

A Palestinian boy in a site for displaced people in Gaza city. Photo by OCHA/Olga Cherevko

Humanitarian Situation Update #286 | Gaza Strip

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The Humanitarian Situation Updates on the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank are both issued every Wednesday. The Gaza Humanitarian Response Update is issued every other Tuesday. The next Humanitarian Situation Updates will be published on 14 May.

Key Highlights

- Over nine weeks into the full aid blockade imposed on people in Gaza, some 15 UN entities and 200 non-governmental organizations have rejected proposals by Israeli officials to dismantle the existing aid distribution system run by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners.

- UNICEF warns that children in Gaza are facing a growing risk of starvation, illness and death, as a third of UN-supported community kitchens have shut down in the past 10 days due the depletion of food supplies and limited access to fuel.

- Over 75 per cent of households in Gaza report a decline in water access over the past month, amid deteriorating sanitation conditions.

- Gaza's medical rehabilitation system is at a breaking point – overwhelmed by traumatic injuries, damaged infrastructure, and severe shortages of specialists, supplies, and equipment – leaving persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups without essential care.

Humanitarian Developments

- Since 18 March 2025, Israeli forces have escalated bombardment from the air, land and sea across the Gaza Strip and expanded ground operations. This has resulted in hundreds of casualties, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and large-scale displacement. Fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups has been reported. Strikes on residential buildings and tents of internally displaced people (IDPs) also continue to be reported, alongside detonation of buildings, especially in Rafah and eastern Gaza city. Humanitarian operations have been stifled by a combination of expanded military activity, the Israeli government's full blockade on the entry of humanitarian aid and commercial supplies (since 2 March), attacks on humanitarian facilities, and severe movement restrictions within Gaza. As of 6 May, over 428,000 people are estimated to have been displaced again since the escalation of hostilities on 18 March, according to the Site Management Cluster (SMC), with no safe place to go.

- For over two months, Israeli authorities have made a deliberate decision to block all supplies to Gaza, bringing to a near-standstill humanitarian efforts to protect and assist civilians through the provision of commodities. In response to the ongoing blockade, the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG-ERC), Tom Fletcher, issued a stark warning: "Blocking aid starves civilians. It leaves them without basic medical support. It strips them of dignity and hope. It inflicts a cruel collective punishment. Blocking aid kills." In an earlier statement, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), underscored the severity of the situation: "As humanitarians, we can see that aid is being weaponized through its denial. There is no justification for this, and it has to stop."

- On 7 May, the Palestinian Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Mustafa, declared Gaza a "famine zone" during a press conference addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. He called on the United Nations system to "immediately activate its mechanisms" in response.

- While hundreds of truckloads with life-saving supplies are waiting to enter Gaza, children, who make up about half of Gaza's population, are facing the worst humanitarian crisis since October 2023, characterized by the growing risk of starvation, illness and death due to ongoing bombardments, forced displacement and the aid blockade, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). Access to food and drinking water is diminishing, malnutrition and diseases are spreading, and vaccines are running low, highlighted UNICEF's Executive Director, Catherine Russell, adding that about 75 per cent of households reported deteriorating access to water over the past month, with families often "forced to choose between showering, cleaning and cooking," and acute watery diarrhea now accounts for a quarter of disease cases recorded in Gaza. Similarly stressing the gravity of humanitarian conditions in Gaza, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Ghebreyesus, stated that "we don't need to see photos of emaciated children to know people are hungry, and that children are weak and malnourished, with life-long consequences."

- On 5 May, Israel's security cabinet reportedly approved a plan to expand military operations in the Gaza Strip and a modality for the distribution of limited supplies in Gaza, pending a separate decision of activation. According to Israeli officials cited in the media, the plan would entail the movement of most of the population to the southern part of the Strip, where the Israeli military would retain presence. According to the Israeli army spokesperson, the Rafah model will be replicated in other parts of the Strip.

