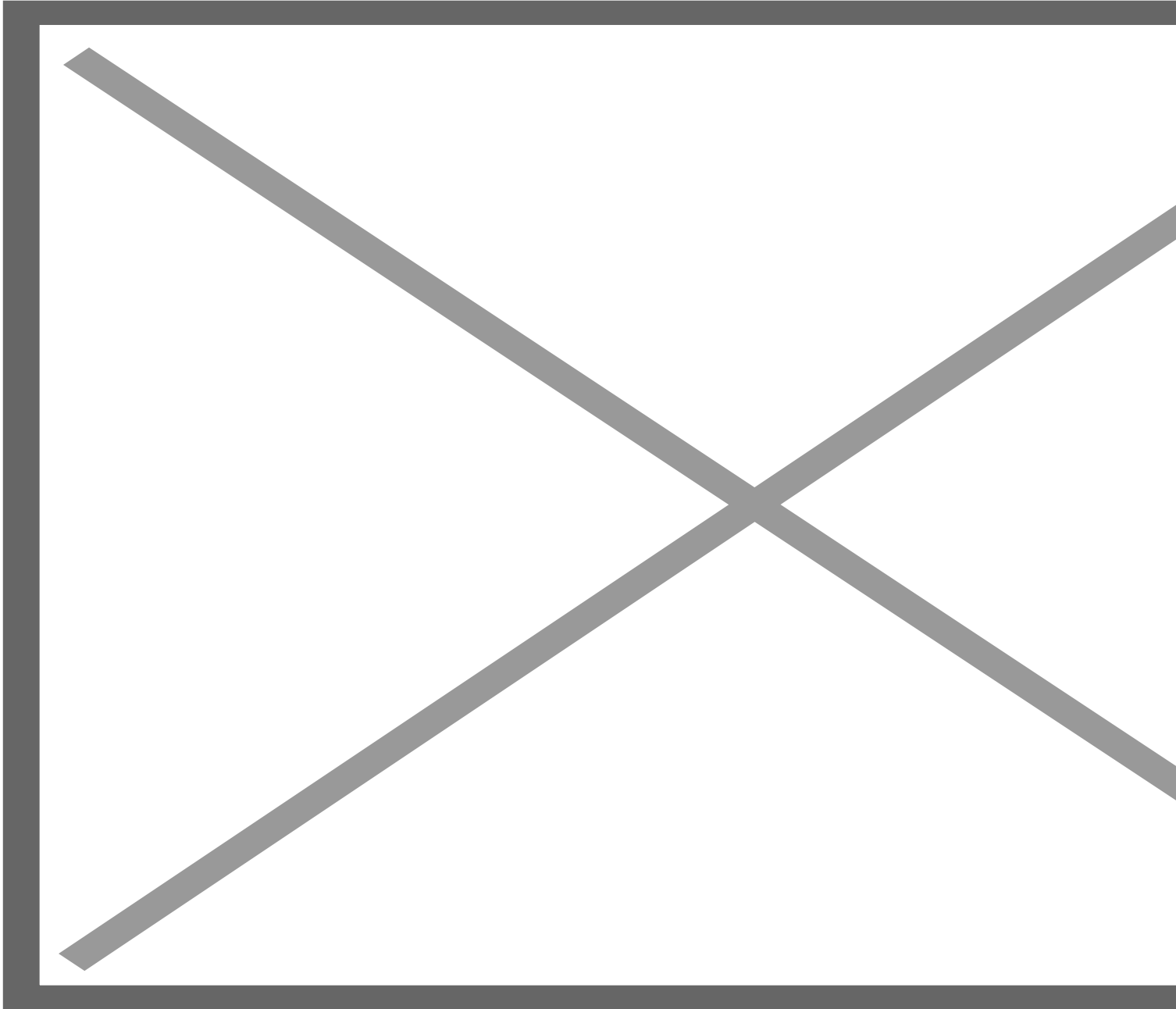


Aid to Gaza resumes, with UN and established faith-based agencies leading the way

by [Yonat Shimron](#)

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Egyptian Red Crescent members monitor trucks carrying humanitarian aid as they enter the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, following an agreement between Israel and Hamas on a ceasefire, October 12. (AP Photo/Mohamed Arafat)

With President Trump announcing [“the war is over”](#) on Monday and Israel and Hamas trading hostages for Palestinian prisoners, aid from the United Nations and faith-based agencies began to flow into the Gaza Strip,

with hopes of stemming a humanitarian disaster.

