GAZA FLOODING · 6–7 NOVEMBER 2026

Britain Palestine Project
Peace with justice, security and equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians

A human-made catastrophe

Foreseen. Blocked. Unfunded.

950,000
displaced people at flood risk, a month before

121,000
tents still needed on 1 November

2,800
tents in stock inside Gaza

Sources: UN OCHA and Shelter Cluster, October–November 2026; Times of Israel, September 2026

Britain Palestine Project · Figures correct as of 8 November 2026

Actions needed now

The rains of 6–7 November flooded tents across Gaza because a foreseen risk went unanswered. A month earlier OCHA warned that 950,000 displaced people faced medium or high flood risk and that stocks could partially help only 18 per cent of families needing winter shelter; the UK Government repeated that figure to Parliament on 2 November.

IMMEDIATELY, ON THE GROUND

- Open every crossing to winter cargo, including repair timber and sheeting, bedding, and the IOM shelter kits and Egyptian and Qatari mobile homes refused entry.
- Admit generators, pumps, spare parts and engine oil to restart flood pumps, sewage trucks and water tankers.
- Close the US$186.5 million winter shelter funding gap and bring forward late-winter supplies.
- Provide safe land, transport and continuing services for voluntary relocation from flood zones, prioritising newborns, children, pregnant women, older and disabled people.

REVERSE THE POLICIES THAT CREATED THIS

- Decouple civilian protection from the disarmament and withdrawal dispute, as resolution 2803 stated.
- Stop dismantling UNRWA: no further cuts, no transfer of its functions to the Board of Peace before funded equivalent capacity exists, and repeal of the Knesset laws against it.
- Turn Board of Peace pledges into cash and spend its costed US$480 million for shelter and winterisation.
- End the blanket ‘dual use’ bar on timber, cement and metal sheeting.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS BY THE UK GOVERNMENT

- Apply the new IHL sanctions regime, against published criteria, to those who obstructed aid and attacked UNRWA: a clear first case.
- Make an oral statement this week and publish a named Gaza winter allocation within the £88 million, with partners, dates and outcomes.
- Make an emergency contribution to UNRWA’s US$80 million deficit and publicly oppose premature transfer of its functions.
- Press Israel to publish and urgently resolve consignment-level refusals; publish the UK’s own list of blocked UK-funded items.
- Require the Board and donors to publish a weekly ledger of funds disbursed, goods admitted and distributed, shelters installed and pumping restored.

What happened on 6–7 November

Heavy rain and high winds from Friday evening flooded tents from Jabalia and Gaza port in the north to Khan Younis in the south. Gaza's government media office estimates 70,000 tents flooded in twelve hours; Civil Defence logged 2,166 distress calls and could answer 218, citing fuel shortages and damaged equipment. Both are local figures, not verified by the UN (Reuters, Jerusalem Post). Two bomb-damaged walls collapsed, injuring four people, and a building in Nuseirat partly collapsed. No deaths had been reported by Saturday; last winter UNICEF recorded at least 11 child deaths from hypothermia in Gaza (WAFA, OCHA 5 Nov, UNICEF).

The UN points to the same causes. OCHA said on 7 November that months of funding shortfalls and restrictions had severely constrained preparations, and called for immediate entry of winter supplies, heavy machinery, engine oil and spare parts (OCHA 7 Nov).

Why rain became a catastrophe

Nearly two million people need shelter assistance; 54 per cent of tents and makeshift shelters were in poor condition before the storm (IOM), and 71 per cent of households surveyed in June had flooded since last winter (NRC).

Item (OCHA, 1 November)	Remaining need	Stock inside Gaza
Tents	121,000	**2,800**
Tarpaulins	561,000	**76,000**
Emergency shelter kits	57,000	**0**
Mattresses	1,700,000	**4,993**

Israel disputes this: COGAT says 91,000 new tents, with tarpaulins and 9,000 truckloads of clothing and blankets, have been delivered for winter (Jerusalem Post). The figures are undated and unitemised, and do not alter OCHA's count of remaining need.

