

Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #8

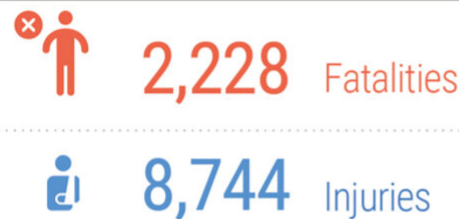
14 Oct 2023

KEY POINTS

- Heavy Israeli bombardments, from the air, sea and land, have continued almost uninterrupted. Over the past 24 hours and as of 22:00 today (Saturday), there have been 315 fatalities in Gaza and 1,048 injuries, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza.
- Mass displacement from the north to the south of the Gaza Strip has been ongoing since yesterday (Friday) morning, after Israel ordered residents to evacuate the areas ahead of military operations. Prior to the order, over 400,000 Palestinians had been internally displaced due to the hostilities.

PALESTINIAN CASUALTIES

Gaza*



*According to the MoH in Gaza

West Bank



ISRAELI CASUALTIES**



**According to Israeli official sources

- Palestinian armed groups in Gaza continued their indiscriminate rocket firing towards Israeli population centres, including the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. There were no Israeli fatalities reported during the past 24 hours, but 183 were wounded, according to Israeli media.
- The Israeli city of Sderot will be completely evacuated within 24 hours, according to Israeli media, and many have reportedly left Ashqelon and other Israeli towns. Previously, mass displacement in southern Israel primarily occurred in small communities in the immediate vicinity to Gaza.
- People across Gaza have severely limited access to clean drinking water. As a last resort, people are consuming brackish water from agricultural wells, triggering serious concerns about the spread of waterborne diseases.
- For the fourth consecutive day, Gaza has had no electricity, pushing vital services, including health, water and sanitation to the brink of collapse and worsening food insecurity.



- All hospitals in Gaza are believed to have about 48 hours of fuel to operate backup generators. The shutdown of generators would place the lives of thousands of patients at immediate risk.
- From yesterday (Friday) afternoon to 16:00 today, Israeli forces killed 19 Palestinians, including seven children, across the West Bank. Forty-nine Palestinians, including 13 children, have been killed in the past week, making it the deadliest for West Bank Palestinians since OCHA began recording casualties in 2005.
- On 12 October the OPT Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) launched a Flash Appeal calling for US\$294 million for 77 humanitarian partners to address the most urgent needs of 1,260,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank.. This is set to be updated shortly.



A displaced child in Gaza, October 2023. Photo by UNRWA

GAZA HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW

Hostilities and casualties

Multiple residential buildings in densely populated areas have been targeted and destroyed during the past 24 hours. According to the Health Cluster, hospitals receive an average of 1,000 daily injuries, with 75 per cent classified as moderate to severe.

According to the Ministry of Health , between 22:00 on Friday and 22:30 on Saturday, 315 people were killed and 1,048 others injured in Gaza. In total, 2,228 have been killed and 8,744 injured in Gaza since 7 October. Human rights organizations have expressed concern about incidents where civilians and civilian objects appear to have been directly targeted by Israeli airstrikes. Many casualties are still trapped beneath the rubble, with the Palestinian Civil Defense and medical teams unable to access areas due to safety concerns, equipment shortages and severe damage to streets .

As of 21:00 today, no new Israeli fatalities have been reported. According to Israeli official sources, at least 1,300 Israelis and foreign nationals have been killed in Israel since 7 October and at least 3,261 have been injured, the majority during the initial attack carried out by Palestinian armed groups.

Between 130 and 150 Israelis, including soldiers and civilians, some of whom are women and children, as well as some foreign nationals, have been captured and forcibly taken into Gaza. The UN Relief Chief stated today (Saturday) that: “Anyone held captive must be treated humanely. All hostages must be released.”



Yesterday (Friday), at around 16:00, Israeli forces reportedly dropped leaflets in Gaza stating that Gaza City had become a battlefield and for people to leave to the south of Wadi Gaza. Shortly thereafter, airstrikes on a few vehicles on Al Rashid and Salah ad Din roads leading to southern Gaza reportedly killed at least 40 Palestinians in separate incidents.

At 9:00 today (Saturday), the Israeli military spokesperson announced two routes where it instructed residents to evacuate from the north to the south of Gaza Strip between 10:00 and 16:00. Media reports indicated that at least 12 people were killed while trying to evacuate to the south via these routes.

According to the Gaza Ministry of Public Works, 1,324 residential and non-residential buildings, comprising 5,540 housing units, have been destroyed. Another 3,743 housing units have been damaged beyond repair and rendered uninhabitable.

