁴³ <https://unwatch.org/updated-list-of-countries-suspending-unwra-funding/>

⁴⁴ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-will-proceed-paying-eur-50-million-unrwa-and-increase-emergency-support-palestinians-eur-2024-03-01_en, <https://twitter.com/JosepBorrellF/status/1793535982169718818>

⁴⁵ <https://www.cpac.ca/headline-politics/episode/canada-resumes-funding-to-un-relief-agency-for-palestinian-refugees?id=ef8000b5-d290-43b1-ba2a-f2681fb289e0>

⁴⁶ <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/03/government-issues-disbursement-of-sek-200-million-to-unrwa-following-new-agreement-on-stricter-controls/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/funding-united-nations-relief-and-works-agency-and-additional-support-gaza>

⁴⁸ <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/finland-continues-funding-unrwa-funds-directed-to-prevention-of-misconduct#:~:text=Finland%20continues%20funding%20UNRWA%E2%80%94%20funds%20directed%20to%20prevention%20of%20misconduct,-Ministry%20for%20Foreign&text=Finland's%20support%20for%20the%20UNRWA,strengthening%20the%20Organisation's%20oversight%20activities.>

⁴⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/france-provide-unrwa-funding-ensuring-right-conditions-are-met-foreign-ministry-2024-03-28/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.government.is/diplomatic-missions/embassy-article/2024/03/19/Iceland-disburses-annual-core-contribution-to-UNRWA/#:~:text=Iceland's%20annual%20core%20contribution%20to,2028%2C%20signed%20in%20September%202023.>

⁵¹ https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/kaiken/kaikenwe_000001_00053.html#

⁵² <https://www.bmz.de/de/aktuelles/aktuelle-meldungen/gemeinsame-erklaerung-auswaertiges-amt-bmz-zu-unrwa-207472?enodia=eyJleHAiOiE3MTczMTYwMjQsImNvb3RlbnQiOiOnRydWUslmF1ZC16ImF1dGgiLCJlb3N0Ijoia3d3LmJtei5kZSIsIlNvdXJzUUIQljoiodDcuNzAuMjAyLjI0OSIsIkNvb3RlbnQzZ0E1joiOGRhZGNIMT11ZmQyYzY5MzZjOTQzYjUyZTIkMmNkNjUwNTc1NGUxNjlyMTJhMmNIMWJiNWFmMTVjMGQ0YmJmZSj9.b7JTtoHmHghwfSqjPKzT5A7Bj6XS97-G4EFwQ7litxNQ=>

⁵³ <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-100965.html#:~:text=Switzerland's%20CHF%2010%20million%20contribution,foreign%20affairs%20committees%20for%20consultation.>

⁵⁴ <https://news.err.ee/1609335705/minister-tsahkna-in-brussels-people-of-gaza-and-ukraine-need-quick-decisions>

⁵⁵ <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/ministerium/presse/aktuelles/2024/05/statement-on-unrwa>

not yet renewed their aid to UNRWA are the United States, Great Britain and New Zealand.⁵⁶ The agency's largest expenditures are in the field of education, which accounts for about 54% of the budget, and in the field of health, which accounts for about 17% of the budget. Therefore, the loss of funding will affect these areas more than others.⁵⁷

The main points in the discussions in the Knesset regarding UNRWA

Since the beginning of the Iron Swords War, three bills have been passed concerning the activities of UNRWA and its legality.

1. **Bill to stop the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2023** - Was proposed for early discussion in the Knesset on January 9, during which it was claimed that it does not serve as an agency for refugees but as an organization whose goal is to eliminate Israel.⁵⁸ The Knesset plenum approved the proposal in the preliminary stage on February 14, and it was forwarded to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee for discussion.⁵⁹ On April 8, the proposal was brought up for discussion in the committee in preparation for the first vote.⁶⁰ During the discussion, committee chairman Yuli Edelstein stated that he intends to exhaust the discussions during the month of April, so the bill can be voted at the opening of the summer session.
2. **Bill to amend the Immunities and Privileges Ordinance of the United Nations (cancelation of the immunities and privileges of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 2024** - The bill passed on December 2 in preliminary vote in the Knesset plenum.⁶¹ It was then transferred to the Knesset plenum for an early discussion on March 27, but eventually was not proposed for fear that it would be overturned.⁶² The proposal was finally proposed and approved on May 29 in a preliminary vote, and now has been transferred to the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee for its preparation for the first vote.⁶³

⁵⁶ <https://unwatch.org/updated-list-of-countries-suspending-unwra-funding/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/unrwa-funding-cutoff-what-next>

⁵⁸ <https://www.knesset.tv/parliament/1307/62649/>

<https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2198188>

⁵⁹ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2198188>

⁶⁰ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2198188>

⁶¹ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2214465>

⁶² <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2214465>

⁶³ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2214465>

- 3. Bill to terminate the relations of the State of Israel with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to declare it a terrorist organization, 2024** - Passed on February 19 in a preliminary vote in the Knesset plenum,⁶⁴ and then approved on May 29 in preliminary vote and was forwarded to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee to prepare it for first vote.⁶⁵

In addition to these three bills, there were other discussions concerning UNRWA. On December 27, a discussion was held in the Knesset Committee on Foreign Policy and Information (a subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee), on the nature of the agency's activities during the Iron Swords War, when the purpose of the discussion was to examine the State of Israel's policy towards the agency following the findings from the October 7 attack and considering its problematic history.⁶⁶

On April 16, the Finance Committee held a discussion on the cancelation of UNRWA tax benefits, in which it was agreed that the Ministry of Finance and the National Security Council would complete the discussions on the subject, and that the committee considers that granting tax benefits is like funding the agency.⁶⁷ On May 22, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee heard a political-security review from the head of the National Security Council, Tzachi Hanegbi, according to which the goal is to end the agency's activities in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and that even in the present time the agency no longer possess the position it used to have in the Gaza Strip. He also added that there are other organizations that are starting to act instead on certain issues in the Strip.⁶⁸

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<https://main.knesset.gov.il/activity/legislation/laws/pages/lawbill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2214645>

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<https://main.knesset.gov.il/activity/legislation/laws/pages/lawbill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2214645>

⁶⁶ <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/geopolitics/article/15007179>

⁶⁷ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/news/pressreleases/pages/press16.04.24.aspx>

⁶⁸ <https://main.knesset.gov.il/news/pressreleases/pages/press22052024h.aspx>