

Joint Statement from Save the Children Australia, Plan International Australia, Oaktree and ChildFund Australia on special protection of children in Gaza.

Save the Children Australia, Plan International Australia, Oaktree and ChildFund Australia welcomes the news of a temporary truce and the release of some of the hostages but urges the Australian Government to call for a lasting ceasefire in Gaza and the uninterrupted flow of humanitarian aid so that children and their families can access food, water and lifesaving medical supplies. Of the two million people in Gaza, over 50 percent are aged under 18 years.

Given the degree of devastation on the ground, a temporary truce will not be adequate to protect children and ensure the flow of aid and humanitarian assistance required by affected civilians.

We are a group of experienced and trusted child rights' organisations whose collective work reaches over 100 million children in over 100 countries. We condemn the catastrophic violence that is currently unfolding in Gaza and Israel in the strongest terms, and the significant and ongoing violation of child rights, including grave violations. Nothing can ever justify the killing or maiming of children.

Australia has been a strong advocate for an international rules-based order and for compliance with International Humanitarian Law. We are calling for the Australian Government to:

- call for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, in line with international public consensus
- use diplomatic channels to encourage the UNGA to take action to protect children and civilians in the OPT based on General Resolution 377
- continue to call for all parties to the conflict to observe their obligations under International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law
- call for the safe release of all hostages
- call for a safe pathway for the permanent entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza to meet urgent humanitarian need including food, clean water and medical supplies.
- call attention to the special protection owed to children in armed conflict
- call on all parties to cease military activity in and around the al-Shifa hospital and ensure no further disruption to lifesaving medical interventions and no harm to critical medical equipment
- as a signatory to the *International Safe Schools Declaration* condemn continued attacks on and threats against schools, children, teachers and other civilians taking shelter in schools (over 250 education facilities have been struck in Gaza since 7 October)

A humanitarian catastrophe is worsening every day in Gaza - the United Nations has described Gaza as a 'graveyard for thousands of children'. At the time of writing, over 14,000 civilians, including 4,500 children, have been killed in Gaza over the past four weeks, with more than 1500 children missing. That means one child is being killed every 10 minutes – something we, and the Australian people, refuse to accept.

For those children who have survived, they are living in an increasingly desperate and deteriorating situation, without access to clean water, food or medicine. Although aid deliveries have resumed, it is a drop in the ocean and nowhere near enough. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees has reported that as of 19 November, 1,268 trucks have entered Gaza through the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza since 21 Octoberⁱ. Critically, humanitarian operations are being severely limited due to lack of fuel. According to the UN, at least 100 trucks a day are needed to supply desperately needed food, water, medicine, and fuelⁱⁱ – which would be the equivalent of 4,700 trucks since 7 October, at a minimum. This does not take into account the greatly increased humanitarian need due to the conflict.

The impact on the children of Gaza will endure long after the immediate crisis. The trauma of this war will leave them with lifelong and profound psycho-social and mental health impacts.

All children have the right to a life free from violence and fear. Every child's life – Palestinian and Israeli – should be valued and treated with humanity.

We urgently call on the Australian Government to demand a lasting ceasefire and a resumption of the required humanitarian aid. Further delay is unacceptable.

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ⁱ <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-29-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>

ⁱⁱ [Israel-Palestine: Gaza buckles under fuel shortage, healthcare in crisis | UN News](#)