As of 13 October, additional buildings struck and damaged include at least 144 educational facilities, including 20 UNRWA schools, of which two were used as emergency shelters for IDPs, and 124 Palestinian Authority (PA) schools, of which one was destroyed. Eleven mosques were targeted and destroyed and seven churches and mosques were damaged.

Water and sanitation facilities have also been severely damaged . Since the start of hostilities on 7 October through 12 October, at least six water wells, three water pumping stations, one water reservoir, and one desalination plant serving over 1,100,000 people were damaged.

Displacement

Humanitarian partners report that the number of IDPs has risen significantly over the last 24 hours, however the exact number is unknown. , As of 12 October, at 23:00, there were 423,378 IDPs, with UNRWA hosting about 64 per cent in 102 premises operated as designated emergency shelters (DES). Some 33,054 IDPs had taken refuge at 36 public schools. It is estimated that over 153,000 IDPs, whose homes have been destroyed or damaged, or have left their homes due to fear, are residing with relatives and neighbours, as well as in other public facilities.

Considering the high number of IDPs, the collapse of basic service infrastructure and the ongoing siege, the UN Relief Chief stated that: "The humanitarian situation in Gaza, already critical, is fast becoming untenable."

The World Health Organization (WHO) spokesperson described the humanitarian impact of the recent evacuation order as a "death sentence" for many and said that it is "impossible to evacuate vulnerable hospital patients from the north of Gaza."

Twenty-three hospitals in the northern area of Gaza received evacuation orders, affecting about 2,000 patients, and remain at risk of being hit by Israeli forces. Hospitals face a serious challenge with evacuating patients who are unable to survive without vital support or are disabled. Three of these hospitals (Beit Hanoun, Hamad Rehabilitation, and Ad Durra), were damaged and the patients had to be evacuated.

UNRWA's designated emergency shelters (DES) in the centre and south are overwhelmed with IDPs. Many are sleeping outdoors due to lack of space. Water and sanitation services are severely limited. Vulnerable people are also sheltering there including the disabled, pregnant women and patients. Hosting capacity is overstretched and resources are limited, putting everyone at immense risk.

Basic services and livelihoods

Since 11 October at 14:00, Gaza has been under a full electricity blackout, following Israel's halt of its electricity and fuel supply to Gaza on 7 October, which in turn triggered the shutdown of Gaza's sole power plant, after it depleted its fuel reserves. Essential service infrastructure is currently operational via backup generators, which rely on fuel reserves.



All governmental and NGO hospitals in the Gaza Strip, except the three which were evacuated, are partially operational and continue to treat an average of 1,000 injuries per day. Hospitals are struggling with severe shortages of fuel and medical supplies, and cannot restock supplies from the local market. Fuel that the World Health Organization (WHO) had secured through UNRWA on 13 October could not be delivered. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stated that, “hospitals in Gaza risk turning into morgues without electricity.”

As of 12 October, four out of five of the Gaza wastewater treatment plants had shut down due to lack of power, resulting in the daily discharge of 120,000 cubic metres of untreated sewage into the sea. Additionally, 53 out of 65 sewage pumping stations were not functional, increasing the risk of sewage flooding. In some areas, sewage and solid waste are now accumulating in the streets, posing health and environmental hazards.

As of 12 October, most residents no longer have access to safe drinking water from service providers or domestic water through pipelines. Two out of three seawater desalination plants have ceased operations entirely. Currently, there is only one operational desalination plant functioning, serving the southern and central areas of Khan Yunis, Rafah, and Deir al Balah. A severe shortage in bottled water has caused the prices to sharply increase and is now unaffordable for most people. The supply of drinking water from Israel was halted on the evening of 9 October, affecting more than 650,000 people.

According to UNRWA, the shortage of drinking water is putting two-million people at risk of dehydration and contracting water-borne diseases from consuming fluids due to lack of fuel to operate water and sanitation services.

The blackout has impacted food security. It has disrupted refrigeration, irrigation, and incubation devices, severely impacting agricultural livelihoods (poultry, cattle, fish, and other commodities). The increasing number of IDPs has overwhelmed existing resources, leaving many vulnerable families without access to food. There are shortages of wheat flour and other primary foodstuffs.

The lack of access to fodder and the impact of airstrikes have taken a toll, with many breeders, primarily small-scale ones, reporting substantial livestock losses, particularly in the poultry sector. In various locations, particularly in the East of Khan Yunis, farmers are losing their crops.