Trump's 20-point Gaza ceasefire [plan](#) names the United Nations, the Red Crescent, and other international institutions as the entities responsible to deliver aid to Palestinians who are in the grips of a profound humanitarian crisis. It does not cite the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a private entity created by the US and Israel to circumvent the United Nations, which the latter alleged was allowing Hamas to steal aid.

Over the past 36 hours, the United Nations, which has seen its agencies hampered or outright banned by Israel during the two-year war, resumed its work in Gaza.

On Monday, the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that "for the first time since March, cooking gas entered the Strip" and that frozen meat, fresh fruit, flour, and medicines also crossed into Gaza throughout the day.

Israel broke an earlier ceasefire agreement in mid-March, leading to an 11-week halt of all humanitarian relief entering Gaza. Since then the Israeli government has been allowing a small amount of aid into Gaza but has been unable to stamp out spreading starvation.

Tom Fletcher, undersecretary-general for the UN's humanitarian affairs office, briefed the media late last week on 60-day plans to immediately scale up distribution of food and medicine, repair water and sewage lines, and provide thousands of tents, tarps, and other supplies to the strip, which now lies in rubble.

"This is the plan. We can deliver it. We've done it before, and we will do it again," Fletcher [told the media](#).

Until last week, the GHF was operating four militarized distribution sites. But Sunday night, The Associated Press [reported](#) that three of the four GHF distribution points, where more than 1,000 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces guarding from the perimeters, have been abandoned.

Palestinians had torn down the structures, dragging off wood and metal fences. The report cited an unnamed official suggesting that the GHF would no longer be involved.

The GHF denied it was shutting down. In an email, a spokesman said, "there will be tactical changes in GHF operations and temporary closures of some distribution sites may occur. There is no change to our long-term plan."

But it wasn't clear if the GHF was prepared to continue to function without the Israeli military in the vicinity. Nor was it clear why Palestinians would choose to receive aid from militarized sites guarded by US contractors, especially given the number of Palestinians killed approaching those sites, when they could revert to the UN's civilian delivery system that included some 400 distribution locations before the war.

Samaritan's Purse, which joined the GHF—primarily to provide supplemental food packets and first aid at its distribution sites—temporarily suspended its flights from North Carolina to the region.

"We're in a wait-and-see holding pattern," said Ken Isaacs, vice president of programs and government relations for Samaritan's Purse. "We want to help the people of Gaza in any and all ways that we can, and we're waiting to see what the finalized results of the peace agreement are so that we know where and how are the best ways to help."

The lifting of restrictions on aid was welcomed by a host of humanitarian groups, including Catholic Relief Services. Bill O'Keefe, executive vice president for mission, mobilization, and advocacy at CRS, said the organization was "aggressively ramping up."

“We are anticipating deliveries of large supplies of shelter materials that we’ve had in Jordan and Egypt, and we’ve secured more warehouse space,” O’Keefe said. “We reopened our office in Gaza City and are really doing everything we possibly can to meet as many needs as we can as quickly as we can.”

CRS has a staff of 65 in Gaza, all of them Gazan residents, but its work has been slowed significantly by Israel’s restrictions on aid. When Israel has allowed in aid, it has mostly privileged the GHF.

O’Keefe said his staff has seen a big opening for aid in the past 24 hours and hopes the end of hostilities will allow even more.

“There are lots of questions in terms of how many access points will be opened,” he said, adding, “We hope all of them.” —Religion News Service