- On 7 May, the UN Human Rights Chief, Volker Türk, warned that "Israel's reported plans to forcibly transfer Gaza's population to a small area in the south of the strip and threats by Israeli officials to deport Palestinians outside of Gaza further aggravate concerns that Israel's actions are aimed at inflicting on Palestinians conditions of life increasingly incompatible with their continued existence in Gaza as a group."

- In a statement issued on 5 May, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) – which brings together some 15 UN entities and over 200 NGOs – denounced plans by Israeli officials to dismantle the existing aid distribution system run by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners and channel supplies through Israeli hubs under conditions set by the Israeli military, once the Israeli government agrees to re-open crossings: "The design of the plan presented to us will mean large parts of Gaza, including the less mobile and most vulnerable people, will continue to go without supplies. It contravenes fundamental humanitarian principles and appears designed to reinforce control over life-sustaining items as a pressure tactic – as part of a military strategy. It is dangerous, driving civilians into militarized zones to collect rations, threatening lives, including those of humanitarian workers, while further entrenching forced displacement." On 8 April, the UN Secretary-General, and on 1 May the USG-ERC, had emphasized that the modality proposed by Israeli authorities fails to meet the minimum standards for principled humanitarian action and that the UN will not participate in any arrangement that does not fully respect humanitarian principles.

- According to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, between 30 April and 7 May, as of noon, 230 Palestinians were killed and 883 were injured. Between 7 October 2023 and 7 May 2025, the MoH in Gaza reported that at least 52,653 Palestinians were killed and 118,897 Palestinians were injured. This includes 2,545 people killed and 6,856 injured since the escalation of hostilities on 18 March 2025, according to MoH. On 5 May, MoH reported that 16,278 children have been killed in Gaza since October 2023.

- Between 2 and 7 May, incidents resulting in a large number of fatalities were reported across the Gaza Strip, including the following:
  - On 2 May, at about 1:37, nine Palestinians, including a girl and five women (one of them pregnant), were reportedly killed and 12 others, including children, were injured when a residential building was hit in northern Al Bureij refugee camp, in Deir al Balah.
  - On 2 May, at about 11:05, seven Palestinians, including at least one woman, were reportedly killed when mourners at a funeral were hit in Beit Lahiya, in North Gaza.
  - On 2 May, at about 15:20, 10 Palestinians, including at least one woman and her daughter, were reportedly killed when a residential building was hit in Jabalya al Balad, in North Gaza.
  - On 2 May, at about 22:00, nine Palestinians were reportedly killed when a residential building was hit in Ash Shuja'iyyeh, in eastern Gaza city.
  - On 3 May, at about 2:40, 11 Palestinians, including at least four women and four children (three infants and a boy), were reportedly killed and others injured when a residential building was hit in central Khan Younis.
  - On 4 May, 10 Palestinians, including seven women and one child, were reportedly killed and others injured when an IDP tent was hit in western Khan Younis.
  - On 4 May, at about 19:00, 15 Palestinians were reportedly killed and tens of others injured when a residential building was hit in At Tuffah, in northeastern Gaza city. Shooting was reported at people attempting to rescue those trapped under the rubble of the struck building.
  - On 5 May, at about 0:40, 15 Palestinians were reportedly killed and 10 others injured when three floors of a residential building were hit in western Beit Lahiya in North Gaza.
  - On 5 May, at about 18:00, 11 Palestinians, including a woman and male police officers, were reportedly killed and 21 injured when two locations were hit in An Nuseirat refugee camp, in Deir al Balah.
  - On 6 May, over 30 Palestinians, including children and women, were reportedly killed when an UNRWA school-turned-shelter, hosting 2,000 displaced people, was hit twice in Al Bureij refugee camp, in northeastern Deir al Balah, according to UNRWA.

    - On 7 May, 15 Palestinians were reportedly killed and 10 others injured when a school hosting IDPs was hit in At Tuffah neighbourhood in eastern Gaza city, according to Palestinian Civil Defence.

    - On 7 May, 33 Palestinians were reportedly killed and over 86 others injured in a strike next to a restaurant in Gaza city, according to MoH.