Three policy decisions caused this:

- **Materials blocked.** Timber, cement and metal sheeting are treated as 'dual use', keeping families in short-life tents; timber for shelter kits is still refused. At the permitted rate, NRC calculated, the Jordan-route shelter backlog would take over seven months to enter; 8,600 IOM shelter kits and 5,000 Egyptian and Qatari mobile homes were turned away (NRC, OCHA 5 Nov).
- **Drainage disabled.** On 1 November Gaza's water utility warned that restrictions on spare parts and engine oil threatened flood pumps, sewage trucks and water tankers. The Abu Rashid stormwater basin is out of action, and UNICEF warned that Sheikh Radwan would overflow without equipment Israel had not admitted (CMWU, OCHA 29 Oct).
- **Response defunded.** Seventy per cent of the winter shelter appeal is unfunded; only about 2,000 more tents, and no mattresses, wait outside Gaza, and the main pipeline arrives in late winter (OCHA 5 Nov).

The Board of Peace: relief must come before politics

Resolution 2803 gave the Board explicit humanitarian duties and promised immediate full aid, including sewage rehabilitation (S/RES/2803). Surely this is why states voted for it. In September the Board costed 66 projects at US$2.45 billion, among them US$400 million for insulated mobile shelters, US$80 million for winterisation and US$20 million for eight pumping stations (programme).

None of it reached a family before the rain.

By September only US$280 million of US$17 billion pledged had been transferred, no start date was set, and the Palestinian administrative committee could not enter Gaza (Times of Israel); UNSCO found recovery far below the scale required (UNSCO).

UN agencies have delivered under the ceasefire, and the Board has delivered some cargo. But the plan the Security Council endorsed put immediate relief first; disarmament, withdrawal and new institutions came after. That sequence has been reversed, and Israel now says so: on 8 November security officials said reconstruction equipment and mobile homes will not enter while Hamas refuses to disarm (Jerusalem Post). Fear of rearmament is a case for inspection and monitoring, not for leaving families in flooded tents. Rationing aid owed on need alone breaches the principles of humanity and impartiality, and 2803 itself. Dry shelter, working pumps and clean water are not rewards for political progress; they are the first test of the transition.

The Board will report to the Security Council on 15 November and its mandate is up for renewal in 2027. Israel's expulsion of British officials from the International Gaza Support Centre in September, in retaliation for settlement sanctions (Al Jazeera), removed Britain from the coordination room, not from the Council. The UK voted for 2803 and declined to join the Board (Commons Library); as a permanent member it should:

- Put the Board under real Council oversight, with external benchmarks (households sheltered, pumping restored, goods delivered, pledges disbursed) and independent verification, and answer the 15 November report publicly against them.
- Make UK support for renewal in 2027 conditional on verified relief and recovery, including full access for UN bodies, UNRWA among them, and established international NGOs, including those Israel has deregistered.

Dismantling UNRWA removes Gaza's flood response

UNRWA is the network that clears drains, removes waste, inspects shelters and finds the households most at risk. In October it unblocked 1,257 manholes, ran 678 drainage clearances, sheltered 65,000 people in 114 centres and prioritised 270 households in dangerous buildings for relocation, with pumps idle for want of engine oil (UNRWA 5 Nov, SitRep 237).

That network is being dismantled by law and by starvation of funds. The Knesset barred official contact in 2024 and in December 2025 cut water and electricity to UNRWA premises; the UN Secretary-General called this inconsistent with international law and said UNRWA supports implementation of 2803 (Knesset, UNSG). Israel has blocked UNRWA's international staff and supplies since March 2025, against the ICJ's October 2025 advisory opinion. UNRWA has cut service hours by 20 per cent and carries a US$80 million deficit. On 5 November UNRWA rejected a reported plan to hand its functions to the Board, saying no other organisation can deliver at equivalent scale in Gaza (AFP, Europa Press).

