

Frequently asked questions about Tearfund & MCC's response to starvation in Gaza

"...It has broken our hearts to see the brutality of war unleashed on the people of Gaza. Since our inception, Tearfund Canada has sought to follow Jesus where the need is greatest. In recent years, we have responded to humanitarian aid crises in South Sudan, Bangladesh, India, Ethiopia, Haiti, and the DR Congo. We must respond in Gaza..."

Wayne Johnson - Tearfund Canada CEO

The actions that the Israeli military have unleashed on Gaza are nothing short of apocalyptic, amounting to more than 30,000 Palestinian civilian deaths and countless injuries. Widespread damage to infrastructure has led to a full collapse of nearly all public services. In December, the World Food Programme reported that nine out of ten people in northern Gaza and two out of three people in southern Gaza are going without food for days at a time.

Why are you supporting food aid into Gaza?

Simply, we are called by Jesus to feed the poor. In a parable in his last week on earth, Jesus explained that real faith had to be demonstrated in action and told the crowd in Matthew 25,

"...Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'"

We must respond. When Tearfund's founders started this organization, their desire was to partner with Churches to bring restoration to people living in poverty. When a humanitarian crisis occurred, we responded. In recent years, with your help, we have responded all over the world to earthquakes, tsunamis, conflicts of all kinds, drought and flooding, cyclones, and hurricanes.... Even this month, you have made it possible to respond in South Sudan, the DR Congo and Tigray.

Why support now?

For five months, our hearts have been broken by the suffering in Gaza. But, we have not appealed for donations because we could not guarantee that we could deliver aid.

Until now...

Partnering with MCC and CFGB, the first tractor-trailer load of food crossed into Gaza in the afternoon of Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

Why are you partnering with Mennonite Central Committee Canada?

Tearfund Canada has a long-term commitment to delivering quality humanitarian aid, especially food assistance, to people in times of humanitarian crisis, whether driven by conflict or natural disaster. We deliver through our network of national partners and local churches, through the Tearfund family, and fellow members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Mennonite Central Committee, commonly known as MCC, is a fellow member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We have worked closely with them for years. They have contributed to our work in South Sudan, the DR Congo, and Tanzania, and most recently, we supported their work in Ukraine.

MCC has been actively engaged in the Middle East for over 75 years, including Gaza. They have developed multiple long-term local partners, including those within the small Christian community. They have been involved in health, education, trauma, healing, food assistance, and, most importantly, peacebuilding. We trust them. Rather than start something new, we work with them.

Explain the logistics of getting the food to Gaza

Appropriate high-calorie, dry foods, oil, spices and salt were procured in Jordan. The first shipment was prepared, boxed, and placed on pallets in January, ready to ship from warehouses. All necessary permissions from Jordanian and Israeli authorities, as well as local coordinators in Gaza such as the Palestinian Red Crescent have been made for the transportation and entry of goods. After all necessary (multiple) approvals were received and the shipment inspected multiple times, the life-saving food was shipped by truck to the Kerem Shalom / Abu Salem crossing between Israel and Gaza. It has sat there for multiple days, waiting to cross the border for distribution.

The lack of available warehousing within Gaza as so many buildings have been bombed, will increase reliance on logistics chain management and sequencing to ensure a stable flow of commodity deliveries and distributions are possible.

Who gets the food?

This project aims to improve the quality of life of those vulnerable to food insecurity. It will target 2,000 displaced families (approximately 12,000 individuals with an average household size of 6) for the next six months who came from the north and are taking refuge in tent encampments in the southern areas of Gaza.

Our partner works closely with local committees to serve those identified as experiencing high vulnerability to food insecurity. This project aims to fill the gaps of larger distributions by the UN and other NGO's.

Targeting will be aimed at:

- households displaced from their homes and living in tents;
- households and children having lost a primary caregiver;
- large households (>7 members);
- households with members who have been hospitalized;
- Members of the family who have special needs like diabetes, disabilities, or other sickness.

Will members of Hamas get food from MCC and Tearfund's food distribution?

In every humanitarian crisis, Tearfund and MCC follow a clear criterion of targeting the most vulnerable. Primarily female-headed households, and households with many children, people with disabilities and the elderly. That will not change.

Targeting aid with planned community distributions is much more appropriate than dropping aid from planes.

How will you try to prevent Looting and Community Violence

Given the desperate situation and the high levels of malnutrition, it is expected that communities may wish to engage in looting. To avoid this, MCC will stagger truck deliveries so that food baskets are quickly distributed from trucks, to small delivery vehicles, reducing the period of time they are available for looting. Additionally, our partner will rely on its community networks to manage the risk of community violence.

What is Tearfund's long-term hope?

Tearfund seeks to be a small part of relieving poverty, hunger, and brokenness in Gaza. We hope that on the international stage, bodies will:

1. Negotiate for an immediate and permanent ceasefire
2. Pursue all means to expand significantly humanitarian aid access into Gaza.
3. Release all civilian hostages on all sides
4. Call on all parties to negotiate a just and shared vision of the future.

How can you pray?

1. Pray for comfort for every single person whose life has been upended within a moment's notice.
2. Pray for those near and far who worry for the safety and well-being of their loved ones.
3. Pray for peace and radical reconciliation between all parties.
4. Pray for our partners on the ground who are responding to the immense needs.
5. Pray for safe, secure and quick delivery across borders and into communities and the families that desperately need it.

One last thought from Wayne:

My heart broke when I listened to Nader Abu Amsha, the Executive Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches (a long-term partner of MCC) say,

“...We cannot stand by as the Church; we should not be able to sleep at night when we hear of people having to eat grass to survive...”

We ask you as friends, as fellow humans, as followers of Jesus to cry out for peace, for a ceasefire, for the release of civilian hostages and seek justice for all. Please join my wife and me in this life-saving appeal for Palestinians in Gaza.”

Wayne Johnson – CEO – Tearfund Canada

Questions

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*Following Jesus where
the need is greatest*