

Displaced Palestinians shelter in Al Mawasi area, Gaza Strip, amid ongoing hostilities. Photo: Themba Linden/OCHA

Humanitarian Situation Update #206 | Gaza Strip

19 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 21 August.

Key Highlights

- A 10-month-old baby is the first confirmed case of active poliomyelitis, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.
- Some 13,500 internally displaced people across 18 sites have been affected by the latest Israeli military evacuation order issued on 17 August. Around 213,000 Palestinians have been affected by nine evacuation orders since the beginning of August. In total, 314 square kilometres (86 per cent) of the Gaza Strip have come under evacuation orders since 7 October.
- Fuel shortages force hospitals to postpone critical surgeries and threaten to halt ambulances, particularly in northern Gaza.
- On 19 August, World Humanitarian Day was observed, an occasion to reflect on the 289 aid workers killed in Gaza since 7 October 2023.

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, particularly in eastern area of Khan Younis and Deir al Balah, and heavy fighting also continue to be reported. Rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups toward Israel was also reported.
- Between the afternoons of 15 and 19 August, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, 134 Palestinians were killed and 342 were injured. Between 7 October 2023 and 19 August 2024, at least 40,319 Palestinians were killed and 92,743 were injured, according to MoH in Gaza.
- The following are some of the deadly incidents reported between 15 and 18 August:
  - On 15 August, at about 19:10, seven Palestinians, including at least one woman, were reportedly killed and others injured when an apartment was hit in Al Mtein residential building, near At Tawba Mosque in Jabalya Refugee Camp, in North Gaza.
  - On 16 August, at about 2:00, at least five Palestinians were reportedly killed and eight others injured when a residential building was hit in Ad Daraj area, in Gaza city.
  - On 16 August, at about 12:20, eight Palestinians were reportedly killed and others injured when people were attempting to obtain aid and were hit in eastern Rafah.
  - On 16 August, at about 12:25, seven Palestinians, including one woman and three girls, were reportedly killed and others injured when an internally displaced people's (IDP) tent was hit in Al Mawasi, west of Khan Younis.
  - On 17 August, at about 00:50, at least 15 Palestinians, including five women, and nine children, were reportedly killed and others injured when IDPs were hit at Az Zawayda entrance on Salah Ad Deen Road, in Deir al Balah.

  - On 18 August, at about 7:05, seven Palestinians, including a mother and her six children, were reportedly killed when an apartment was hit on Al Mazraa Street in Deir al Balah.

  - On 17 August, at about 10:15, seven Palestinians, including three women, were reportedly killed when a house was hit in west of An Nuseirat Refugee Camp, in Deir al Balah.

- Between the afternoons of 16 and 19 August, two Israeli soldiers were reportedly killed in Gaza, according to the Israeli military. Between 7 October 2023 and 19 August 2024, according to the Israeli military and official Israeli sources cited in the media, more than 1,532 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed, the majority on 7 October and its immediate aftermath and including 332 soldiers killed in Gaza or along the border in Israel since the beginning of the ground operation. In addition, 2,219 Israeli soldiers were reported injured since the beginning of the ground operation. As of 19 August, it is estimated that 115 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including hostages who have been declared dead and whose remains are in Gaza.

- 19 August marks World Humanitarian Day which recognises aid workers worldwide and mobilizes people from around the world to advocate for the broader humanitarian cause. Year 2023 was the deadliest year on record globally for humanitarians, and 2024 could be even worse, with 172 aid workers killed as of August. More than half of the 2023 deaths worldwide were recorded in Gaza between October and December – the first three months of the hostilities. The majority of these deaths occurred during airstrikes. In just 11 months, 289 aid workers in Gaza – the majority of them staff members of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) – have been killed, some while on duty.

- On 16 August, the Palestinian Minister of Health, Majed Abu Ramadan, announced the first confirmed active case of poliomyelitis in the Gaza Strip. The case concerns a 10-month-old baby from Deir al Balah, who was unable to be vaccinated due to the ongoing hostilities. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres stressed that "hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza [are] at risk" and that the UN stands ready to launch "a vital polio vaccine campaign" for more than 640,000 children under the age of 10. The World Health Organization (WHO) has approved the release of 1.6 million doses of vaccine, UNICEF is coordinating their delivery along with cold storage units, and UNRWA's medical teams will administer the vaccines once they arrive in Gaza. Secretary-General Guterres underscored that for the campaign to be successful, transport of vaccines and required equipment would need to be facilitated as well as the entry of polio experts into Gaza, adequate fuel, increased flow of cash, reliable communications, and ensuring the safety of both health workers and people reaching health facilities. While the "ultimate vaccine for polio is peace and an immediate humanitarian ceasefire," at the very minimum, a "polio pause is a must." UNICEF's Executive Director, Catherine Russel warned in a separate statement that "we cannot allow polio to spread in Gaza and threaten not just Gazans, but all children in the region" and that the re-emergence of the virus in the Strip after a quarter century is "another sobering reminder of how chaotic, desperate and dangerous the situation has become".

