



Mohammed Zo'rab, aged 11, waits in line to collect food for his family

**THIS Tuesday (5 March) marks 150 days since the Hamas invasion of Israel, which triggered the conflict in Gaza.**

On 7 October, terrorists from Hamas (the group that controls Gaza) crossed into Israel, killed more than 1,200 people and took hundreds more as hostages (prisoners). In response, Israel has bombarded Gaza with rockets in a bid to destroy Hamas. The conflict has brought misery to people living in Gaza. It's been very difficult to bring them aid like food, water and medicine, and Hamas sources say nearly 30,000 people there have been killed.

Tor Wennesland, the United Nations' Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, says that "there is still no end in sight".

### Struggling for food

The conflict has caused a food crisis in Gaza. A report by the Global Nutrition Cluster says that one in six children there are malnourished, and 90% of children under two are suffering severe food poverty.

Thousands of children have become the main food gatherers in their families. Each day, they take bowls and join long queues at refugee centres and wait in line for food, such as baked beans, to take home.

Hossam Abu Safiya, a doctor in Gaza, told the charity ActionAid: "We have lost a significant number of children in recent days due to widespread malnutrition."

### "No safe place"

Israel has been under pressure from other countries to abandon its plan to attack Hamas fighters in the city of Rafah. About 1.5 million civilians are sheltering there, because Israel's forces had told them it would be safe.

A statement from UNICEF warned that Rafah has become "another battleground", and that "there is no safe place in Gaza."

### Hopes for a ceasefire

UNICEF and many countries have called for a ceasefire – a stop to the fighting. This could allow charities to bring aid to civilians in Gaza, and allow hostages held by Hamas to return to Israel. The most recent ceasefire was in November, and it lasted for six days.

For a ceasefire to happen, Israel and Hamas need to agree to each other's terms (demands). Discussions are taking place in Qatar. Israel rejected a ceasefire last month because it didn't agree with Hamas' terms.

However, there are signs that a second ceasefire is close. US President Joe Biden said this week: "My hope is by Monday [4 March] we'll have a ceasefire."

### Parliament problems

The UK has been thinking carefully about how to word its own calls for a ceasefire, with the different political parties each presenting their own ideas.

Protests against the war continue in city centres, and politicians are feeling the pressure. Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker of the House of Commons, says some MPs have received "absolutely frightening" threats to their safety.

Kamel Hawwash, a British-Palestinian professor at the University of Birmingham, says: "I'm against protests outside MPs' homes, but not outside their place of work. I think it's [fair] to express dissatisfaction and dismay at the lack of urgency to stop the killings in Gaza."

Last week, protesters sparked anger by beaming the phrase "From the river to the sea" onto Big Ben. Pro-Israel groups say the message calls for the destruction of Israel.

Israel is a Jewish country, while most people in Gaza are Muslim. Figures reveal there has been a big spike in incidents of both anti-Semitism (Jewish hate) and Islamophobia (Muslim hate) in the UK.

## Herd of puppet animals to trek 20,000km

**A NEW project will see 30 large animal puppets trek 20,000km (12,427 miles) from Africa to Europe in a bid to get the world talking about the climate crisis.**

The 'herd' will set off on their epic journey in spring next year, walking from Central Africa to Norway to represent animals fleeing climate disaster. Their route includes Spain, France and the UK, and they'll stop off in city centres along the way.

The 30 animals represent the migrating animals of the Serengeti, a region in Africa that's home to large mammals

like lions, zebras, giraffes and elephants. Along their journey, the puppets will be joined by more animals, increasing the herd.

*The Herds* is being organised by The Walk Productions, the same team behind a similar project that saw a 12-foot tall puppet of a child called Little Amal trek 8,000km (4,971 miles) from Syria to Manchester in 2021 to raise awareness of the struggles of refugees.

Amir Nizar Zuabi, the artistic director of both projects, said: "Climate change is the biggest story we're facing now."



The Little Amal puppet (left) and an artist's impression of *The Herds*

## EDITOR'S COMMENT



Nicky Cox MBE

**WHAT do you think of the proposal for shortening the summer holidays (see our front page)?**

Most adults would do anything to get six weeks off in the summer, but many people argue that it's not the best thing for pupils or their education.

Many also think that the long terms in autumn and winter can feel like a bit of a slog, and that having longer half-terms would be better for everyone's physical and mental health.

But more importantly, what do you think? After all, you're the ones it would affect the most. Make sure to vote in our poll, or write to [newsdesk@firstnews.co.uk](mailto:newsdesk@firstnews.co.uk) to share your thoughts.



## Everton

YES, Liverpool won the League Cup (see page 28) – but city neighbours Everton had reason to celebrate too! Their men's team's ten-point penalty in the Premier League for breaking financial rules was reduced to six points after an appeal by the club. It lifts the Toffees from 17th place, and just a single point above the relegation zone, into a more comfortable 15th place.

## Champion tree-thrower



A WOMAN in Ireland tried to claim £650,000 after a car crash, which she said left her unable to work or play with her children. However, Kamila Grabska was denied the cash as a photo emerged of her winning a Christmas tree throwing competition not long after the accident happened. Add her to the naughty list!



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