- Between 1 and 7 May, two Israeli soldiers were killed in Gaza, according to the Israeli military. Between 7 October 2023 and 7 May 2025, according to Israeli forces and official Israeli sources cited in the media, more than 1,612 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed, the majority on 7 October 2023 and its immediate aftermath. This includes 412 soldiers killed, in addition to 2,643 soldiers injured, in Gaza or along the border in Israel since the beginning of the ground operation in October 2023. These include five soldiers killed and 59 injured since the re-escalation of hostilities on 18 March 2025. As of 7 May, it is estimated that 59 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including hostages who have been declared dead and whose bodies are being withheld.

- Fishers and farmers in Gaza continue to face significant risks in accessing the sea and farmland due to restricted access and ongoing insecurity; farming areas have further diminished since 18 March, with 70 per cent of Gaza now designated as an Israeli-militarized zone or placed under displacement orders. Yet, the growing scarcity of food supplies in Gaza is driving some to take the risk. On 3 May, one fisher was reportedly hit and killed off the coast of Gaza city and another five fishers, including a boy, were injured separately on 3 and 6 May in Beit Lahiya in North Gaza, when fishers were hit off the coast. According to Amnesty International, one fisherman described the deadly gamble he is forced to take because his "family's survival depends on the money [they] can get out of selling the fish in the market." Moreover, in two incidents on 1 May, five farmers were reportedly killed in Rafah and in Beit Lahiya, in North Gaza, while agricultural lands were reportedly set on fire in Beit Hanun, in the northeastern area of North Gaza, between 28 and 30 April.

- On 2 May, marking World Press Freedom Day, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) in the OPT stated that "Palestinian journalists continue to be killed or injured at an alarming rate with impunity, along with widespread attacks on their work and freedom." The office further stated that the Israeli military has continued to refuse the entry of foreign journalists into Gaza, except for limited army-controlled visits. Marking the same occasion, the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS) reported that, since 7 October 2023, 210 male and female journalists and media workers have been killed, of whom 90 were killed in their homes, where many journalists had resorted to working after media offices were destroyed. Some have remained trapped under the rubble of their homes to this day, PJS noted, adding that 29 journalists were killed while in tents or inside IDP shelters, and many others have suffered critical injuries, some leading to amputations. On 7 May, two additional journalists were reportedly killed in two separate incidents in Gaza city and Deir al Balah, raising the number of journalists killed to 212, according to PJS.

- On the occasion of the International Workers' Day on 1 May, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PRCS) reported on rising unemployment in Gaza. While noting that this metric rose from 45 per cent in the third quarter of 2023 to 68 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2024, PRCS stressed that most labour force concepts and measurements have become inapplicable under the circumstances prevailing in Gaza, where economic activity is indefinitely suspended, and people's priority has shifted to securing shelter, food, and safety.

- In April 2025, the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster conducted the third monthly Light-Touch monitoring survey using the WISE methodology to assess water insecurity across the Gaza Strip. The findings reveal that 90 per cent of surveyed households experienced water insecurity in early April, with a high proportion of assessed households, ranging from 88 per cent to 100 per cent, reporting moderate to high water insecurity across all governorates. Overall, 75 per cent of households reported worsening levels of drinking water security. The main reasons included: decreasing volumes of accessible water (cited by 73 per cent respondents); fewer water points (68 per cent); and the growing number of families at displacement sites (42 per cent). In addition, the majority of households reported challenges to adequate sanitation, due to a decreasing number of functional latrines (57 per cent), lack of cleanliness (57 per cent), and the growing number of families at displacement sites (49 per cent). Households across governorates also reported reduced access to soap, as it is largely depleted and expensive when available. Amid these dire conditions, people are struggling to secure some of their basic WASH needs; according to the survey, 63 per cent of households reported that they have bought drinking water from private or unofficial suppliers to meet some of their needs in the two weeks preceding the survey.

- Recently, the Joint Service Council (JSC) for Solid Waste Management in southern Gaza has been managing a medical waste collection and storage service. The waste is collected from 32 health-care facilities and stored at a controlled location near the Al Amal dump site. To date, the JSC has collected over 140,000 kilograms of medical waste for a fee of 13 NIS ($3.6) per kilogram. Medical waste includes infectious material, which if not managed separately can render all waste infectious. The JSC in the governorates of Gaza and North Gaza are looking for a location for medical waste storage.