No transfer has been shown to reproduce UNRWA's 10,500 Gaza staff, facilities, legal access and community trust; cutting first weakens prevention and rescue at once. The UK's £23 million pledge in June needs political as well as financial follow-through (Donor Tracker).

What the UK Government has said and done

In a written answer on 2 November, Lord Wood of Anfield acknowledged that stocks could partially help only 18 per cent of families needing winter shelter, said the UK was pressing Israel to admit dual-use shelter, fuel, water and health items, and cited £88 million in humanitarian and early recovery support this year (HL4287). That sum covers Gaza and the West Bank; it is not a winter allocation, and no delivery figures have been published (Arab News). Last winter the UK funded tents for 12,000 people and matched £3 million of DEC donations. On 27 October a minister told the Commons that the Government 'will use' the new sanctions powers (Hansard). The question is when.

The new IHL sanctions regime: a clear first case

The Global Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Sanctions Regulations 2026 (SI 2026/1071), in force since 15 October, allow designation of anyone, anywhere, reasonably suspected of involvement in serious violations of international humanitarian law or obstruction of humanitarian assistance. The Government deserves credit for this serious reform; Lord Wood told the Lords on 4 November that it lets the UK respond 'where aid has been deliberately prevented from reaching civilian populations' (Hansard).

The flooding is its first test. In November 2024 ICC judges issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister and former Defence Minister, finding reasonable grounds to believe they bore criminal responsibility for the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare: a higher bar than the new Regulations set. Since the ceasefire: the arbitrary denial of shelter materials, fuel and pumps; the exclusion of UNRWA's international staff; the deregistration of 37 international NGOs; legislation to shut UNRWA down. Each obstructs humanitarian assistance. Those responsible for leaving Gaza's displaced flooded this week, as children died of cold last winter, are exactly whom this regime was written for.

Sanctions designations should follow the evidence, against published criteria: ministers and officials who designed or enforce the restrictions; convoy-blocking groups such as the EU-listed Tzav 9, eligible for the urgent procedure; and members of Hamas or any armed group found diverting aid. Even-handedness answers both the regret motion passed by peers on 4 November (Global Sanctions) and Lord Gold's charge in the same debate that the regime 'applies only to Israel'. On 28 October, 75 MPs and peers, in a letter co-ordinated by Caabu and the Britain Palestine Project, asked for designations 'before winter sets in' (Caabu). Winter arrived nine days later.

Sources

In order of first citation. Each label in the text above links to the same source.

1. Reuters (via Arab News): heavy rain floods tents housing Gaza's displaced; aid shortages hamper response
https://www.arabnews.com/middle-east/heavy-rain-floods-tents-housing-gaza-displaced-people-aid-shortages-hamper-response-3010327
2. Jerusalem Post
https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-914223
3. WAFA news agency
https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/176712
4. OCHA: Humanitarian Situation Report, 5 November 2026
https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-5-november-2026
5. UNICEF: call for urgent funding to protect 540,000 children in the Gaza Strip and West Bank this winter
https://www.unicef.org/sop/press-releases/unicef-calls-urgent-funding-protect-540000-children-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-winter
6. OCHA, 7 November 2026 (reported by A News): heavy rains flood Gaza shelters, putting displaced families at immediate risk
https://www.anews.com.tr/world/2026/11/07/heavy-rains-flood-gaza-shelters-putting-displaced-families-at-immediate-risk-ocha
7. IOM: nearly 2 million in Gaza need urgent shelter assistance as winter looms
https://iom.int/news/nearly-2-million-gaza-need-urgent-shelter-assistance-winter-looms-iom-chief-warns

