

Escalation in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #2

08 Oct 2023

KEY POINTS

Information on humanitarian needs is as of 12:00, while casualty figures and the number of people displaced are updated as of 21:00

- Exchanges of fire in the towns and communities in Israel surrounding Gaza continued for the second consecutive day following the infiltration of members of Palestinian armed groups into Israel. Palestinian armed groups in Gaza continued rocket fire into Israel. Simultaneously, Israeli continued air, naval and land strikes throughout the night and morning.
- As of 20:00, according to Israeli sources, at least 677 Israelis, including possibly also foreign nationals, were killed and at least 2,000 people were injured, making it the deadliest attack in Israel in decades. Media reports estimate the number killed to be much higher. According to Israeli sources, more than 50 Israeli forces personnel and Israeli civilians, including women and children, were captured and forcibly taken into Gaza.
- As of 20:00, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, at least 413 Palestinians have been killed and 2,300 others injured. An additional 13 Palestinians, including one child, were killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank.
- As of 21:00, 123,538 Palestinians had been displaced in Gaza.



Children seeking shelter at Ash Shati Elementary Joint Refugee School in An Nasr, Gaza. Photo: Mahmoud Ajjour, 8 October 2023

HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW

- In the early morning hours of 8 October, Israeli authorities evacuated thousands of inhabitants of 25 towns surrounding the Gaza Strip. The evacuation coincided with renewed exchange of fire and infiltrations by members of armed Palestinian groups into Israeli towns. During the night of the 8 October, Israeli forces issued evacuation orders to Palestinian communities in Gaza, potentially affecting hundreds of thousands of people who have been told to relocate into the centre of Gaza city amid ongoing Israeli forces air and land strikes and the firing of rockets by Palestinian armed groups.
- Palestinian armed groups in Gaza have fired thousands of rockets and mortar shells into Israel since the current round of hostilities began on 7 October. The Barzilai hospital in the Israeli town of Ashkelon was hit with rocket fire from Palestinian armed

groups, causing damage to the hospital. Furthermore, members of Palestinian armed groups shot and killed one paramedic and injured four others. Several buildings and livelihood structures in Sderot, among other locations, were damaged.

- Israeli airstrikes and shelling have targeted houses and apartment buildings in Gaza. In some cases, residential buildings were reportedly struck without warning for residents to evacuate. Notably, four large residential towers with multiple floors of residential units (Palestine, Al-Hashim, Wattan, and Al Aklouk) in Gaza city were completely destroyed. Israeli forces reportedly provided prior warnings in these cases and there were no fatalities reported from these incidents. According to the Gaza Ministry of Public Works and Housing, 159 housing units have been destroyed, while 1,210 have suffered severe damage.
- Six health care workers were killed and four injured by Israeli airstrikes that also damaged seven health care facilities and nine ambulances. Damage to WASH related facilities from Israeli airstrikes has undermined the provision of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services to over 400,000 people.
- The hostilities have led to internal displacement. More than 17,500 families, comprising over 123,538 people, have been internally displaced in Gaza, mostly due to fear, protection concerns and the destruction of their homes. Out of the internally displaced persons (IDPs), UNRWA estimates 73,538 people are sheltering in 64 schools, some of which are designated emergency shelters. The UNRWA designated emergency shelters in the Gaza Strip were activated to host the displaced and provide them with urgent assistance.
- Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings remain closed due to the escalation. Among those unable to exit were 130 referred patients and their accompaniers with scheduled appointments at medical facilities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, or in Israel. The Rafah crossing with Egypt were open today and allowed 100 truckloads of food items, 30 truckloads of fuel, and 70 truckloads of construction materials to cross.
- In the evening of 7 October, Israeli authorities ceased supplying electricity to the Gaza strip, reducing the hours of electricity to 3-4 per day. The Gaza Power Plant is currently the only source of power and could run out of fuel within days.
- In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, confrontations with Israeli forces have persisted for the second consecutive day in multiple locations. Between 7 and 8 October, as of 21:00, 13 Palestinians, including a 12-year-old child, were killed by Israeli forces in various areas across the West Bank. One of the Palestinians was killed while attacking or allegedly attempting to stab a member of the Israeli forces near Al Lubban al Gharbiyeh (Ramallah). Another individual was shot and killed during an armed clash between Palestinians and Israeli forces near the Deir Sharaf checkpoint (Nablus). The remaining eleven Palestinians were all killed during demonstrations in solidarity with the Gaza Strip and other confrontations involving stone throwing.
- PRCS reported that since 7 October and as of 8 October at 12:00pm, they treated 191 Palestinian injuries in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, of which 38 from live ammunition, 26 from rubber bullets, 101 were treated for teargas inhalation, eight from shrapnel, and 18 were physically assaulted.
- Israeli settlers injured three additional Palestinians; one by live ammunition, another by a rubber bullet, and a third was stabbed. On 7 October, settlers reportedly from Itamar attacked Palestinian farmers in Yanun (Nablus), injuring one farmer and damaging five vehicles. On that day, settlers reportedly from Esh Kodesh closed the road connecting Qusra and Jalud (Nablus), firing live ammunition and injuring a Palestinian man while also setting fire to three agricultural rooms. Additionally, on the same day, a Palestinian man was stabbed and injured in Yasuf (Salfit) during a settler attack involving an attempt to set fire to three Palestinian houses.
- The Israeli authorities have continued to impose multiple movement restrictions, including the closure of several checkpoints and entrances to towns and cities in the West Bank. This includes the Shu'fat Refugee Camp and Beit Iksa town both in Jerusalem, which remain under closure for the second consecutive day, restricting the movement of more than 27,000 Palestinians from accessing essential services, including healthcare. Additionally, Israeli forces closed all checkpoints segregating part of the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron (H2) from the remainder of the city, impeding the movement of 7,000 Palestinian residents of the area, including from accessing essential services.
- A general strike was announced in the West Bank, resulting in the closure of all markets, shops, and education facilities.
- Humanitarian needs across the OPT continue to rise, the response to which is impeded by a current lack of access.

