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GAZA EMERGENCY SITUATION UPDATES

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN GAZA?

(Last updated: 10 January 2024)

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) has launched an unprecedented emergency response amid growing critical health needs in Gaza and the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, resulting from the current escalation of violence and Israel's ongoing bombardment and complete siege on Gaza.

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On 7 October, Israel launched an extensive aerial bombardment across all areas of Gaza, hitting homes, hospitals, clinics, schools and essential infrastructure. This has resulted in mass casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure:

- More than 23,210 Palestinians have been killed, around 70% of whom are children and women.
- Thousands more are thought to remain missing under the rubble of buildings destroyed by Israeli airstrikes
- 200,000 + housing units damaged or destroyed, roughly 45% of all homes in Gaza.

Israel's military assault follows attacks in cities and towns surrounding Gaza by Palestinian armed groups which killed at least 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, and more than 5,400 injured according to Israeli media.

Since 9 October, Israeli authorities have imposed a total siege on Gaza, halting the entry food, fuel, electricity, medical items and water, with the following effects:

- **MOVEMENT:** The combination of intensified ground operations and Israeli forces' restriction of movement has essentially split Gaza into three areas: Gaza, the middle and the south, with very limited access between. A map published by Israel, which splits Gaza into 2,376 numbered zones, has not provided any sense of security for civilians. Areas encompassing almost 30% of Gaza have now been marked for evacuation (excluding those ordered to evacuate north of Wadi Gaza). With communications difficult, and bombardment continuing both inside and outside those areas demarcated as "unsafe", it has instead heightened the panic among people who are desperately seeking a scrap of land where they can find shelter, food and safety.
- **ELECTRICITY**: Gaza has been under an electricity blackout for almost two months, following Israel's shutting off the electricity supply and the depletion of fuel reserves for Gaza's sole power plant. Telecommunications blackouts are becoming more frequent, sowing terror among the population, and diminishing the ability of the humanitarian system to operate. The lack of fuel for the power plant, generators and vehicles is affecting food, water, livelihoods, shelter, communications and the distribution of aid.
- **SHELTER:** Almost 1.9 million people in Gaza are internally displaced (IDPs). Of them, almost 1.4 million are sheltering in overcrowded UNRWA facilities. Due to overcrowding and poor sanitation, significant increases in communicable diseases and conditions, such as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections, have been reported. (OCHA)
- **WATER**: the UN reports there is no access to clean water in northern governorates. 20 WASH facilities have been damaged. The risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera due to unsafe water consumption remains very high.
- **FOOD**: As of 6 Dec, 97% of households in northern governorates have inadequate food consumption, and 83% of IDPs in the south (WFP). The lack of food is raising alarming concerns of widespread hunger, with the WFP warning of the "immediate possibility of starvation." On 18 December, Human Rights Watch accused the Israeli government of "using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare" in Gaza. As of 21st December, OCHA reported that 2.2 million people are at imminent risk of famine with 378,000 at Phase 5 (catastrophic levels) referring to an extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaustion of coping capacities.
- **HEALTH SYSTEM:** (13 of 36) and primary healthcare clinics (54 of 72) and have ceased operating due to damage, lack of fuel, or insecurity. According to the WHO, hospital bed capacity across all of Gaza has now been reduced from 3,500 to just 1,400.
- **HEALTH INDICATORS:** The MOH has confirmed at least 350,000 confirmed cases of infectious diseases, noting that the actual number is likely to be higher. WHO has reported that cases of meningitis, jaundice, impetigo, chickenpox and other upper respiratory tract infections have been recorded. The director of the Abu Youssef An Najjar Hospital in Rafah announced that diarrhoea and influenza were spreading amongst IDPs in Rafah; including 1,500 cases of intestinal disease reported daily due to food shortages. (OCHA)
- **Emergency Medical Teams:** Guided by MAP's more than 30 years of experience working inside Gaza, the Emergency Medical Team, comprises a group of trauma doctors, surgeons, paediatricians and humanitarian experts. They are working alongside their local counterparts to support the treatment of trauma injuries, the provision of emergency and urgent clinical care and emergency resuscitation. As well as Emergency Medical Teams, MAP and IRC are working together to supply essential medical items, including those needed to treat trauma injuries, to Gaza's hospitals through the Rafah Crossing with Egypt. On Friday 29 December, the latest shipment of four truckloads of medicines and disposables entered Gaza, for distribution to Ministry of Health hospitals in the South and Middle Areas of Gaza. Reporting from Gaza, Professor Nick Maynard, a senior surgeon from Oxford University Hospital and the EMT's clinical lead, said, "The injuries we're witnessing are predominantly blast injuries with shrapnel wounds all over the body. Most are to the limbs, and multiple adults and children and babies coming in with traumatic amputations of arms and legs. We've seen small children with the most horrible facial burns. Every square inch of the hospital - the halls, the staircases, the reception areas, the wards - are covered with people lying on the ground."