According to officials at the Gaza Power Plant, Israeli authorities have warned that the plant would be targeted if it attempted to resume operations. The Israeli Defense Minister indicated that electricity, fuel and water supply to Gaza would not be restored until the Israeli hostages are released. The Secretary-General stressed on Wednesday that “crucial life-saving supplies, including fuel, food and water, must be allowed into Gaza.”

Movement and access

The Rafah crossing with Egypt has remained closed for the movement of people and goods. Media reports indicated that the United States, Israel, Egypt, and Qatar agreed that the crossing would be open today (Saturday) for the evacuation of foreign nationals to Egypt. However, those who had approached the crossing left after receiving an unofficial warning that the crossing might be attacked. Ultimately the crossing did not open.

The Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings with Israel also remained closed . Referrals for patients and their companions to exit the Gaza Strip to reach their medical appointments in the West Bank and Israel have ceased since 7 October. People from Gaza working in Israel were not able to return home. Hundreds have been detained by Israeli authorities, while others were transferred to the West Bank.

Access to the sea has been prohibited by the Israeli military, and all fishing activity stopped since the hostilities began. Access within 1,000 metres from Israel’s perimeter fence remained prohibited , preventing access to large areas of farming lands and, alongside safety concerns, has decreased produce yield.



Humanitarian operations

A Flash Appeal that brings together the work and funding requirements of the humanitarian community in the OPT, including 13 UN Agencies, 29 International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), 35 National NGOs (NNGOs) was presented to Member States yesterday (Friday). This Appeal was launched before the calls by the Israeli military to vacate northern Gaza and therefore do not address the humanitarian needs this is expected to generate.

All humanitarian agencies and personnel have faced major constraints in providing humanitarian assistance. The prevailing insecurity is preventing safe access to people in need and essential facilities, such as warehouses. At least 23 humanitarian staff, including 11 health workers and 12 UNRWA employees, killed between the start of hostilities and 14 October. Operations have also been impeded by movement restrictions, the barring of imports, shortages of electricity, fuel, water, and other essentials. The distribution of assistance to IDPs not in UNRWA shelters is particularly complex.

Despite these challenging conditions, humanitarian actors are working around the clock to support the most vulnerable. The major operation entails the hosting of IDPs in UNRWA schools, where basic food, medicine and support is provided to retain dignity and a glimmer of hope. Other interventions have included the distribution of food assistance to IDPs and emergency fuel to WASH facilities, the activation of psychosocial support helplines, and launching a mass media campaign to raise awareness about the risks of unexploded ordnance (for further detail, see Humanitarian Needs and Responses). However, without a humanitarian pause, an opening of the crossings, and significant funding, the reach of operations will remain limited.

WEST BANK HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW

Casualties

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces have continued for eight consecutive days. Since the start of the hostilities until 16:00 of today, Israeli forces have killed 49 Palestinians, including 13 children. An additional five Palestinians were killed by Israeli settlers during two consecutive settler attacks in Qusra (Nablus). This has been the deadliest week for West Bank Palestinians since OCHA began recording casualties in 2005.

From the afternoon of Friday to 16:00 today, Israeli forces shot and killed 19 Palestinians, including seven boys, mostly during confrontations that erupted in protests and marches in solidarity with residents of the Gaza Strip. This has raised concerns of possible excessive use of force.

During the same period, Israeli forces injured 593 Palestinians. Bringing the total number of Palestinians injured since 7 October to over 1,150 Palestinians, including at least 106 children. Most of the injuries (over 1,000) were reported in various demonstrations in solidarity with residents of the Gaza Strip, and 26 per cent were by live ammunition.

Settler-related violence

Settler violence across the West Bank, especially in Palestinian communities near Israeli settlements, has been on the rise. Since 7 October, OCHA has recorded 67 settler attacks against Palestinians resulting in casualties or property damage, including some where Israeli forces were involved. This represents an average of eight incidents per day, compared with a daily average of three incidents since the beginning of this year.

In the past 24 hours, settler violence incidents continued. In four reported incidents, armed Israeli settlers, sometimes accompanied by Israeli forces, opened live fire at homes or residents in the towns of At Tuwani (Hebron), Burin, Yatma and Qabalan (all in Nablus). As a result, three Palestinians were injured.



