



“People in Gaza are starving to death right now,” warns the World Food Programme Executive Director Cindy McCain, as every second person is expected to experience catastrophic levels of food insecurity. Photo by UNICEF/EI Baba

Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #141

18 Mar 2024

Key Highlights

- 1.1 million people in Gaza are projected to face catastrophic levels of food insecurity between March and July 2024, up from 378,000 in December 2023, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis released on 18 March.
- Nutrition screenings conducted in February show acute malnutrition rates among children in northern Gaza and Rafah have nearly doubled since January.
- On 18 March, the Israeli military launched an operation in the area of Al Shifa Hospital, in Gaza city, and reportedly distributed leaflets instructing internally displaced persons to immediately evacuate to Al Mawasi area in southern Gaza.

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 near Al Shifa hospital in Al Rimal area of Gaza city and in Deir al Balah. This has resulted in further civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure. On 16 March, the Israeli army reportedly withdrew from Hamad area of Khan Younis.
- Between the afternoon of 15 March and 10:30 on 18 March, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, 236 Palestinians were killed and 358 Palestinians were injured, including 81 killed and 116 injured in the past 24 hours. Between 7 October 2023 and 10:30 on 18 March 2024, at least 31,726 Palestinians were killed in Gaza and 73,792 Palestinians were injured, according to MoH in Gaza.
- The following are among the deadly incidents reported between 14 and 17 March:
 - On 14 March, at about 16:10, four Palestinians including a child were reportedly killed, and others injured, when a civilian car in Ash Sheikh Radwan area in Gaza city was hit.
 - On 14 March, at about 12:30, at least five Palestinians were reportedly killed, and others injured, when a house on Salah Ad Deen Road in Al Bureij refugee camp was hit.
 - On 14 March, the bodies of 24 Palestinians were reportedly recovered from different areas in Khan Younis, including 17 from Hamad area.
 - On 15 March, at about 10:50, the bodies of eight Palestinians were reportedly recovered from central Khan Younis city and Hamad area in northwestern Khan Younis.
 - On 15 March, at about the time when people break their daily Ramadan fast, five Palestinians were reportedly killed, and 22 others were injured, when a house sheltering internally displaced persons (IDPs) in At Touffah area, north of Gaza city, was hit.

