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# Gaza, Israel: the unacceptable suffering of civilians

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OUR WORK IN  
PALESTINE

Archive photo 2015: The remains at Wafa Hospital in Shejaiya, Gaza, a hospital specialising in physical rehabilitation. The area, Shejaiya was largely destroyed during Operation Protective Edge in the Summer of 2014. The area is heavily contaminated with | © T. Shelton / HI

The recent attacks by Hamas and retaliation by Israel are having a devastating impact on civilians. At least 1,300 people have lost their lives in Israel, and 1,400 in Gaza. HI, present in Palestine since 1996, is preparing an emergency response.

HI Country Manager for Palestine, Danila Zizi, describes the catastrophic humanitarian situation.

## Unbearable situation for civilians

The recent attacks by Hamas and the retaliation by Israel are having a devastating impact on civilians. The continued escalation of violence will cause further loss of civilian life. We are deeply concerned for the safety of civilians on both sides.

The safety of civilians and civilian infrastructure should be the priority. We are calling for an immediate ceasefire. As long as hostilities last, HI is appealing to all parties to at least establish daily humanitarian ceasefires to allow humanitarian aid workers to deliver assistance safely.

## Network of volunteers in Gaza

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 6,049 have been injured in the Gaza Strip (Oct. 12, 12 AM). 60% of all injuries have been sustained by women and children. So far, around 260,000 people in Gaza have fled their homes to escape the bombing and shelling. The population is traumatised.

HI has strong partnerships in Gaza, and a network of 300 volunteers trained to serve as first responders in crises or emergencies. Since the bombings began, some of them have found refuge in shelters; others are on standby waiting for a cease-fire to be able to move. The shelters are usually communal buildings, schools, etc.

The volunteers in shelters have started to identify the needs of people with disabilities, injured or traumatised people, women and children.

## Rehabilitation and mental health support in emergencies

HI's teams are able to provide emergency rehabilitation services and psychosocial support to the people injured and traumatised by the violence. We will do so as soon as safe passage for humanitarian assistance is guaranteed, as we must also ensure the safety and protection of our staff.

Our teams can also provide assistive devices, such as crutches, wheelchairs, wound dressings and first-aid kits.

## Emergency stocks

With our partners, we have emergency stocks stored in each of the five Gaza governorates. The delivery of equipment and items from HI's emergency stocks will begin as soon as a humanitarian ceasefire allows safe passage for our personnel and vehicles.

Our stocks include non-food items, such as dignity, hygiene and cooking kits, as well as assistive devices and first aid kits containing everything required to treat minor injuries. We are also able to support health facilities with the delivery of early rehabilitation and post-trauma services.

## Risk education

HI's teams and partners are considering launching a conflict preparedness awareness campaign and risk education sessions to alert people to the dangers caused by the presence of explosive remnants of war. The team will also advise them on how to reduce exposure during airstrikes and other conflict-related events.

During bombing and shelling, many bombs do not explode on impact and therefore pose a long-term threat. Those that do explode leave remnants that can also be dangerous.

The situation is catastrophic. Gaza is under complete siege and the violence is intensifying. Humanitarian needs will certainly grow in the coming days, especially access to food, water and sanitation.

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## HI in Palestine

HI launched its first project in Palestine in 1996. For the last 27 years, our teams have been responding to the needs of the Palestinian community – both in West Bank and Gaza – across several sectors. HI Palestine is currently running projects in Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction, Physical and Functional Rehabilitation, Economic Inclusion and Economic Recovery, and Inclusive Education.

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