Attacks on health care

Since 7 October, WHO has documented 48 attacks in the West Bank, 29 attacks involving obstruction to delivery of health care, affecting 44 ambulances; 24 involving physical violence towards health teams; 12 involving the detention of health staff and ambulances; and seven involving militarized search of health assets.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS & RESPONSES

Protection

Priority Needs

- Psychological first aid (PFA) services, psychological counseling services and psychosocial/recreational/50,000 dignity kits.
- Need to increase documentation of violations of International Human Rights Law and Humanitarian Law.
- Supportive tools and devices such as crutches, wheelchairs, earphones, eyeglasses, etc., and medications for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Response to Date

- Ten child protection and Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) partners are operating in and for Gaza (six in Gaza Strip and four partners in West Bank) providing remote psychosocial support.
- The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has initiated an emergency mass media campaign through various platforms, including social media and radio stations, to send Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and Conflict Preparedness and Protection (CPP) messages to as wide a population as possible.
- In the West Bank, the assigned MHPSS Focal Points for responding to settler violence triggers are continuing their MHPSS response as much as possible and the MHPSS Coordination Lead Focal Points at governorate levels are intervening as needed.

Shelter

Priority Needs

- Urgent need to provide services and basic Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).
- Provision of shelter support in the form of NFIs (Non-Food Items) and house maintenance for people displaced at urban centers and host families.
- Provision of shelter cash assistance for IDPs (reintegration package and belongings loss compensation) for at least 3,000 families.

Response to Date

- 270,000 IDPs are hosted at 102 UNRWA schools across Gaza Strip.
- Distribution of 3,900 NFIs in Rafah and Khan Younis including bedding sets, dignity kits.
- Distribution of 820 hygiene kits to displaced families.
- ICRC/PRCS distributed 120NFIs for displaced families.



Health

Priority Needs

- Addressing shortages of medical supplies impacting case management.
- Fuel for hospitals and ambulances is on the verge of running out.
- Urgent need to restock medical supplies from external sources due to the severe depletion in the local market.
- UNRWA managed to have medical points in 53 out of the 108 shelters; the Health Cluster is identifying other partners who can support in the remaining shelters.

Response to Date

- Partners continue to procure supplies from the local market to support hospital operations.
- Surge staff remain present in the hospitals supporting case management.
- Ambulances and emergency medical teams continue to operate despite the risk and difficult environment.

Food Security

Priority Needs

- Electricity, fuel, and water sources to maintain internal food markets.
- Many shops now have supplies lasting less than a week, increasing urgency.
- Safe access to farms, livestock, fisheries, and other food livelihood.
- Urgent import of fodder.

Response to Date

- The World Food Program (WFP) reached 220,000 displaced people residing in UNRWA shelters, providing canned food and bread.
- On the day of the evacuation (13 October), over 135,000 displaced people received fresh bread in shelters in south and central Gaza and few locations in the north.
- WFP provided cash transfer of \$12.4 to 138,863 displaced people and cash emergency top-up of \$5 to 164,000 regular beneficiaries who had already received their October transfer.

Education

Priority Needs

- Safe access to schools and communities.

Planned Responses

- Provision of school-based psychosocial support and recreational activities for at least 70,000 children and school staff as soon as the situation allows.
- Emergency rehabilitation for at least 20 damaged schools, following a cluster rapid needs assessment.



- Provision of emergency supplies and learning kits to 10,000 children in DES and 50,000 children in schools once they reopen.
- Provision of catch-up classes, especially to displaced children (at least 20,000 child)

WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)

Priority Needs

- Provision of clean drinking water to the population.
- Provision of alternative power supply and 20,000 liters/day of emergency fuel to sustain the operation of WASH facilities, along with replenishing the chlorine supply for water treatment plants.
- Support to restore disrupted municipal services, including solid waste management, water, and sanitation operations, as appealed by the Gaza Strip municipalities.
- Delivery of essential WASH services and provisions to IDPs in collective centers, including drinking water and hygiene kits.

Planned Response to Date

- Service hub planning in Raffa Egypt with supply chain from local markets and/or agency stocks (including fuel and bottled water for quick recovery, hygiene kits, water storage bladder tanks, jerrycans, materials for treatment plans) and planning IDP kits for 300,000 people.
- Reviewing and checking feasibility of water trucking operations.

Protection against sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA) remains a cross-cutting priority for all clusters. The SAWA helpline, reachable at 121 and through WhatsApp at +972 59-4040121 (East Jerusalem at 1-800-500-121), operates 24/7. This toll-free number is widely disseminated across all areas of intervention to report cases of SEA and to facilitate emergency counseling and referrals for affected communities to access life-saving services. The PSEA Network is monitoring calls daily and will increase the number of counselors if necessary.