Protection

Priority Needs

- Psychosocial support (PSS) for affected families.
- 50,000 Dignity Kits for women and men.
- Cash assistance for the host community and protection cases, women, and families in Designated Emergency Shelters.
- Emergency referral pathways for GBV.
- Enhance the infrastructure for GBV remote services through solving the electricity shortages and internet disruptions (by providing power banks, phones, tablets, etc.).

Response to Date

- GBV remote services activated with already existing survivors. Services include PSS counselling, legal, case management, and family visitations and other remote services for 572 individuals.
- Counting and procuring dignity kits: GBV partners have 650 dignity kits ready for distribution with at least 600 more being procured.
- Child Protection Area of Responsibility/MHPSS: Scaled up capacity of helplines and remote psychosocial support and referral to other services for children and their caregivers.
- MHPSS and CP partners continued their hotline services to provide remote MHPSS services and guidance.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Lack of electricity/Internet hinders frontline workers to connect children with their parents during family visitation services.
- Limited supplies of non-food items (NFIs), including number of available dignity kits (650).
- Limited access to basic emergency information (ambulances, police, and civil defense).
- Closure of offices of service providers due to security concerns;
- Safety risks and hazards disrupt the capacity of emergency responders to mobilize.
- Lack of infrastructure to provide remote GBV protection services.

Shelter

Priority Needs

- According to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MoPWH), 1,210 housing units sustained considerable damage, including 159 that were destroyed and 36 that were severely damaged, becoming uninhabitable.
- Overall, 123,000 people who had their homes destroyed or damaged since 7 October or left their homes due to protection concerns, have been internally displaced. Most are staying with host families, and 73,538 people took shelter in 64 UNRWA schools, some of which are designated emergency shelters.
- Urgent need to provide services and basic needs for the IDPs in the designated emergency shelters and provision of shelter support for the people in urban displacement.
- Provision of shelter cash assistance for IDPs (reintegration package and belongings loss compensation).

Response to Date

- Assisting IDPs to access 45 designated emergency shelters, which have been officially declared open Distribution of Shelter/NFIs to IDPs through cluster partners

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Movement restrictions particularly for people in urban areas.
- Lack of access to potential suppliers for shelter/NFIs.

Health

Priority Needs

- The electricity cuts are affecting hospitals that now rely on back-up generators. Some hospitals have enough fuel to last only 4 days.
- With the high number of casualties, there is urgent need for trauma and emergency care following the trauma pathway and the caseload continues to increase.
- The insecurity is hindering access to essential health care services for the population as healthcare workers and patients are unable to reach healthcare facilities.
- Movement restrictions across the West Bank and potential risk of settler attacks at junctions has disrupted mobile clinics, UNRWA and some MoH health facilities.

