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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



ISRAEL'S SIEGE IS FREEZING BABIES TO DEATH

A ceasefire and increased humanitarian aid is the only way to stop more babies in Gaza dying during the cold winter, Islamic Relief says as yet another young infant froze to death in their tent few days ago as a result of Israel's ongoing onslaught and siege.

At least 8 Palestinian babies have now died from hypothermia as forcibly displaced families try to survive in flimsy tents that are flooded by heavy rains and without adequate food or healthcare. The youngest was just 3 days old, while another 20-day old baby froze to death in his tent with his twin brother dying the next day.

The rainfall and cold temperatures of around 7°C (45°F) would not normally be life threatening, but 15 months of Israel's relentless bombing, denial of humanitarian aid, forcible displacement of civilians and attacks on health facilities has exposed babies in Gaza to extreme risk.

An Islamic Relief aid worker says: *“These tragic deaths were entirely preventable. Children should not be dying in these temperatures, but they are because Israel is systematically denying Palestinians shelter, food, healthcare and everything that is needed for survival. People have nowhere to go to escape the cold, the bombs or the hunger. Only a ceasefire and an end to Israel’s siege will stop more babies from freezing to death.”*

Israeli bombing has now destroyed or damaged around 92% of all housing in Gaza, leaving many families sheltering in tents. The Israeli military continues to order people to leave entire regions of Gaza in the middle of the bitterly cold nights, often forcing them to leave behind their clothes and anything that could keep them warm. Most families have been forced into coastal areas such as al Mawasi where their tents are now battered by the sea and strong winds.

Tents that were distributed a year ago are now worn away but most families cannot access new ones. Hardly any new shelter, food and medical aid is being allowed in, with just 76 aid trucks a day allowed to enter Gaza during December – less than 15% of the 500 trucks a day that used to enter before October 2023 and even less than the amount allowed in at this time last year. Despite the huge need for new tents and shelter, only 160 trucks of shelter items were able to enter Gaza throughout December, according to the Shelter Cluster.

Families have barely any food or warm blankets and cannot access fuel or gas for heating as it is either prevented from entering or is prohibitively expensive. Israel is preventing almost all aid from reaching civilians in northern Gaza especially.

In the past week Islamic Relief and partner organisations have provided more than 800,000 hot and ready to eat meals to displaced people in areas such as Khan Younis and Gaza City, and distributed winter clothing to around 5,000 people – but it is nowhere near enough given the scale of the needs.

The destruction of Gaza's health, water and sanitation infrastructure has made people even more vulnerable to the cold, with more hospitals besieged, raided and burnt to the ground in recent days. More than half of hospitals and more than 60% of primary health centres are now completely shut down due to Israeli attacks and restrictions, making it even harder for vulnerable children to get care and treatment.

Join hands with us to support Gaza. Donate today to our Palestine Appeal at www.islamic-relief.org.my or contact 03-8926 3434 for more information.

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About Islamic Relief

Islamic Relief is an international humanitarian organization founded in 1984 in response to the famine in East Africa. The headquarters of Islamic Relief is located in Birmingham, United Kingdom. Islamic Relief operates in over 40 countries and has assisted more than 145 million people. Today, Islamic Relief Worldwide among one of the largest charity and development organizations in the world.

About Islamic Relief Malaysia

Islamic Relief Malaysia was operated since 2004, which aspires to continue Islamic Relief humanitarian assistance in the Asia-Pacific region. Islamic Relief Malaysia serves as a fundraising and project implementer for international and local projects.

Kindly visit the Islamic Relief Malaysia website, www.islamic-relief.org.my for more information.

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