



Humanitarian workers preparing hot Ramadan Iftar meals for displaced families in southern Gaza. Implemented by ANERA and World Central Kitchen, this is one of 122 relief projects currently supported by the occupied Palestinian territory Humanitarian Fund. Photo by ANERA

# Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #144

21 Mar 2024

## Key Highlights

- The Israeli military operation inside and around Al Shifa Hospital is ongoing for the fourth consecutive day.
- According to Oxfam, the Israeli authorities have been arbitrarily rejecting the entry into Gaza of civilian goods that have a potential military use.
- The Israeli Supreme Court issued a temporary injunction against the return of some 25 patients from East Jerusalem and Israel to Gaza.
- The Israeli army killed nine Palestinians across the West Bank since the afternoon of 20 March, including five by airstrikes.

## 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 Al Rimal area in the vicinity of 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 20 March and 10:30 on 21 March, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza, 65 Palestinians were killed, and 92 Palestinians were injured. Between 7 October 2023 and 10:30 on 21 March 2024, at least 31,988 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and 74,188 Palestinians have been injured, according to MoH in Gaza.
- The following are among the deadly incidents reported on 19 and 20 March:
  - On 19 March, at about 21:00, at least 27 Palestinians were reportedly killed when a three-floor building housing internally displaced persons (IDPs) on Al Ishreen street in An Nuseirat Refugee Camp, in Deir al Balah, was hit.
  - On 19 March, at about 17:30, at least four Palestinians, including the head police of An Nuseirat, and two young girls, were reportedly killed and others injured when a car in An Nuseirat Refugee Camp, in Deir al Balah, was hit.
  - On 19 March, at about 20:45, near Al Kuwaiti roundabout at the southeastern entrance to Gaza city, at least 30 Palestinians, were shot at and killed. Among the victims was the Director of the Emergency Committee in western Gaza city. The group reportedly comprised Palestinians who were part of a committee tasked with overseeing the entry and distribution of humanitarian aid.
  - On 20 March, at about 4:00, 20 Palestinians were reportedly killed, and others injured, when a residential building in Ard Ash Shanti area, in northwestern Gaza city, was hit.
  - On 20 March, at 5:25, at least seven Palestinians were reportedly killed, and others injured, when a house in Al Bureij Refugee Camp, in Deir al Balah, was hit.

- On 20 March, at about 11:00, four Palestinians, including two children and a woman, were reportedly killed when a house near Hamdan Hall in eastern Rafah was hit.
- Between the afternoons of 20 and 21 March, no Israeli soldiers were reported killed in Gaza. As of 21 March, 250 soldiers have been killed and 1,489 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 21 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 has continued for the fourth consecutive day. According to the [Israeli military](#), it has killed over 50 armed Palestinians in the past 24 hours, bringing to 140 the number of Palestinians the Israeli army said they have killed since the start of this military operation. According to the spokesperson of the Palestinian Civil Defense in Gaza, the Israeli army reportedly refused to allow civil defense crews to reach and rescue hundreds of injured people who had issued calls for help in the vicinity of Al Shifa Hospital. The Israeli military also reported that about 3,700 people passed through a checkpoint it established near Al Shifa hospital and moved southwards, over 300 of whom have been detained.
- In a recent report, Oxfam International [outlines](#) seven key humanitarian access constraints that impede aid delivery into and across Gaza. Among other constraints, the report draws attention to the denial of entry of civilian goods into Gaza by the Israeli authorities, on the grounds that they could potentially be used for military purposes. It highlights that the range of prohibited items goes beyond international best practice for regulating trade in dual-use items established by the Wassenaar Arrangement. The report adds: "Israel is arbitrarily rejecting aid items as 'dual-use'; civilian goods with a potential military use. Such items, including flashlights, batteries, water pipes, fittings and medical supplies, are often necessary for people's survival and for meeting other basic needs," with the same item sometimes being rejected or allowed to pass on different days. According to the report, the prohibition on the entry of back-up generators has severely impacted the functionality of Gaza's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and health sectors, and Oxfam has been unable to bring in a shipment of vital water quality testing equipment since December 2023. [Action Aid](#) had also reported that oxygen cylinders and anaesthetics for hospitals were among the items not permitted to enter Gaza during inspections. Other items that [humanitarian partners](#) are currently identifying as difficult to bring into Gaza include psycho-social support kits, mine-action supplies for Explosive Ordnance contamination assessments, and telecommunications equipment.
- On 20 March, following a petition filed by Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHRI), the Israeli Supreme Court issued a temporary injunction against the return to Gaza of some 25 patients, along with their companions, who have been at hospitals in East Jerusalem and Israel since before 7 October. The patients were scheduled to be bused back to Gaza by the Israeli authorities, reportedly because they no longer require in-patient medical treatment, and include cancer patients and five newborn babies and their mothers. According to PHRI's spokesperson, as [cited](#) in the media: "Returning residents to Gaza during a military conflict and a humanitarian crisis is against international law and poses a deliberate risk to innocent lives." In late October 2023, WHO [estimated](#) that at least 400 patients from Gaza had been stranded in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, after the movement between Gaza and the West Bank came to a halt. Separately, on 18 March, PHRI and five other human rights organizations [petitioned](#) the Israeli Supreme Court to "compel Israel to allow the entry of all humanitarian aid and assistance shipments into Gaza and ensure the civilian population receives everything it needs to survive the war – in accordance with Israel's obligations as an occupying power."