8. NRC: Gaza, 94 per cent of households in need of shelter aid
https://www.nrc.no/news/2026/gaza-94-per-cent-of-households-in-need-of-shelter-aid
9. NRC: Israeli restrictions mean entry of winter shelter materials will take over seven months
https://www.nrc.no/news/2026/gaza-israeli-restrictions-mean-entry-of-winter-shelter-materials-will-take-over-seven-months
10. Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU): urgent appeal and distress call
https://cmwu.ps/en/news/urgent-appeal-and-distress-call
11. OCHA: Humanitarian Situation Report, 29 October 2026
https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-29-october-2026
12. UN Security Council resolution 2803 (2025)
https://mandates.un.org/mandate/S/RES/2803(2025)
13. Board of Peace: Gaza Recovery Program, September 2026
https://static-cdn.toi-media.com/www/uploads/2026/09/Gaza_Recovery_Program_Flyer-vSent.pdf
14. Times of Israel: Board of Peace unveils $2.4b Gaza recovery plan, but hurdles remain before implementation
https://www.timesofisrael.com/board-of-peace-unveils-2-4b-gaza-recovery-plan-but-hurdles-remain-before-implementation/
15. UNSCO: report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, September 2026
https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unsco-report-to-the-ad-hoc-liaison-committee-september-2026/
16. Al Jazeera: how has Israel hit back against sanctions by the UK and others?
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/9/how-has-israel-hit-back-against-sanctions-by-the-uk-others
17. House of Commons Library: research briefing CBP-10492
https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10492/
18. UNRWA: updated situation report on Gaza, 5 November 2026 (Spanish)
https://unrwa.es/actualidad/noticias/informe-actualizado-de-la-situacion-en-gaza-44/
19. UNRWA Situation Report 237
https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-sitrep237-22oct26/
20. Knesset press release, 29 December 2025
https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press291225u.aspx
21. UN Secretary-General: statement on the Knesset's amendments to the law to cease UNRWA operations, 31 December 2025
https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statements/2025-12-31/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-for-the-secretary-general-the-adoption-of-amendments-the-law-cease-unrwa-operations-the-knesset-of-israel
22. AFP (via Arab News): UNRWA's Gaza employees march against job cuts
https://www.arabnews.com/middle-east/unrwas-gaza-employees-march-against-job-cuts-3009470
23. Europa Press: UNRWA warns of its debt and says it will stay true to its mandate (Spanish)
https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-unrwa-alerta-deuda-mas-70-millones-asegura-seguira-fiel-mandato-20261106151628.html
24. Donor Tracker: UK announces US$30 million for UNRWA
https://donortracker.org/policy_updates?policy=uk-announces-us-30-million-for-unrwa
25. UK Parliament: written question HL4287, answered 2 November 2026
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2026-10-19/HL4287
26. Arab News: British government provides £88 million in aid for Gaza
https://www.arabnews.com/middle-east/british-government-provides-88-million-in-aid-for-gaza-3002978
27. Hansard (Commons), 27 October 2026: West Bank: Illegal Settlements
https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2026-10-27/debates/33C333E2-BAED-4B1C-830D-716C1BA445B1/WestBankIllegalSettlements
28. Global Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Sanctions Regulations 2026 (SI 2026/1071)
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/1071/made
29. Hansard (Lords), 4 November 2026: debate on the Sanctions Regulations 2026
https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2026-11-04/debates/F48DFC05-504D-4356-9E19-2D3B6DBA4DA7/GlobalHumanRightsAndInternationalHumanitarianLawSanctionsRegulations2026
30. Global Sanctions: Lords approve the Regulations and pass a motion to regret
https://globalsanctions.com/2026/11/uk-house-of-lords-approves-global-human-rights-and-ihl-sanctions-regulations-and-passes-motion-to-regret/
31. Caabu: 75 UK parliamentarians call for further sanctions on Israel for blocking aid to Gaza
https://www.caabu.org/news/news/75-uk-parliamentarians-call-further-sanctions-israel-blocking-aid-palestinians-gaza