- Severe shortages of fuel and medical supplies continue to disrupt the functionality of remaining hospitals and primary healthcare centres, particularly in northern Gaza. On 19 August, the Director of the Al Awda Hospital, Dr. Mohamed Saleh, announced that all surgery operations had been postponed at the facility as he appealed for the urgent delivery of fuel to avert the further loss of lives. Conditions are equally critical at the Kamal Adwan Hospital, where fuel and medical supply shortages are reportedly threatening to cease operations. WHO and its partners are working to get fuel to these facilities. On 18 August, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) also warned that its ambulances, emergency medical clinics and relief services are at risk of being halted in northern Gaza due to the lack of fuel, with its teams already operating at minimum capacity and only two out of eight ambulances presently functioning.

- On 17 August, the Israeli military issued an evacuation order affecting multiple neighbourhoods in Deir al Balah, including the entire Al Maghazi Refugee Camp. Before 7 October, approximately 33,000 people lived in the affected areas. Initial mapping indicates that the order affected seven neighbourhoods that where some 13,500 people resided across 18 IDP sites. These included seven makeshift sites, three UNRWA collective centres, one non-UNRWA collective centre, and seven scattered sites. Additionally, the evacuation order affected 14 WASH facilities, five schools, and 10 health facilities, including two primary health care centres (PHCs) and five operational medical points. The ongoing hostilities, constant evacuation orders and severe shortages of essential supplies are significantly worsening the challenges faced by displaced families and making it increasingly difficult for them to access basic services at their arrival sites.

- Since the beginning of August, the Israeli military has issued nine evacuation orders that are affecting an estimated 213,000 people across Khan Younis, Deir al Balah, and to a lesser extent, northern Gaza. Since the escalation of hostilities, 314 square kilometres of the Gaza strip (86 per cent) have been placed under evacuation orders. The population is increasingly concentrated within the Israeli-designated zone in Al Mawasi, which continues to shrink and the density in this area has surged to an estimated 30,000 to 34,000 people per square kilometre compared to an estimated 1,200 people per square kilometre before October 2023. The area has decreased from 50.28 square kilometre on 22 July to 41.05 kilometre or just 11 per cent of the Gaza Strip. This reduction in space, combined with overcrowding, heightened insecurity, inadequate and overstretched infrastructure, ongoing hostilities, and limited services is exacerbating the dire humanitarian situation for the hundreds of thousands of people forced to live inside it.

- Lack of fuel, denial of access and destroyed rescue equipment by Israeli forces, are a major challenge for the Palestinian Civil Defence (PCD) to coordinate a response to the needs of people in Gaza. On 18 August, the PCD reported that it had received 87,000 appeals of which 72,000 were responded to despite these challenges, however they were unable to respond to the remaining 15,000. Additionally, since the escalation of hostilities 82 PCD staff were killed and more than 270 were injured, including members on duty. PCD facilities have been directly hit and 38 vehicles were destroyed, severely impacting their ability to save lives. There are also an estimated 10,000 people presumed dead and missing under the rubble that PCD have not been able to reach, as their rescue equipment and vehicles have been hit by Israeli forces. Reportedly, there are 1,760 fatalities that cannot

be traced due to the use of weapons that render it impossible to find a body. Lastly, PCD states that 2,210 buried bodies from various graves across the Gaza that have been reportedly taken to an unknow location by Israeli forces.

- According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 24 per cent of Palestinian fatalities in Gaza were young adults (aged 18-29), with 26 per cent being males and 22 per cent females. This toll significantly impacts the future of Palestinian youth in Gaza, who constitute about 21 per cent of the overall population in Gaza. On 12 August, the UN highlighted the unprecedented hardship that Palestinian youth are facing, especially in Gaza. This is compounded by the death toll among students and academic staff and the destruction and closure of all higher education institutions in Gaza, depriving about 88 thousand students of their higher education. The International Labour Organization (ILO) warns that unemployment rates constitute the biggest challenge for the youth in Gaza, where young people constituted 95 per cent of the overall unemployment rate (75 per cent) in the fourth quarter of 2023. According to ILO, such rates are expected to continue to increase, limiting the future of Palestinian youth.

Funding

- As of 16 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. 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).