

AMBER ALERT DECLARED IN GAZA WATER CRISIS

Humanitarian charity's HEWT monitoring system issues Amber warning for supply of fresh water to the Gaza Strip in light of impending Winter Conditions

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EINPresswire.com/ -- [Human Appeal](https://www.humanappeal.org/), one of the UK's fastest growing INGO's, has declared an amber alert in Gaza over the growing water health crisis in the Strip. The declaration comes following the launch of Human Appeal's colour-coded early warning indicator for humanitarian crisis around the globe, which it has named the Humanitarian Early Warning Traffic-light (HEWT).



Human Appeal staff with desalination project in the Gaza Strip

Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the World. Conflict has decimated Gaza's water networks, pipes, and wells, leaving Gaza's 2.1 million men, women and children without access to clean fresh water and relying only on a sparse supply of salty seawater. Human Appeal's humanitarian team reports that the situation is so bad that it is on the brink of a major health crisis that will affect millions, and with winter approaching, this situation will only worsen – hence the charity issuing its amber alert.

Winter is especially brutal in Gaza. Families already face a debilitating blockade, medical shortages, daily power cuts, unemployment and undrinkable water. The most vulnerable families still haven't recovered from the bombings in May, when over 50,000 homes were damaged, and now they face a freezing winter with heavy rains and flooding.

"Some 2.1 million people – the entire population of Gaza – are at risk of waterborne diseases, such as kidney failure, dehydration, and fatal diarrheal disease. One of the biggest health risk of children today in Gaza is drinking contaminated water. Even prior to the last escalation, the entire population of the Gaza Strip depended on one single aquifer for water, which is

chronically contaminated by saltwater and sewage,” said Dr. Mahmoud Shatat, Human Appeal’s Global WASH Advisor.

The lack of clean water in Gaza has devastating knock-on effects: it makes it difficult to halt the spread of COVID-19, it forces families to spend an average of 1/3 of their income just on water, and it has made it all but impossible for farmers to make a decent living. The WASH (Water and Sanitation Hygiene) situation in Gaza has been identified by many international aid organisations as of particular concern, as it not only impacts inhabitant’s daily washing, cooking and drinking water and wastewater needs but also the demands on the area’s agriculture and infrastructure.

Human Appeal UK is working to find a sustainable solution to this water crisis. It is in the process of building a desalination plant in the Rafah area of Gaza – including three wells, projected to provide clean and safe drinking water for to up to 60,000 people for the next 15 years, as well as providing school and university students with clean drinking water through the supply and installation of decentralised desalination units.

A pre-existing desalination plant, which a quarter of a million people relied on for clean water, was damaged beyond repair in the recent conflict, which also damaged water pipes supplying 800,000 people. In all, some 290 water supply locations have been damaged during the last escalation of conflict in the region, and are in urgent need of repair.

“More urgent help is needed as 97% of ground water in Gaza is undrinkable, forcing families in Gaza to spend a third of their income to buy what they can afford in bottled water, often at extortionate rates,” commented Dr. Shatat.

To date, Human Appeal’s work in the region has included WASH activities spanning:

- Providing disinfectants to help fight the pandemic in water supply and wastewater treatment facilities
- Rehabilitating and installing water desalination units on community and school levels
- Providing sodium hypochlorite to disinfect all water resources to maintain clean and safe water delivery
- Provision of WASH and PPE kits to fight COVID19 outbreaks and support WASH facilities to maintain a continuous water and sanitation services to the people and communities in the Gaza strip.
- Preventing essential WASH staff members from getting infected and continuing to operate some of most vital facilities means the sustainability of adequate and sufficient WASH services.

The HEWT system grades areas of humanitarian concern around the globe from purple (noteworthy) to amber (escalating) and red (acute and critical), assessed by Human Appeal’s team using their 30 years’ of experience in offering aid and support to regions facing pressing crises endangering human life. It will be updated on a case-by-case basis by the INGO as it assesses global humanitarian aid needs.

For more information about the WASH situation currently escalating in the region or to support

Human Appeal's efforts and construction of the desalination plant, please go to www.humanappeal.org.uk

About Human Appeal

Human Appeal is a humanitarian relief charity, established in a flat in Manchester in 1991 and now active in 25 countries. It carries out emergency relief campaigns in response to man-made and natural disasters, as well as long-term sustainable development projects designed to lift people out of poverty and create resilient communities.

www.humanappeal.org.uk

The Media Foundry

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+44 20 3011 1023

[email us here](#)

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