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# Humanitarian Disaster in Gaza: Aid Organisations Demand an Immediate Ceasefire

8 humanitarian organisations sign a declaration to the German federal government

**Berlin, 20 February 2024.** In view of the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Gaza and the planned Israeli offensive on Rafah, 8 humanitarian organisations call on the German federal government to work unconditionally and comprehensively to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance that is vital for their survival.

This is more important than ever, especially in view of the lack of consensus in multilateral forums such as the EU Foreign Affairs Council and the UN Security Council. In addition to the local population, there are currently 1.5 million people in extremely confined conditions in Rafah.

The aid organisations are also calling on the German federal government to release funding for UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), and to encourage all parties to the conflict to obey international law, to allow unhindered access for aid supplies, and to implement an immediate and lasting ceasefire.

Since Hamas's brutal attack on Israel over four months ago there has been war in the Gaza Strip. More than two million people, half of them children, are experiencing a humanitarian disaster, in which there is no safe place for the civilian population. The number of victims is steadily growing - currently more than 28,000 dead and 69,000 injured. In light of this highly alarming situation, humanitarian aid organisations firmly call on the German federal government to take the following measures:

- **Immediate and lasting ceasefire:** The German federal government must work actively to ensure an immediate and lasting ceasefire among all parties to the conflict, that protects the civilian population, enables unhindered access for humanitarian organisations, and includes the release of all hostages.
- **Resumption of funding of UNRWA:** We call on the German federal government to continue to fund UNRWA. The accusations made against former UNRWA staff are extremely serious and require a thorough and transparent examination. However, accountability must not come at the cost of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip. There is a risk that UNRWA will have to stop its lifesaving humanitarian work at the end of February 2024 due to a lack of resources.
- **Observance of international law:** The German federal government must continue to work to ensure that all parties to the conflict observe international law and insist that there is protection for the civilian population, humanitarian workers, and infrastructure. Protected areas have been attacked, including the accommodation of the medical emergency teams of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the office of Handicap International (HI). International humanitarian law forbids attacks on humanitarian workers and these attacks must stop.
- **Unhindered access for humanitarian assistance:** Only through unhindered access for humanitarian assistance can the population of the Gaza Strip receive an adequate amount of vital support. We call on the German federal government to use its diplomatic weight to ensure that the border crossings at Rafah and Kerem Shalom are opened to full

capacity. We must also ensure that aid supplies really reach the people - prioritising essential supplies such as medicine and food. This is primarily contingent upon sufficient fuel reaching the Gaza Strip, and humanitarian workers being able to work without fear of attacks.

The aid organisations urgently appeal to the German federal government to do everything in its power to ensure that urgently needed assistance can reach people in the Gaza Strip and the humanitarian crisis is ended:

“Gaza has become the deadliest place in the world. Israel’s offensive on Rafah, a designated safe zone, is a cruel demonstration that nowhere in Gaza is safe. People are not just dying from bombing, but also from hunger and disease. 100% of the population of the Gaza Strip is affected by food insecurity - a situation never before seen anywhere else in the world. With the removal of a large proportion of the funding for UNRWA, this lifeline for the population may be cut off. No other aid organisation can take on UNRWA's role in humanitarian assistance and provision of basic supplies.

The ongoing humanitarian disaster in Gaza requires determined measures to limit the suffering of the population. We call on the German federal government to use all its diplomatic weight to prevent a further disaster in Rafah, and at the same time to quickly restore funding of UNRWA. Also, protection for the civilian population must be ensured, unhindered access for humanitarian assistance must start, and an immediate and lasting ceasefire among all parties to the conflict must be promoted. The bombing and firing of rockets must stop. Only in this way can the population of Gaza get the assistance that it so urgently needs to survive.”

## Signatory organisations in Germany:

- Aktion gegen den Hunger
- CARE
- Handicap International – Humanity & Inclusion
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Oxfam Deutschland e.V.
- Save the Children
- Welthungerhilfe

*Welthungerhilfe is one of the largest private aid organisations in Germany, without political or religious affiliation. It is fighting for “Zero Hunger by 2030”. Since it was founded in 1962, more than 11,498 overseas projects in 72 countries have been supported with 4.75 billion euros. Welthungerhilfe works on the principle of help for self-help: from fast disaster relief to reconstruction and long-term development cooperation projects with national and international partner organisations.*

Keywords

**Global responsibility**