## West Bank Updates

Israeli forces killed nine Palestinians across the West Bank on 20 and 21 March:

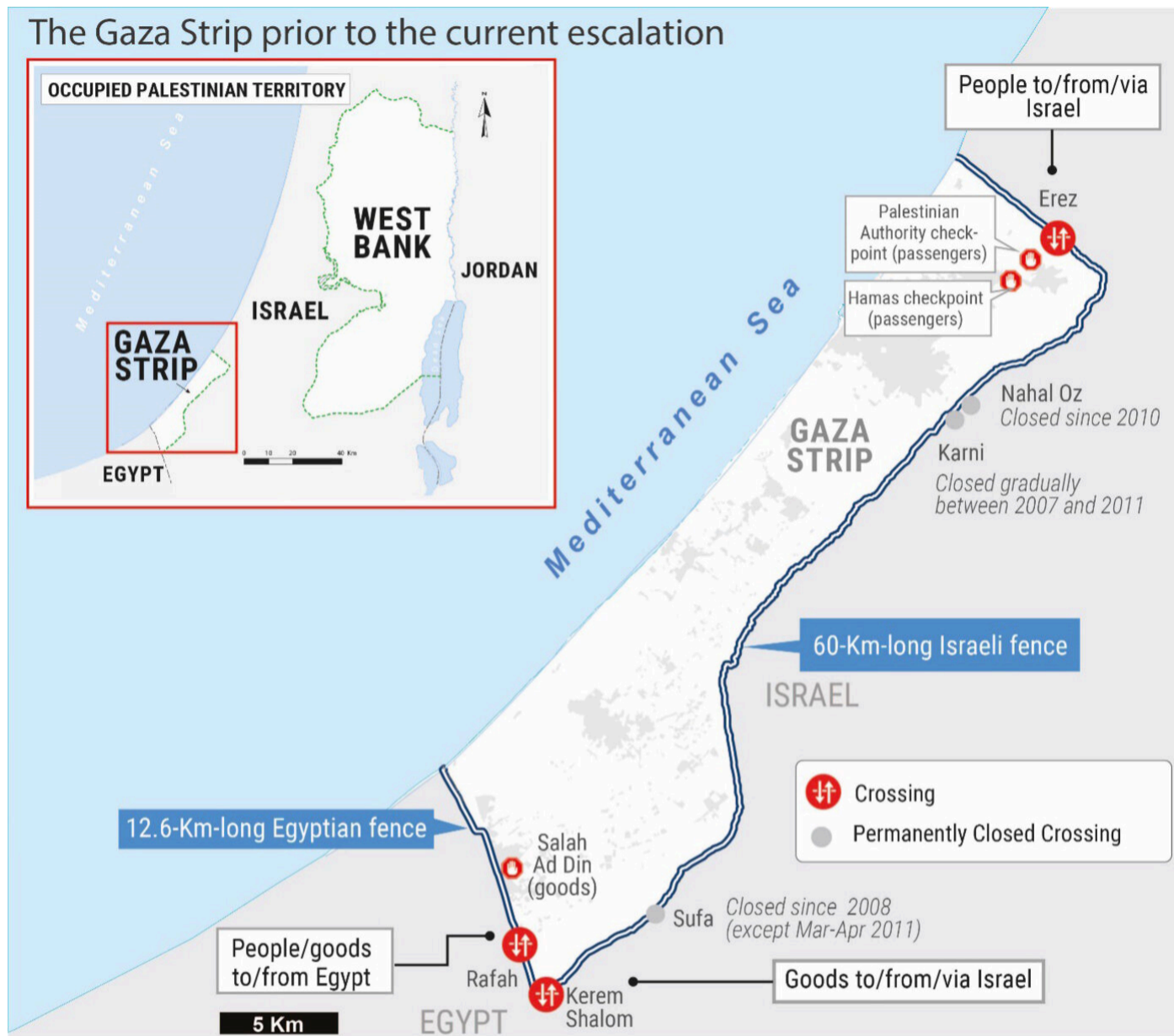
- Minutes before the start of Ramadan Iftar on 20 March, Israeli forces targeted with a "Sky Quad Drone" a Palestinian vehicle driving in Jenin Refugee Camp, killing its three passengers and seriously injuring the fourth. According to reports from PRCS, two bodies were severely charred, while the third was dismembered. Palestinians later demonstrated in front of the Palestinian Presidential Compound, refusing to bury the three killed Palestinians before the release of political prisoners from a Palestinian Authority prison. Subsequent clashes and an exchange of fire erupted between Palestinian security forces and Palestinians in the camp, resulting in the injury of six Palestinians, one of whom sustained a critical head injury.
- On 20 March, Israeli forces carried out a 10-hour military operation in Nur Shams Refugee Camp in Tulkarm city, during which the forces killed four Palestinians, two by Israeli airstrikes and two by shooting. Israeli forces also bulldozed road infrastructure and caused damage to residential houses and other properties. Israeli [media](#) outlets, citing the Israeli army, said that Israeli forces have carried out 45 air strikes across the West Bank since the start of the war on Gaza.
- On 21 March, Israeli forces shot with live ammunition and killed an 18-year-old Palestinian male during an Israeli search-and-arrest operation in Al Bireh city, in Ramallah governorate, which involved clashes between Palestinians throwing stones and Israeli forces. During the operation, Israeli forces searched several houses in Al Bireh and Ramallah cities.
- On the morning of 21 March, Israeli forces shot and killed an elderly Palestinian man from Hebron city at a bus station near the settlement of Elazar in Gush Etzion in Bethlehem. The circumstances of the incident remain unclear.
