



Displaced people returning to northern Gaza. Photo by OCHA, 27 January 2025

Humanitarian Situation Update #259 | Gaza Strip

28 Jan 2025

The Humanitarian Situation Update is issued by OCHA Occupied Palestinian Territory twice a week. The Gaza Strip is covered on Tuesdays and the West Bank on Thursdays. The Gaza Humanitarian Response Update is issued every other Tuesday. The next Humanitarian Situation Update will be issued on 30 January.

Key Highlights

- Over 376,000 people are estimated to have returned to their places of origin in northern Gaza, following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the two main roads along the Netzarim corridor.
- A surge in aid supplies and improved access conditions have enabled humanitarian partners to meaningfully expand the delivery of lifesaving assistance and services across the Gaza Strip, including in areas that were previously impossible to access.
- Field assessments reveal massive levels of destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, particularly in northern Gaza, underlining the critical need to ramp up rehabilitation and repair efforts to meet basic human needs.
- Over 50 million tonnes of debris in Gaza can take up to 20 years to remove, the UN estimates, as efforts continue to scale up explosive hazard assessments.

Humanitarian Developments

- On 25 January, the International Committee of the Red Cross ([ICRC](#)) facilitated the second release operations under the first 42-day phase of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza that came into effect on 19 January. Four Israeli hostages were transferred from Gaza to Israeli authorities and 200 Palestinian detainees were released from Israeli prisons. This includes 128 Palestinian detainees released to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip and 72 detainees released to Egypt. As of 28 January, it is estimated that 90 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including hostages who have been declared dead and whose bodies are being withheld in Gaza. As of January 2025, according to [data](#) provided by the Israel Prison Service (IPS) to Hamoked, an Israeli human rights NGO, there are 10,221 Palestinians in Israeli custody, including 2,025 sentenced prisoners, 2,934 remand detainees, 3,376 administrative detainees held without trial, and 1,886 people held as “unlawful combatants.” These figures do not include Palestinians from Gaza who have been detained by the Israeli military since 7 October 2023.
- Between the afternoons of 22 January and 28 January, the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza reported that 193 Palestinians were killed and 397 were injured. This includes 171 bodies retrieved across the Gaza Strip. Since the ceasefire came into effect on 19 January, and as of 28 January, a total of 354 bodies were retrieved from areas that were previously inaccessible, MoH reported. Between 7 October 2023 and 28 January 2025, at least 47,354 Palestinians were killed and 111,563 were injured, according to MoH in Gaza.
- Palestinian casualties during the reporting period include cases where Israeli forces opened fire at Palestinians, including in areas in or near the identified buffer zones under the ceasefire agreement, as well as due to the explosion of unexploded ordnance. For example, on 27 January, a girl was reportedly killed and others injured when an animal-driven cart was hit on Al Rashid Road, northwest of An Nuseirat while returning towards the north. On the same day, a man was reportedly killed and others injured when

a bulldozer was hit in An-Nuweiri area, northwest of An Nuseirat. Earlier, on 22 January, one Palestinian was reportedly killed and two were injured by an explosive remnant of war in At-Twam area, west of Jabalya, in North Gaza.

