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# Gaza: a crisis within a crisis

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OUR WORK IN  
PALESTINE

HI's staff and volunteers providing recreational activities for children in a UNRWA shelter, in Khan Younés West, a town in the south of the Gaza Strip, October 2023. | © HI

## Sharaf Al Faqawi and Haytham Abusabet, members of HI's team in Gaza, describe their daily lives since the escalation of the conflict.

Hamas attacks and Israeli reprisals are having a devastating impact on civilians. Some 1,400 people have already lost their lives in Israel according to the Israeli authorities, and more than 4,600 people in Gaza according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Of the 1.4 million people displaced within the Gaza Strip, around 580,000 are housed in 150 UNRWA Designated Emergency Shelters (DES).

Present in Palestine since 1996, HI is responding to the emergency. Sharaf Al Faqawi and Haytham Abusabet are part of our team in Gaza.

## Daily life on hold

In normal times, Sharaf Al Faqawi and Haytham Abusabet, respectively Area Manager and Economic Support Technical Officer for HI in Gaza, live a relatively ordinary life, looking after their families, working with vulnerable populations (rehabilitation, access to education, access to basic needs, etc.), meeting up with their friends at the end of the day to enjoy each other's company for a while, etc. Since 8 October, all of this has been suspended. The urgent task now is to assess and address the needs of displaced people, providing emergency kits and mobility aids, psychosocial support, conflict preparedness and protection, explosive ordnance risk

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Civilians have little or no access to food, drinking water, electricity and health services. People with disabilities or people living with chronic illnesses are particularly badly affected by the situation.

Families have had to flee their homes in haste, with no time to gather their belongings. This has created a desperate situation for people with disabilities and anyone living with a chronic illness, as they have had to abandon their assistive devices and medical treatments. This is the case of a 3-year-old child with cerebral palsy, Haytham Abusabet tells us. His family had to evacuate their home, leaving his assistive device behind, and he has been suffering from painful muscle spasms without his medicine.

## No choice but to cope

Sharaf Al Faqawi explains that the people are exhausted, that they were already exhausted before the conflict escalated. They have almost no resources left. Adults are eating little or nothing to leave food for their children. Sometimes they go the whole day without food.

*"I am not sure they are coping, or if it's just something they're forced to do."*

HI is calling on all parties to the conflict to stop the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas such as Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. HI is also supporting #CeasefireNow, an open call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Israel to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and further loss of innocent lives and ensure humanitarian aid can be delivered rapidly and safely.

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HI is an independent and impartial aid organisation working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. We work alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, taking action and bearing witness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.

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