



Muhammad (11) carrying a bowl of beans for his family who stay in a tent in Rafah. "Every day, I walk two kilometres and spend over five hours to provide one meal a day for my family," he says. Photo by UNICEF/Zagout

# Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #142

19 Mar 2024

## Key Highlights

- The Famine Review Committee and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator emphasize that famine in Gaza can be averted, provided urgent measures are put in place, including the restoration of unfettered humanitarian access.
- Significant obstacles currently hinder the sustained scale-up of aid into and across Gaza, according to the World Food Programme and the Humanitarian Coordinator.
- During the first two weeks of March, one in five humanitarian aid missions to northern Gaza were denied access by the Israeli authorities.
- Some 900 Palestinians have been displaced due to the destruction of their homes during search-and-arrest and other operations carried out by Israeli forces across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 7 October.

## Gaza Strip Updates

- Intense Israeli bombardment and ground operations as well as heavy fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups continue to be reported across much of the Gaza Strip, particularly in Deir al Balah and areas surrounding Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza city. This has resulted in further civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure.
- Between the afternoon of 18 March and noon on 19 March, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, 93 Palestinians were killed and 142 Palestinians were injured. Between 7 October 2023 and noon on 19 March 2024, at least 31,819 Palestinians were killed in Gaza and 73,934 Palestinians were injured, according to MoH in Gaza.
- The following are among the deadly incidents reported on 17 and 18 March in Deir al Balah:
  - On 17 March, at about 15:00, two Palestinians, a man and a young girl, were reportedly killed and others injured when a house was hit in An Nuseirat Refugee Camp.
  - On 18 March, at about 00:40, nine Palestinians, including a 3-year-old boy, were reportedly killed and at least six others injured when a house was hit in western An Nuseirat Refugee Camp.
- Between the afternoons of 18 and 19 March, one Israeli soldier was reported killed in Gaza. As of 19 March, 249 soldiers have been killed and 1,482 soldiers injured in Gaza since the beginning of the ground operation, according to the Israeli military. In addition, over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals have been killed in Israel, the vast majority on 7 October. As of 19 March, the Israeli authorities estimate that 134 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including fatalities whose bodies are withheld.
- The Israeli military operation inside and around Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza city continued for the second consecutive day. According to the [Israeli military](#), some 50 armed Palestinians were reportedly killed during the operation, including the Head of the Internal Security Operations Directorate, and 180 were otherwise detained. There were also reports indicating that Israeli forces took control of several buildings within and around the hospital compound, besieged two schools where hundreds of internally

displaced persons (IDPs) reside, and detained journalists. The full extent and impact of the military operation remains unknown. The hospital and its surroundings reportedly witnessed intense exchanges of heavy gunfire, heightening concerns for the safety of patients, medical personnel and thousands of IDPs in the hospital and the surrounding area. Since the first Israeli military raid in mid-November 2023, Al Shifa Hospital has struggled to maintain services and is one of six hospitals in northern Gaza that remain only partially functional, facing critical shortages of electricity, medications, medical equipment, food, and personnel.

- The hunger crisis in the Gaza Strip is rapidly deteriorating, particularly in northern Gaza, because “people have been cut off from life-saving aid, markets have collapsed, and fields have been destroyed,” [stated](#) Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Martin Griffiths. According to the latest findings of the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\) partnership](#), 1.1 million people are projected to face catastrophic levels of hunger (IPC Phase 5) and be at risk of famine in Gaza, the highest number of people ever recorded in this category by the IPC system. This includes more than 200,000 people in Gaza and North Gaza governorates who are imminently at risk of famine anytime between mid-March and May 2024 because they will have completely exhausted their food supplies and coping capacities. The IPC global Famine Review Committee (FRC) has emphasized that famine in Gaza can be halted provided there are urgent and proactive measures undertaken by parties to the conflict and the international community. In addition to specific programmatic recommendations, the FRC recommends: the restoration of humanitarian access as well as health, nutrition, and WASH services; the protection of civilians; the provision of safe, nutritious, and sufficient food to all populations in need; the sustained supply and movement of sufficient aid commodities ranging from food to medicines, specialist nutrition products, and fuel throughout the Gaza Strip; and the full resumption of the flow of commercial goods. Before famine is declared when it would be way too late, ERC Griffiths similarly [emphasized](#) the urgency of averting famine: “We must flood Gaza with food and other life-saving aid. There is no time to lose. I renew my call to the Israeli authorities to allow complete and unfettered access for humanitarian goods.”
- On 17 March, the World Food Programme (WFP) [delivered](#) 18 trucks carrying 274 metric tons of wheat flour, food parcels and ready-to-eat rations to Gaza city, the ninth convoy WFP managed to take to northern Gaza since the beginning of 2024. WFP estimates that at least 300 daily food trucks need to enter and be distributed across Gaza, particularly in the north. However, there are obstacles hindering the sustained scale-up of the food supply chain, such as limited entry points, complicated border controls, difficult road conditions, and high tensions and desperation, according to WFP. The Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim, Jamie McGoldrick, underscored in a [briefing](#) on 18 March that “nothing moves aid faster and in greater volumes to populations in need than a fleet of heavy trucks and use of all roads that are available.” He highlighted the need for: consistently reaching northern Gaza via multiple routes; scanning goods at Ashdod port and Allenby Bridge to bring larger amounts of aid directly into northern Gaza as Kerem Shalom crossing only has the capacity to scan 250-300 trucks per day; and being able to bring in critical commodities including medical equipment, spare parts for water and sanitation systems, generators, solar panels, and chemicals to treat water, among others. According to McGoldrick, the lack of these critical items is one of the key drivers of the malnutrition crisis.
- Humanitarian access constraints continue to severely affect the timely delivery of life-saving assistance, particularly to hundreds of thousands of people in northern Gaza. During the first two weeks of March, 46 per cent of humanitarian aid missions to northern Gaza (11 out of 24) were facilitated by the Israeli authorities, 21 percent were denied (5), and 33 percent (8) were postponed including one due to access impediments. During the same period, 76 per cent of aid missions to areas south of Wadi Gaza that require coordination (78 out of 103) were facilitated by the Israeli authorities, 15 were denied (14 percent), and ten were postponed or withdrawn (10 percent). Facilitated missions primarily involved food distributions, nutrition and health assessments, and the delivery of supplies to hospitals.