- On 15 March, at about 20:00, eight Palestinians were reportedly killed when a house in northern An Nuseirat refugee camp, in Deir al Balah, was hit.
 - On 15 March, at about 23:50, at least 36 Palestinians were reportedly killed, most of them said to be children and women, including pregnant women, and others injured when a residential building in Abu Ghula area in western An Nuseirat refugee camp, in Deir al Balah, was hit.
 - On 16 March, at about 14:00, one Palestinian woman was reportedly killed, and others injured, when IDP tents in Al Mawasi area, in Rafah, were hit.
 - On 16 March, at about 10:00, seven Palestinians were reportedly killed, and 10 others injured, when a house in An Nuseirat Camp, in Deir al Balah, was hit.
 - On 17 March, at about 1:25, at least 11 Palestinians were reportedly killed, and others injured, when a house in Bishara neighbourhood, in Deir al Balah, was hit.
- Between the afternoons of 15 and 18 March, one Israeli soldier was reported killed in Gaza. As of 18 March, 248 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 18 March, the Israeli authorities estimate that 134 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including fatalities whose bodies are withheld.
 - On 15 March, [UNICEF](#) reported a staggering and rapid rise in malnutrition levels among children, warning that there is a high risk that malnutrition rates will “continue to increase across the Gaza Strip, costing more lives, in the absence of more humanitarian assistance and the restoration of essential services.” Nutrition screenings conducted in February show a near doubling of acute malnutrition among children compared with January: from 16 to 31 per cent among children under the age of two in northern Gaza; from 13 to 25 per cent among children under the age of five in northern Gaza; and from 5 to 10 per cent among children under the age of two in Rafah. The rate of severe wasting, the most life-threatening form of malnutrition that necessitates therapeutic feeding and treatment unavailable in Gaza, has also increased: from almost 3 per cent to 4.5 per cent of children in shelters and health centres in northern Gaza, and fourfold in Rafah from 1 to 4 per cent. In Khan Younis, where nutrition screenings were conducted for the first time by UNICEF and its partners, 28 per cent of children under the age of two were found to be acutely malnourished, including 10 per cent who suffer from severe wasting. In reaction to these devastating findings, UNICEF Executive Director, Catherine Russell, stated: “We have repeatedly attempted to deliver additional aid and we have repeatedly called for the access challenges we have faced for months to be addressed. Instead, the situation for children is getting worse by each passing day. Our efforts in providing life-saving aid are being hampered by unnecessary restrictions, and those are costing children their lives.”
 - According to the latest findings of the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#) (IPC) analysis released on 18 March, nearly the entire population of Gaza is currently facing crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of food insecurity, including 876,000 facing emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity and 677,000 facing catastrophic (IPC Phase 5) levels of food insecurity. The fast-deteriorating food security conditions, including a nearly 80 per cent increase in the number of people facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity (677,000 vs. 378,000) have been triggered by the intensity of hostilities, extremely limited humanitarian access, and severe limitations on the supply of goods and basic services, according to the report. During the period of March through July 2024, under the assumption that a ground offensive in Rafah takes place, the analysis finds that half the population of Gaza (1.1 million people) is projected to face catastrophic levels of insecurity; these would include 70 per cent of the population of Gaza and North Gaza governorates, 50 per cent of Deir al Balah and Khan Younis governorates, and 45 per cent of Rafah governorate.
 - On 16 and 17 March, at least 27 truckloads carrying food supplies successfully reached northern Gaza, including 15 that reportedly reached Jabalya for the first time in four months. The arrival of supplies occurred without any reported incident.
 - In the early morning hours of 18 March, the Israeli military [announced](#) the initiation of an operation in the area of Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza city, citing intelligence information suggesting the military use of the hospital by Palestinian armed groups. The Israeli army also reportedly distributed leaflets instructing IDPs at and near the facility, as well as the residents of Al Rimal neighbourhood, to immediately evacuate to Al Mawasi area in southern Gaza. According to MoH in Gaza, a fire erupted at the entrance to the surgeries department building, resulting in multiple fatalities and injuries. Expressing concern about the safety of health workers, patients and civilians, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) [stated](#): “Hospitals should never be battlegrounds...The hospital has only recently restored minimal health services. Any hostilities or militarization of the facility jeopardize health services, access for ambulances, and delivery of life-saving supplies. Hospitals must be protected. Ceasefire!”

