



By: TA | AP Insight

Do taxes imposed by Hamas prevent the entry of commercial goods in Gaza?



No commercial goods have entered the Gaza Strip for two days, Israeli authorities said Thursday, blaming the suspension on merchants angered by taxes imposed by Hamas — a claim that Palestinian importers deny.

The halt to **commercial shipments**, including fruit and winter clothing, cuts off a key source of food and other critical supplies as fears grow about procuring supplies needed to get through winter in the territory.

The move stands to immediately reduce Gaza's supplies, because the closed-off territory is completely reliant on whatever goods Israel allows in through border crossings.

Aid groups generally bring in staples such as flour, while merchants import more perishable foods like fruits and meat, according to data released earlier this year by COGAT, the Israeli military body that oversees humanitarian affairs in Gaza.

The suspension is raising fears about affordability, with humanitarian workers saying a combination of aid and a robust commercial market is needed to keep prices under control.

"The humanitarian sector on its own cannot meet the needs of all the people," said Shaina Low, a spokesperson for the Norwegian Refugee Council, an aid group. "The markets need to be functioning."

Hamas's taxation mechanism and threats against merchants

COGAT announced the suspension of commercial shipments Wednesday. Its deputy spokesperson, Lt. Daniel Kantorovich, said the agency was acting on a decision made by Palestinian merchants a day earlier and could reverse it at their behest.

The merchants don't want to bring goods into Gaza - Daniel Kantorovich

"We were prepared to coordinate the entry of their trucks as usual, but the vendors informed us that they were cancelling the coordination due to Hamas's taxation mechanism and threats against them," Kantorovich said. "The merchants don't want to bring goods into Gaza."

The world's leading authority on food insecurity reported earlier this year that conditions in Gaza had improved since **famine was declared** in the territory in August 2025, but were still at crisis levels.

Most families in the war-battered enclave weren't getting nearly enough to eat, said the report, adding that "even small disruptions to humanitarian access could rapidly reverse recent gains."

Merchants in Gaza coordinate directly with vendors outside the territory, whose shipments are examined by Israel's military before entering Gaza.

Truckers' union blames Israel

In announcing the measure, COGAT claimed to be communicating a decision made by local merchants in Gaza who had grown tired of Hamas taxing their trucks and threatening them.

Israel has long accused the militant group of levying fees on imports to fund its operations.

COGAT said no private-sector vendors had attempted to import goods to Gaza since the merchants alerted Israel on Tuesday.

But the head of Gaza's private truckers union, Nahed Sheheiber, disputed Israel's account, saying they were the ones who had made the decision.

The truth is that the Israelis are the ones who imposed the restrictions - Nahed Sheheiber

“The merchants are not the ones who stopped the shipments,” he said. “The Israeli coordinator is claiming that Gaza’s merchants are responsible, but the truth is that the Israelis are the ones who imposed the restrictions.”

Following COGAT's announcement, Sheheiber's union met with Gaza's Ministry of Economy to express concern and say Israel was citing fees levied by the ministry as a pretext to cut off commercial goods.

The ministry had been asking merchants to pay 10,000 shekels (about \$3,226) per truck entering Gaza, Sheheiber said.

At the meeting, ministry Undersecretary Khaled Al-Raqab told the union that the amount was not a tax, but rather a donation sought by the ministry to help pay civil servants in the strip.

Would aid agencies be allowed to increase shipments?

It was not clear from the COGAT announcement if aid agencies would be allowed to increase shipments into Gaza to compensate for the loss in commercial goods.



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That's far below the minimum of 600 trucks a day stipulated by a **ceasefire** brokered by the U.S. a year ago.

The war started when Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people on Oct. 7, 2023, and took 251 hostages. Israel responded with a massive bombardment and a ground invasion that has killed more than 74,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

That includes over 1,400 Palestinians killed since the ceasefire took effect, the ministry says. Sporadic attacks have killed five Israeli soldiers in Gaza in the same period.

The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, maintains detailed records and is seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. It does not distinguish between civilians and militants in its toll but says women and children make up around half the dead.