## West Bank Updates

- On 15 March, a 26-year-old Palestinian man died of wounds sustained on 17 July 2023 during an Israeli raid in Al Fawwar Refugee Camp in Hebron.
- Since 7 October, 420 Palestinians have been killed, including 409 by Israeli forces, nine by settlers and two by either Israeli forces or settlers, across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These include 112 Palestinians killed since the start of 2024 (compared to 85 during the same period in 2023), the vast majority by Israeli forces. Some 4,690 Palestinians have been injured, including 724 children, since 7 October in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
- Since 7 October, 15 Israelis, including four members of Israeli forces, have been killed and 99 injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.
- Between 7 October 2023 and 18 March 2024, OCHA has recorded a monthly average of 670 search-and-arrest and other operations by Israeli forces across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This is almost double the monthly average for the first nine months of 2023 (some 340 operations). A total of 304 Palestinians have been killed, including 72 children, and 2,657 others were injured, within this context by Israeli forces, representing about 73 per cent of Palestinian fatalities during this period. Some of the operations involved fire exchanges between Palestinians and Israeli forces, airstrikes, and use of under-cover Israeli military units. As a result, over 5,700 Palestinians have been detained, and some 900 Palestinians, including 370 children, have been displaced due to the destruction of their homes by Israeli forces during these operations. The vast majority (94 per cent) of displaced people were in the refugee camps of Nur Shams, Tulkarm and Jenin, where Israeli forces also regularly bulldozed roads and caused extensive damage to electricity, water and sewage infrastructure.
- Since the beginning of 2024, 580 Palestinians, including 220 children have been displaced, compared with some 400 in the same period last year. The majority of those displaced were in operations carried by Israeli forces (318), especially in the refugee camps in Tulkarm and Jenin. Over 200 Palestinians were displaced as are result of demolition of houses due to the lack of Israeli-issued

