Remarks

Gaza’s taps running dry: Fuel crisis deepens daily struggle for families

This is a summary of what was said by UNICEF Spokesperson, James Elder, to whom quoted text may be attributed – at today's press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva

20 June 2025

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AMMAN/GENEVA, 20 June 2025 – “In a war already defined by its brutality, Gaza now teeters at its deadliest edge. Currently just 40 per cent of drinking water production facilities remain functional in Gaza (87 out of 217). Without fuel, every one of these will stop operating within weeks.

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million Palestinians.

“If the current more than 100-day blockade on fuel coming into Gaza does not end, children will begin to die of thirst. Diseases are already advancing, and chaos is tightening its grip.

“Whilst alarm bells rightly ring on the nutrition situation in Gaza – just yesterday UNICEF reported a 50 per cent increase in children (6months to 5yrs) admitted for treatment of acute malnutrition from April to May – water cannot be sidelined.

“And so in the most relatable terms: Gaza is facing what would amount to a man-made drought. Water systems are collapsing.

“However, because this is man-made, it can be stopped. None of these problems are logistical or technical. They are political. Denial has become policy. If there is political will, the water crisis will be eased overnight – fuel would mean that water flows from hundreds of groundwater wells and restores supply within a day. But time is running out.

“To help paint the picture: without fuel, desalination plants that already operate on reduced capacity will cease completely, and critical membranes in the machinery will close, doing immense damage. Without fuel, trucking the millions of litres of water to people will stop. At major production points, large numbers of donkeys are starting to replace trucks. This is the last gasp of a collapsing system. A donkey cart can barely carry 500 litres. A truck, 15,000. And even the donkeys are slowing – there’s barely enough food to keep them moving.

“Fuel is also the thread holding Gaza’s devastated healthcare system together. Without it, hospital generators stop, oxygen production stops, and life-support machines fail. Ambulances can’t move. Incubators go dark. Denying fuel doesn’t just cut off supply – it cuts off survival.

“Or sanitation: The sewerage systems are broken. Sewage now flows into makeshift shelters and tents. There are already suspected cases of HepA and HepE, which are highly infectious.

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average, more than 110 children (6months to 5yrs) have been admitted for treatment for malnutrition every day since the beginning of 2025.

“At the start of this month a friend in Gaza said to me: ‘we have learnt to live without so much. Without our homes; without safety; without loved ones…but we cannot live without food’.

“This week he clarified that: ‘we have learnt to live without so much. Without our homes; without safety; without loved ones…we have even learnt we can live without food for a week, or more…but we *cannot* survive days without water’.

“UNICEF is very clear. This is Gaza’s most critical moment since this war on children began – a woeful bar to sink below. A virtual blockade is in place; humanitarian aid is being sidelined; the daily killing of girls and boys in Gaza does not register; and now a deliberate fuel crisis is severing Palestinians most essential element for survival: water.”

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Media contacts

James Elder
UNICEF Geneva

Tel: +41 79941 5298

Email: jelder@unicef.org

Ricardo Pires
Communication Manager
UNICEF New York

Tel: +1 9176311226

Email: rpires@unicef.org

View all contacts

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