- On 3 May, the Municipality of Deir al Balah issued a warning about the unprecedented and severe water shortages in the governorate, particularly with the summer approaching and temperatures rising. Reliance on groundwater wells is frequently disrupted by a severe lack of maintenance and repair materials and limited access to diesel fuel needed to operate the wells, the municipality reported. The electricity supply line to the Southern Gaza Desalination Plant has been cut off for more than a month, and the Bani Saeed Mekorot water pipeline was damaged in January 2025, with coordination requests to repair it continuously denied by Israeli authorities.

- On 4 May, the Municipality of Jabalya an Nazla, in North Gaza, stated that there is widespread sewage overflow due to the lack of essential equipment and machinery, which were destroyed in airstrikes in April 2025. Over 90 per cent of the municipality's heavy machinery, including the only "jetter" truck used for sewage suction, are now out of service. The situation is further exacerbated by

the growing infestation of rodents and insects in overcrowded displacement shelters. The municipality warned of a major public health disaster if the crisis continues, heightening the risk of disease outbreaks amid limited medical services.

- On 6 May, the Municipality of Khan Younis announced that fuel shortages have resulted in a 30-per-cent reduction in all essential water and sanitation services, including water supply, sewage treatment, solid waste collection and disposal, and emergency operations. This has further worsened solid waste accumulation in the streets, led to the proliferation of unregulated garbage dumps, resulted in cases of sewage overflow, and hindered the ability of the municipality to operate water wells and desalination plants. The municipality warned that deteriorating public health conditions are gravely affecting about 700,000 people in the governorate.

Shrinking Humanitarian Space

- On 6 May, 55 international and local organisations operating in Israel and the OPT issued a statement, urgently calling on the international community to oppose Israeli registration measures that threaten to shut down humanitarian operations and undermine international law. According to the statement, under the new rules, registered international, non-governmental organizations (INGOs) face the risk of de-registration or rejections of new registration "based on arbitrary, politicised allegations, such as 'delegitimising Israel' or expressing support for accountability for Israeli violations of international law," among others. The 55 organizations warned that "[t]hese new rules are part of a broader, long-term crackdown on humanitarian and civic space, marked by heightened surveillance and attacks, and a series of actions that restrict humanitarian access, compromise staff safety, and undermine core principles of humanitarian action."

- In vast areas across the Gaza Strip, humanitarian teams are still required to coordinate their movements with the Israeli authorities. Between 30 April and 6 May, out of 63 requests to coordinate planned aid movements across the Gaza Strip, 43 were denied outright by the Israeli authorities, four were initially accepted but faced impediments, including blocks or delays on the ground potentially resulting in missions being aborted or partially accomplished, 14 were fully facilitated, and two were withdrawn by the organizers for logistical, operational, or security reasons. These include 24 requests for coordinated aid movements in or to northern Gaza, of which 10 were facilitated, 10 were denied, two faced impediments and two were withdrawn. In southern Gaza, out of the 39 requests for coordinated aid movements, four were facilitated, 33 were denied and two faced impediments. The majority of the denied missions had the objective of retrieving humanitarian cargo left in warehouses in Rafah and at Kerem Shalom crossing, repairing roads to improve accessibility to Kerem Shalom crossing, or retrieving commodities that are stored in areas in Rafah that are either in the Israeli-militarized zone or under displacement orders. Since 2 March, only seven requests to retrieve fuel from Rafah and Gaza city were facilitated while 35 were denied, two were withdrawn and one faced impediments. In Rafah, not a single attempt to retrieve fuel has been facilitated since 18 April.