This escalation is spilling over into the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Since 7 October:

- Israeli soldiers and settlers killed 3390Palestinians, including 84 children. Over the course of ten weeks, more Palestinians have been killed than in the whole of 2022, already the deadliest year since 2005.
- Between 7 Oct-14 Dec, 49 new access obstacles were enforced, and 100 previous obstacles have changed status - bringing the total number of obstacles to 694. Teams are increasingly worried about movement restrictions, with fears that northern areas could be completely cut off.

- At least 1,257 people, including 582 children, have been displaced amid settler violence and access restrictions. According to OCHA, a further 915 Palestinians have been displaced following demolitions of their homes or destruction during operations by Israeli forces.

LEBANON

MAP is worried too about the potential impact of growing instability in southern Lebanon, with continued clashes between armed groups and Israeli forces across the border. No Palestinian deaths or injuries have so far been reported.

HOW IS MAP RESPONDING?

MAP's permanent team in Gaza were among the first to respond to the current emergency by releasing more than US$570,000 worth of pre-positioned stocks of drugs, medical disposables, and other humanitarian supplies held in our warehouses to hospitals and shelters.

Working in the most challenging of circumstances, MAP's team have sourced more than $1.8 million of humanitarian supplies from the local market, which have been distributed to hospitals and shelters. This includes medicines, disposables and lab reagents for hospitals, and mattresses, blankets and hygiene kits for thousands of people displaced from their homes.

MAP has now set up operations in Egypt, where we are procuring additional supplies of medical and other essential items and delivering these to Gaza through the Rafah crossing in coordination with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. We have so far delivered $2.5 million USD worth of medical items, including antibiotics, ultrasound gels, intravenous paracetamol, and saline. In the coming weeks we aim to launch our first delegations of medical experts to Gaza.

MAP is calling on the international community to take urgent steps to secure a ceasefire and ensure civilians are safe from attack wherever they are. We are also demanding an end to the siege and the collective punishment of Gaza's population, and unimpeded safe access for humanitarian supplies and medical teams into and around Gaza.

Additionally in the West Bank, with an explosion of Israeli military and settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, and growing movement restrictions that restrict the movement of people and health workers, emergency healthcare needs are growing there as well. In response, MAP is working to equip four urgent care centres across the West Bank, as well as frontline emergency medical services with the medicines and equipment they need to treat the wounded, as well as pre-positioning emergency supplies to be released in case of further escalation.

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MAP is also calling on the international community to take urgent steps to secure a ceasefire, rescind the evacuation orders, and ensure civilians are safe from attack wherever they are. We are also demanding an end to the siege and the collective punishment of Gaza's population, and unimpeded safe access for humanitarian supplies and medical teams.

MAP also emphasises the urgent need to address the root causes of violence, including the now 16-year blockade and closure of Gaza and decades-long occupation.

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