Response to Date

- Fifteen out of 22 UNRWA health centres across the Gaza strip have resumed providing primary healthcare services from 09:00 – 12:00 to patients with urgent referred appointments. Treatment is provided for non-communicable diseases and critical outpatient cases. Provision of health care services through the toll-free hotline continues.
- Health cluster partners have released prepositioned supplies worth \$800,000 to hospitals in Gaza and reprogrammed \$1million to procure urgently needed supplies.

- Health partners operating in Gaza are consolidating supplies and human resources to support case management at Shifa and Al Awda Hospitals.
- PRCS remains the main service provider for pre-hospital care providing ambulance services and emergency medical teams. They have activated their Operation Rooms, 42 stations and sub-stations.
- In West Bank, health cluster partners have activated SRH emergency teams at district level to help with accessing critical SRH services.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Insecurity and movement restrictions are hindering access to essential health care services as both healthcare workers and patients cannot move.
- Attacks on ambulance services and health facilities hinder service delivery.

Food Security

Priority Needs

- UNRWA food operation remains on hold, disrupting the third distribution cycle for 112,759 families.
- Access to agriculture: Strawberry and tomato farmers are at risk of losing their entire seasonal production due to access restrictions.
- Inaccessibility to olive trees could lead to losing olives and oil.
- Closure of Kerem Shalom crossing means that no fodder enters Gaza. This endangers the livestock and poultry sectors affecting the livelihoods of over 10,000 producers and the provision of animal protein to Gaza.
- Electricity and fuel cuts will affect refrigeration, irrigation, incubation, and other machinery that will affect agriculture, poultry, cattle, fish, and other products.
- Closure of the sea puts at risk more than 4,000 fisheries.

Response to Date

- FSS partners are preparing ready-to-eat food rations of fresh bread and canned tuna for 44,000 IDPs seeking shelter in UNRWA schools over the next two weeks and are planning to provide CBT vouchers to 50,000 IDPs outside of UNRWA shelters with a transfer value of 10.3\$ (USD) per person if funding and shop accessibility allows.
- Market monitoring of food availability and prices has begun.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- The closure of Kerem Shalom, Erez and Allenby Commercial terminal poses challenges for the entry of food items into Gaza.
- Farmers cannot access their lands for daily agricultural practices (crop service, irrigation, harvesting).
- Lack of electricity and fuel.

Education

Priority Needs

- All education facilities in the West Bank and Gaza are closed, affecting more than 1,400,000 children.
- Over 50 UNRWA schools (DES and non-DES) are being used for shelter and reports indicate that displaced families are taking shelter in at least 6 PA schools (Not official DES).
- The mental wellbeing of students and school staff is negatively affected by the current situation. In Gaza.

Response to Date

- Provision of school-based PSS and recreational activities to at least 70,000 children and school staff as soon as the situation allows.
- Emergency rehabilitation for at least 20 damaged schools.
- Provision of emergency supplies and learning kits for 10,000 children in DES and 50,000 children in schools once they reopen.
- Provision of catch-up classes, especially to displaced children (at least 20,000 children).

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Insecurity and movement restriction is resulting in school closure and limited access of service providers to schools.

- Electricity cuts make online distance learning almost impossible.

WASH

Priority Needs

- All solid waste collection and transfer to landfills remains on hold.
- Two WASH facilities in the Gaza strip were affected. These facilities served over 400,000 people with water and sanitation services.
- Gaza's current electricity generation is less than 60 MW. This falls significantly short of the necessary power to sustain WASH services across the entire Gaza Strip.
- There is an urgent need for an alternative power supply source. In the meantime, providing fuel (Emergency fuel of 20,000 liters/day) is of paramount importance to support WASH facilities in their continued operation.
- The chlorine supply for the water treatment plants, currently using the emergency supply, must be replenished.
- Spare parts for the water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure to be used as part of the emergency repair need to be replenished.

Response to Date

- 50,000 liters of fuel were allocated for distribution among the WASH facilities experiencing power shortages.
- The operation of water wells in Jabalia, Khan Younis and Rafah is ongoing.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- The access and distribution of materials and items necessary for the WASH facilities is not possible yet.

Protection against sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA) remains a cross-cutting priority for all clusters. The SAWA helpline, reachable at 121 and through WhatsApp at +972 59-4040121 (East Jerusalem at 1-800-500-121), operates 24/7. This toll-free number is widely disseminated across all areas of intervention to report cases of SEA and to facilitate emergency counseling and referrals for affected communities to access life-saving services. The PSEA Network is monitoring calls daily and will increase the number of counselors if necessary