- Since 7 October, 431 Palestinians have been killed, including 419 by Israeli forces, nine by settlers and three by either Israeli forces or settlers, across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These include 123 Palestinians killed since the start of 2024, the vast majority by Israeli forces. Some 4,690 Palestinians have been injured, including 725 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 101 injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.
- On 20 March, Israeli settlers believed to be from settlement outposts near Rimonim settlement, in the Ramallah governorate, have occupied and placed their sheep in an unknown number of empty Palestinian structures in the Bedouin community of Al Mu'arrajat Center. Since 12 October, Palestinian families from this community have been forcibly displaced amid heightened Israeli settler violence in the area. Also on 20 March, following reported attacks by settlers believed to be from a settlement outpost established near Ma'ale Efrayim settlement on 11 March, five Palestinian households comprising 21 people, including eight children, were forced to dismantle their homes and other structures near Fasayil village in Jericho. The families rely on herding as a main source of income and reported that Israeli settlers have been limiting their access to grazing lands and have cut pipes that supply them with water.
- Since 7 October 2023, over 1,240 Palestinians, including around 600 children, from at least 20 herding communities have been displaced amid settler violence and access restrictions. In addition, since 7 October, over 1,600 Palestinians have been displaced due to home demolitions, more than half of whom were displaced in operations carried out by Israeli forces, 38 per cent by the demolition of homes that lacked Israeli-issued building permits, and 8 per cent due to demolitions on punitive grounds.

## 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 21 March, member states disbursed nearly \$991 million for the updated Flash Appeal (81 per cent); this includes about \$616 million out of \$629 million (98 per cent) requested for October-December 2023 and about \$375 million out of \$600 million (63 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.