West Bank Updates

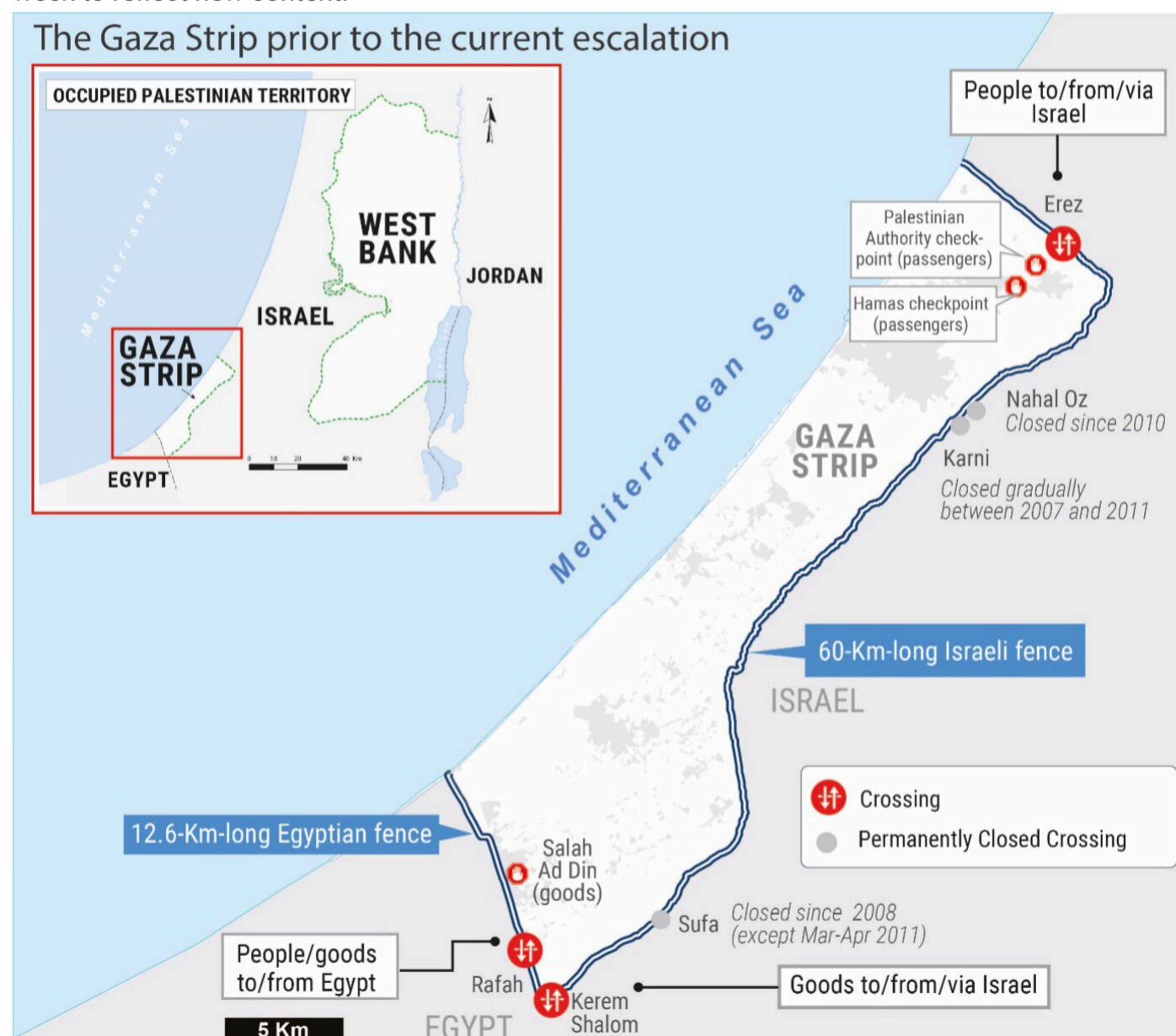
- On 16 March, in H2 area of Hebron city, Israeli forces shot, killed and subsequently withheld the body of an armed Palestinian who had reportedly opened fire at a military post.
- Since 7 October, 419 Palestinians have been killed, including 408 by Israeli forces, nine by settlers and two by either Israeli forces or settlers, across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These include 110 Palestinians killed since the start of 2024 (compared with 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.

- According to the Islamic Waqf, approximately 80,000 Palestinians performed Friday prayers at Al Aqsa Mosque on the first Friday of the month of Ramadan (15 March). Access for Palestinian holders of West Bank IDs into East Jerusalem was limited to children under 10 years of age, women over 50, and men over 55, with valid permits and magnetic cards, through three designated checkpoints along the Barrier (Qalandiya, Gilo 300, Az Zaytoun).
- 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, approximately 300 houses were demolished and 1,640 Palestinians have been displaced in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, of whom 57 per cent were displaced since 1 January. The majority of those displaced (903) were during operations carried out by Israeli forces, especially in refugee camps in Jenin and Tulkarm, followed by displacement due to the lack of Israeli-issued permits (640), and displacement due to the demolition of homes on punitive grounds (138).
- Since 7 October 2023 and as of 18 March 2024, OCHA has recorded 650 Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians that resulted in Palestinian casualties (59 incidents), damage to Palestinian-owned property (518 incidents), or both casualties and damage to property (73 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 18 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](#).
- During February 2024, the oPt Humanitarian Fund ([oPt HF](#)) had a total of 122 ongoing 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). Projects focused on the areas of Education, Food Security, Health, Protection, Emergency Shelter and non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene, coordination and support services, multi-purpose cash assistance and nutrition. Of these, 77 projects were being implemented by international NGOs, 29 projects by national NGOs, and 16 projects by UN agencies. Of the 93 projects implemented by INGOs or the UN, 52 were being implemented in partnership with NNGOs. The oPt HF has also recently finalized its critical and time sensitive First Reserve Allocation of 2024, titled "Emergency Fleet Augmentation for Enhanced Gaza Aid Delivery", amounting to US\$3.5 million. The allocation 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. For a summary of the oPt HF activities in February 2024, please follow this [link](#). Since 7 October, the oPt HF has received a total of \$88 million in contributions from member states and private donors. Private donations are collected directly through the [Humanitarian Fund](#).

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.