



By: TA | AP Insight

Aid groups petition Israeli court to let them keep working in Gaza



Seventeen international aid groups said Tuesday they have petitioned Israel's Supreme Court to allow them to keep working in the Gaza Strip and other Palestinian areas, where Israel is **set to bar** them for refusing to comply with new rules.

Israel says it will ban 37 aid groups by March 1. The rules announced last year require aid groups to register the names and contact information of employees, and to provide details about their funding and operations.

The groups view the rules as invasive and arbitrary, and say the ban would hinder critical assistance to people in war-ravaged Gaza.

They have appealed for an urgent interim order that would halt the process until a final ruling, they said in a joint statement Tuesday.

The government has until Wednesday afternoon to respond, according to a court document.

The statement said that stopping the groups' activities will lead to a "humanitarian collapse and irreparable harm" for hundreds of thousands of people in need.

They say the ban violates Israel's obligations as an **occupying power** and shows "extreme unreasonableness and lack of proportionality."

COGAT, the Israeli military body overseeing civilian affairs in Gaza, has said that the organizations whose licenses are to be revoked contribute less than 1% of the total aid going into the territory.

More than 20 organizations will continue to operate after complying with the new regulations, it said.

The government referred questions about the petition to COGAT, which did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Groups fear handing data over to Israel

Aid groups that refuse to comply say they fear what Israel might do with the personal data of their employees, noting that hundreds of aid workers have been killed in Israeli strikes during the war.

Israel denies targeting aid groups. In some cases, it said it had targeting militants who had infiltrated such groups or were **disguised as aid workers**.

In some others, the military eventually said **it had erred**. Israel blames civilian casualties on Hamas, whose Oct. 7, 2023, attack triggered the war, and whose fighters operate in densely-populated areas.

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The vast majority of Gaza's 2 million residents rely on aid groups for food, water, health care, shelter and other essentials after Israel's two-year offensive destroyed much of the territory.

Hundreds of thousands are living in tents, and reconstruction has yet to begin following a shaky ceasefire agreement reached in October.

International charities play a vital role alongside the United Nations and other aid providers, according to Athena Rayburn, the executive director of AIDA, an umbrella organization representing over 100 groups operating in the Palestinian territories. It has joined the 17 groups in the petition.

"This petition could protect this life saving work, and allow for more time to find resolution to this issue," she said.

Well-known aid groups are affected

The petition argues that the new rules violate international law, that Israel, as an occupying

power, has the obligation to ensure food and medicine reach people.

It also says Israel does not have the authority to shutter organizations in areas under the nominal control of the Palestinian Authority.



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The banned organizations, including Doctors Without Borders, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam and Medical Aid for Palestinians, are some of the most well-known of the more than 100 independent aid groups working in Gaza.

Doctors Without Borders is the largest provider of medical supplies after U.N. agencies and the Red Cross.

The group, known by its French acronym MSF, said it hasn't been able to bring in any supplies – including antibiotics, pain medication, anesthetics and wound dressings – since the start of January, shortly after the ban was announced.

“Patients with traumatic injuries, people requiring surgery, those with chronic illnesses, and vulnerable groups needing routine primary care are all at increased risk of not receiving the care they need,” said Dr. Adi Nadimpalli of MSF.

Effects extend to the occupied West Bank

MSF said it has reserves of essential supplies

for up to three months. It's working with the U.N. and other aid groups to get supplies into Gaza, but Nadimpalli said there is pressure on licensed groups not to bring in materials on behalf of unregistered ones.

If it's unable to get enough supplies it might have to suspend or shutter its operations, which include two Gaza field hospitals, he said.

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The restrictions have also hampered the group's activities in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where it had to end one project and roll back two others.

The U.N. office for humanitarian affairs, known as OCHA, didn't respond to questions about whether it was going to help banned organizations bring in aid.

Last year, Israel imposed a ban on the [U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees](#), the largest aid provider in Gaza, that has hindered its activities.

Israel accused UNRWA of having allowed itself to be infiltrated by Hamas, allegations denied by the agency, which says it takes extensive measures to ensure its neutrality and acts quickly to remove any known militants from its staff.