- Over the past 10 days, between 27 April and 6 May, one in every three community kitchens had to close, leading to a 25-per-cent reduction in daily meal production; the number of meals prepared each day has dropped from 1.08 million, produced through 180 kitchens, to 823,000 meals, prepared and delivered through about 117 kitchens supported by the UN and its partners. Since late April, 100 kitchens have been forced to shut down due to the lack of supplies, and this number is rising by the day. It is expected that the number of meals will further drop to around 440,000 meals on 8 May. This reduction has a critical impact on food security, as the hot meals provided by these kitchens constitute one of the last remaining lifelines. According to the Food Security Sector (FSS), growing overcrowding is being observed across all remaining operational kitchens, leading to increased safety concerns and social tensions. The FSS warns that markets are also running out of commodities, with the very few shops still functioning charging very high prices that fluctuate constantly. For example, during the first week of May, one 25-kilogram bag of wheat flour was sold at upwards of 1,500 ILS (US$415) in Gaza city, representing a 30-fold increase compared with the end of February. Most families no longer have access to affordable bread following the closure of all 25 subsidized bakeries, while the skyrocketing price of flour, when available, and lack of cooking energy, prevent many families from baking.

- Since the collapse of the ceasefire on 18 March, the Education Cluster recorded at least 14 attacks on education infrastructure, causing additional damage, instilling widespread fear and causing delays to the reopening of temporary learning spaces (TLS). Currently, there are 200 TLS functioning across Gaza, benefiting about 117,000 students, with most concentrated in Deir al Balah and western Khan Younis. This includes 40 newly reopened TLS in Khan Younis and 20 in Deir al Balah, which had been paused due to insecurity, in addition to three new TLS in North Gaza and 16 in Gaza city. However, the further expansion of TLS in Gaza city, including nine additional spaces planned by UNRWA, remains hindered by the shortage of educational supplies, posing a serious barrier to the resumption of learning to serve thousands of children.

In Focus: Access to Health Services

- Ambulance services across the Gaza Strip are shrinking due to damage and lack of access to fuel. Prior to the collapse of the ceasefire on 18 March, 149 ambulances were operational, of which only 48 are now functional, severely limiting emergency medical transport and outreach capacity. Humanitarian partners report that many injured civilians now rely on makeshift means of transportation, with donkey carts being the most commonly used mode. This situation is especially dire for vulnerable groups, including the elderly, persons with disabilities and pregnant women, who increasingly depend on fractured social networks for access to health services. Additionally, six hospitals and two field hospitals are in areas that were placed under displacement orders by Israeli authorities, further hampering the access of new patients to life-saving care. This critically increases the risk of mortality and long-term complications, particularly for trauma patients who require urgent care. Across Gaza, about 350,000 people are suffering from chronic diseases, including 71,000 patients living with diabetes of whom about 1,000 patients have Type 1 Diabetes and require insulin therapy and regular medical attention.

- Capacity at health facilities is shrinking. When patients manage to reach medical facilities, the services available are minimal and insufficient to meet the vast scale of needs. Since 18 March, the number of public trauma hospitals has decreased from seven to

five. In parallel, the access of international medical staff to support emergency medical teams (EMT) has been more restricted, resulting in a 45-per-cent reduction in the number of international EMT staff, from 97 to 53. Meanwhile, the proportion of trauma and emergency care missions denied by Israeli authorities has increased from 25 to 40 per cent between 18 March and 5 May, according to the Health Cluster.

- The Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO) and the Disability Working Group have raised urgent concerns regarding the heightened vulnerability of older persons, many of whom are living with disabilities. There are about 321,000 elderly people (aged 60 and above) in Palestine, with about five per cent of Gaza's population falling into this age group, according to PCBS. Older persons face multiple challenges, including physical impairments, chronic illnesses, and limited mobility, which require sustained access to medical care, psychosocial support, and basic hygiene items. According to 2024 data from PCBS, about 78 per cent of the elderly population suffer from chronic illnesses. Their situation has been further exacerbated by the depletion of essential supplies in local markets, most notably adult diapers that are critical to maintaining the health, hygiene, and dignity of those relying on them. The extensive destruction of Gaza's infrastructure, including health facilities, roads and shelters, has severely restricted access to essential services and lifesaving support for this population group.

