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### Preventing a Polio Outbreak in Gaza

The polio virus has been identified in sewage in Gaza. The potential resurgence of polio in Gaza is of the utmost concern. It is critically important that a mass vaccination campaign to prevent a polio outbreak from occurring in Gaza is implemented as soon as possible. To do so, a cessation of hostilities must be implemented to ensure the safety of those distributing the vaccine, community health workers providing the vaccine, and that of the Palestinian children and families who are receiving them.

*The IPA urges all State and non-State actors engaged in hostilities in Gaza to implement humanitarian pause in their hostilities to enable the WHO, UNICEF and collaborating organizations to plan and implement a polio vaccine campaign in Gaza. We further urge all State and non-State actors with influence over the warring parties to do all they can to facilitate the negotiation of a truce in Gaza, otherwise known as “Days of Tranquility.”*

Such campaigns have been implemented in multiple armed-conflict zones after warring parties have agreed to cease hostilities during the campaigns. Over the past decades, this has occurred in areas as diverse as Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, Yemen, and the Congo.

If an outbreak occurs in Gaza, it will almost certainly spread to Israel and surrounding countries. Given the extensive travel between Israel and Europe and the US, there is a high probability it will then spread to these regions as well. This risk is not theoretical—paralytic polio resulting from spread of disease among these regions occurred as recently as 2022. Hundreds of children have been stricken with paralytic polio in the above noted conflict zones. Global spread of Covid-19, SARS, H1N1, Measles, Monkeypox, Zika, etc. admonishes us to take the potential spread of polio seriously.

WHO has the capacity to intervene as quickly as possible, there are no alternatives if a polio outbreak is to be averted. It has been done multiple times, in multiple places, in the midst of multiple different conflicts, in places that have had far fewer assets and resources than exist in the Middle East. So, it can be done. We urge all involved parties to cease their hostilities to enable the polio vaccine campaign to happen—now.

The IPA Working Group on Humanitarian Disasters

Best regards,

Dr Naveen Thacker.  
IPA President

Dr Aman Pulungan  
IPA Executive Director

Dr Jeffrey Goldhagen  
On behalf of Programme  
Committee on Children in  
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Dr. Muhammad Ashraf Sultan  
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