

Many Palestinian families fleeing from Madinat Hamad in Khan Younis following an Israeli evacuation order on 11 August. Photo: Themba Linden/OCHA

Humanitarian Situation Update #203 | Gaza Strip

12 Aug 2024

The Humanitarian Situation Update is issued by OCHA Occupied Palestinian Territory three times per week. The Gaza Strip is covered on Mondays and Fridays, and the West Bank is covered on Wednesdays. The next update will be issued on 14 August.

Key Highlights

- A school hosting hundreds of displaced families in Gaza city was struck by the Israeli military, resulting in mass casualties.
- More than half of schools used as shelters have been directly hit, UNCIEF reports.
- Two new evacuation orders were issued by the Israeli military; to date, about 84 per cent of the Gaza Strip has been placed under evacuation orders.
- The cumulative impact of access constraints is perpetuating a continued cycle of deprivation and distress among affected people. Since 1 August, about a third of aid missions within Gaza were denied access by Israeli authorities.

Humanitarian Developments

- Israeli bombardment from the air, land, and sea continues to be reported across much of the Gaza Strip, resulting in further civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure. Ground incursions and heavy fighting also continue to be reported. Rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups toward Israel was also reported.
- Between the afternoons of 9 and 12 August, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, 198 Palestinians were killed and 430 were injured, excluding those whose bodies are yet to be identified. Between 7 October 2023 and 12 August 2024, at least 39,897 Palestinians were killed and 92,152 were injured, according to MoH in Gaza.
- On 10 August, the Israeli military hit Al Tabi'een School in Ad Daraj neighbourhood in Gaza city, killing and injuring dozens of internally displaced people (IDPs) who had sought refuge at the school. The school-turned-shelter was reportedly hosting hundreds of internally displaced families when it was hit, and at the time of the strike, people were performing the dawn prayer at the school's prayer hall. According to initial reports from Palestinian Civil Defense (PCD), about 90 people were killed, including 11 children and six women, and tens injured. At least 70 bodies were reportedly transported to Al Ahli hospital, and some could not be identified as their bodies were disfigured in the explosion. The hospital is one of 16 hospitals that remain only partially functional in the Gaza Strip. The hospital was overwhelmed by the mass casualty incident amid a critical shortage of medications, clean water and hospital beds. Subsequently, humanitarian partners on the ground visited the school and have been providing families who returned to the school with drinking water, food parcels, hot meals, hygiene kits, as well as clothing and other non-food items. Partners also provided psychological first aid (PFA) and psychosocial support activities for children and their parents.
- The following are among other deadly incidents reported between 8 and 10 August:
  - On 8 August, eight Palestinians were reportedly killed and others injured when a house was hit in Al Bureij Refugee Camp, in Deir al Balah.
  - On 8 August, six Palestinians were reportedly killed and two others injured when a house was hit in Al Qarara, in Khan Younis.

- On 9 August, four Palestinians, including two women, were reportedly killed and others injured when a house was hit in western An Nuseirat Refugee Camp in Deir al Balah.
- On 9 August, at about 16:00, four Palestinians including three children were reportedly killed when an apartment was hit nearby the Power Distribution Company, in the vicinity of Al Samar Junction, in central Gaza city.
- On 9 August, at about 20:10, four Palestinians including three children were reportedly killed and six others injured when a house was hit in the vicinity of Khadija School, in Deir al Balah.
- On 9 August, at about 22:00, five Palestinians were reportedly killed and 17 others injured when a house was hit and two adjacent houses were damaged, in western An Nuseirat Refugee Camp, in Deir al Balah.
- On 10 August, at about 2:25, six Palestinians were reportedly killed and 15 others injured when a house was hit in Jabalya, in North Gaza.

- Between the afternoons of 9 and 12 August, one Israeli soldier was reported killed in Gaza, according to the Israeli military. Between 7 October 2023 and 12 August 2024, according to the Israeli military and official Israeli sources cited in the media, more than 1,530 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed, the majority on 7 October and its immediate aftermath and including 330 soldiers killed in Gaza or along the border in Israel since the beginning of the ground operation. In addition, 2,204 Israeli soldiers were reported injured since the beginning of the ground operation. As of 12 August, it is estimated that 115 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including hostages who have been declared dead.

- On 10 and 11 August, the Israeli military issued two evacuation orders, mostly for areas that were previously placed under evacuation. Initial mapping indicates that the areas affected by these orders encompass about 23 IDP sites, 14 water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, and four educational facilities. The first order, issued on 10 August, affected 1.35 square kilometres in east and central Khan Younis, and mostly included areas that were previously placed under evacuation notices. The second order, issued on 11 August, affected 0.84 square kilometres that encompass Madinat Hamad as well as parts of Al Jala'a, Al Kateebeh, and As Sater neigbourhoods. The bloc is located within the so-called “humanitarian area” and has an estimated population of about 23,000 people, according to the Site Management Working Group, most of whom are IDPs. Except for Al Jala'a, these neighbourhoods had previously received evacuation orders.

- As of 12 August, Israel's unilaterally declared “humanitarian area,” in Al Mawasi, has been reduced from 58.9 square kilometres in early 2024 to approximately 46 square kilometres, covering about 12.6 per cent of the Gaza Strip. In total, about 305 square kilometres, or nearly 84 per cent of the Gaza Strip, have been placed under evacuation orders by the Israeli military.