- In new guidelines on the minimum rehabilitation service package for Gaza, WHO, MoH, and the Health Cluster in the OPT stressed that rehabilitation is an essential health service in emergencies and conflict settings, such as Gaza, as they are vital for addressing a surge in impairment and disability due to injuries, as well as restoring functionality, enhancing the quality of life, and promoting psychosocial well-being. A new assessment report by WHO, MoH and the OPT Health Cluster on Level 4 specialized rehabilitation services at Hamad, Al-Wafaa, and Al-Amal hospitals finds that Gaza's rehabilitation system is unable to address the current scale of needs. This is due to a surge in traumatic injuries by ongoing hostilities, destruction of health infrastructure, limited bed capacity at health facilities that continue to provide rehabilitation services, mass displacement and the lack of appropriate home environments, and shortages in specialized health personnel, as summarized below:
    - As of April 2025, the MoH and the Health Cluster estimated that at least a quarter of people injured in Gaza require sustained rehabilitation support, while only a fraction of services remain operational. More than 2,000 people are currently living with spinal cord injuries and traumatic brain injuries, conditions that require long-term, specialized rehabilitation services, while there are an estimated 15,000 cases of extremity injuries, the dominant form of injury, according to the abovementioned assessment report, which could drive up the number of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip to over 80,000. More than 4,000 of these people have undergone amputations since 7 October 2023, including over 920 children.

    - One in every three rehabilitation beds in Gaza is now occupied by patients with pressure sores, also known as bedsores, as hospitals are often forced to retain patients beyond optimal rehabilitation timelines due to the lack of viable community-based care options. Many patients are at risk of experiencing rapid deterioration in their health when they are discharged into tents or damaged buildings with generally poor shelter and sanitation conditions. This has reduced the capacity of hospitals to serve others and resulted in an increased de-prioritization of non-traumatic rehabilitation cases, such as stroke or cerebrovascular accident survivors, children with cerebral palsy, and unaccompanied minors who need urgent mental health care, widening gaps in equity and access to care.

    - Outreach services have been recurrently disrupted due to security concerns and the lack of fuel to carry out outpatient wound-care services. As of March 2025, according to the Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS), 61 per cent of home visit services, a vital lifeline for persons with disabilities and the elderly, were unavailable – a figure that has likely increased due to ongoing hostilities, according to the Health Cluster.

    - Rehabilitation equipment is scarce or damaged and stocks of assistive products and prosthetic materials are quickly running low, including pediatric wheelchairs, hearing and mobility aids, and raw materials for limb prosthetics. Based on data provided by MoH, the Health Cluster reported that while over 3,330 wheelchairs are waiting at the border, about 4,250 patients are currently on waiting lists for wheelchairs. In addition, about 1,900 people are on waiting lists for walkers and 7,400 people are awaiting crutches.

    - An additional challenge is the lack of specialist capacity; according to Health Cluster partners, there are now only nine prosthetics and orthodontics care technicians across Gaza whereas 6,000 prosthetics are needed to address the scale of needs, especially among children who need continuous care. As children grow, they need new and updated components every six months, according to UNICEF, who is currently co-launching a ground-breaking project to 3D-print prosthetic limbs for war-injured children in Gaza.

Funding

- As of 7 May 2025, Member States have disbursed approximately $619.5 million out of the $4.07 billion (15.2 per cent) requested to meet the most critical humanitarian needs of three million out of 3.3 million people identified as requiring assistance in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in 2025, under the 2025 Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Nearly 88 per cent of the requested funds are for humanitarian response in Gaza, with just over 12 per cent for the West Bank. Moreover, during April 2025, the oPt Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF) managed 128 ongoing projects, totalling $74.3 million, to address urgent needs in the Gaza Strip (88 per cent) and the West Bank (12 per cent). Of these projects, 64 are being implemented by INGOs, 49 by national NGOs and 15 by UN agencies. Notably, 47 out of the 79 projects implemented by INGOs or the UN are being implemented in collaboration with national NGOs. For more information, please see OCHA's Financial Tracking Service webpage and the oPt HF webpage.