

For immediate release

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Oxfam supported health worker killed and ambulance destroyed in Israeli shelling in Gaza Israeli offensive puts families' and aid workers' lives at risk, Oxfam warns

A paramedic working for an Oxfam funded organisation was killed when an Israeli shell struck a civilian ambulance in Gaza today according to international agency Oxfam. The tragedy illustrates the deadly dangers faced by Palestinian civilians and aid workers, said the agency.

Another paramedic lost his foot and a driver was injured in the same incident, which occurred when an ambulance belonging to Oxfam's partner organisation, Union of Health Work Committees, was hit while trying to evacuate an injured person in the Beit Lahiya area, Oxfam said. The UN estimates over 100 civilians have been killed in Gaza over the past week although some other organisations believe the civilian death toll is significantly higher.

"The incident shows yet again that trying to fight a military campaign in the densely populated streets and alleys of the Gaza Strip will inevitably lead to civilian casualties. There are no safe areas and Gazans who want to flee the fighting have been prevented from leaving the Strip," said Oxfam GB Country Director John Prideaux-Brune in Jerusalem.

The Israeli ground offensive into Gaza, which began on Saturday following a week of heavy bombardment by land, sea and air, is preventing urgently needed supplies of medicine, food, water, and fuel from reaching one and a half million Palestinian women, men and children, Oxfam said.

"Hospitals in Gaza are overflowing with dead and wounded while facing severe shortages of essential medical supplies and spare parts. Oxfam and local partners have had to suspend all our work, apart from emergency medical aid. Many of our colleagues in Gaza are trapped in their homes, and in fear of their and their families' lives. Others, such as the paramedic Arafa, have lost their lives trying to save others.

"The trickle of humanitarian aid that Israel has sometimes allowed in through one border crossing at Kerem Shalom has been completely inadequate to meet the needs of 1.5 million people – 80% of whom are reliant on this aid. Since the start of the Israeli ground offensive, even that trickle has dried up. An immediate ceasefire is urgently needed to allow essential aid to reach those families who need it," added Prideaux-Brune.

Oxfam is calling for a binding UN Security Council resolution to demand: an immediate halt to violence in Gaza and Israel by all parties, all parties to commit to an immediate, comprehensive and permanent truce, Israel, Hamas and other parties to permit immediate and unhindered access to and from Gaza for humanitarian and commercial goods, and for people, thereby ending the blockade.

Oxfam is also calling on the European Union to suspend the EU-Israeli upgrade process until there is a comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza, and Israel provides unimpeded humanitarian access.

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