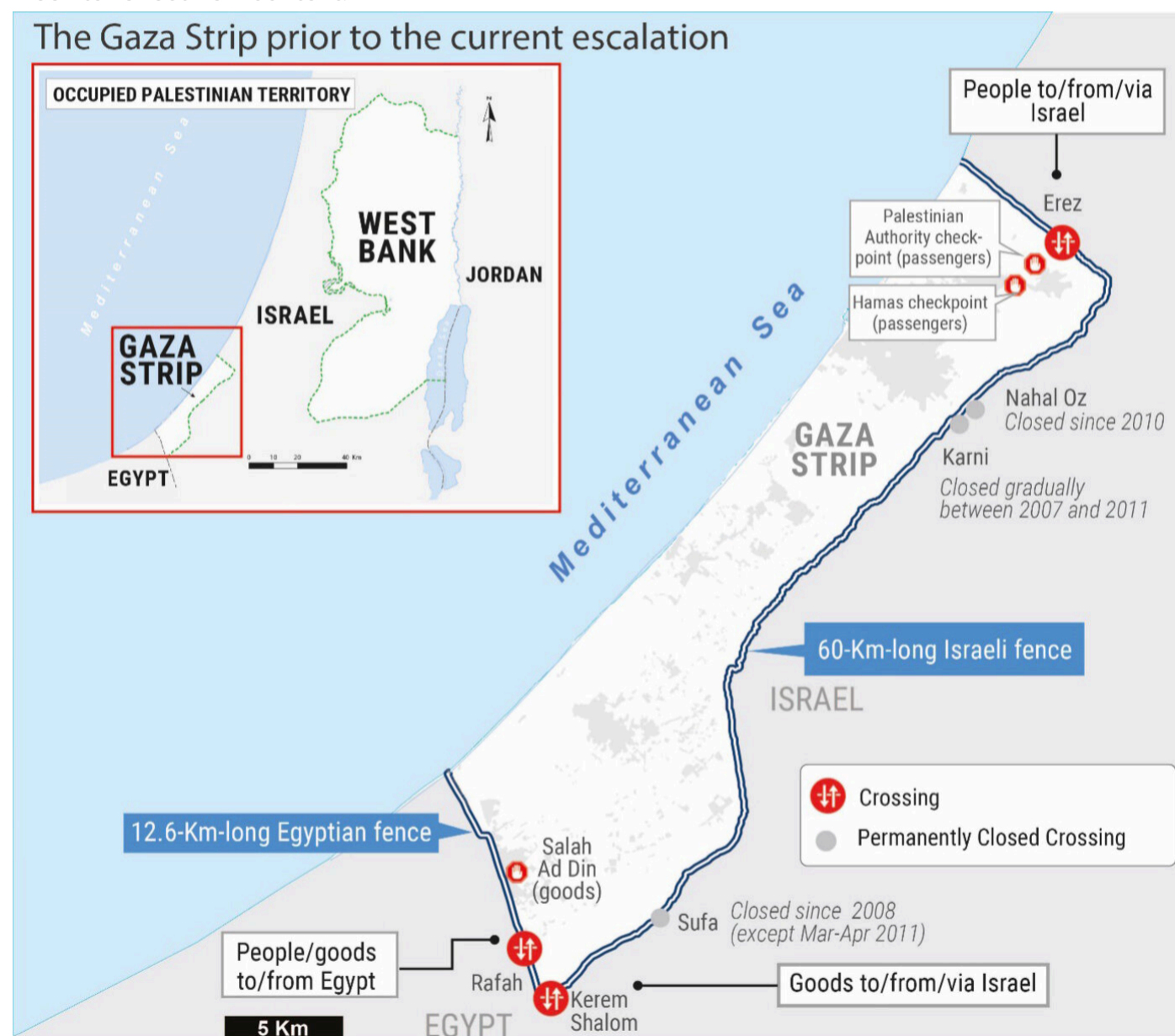
permits, most of them were in East Jerusalem, and around 40 were displaced due to the demolition of their homes on punitive grounds.

- On 17 March, according to local community sources, armed Israeli settlers physically assaulted two Palestinian shepherds while they were grazing their sheep near Ariel settlement in Salfit governorate and stole forty sheep. Since 7 October 2023 and as of 19 March 2024, OCHA has recorded 658 Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians that resulted in Palestinian casualties (59 incidents), damage to Palestinian-owned property (524 incidents), or both casualties and damage to property (75 incidents). Almost two-thirds of these incidents took place between October and December 2023.

## Funding

- The [Flash Appeal](#) for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), which requests US\$1.2 billion to meet the critical needs of 2.7 million people across the oPt (2.2 million in the Gaza Strip and 500,000 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem), was extended through the end of March 2024. As of 19 March, member states disbursed nearly \$974 million for the updated Flash Appeal (79 per cent); this includes about \$616 million out of \$629 million (98 per cent) requested for October-December 2023 and about \$358 million out of \$600 million (60 per cent) requested for January-March 2024. For funding analysis, please see the Flash Appeal Financial Tracking [dashboard](#).
- The oPt Humanitarian Fund ([oPt HF](#)) is currently supporting 122 projects, for a total of US\$ 74.5 million, addressing urgent needs in the Gaza Strip (83 per cent) and West Bank (17 per cent). Despite logistical hurdles, safety and security concerns, and fuel scarcity that hinder the procurement and transport of supplies, implementation is led by 77 international NGOs, 20 national NGOs, and 16 UN agencies. Of the projects implemented by international NGOs or UN agencies, 56 per cent are in partnership with national NGOs. For a summary of the oPt HF activities and challenges in February 2024, please follow this [link](#).
- The oPt HF has recently finalized its First Reserve Allocation of US\$ 3.5 million for 2024, which aims at boosting the aid transport capacity to enable humanitarian partners to increase the delivery of vital aid and services to people across the Gaza Strip. This is in addition to a total of \$88 million received by the Fund since 7 October from member states and private donors and allocated for programming across Gaza, including 43 per cent in Rafah, 21 per cent in Deir al Balah, 20 per cent in Khan Younis, and 16 per cent in Gaza and North Gaza governorates. Private donations are collected directly through the [Humanitarian Fund](#). In addition, the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) has recently allocated US\$ 700,000 to a project led by UN Women that aims to strengthen gender-responsive and inclusive accountability to affected people, bringing to \$18.7 million the total CERF allocation to oPt since 7 October.

For the Humanitarian Needs and Cluster Response Update for the period between 12 and 18 March, please visit: [Humanitarian needs and response update | 12-18 March 2024](#). The update for a given week is initially published on Mondays and is updated throughout the week to reflect new content.



\* Asterisks indicate that a figure, sentence, or section has been rectified, added, or retracted after the initial publication of this update.