- Since 4 July, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) has recorded 21 strikes against schools serving as shelters in the Gaza Strip, which have resulted in at least 274 fatalities, including women and children. This includes at least seven schools serving as IDP shelters that were reportedly hit since 1 August, namely: Dalal Al Mughrabi School on 1 August, Hamama School on 3 August, An Nasser and Hasan Salama schools on 4 August, Al Zahra and Abelfattah Hamouda schools on 8 August, and Al Tabi’een School on 10 August. In a statement issued on 10 August, OHCHR condemned the increased frequency of strikes by the Israeli military “on schools where hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced Palestinians have sought shelter, conducted with apparent disregard for the high rate of civilian fatalities.” OHCHR further stated: “Despite IDF statements that all measures are taken to avoid civilian harm, the repeated strikes on IDP shelters in areas to which the populations have been forced to move, and the consistent and predictable impact on civilians, suggest a failure to strictly comply with obligations required by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack.”

- More than half of schools used as IDP shelters have been directly hit in the last 10 months, with devastating consequences for children and families, UNICEF reports. According to the most recent assessment of school damages by the Education Cluster, which relies on satellite imagery collected on 6 July, 85 per cent of school buildings (477 out of 564) were directly hit (344) or damaged (133). These include 264 public schools, 156 UNRWA schools and 57 private schools. According to PCD, some 180 schools serving as shelters of displaced people have been directly hit since October 2023. At the same time, humanitarian actors on the ground are attempting to support children in schools as part of the launching of UNRWA’s “Back to Learning” program, which started on 1 August in Gaza city, Deir al Balah and Khan Younis. The programme, which is initially targeting 45 schools and will gradually expand to 94 schools (approximately 28,000 children), seeks to provide safe spaces for children to play, learn and cope with trauma. This intervention could become increasingly difficult to implement should attacks against schools continue.

- "The unrelenting war in Gaza continues to inflict horrors on thousands of children, keeping far too many separated from their loved ones,” stated UNICEF Communication Officer, Salim Oweis, in a press briefing on the impact of the ongoing war on children in Gaza. On 6 August, UNICEF conducted a successful mission to reunite seven children with their families, including an 8-month-old baby who was reunited with his family in North Gaza months following his evacuation to receive neo-natal medical care at Al Aqsa hospital in Deir al Balah. Another three children were reunited with their father in North Gaza after their mother and sibling were killed in southern Gaza, UNICEF reported to CNN. Moreover, one child in the UNICEF mission was reunited with his grandmother, who will take care of him after his mother, father and siblings were killed. This UNICEF program has been running since March and entails tracking relatives of unaccompanied children who have been orphaned, lost or separated from their families. Jessica Dixon, child protection coordinator at UNICEF told CNN that there are several causes for family separation, including the detention of family members while moving from the north to southern Gaza, and highlighted that operational constraints include “a huge lack of access…a lack of security, [and] a lack of communications.” According to UNICEF, the number of unaccompanied or separated children in Gaza is unknown as “it is nearly impossible to gather and verify information under the current security and humanitarian conditions.” However, based on an analysis of global conflict trends, UNICEF estimates that there are at least 17,000 unaccompanied or separated children in Gaza.

- Access constraints within Gaza, driven by intense hostilities, the division between the north and south and frequent evacuation orders, severely impede the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people across Gaza. Between 1 and 11 August, out of the 85 coordinated humanitarian assistance missions to northern Gaza, only 34 were facilitated by Israeli authorities, 32 were denied access, 13 were impeded, and six were cancelled due to logistical, operational, or security reasons. In addition, out of the 122 coordinated humanitarian assistance missions to areas in southern Gaza, 63 were facilitated by Israeli authorities, 36 were denied, eight were impeded, and 15 were cancelled. Combined, denied missions (68) comprise about a third of planned missions since 1 August. The cumulative impacts of access constraints undermine efforts to address urgent humanitarian needs, perpetuating a continued cycle of deprivation and distress among affected people across Gaza.

Funding

- As of 12 August, Member States have disbursed about US$1.6 billion out of $3.42 billion (47 per cent) requested to meet the most critical needs of 2.3 million* people in Gaza and 800,000 people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, between January and December 2024. On 10 July, DSC/RC/HC Mohannad Hadi stated that, “more funding is urgently needed – as is a safe, enabling environment inside Gaza. Increased funding now will enable the humanitarian community to scale up operations as soon as conditions permit. For funding analysis, please see the Flash Appeal Financial Tracking dashboard. (*2.3 million reflects the projected population of the Gaza Strip upon issuance of the Flash Appeal in April 2024. As of July 2024, the UN estimates that about 2.1 million people remain in the Gaza Strip, and this updated number is now used for programmatic purposes.)

- During July 2024, the occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF) managed a total of 98 ongoing projects, totalling $81.4 million. These projects aimed to address urgent needs in the Gaza Strip (89 per cent) and the West Bank (11 per cent). The projects were strategically focused on Education, Food Security, Health, Protection, Emergency Shelter & Non-Food Items (NFI), Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Coordination and Support Services, Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance and Nutrition. Of these projects, 55 projects are being implemented by international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), 31 by national NGOs and 12 by UN agencies. Notably, 32 out of the 67 projects implemented by INGOs or the UN are being implemented in collaboration with national NGOs. Since 7 October, the oPt HF has mobilized over $112 million from Member States and private donors to support urgent humanitarian and life-saving programmes across the OPT. Of total funding, 89 per cent has been allocated to projects in Gaza. A summary of the oPt HF activities and challenges in July 2024 is available through this link and the 2023 Annual Report of the oPt HF can be accessed here. Private donations are collected directly through the oPt HF. For an overall picture of the OCHA-managed pooled funds response since October 2023, please see (link).