- Between the afternoons of 22 January and 28 January, no Israeli soldiers were killed in Gaza, according to Israeli forces. Between 7 October 2023 and 19 January 2025, according to Israeli forces and official Israeli sources cited in the media, more than 1,605 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed, the majority on 7 October 2023 and its immediate aftermath. This includes 405 soldiers killed, in addition to 2,570 soldiers injured, in Gaza or along the border in Israel since the beginning of the ground operation in October 2023.
- Since the ceasefire entered into force, a surge in the daily entry of supplies into Gaza, through Erez and Zikim crossings in the north and Kerem Shalom crossing in the south, and improved access conditions have enabled humanitarian partners to meaningfully expand the delivery of lifesaving assistance and services across the Gaza Strip. While the bulk of incoming supplies currently consist of food items, an increase in the entry of shelter, medical, water and sanitation, and other essential supplies is planned. The World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) said that it brought more food to people in Gaza during the first four days of the ceasefire than what it could previously dispatch on average per month. On 28 January, following assessments by partners and the entry of a sufficient flour supply, 13 WFP-supported bakeries began operating at full capacity, of which eight are in Deir al Balah and five in Khan Younis; these include eight bakeries that had previously closed due to flour shortages and five new ones. Free bread distributions at community kitchens have resumed, in addition to making bread available for purchase through five retailers. Moreover, to help families regain their stability following months of food shortages, WFP and partners are providing two food parcels and one 25-kilogramme bag of flour per family and UNRWA is providing each assisted family two food parcels sufficient for one and a half months.
- On 22 January, 274,350 litres of fuel were delivered to northern Gaza for the first time since the ceasefire began, enabling the functioning of back-up generators needed to restore critical humanitarian facilities and services, while additional fuel flows, including cooking gas, are needed over the coming period to avoid service disruption. On 23 January, Food Security Sector (FSS) partners opened a kitchen in North Gaza governorate to support returnees and the five bakeries in Gaza city continued to operate at full capacity. Similarly, as part of its scaled-up health response, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) delivered 70,000 litres of fuel to Gaza city to sustain 20 partially functional health facilities and ambulances. In addition, the delivery of 10,000 litres of fuel, through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has enabled the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) to [support](#) the operation of sewage pumps and 13 water wells in northern Gaza for the first time in more than three months, including five wells in Gaza city and eight in North Gaza (three in Beit Hanoun and five in Beit Lahiya). This is expected to improve water provision given the complete collapse of the water supply system in northern Gaza. Overall, on 22 January, the UN Office for Project Services ([UNOPS](#)) reported that it had already delivered nearly three million litres of fuel to address humanitarian needs in Gaza, noting that "current daily volumes represent more than ten-fold increases," compared with the period prior to the ceasefire when, "the bare minimal amount of fuel needed to power only the most critical needs was estimated to be 100,000 litres per day."
- UNRWA, the backbone of the humanitarian operation in the Gaza Strip, has been able to significantly scale up its operations since the ceasefire began. The improved operating environment has allowed UNRWA to reach 550,000* people with food parcel distributions in nine days. This is in contrast, for instance, to October 2024, when food parcel distributions in central and southern Gaza had barely taken place due to significant shortages of supplies. Nearly 370 pallets of essential medications – including insulin syringes sufficient for over 17,000 people suffering from diabetes for eight months – as well as laboratory and dental supplies have also been dispatched to UNRWA-run health facilities, including in Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat, and Al Mawasi and the Beach Health Centre in Gaza governorate where services have been restored this week. At these centres, temporary clinics and medical points, over 1,000 UNRWA health staff provided 13,768 health consultations on 25 January alone. Furthermore, UNRWA teams have supported, in collaboration with the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) and the Joint Services Council, a scale-up in solid waste collection efforts by municipalities in Gaza, Deir al Balah, Khan Younis, and Rafah, as well as distributed to hundreds of families across Gaza hygiene items, potable and domestic water and shelter supplies, such as tarpaulins and blankets, while about 22,000 tents are in the pipeline ready to enter the Strip. Mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) services provided by UNRWA teams have continued, with nearly 12,500 sessions and activities provided between 20 and 26 January. Over 5,500 children, including about 200 children with disabilities, also participated in basic literacy, numeracy and recreational activities between 20 and 26 January as part of UNRWA's Back to Learning Programme, which has reached more than 18,000 children.
- As of 24 January, [WHO](#) delivered essential medical supplies to six hospitals and medical points and to 21 emergency medical teams in northern and southern Gaza, which "will support 50,000 patients with maternal care needs, malnutrition, treatment for trauma, malnutrition, noncommunicable diseases... [as well as] improve infection prevention at health facilities." Likewise, [UNICEF](#) has accelerated the distribution of supplies and services, reporting that trucks filled with water, hygiene kits, malnutrition treatments, warm clothes, tarpaulins and other critical humanitarian assistance are being distributed via partners to families in need. UNICEF teams have also been ramping up the provision of critical services such as immunization catch-up activities to prevent disease outbreaks, expanding screening and treatment of malnutrition, and scaling up child protection services including MHPSS, "especially in areas not reached before the ceasefire due to operational challenges or restrictions." Highlighting the immense challenges ahead, UNICEF Executive Director, Catherine Russell, said: "UNICEF teams continue to encounter children in desperate need. The ceasefire has provided some relief, but families are returning to areas that have been completely destroyed. Physical and emotional scars run deep." Earlier on 23 January, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, [briefed](#) the Security Council on the plight of children who comprise nearly half of the population in the Gaza Strip. "A generation has been traumatized," the OCHA chief stated, noting that one million children require MHPSS services.
- After midnight on 27 January, the Israeli army [announced](#) a series of instructions to residents of the Gaza Strip, including that residents would be allowed to return on foot through Ar Rasheed Road starting at 7:00 or by vehicles through Salah Ad Din Road

starting at 9:00, stressing that transportation of militants or weapons via these roads to northern Gaza would be considered a breach of the ceasefire agreement. The Israeli army additionally warned residents not to approach all areas where Israeli forces are deployed, the Rafah Crossing area, the Philadelphi Corridor, the buffer zone or the maritime area.

- On the morning of 27 January, as part of the ceasefire agreement and ongoing negotiations through the mediators, Israeli forces withdrew from parts of the Netzarim corridor, allowing tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians to return to their homes and reunite with their families in northern Gaza. People returned both on foot via Ar Rasheed Road and in vehicles after undergoing a security inspection conducted by an international consortium of foreign private companies at a checkpoint on Salah Ad Deen Road, as stipulated in the ceasefire agreement. Starting on 25 January, when people began queuing in anticipation of the corridor's re-opening, humanitarian actors have established humanitarian service points, mainly along Ar Rasheed Road, to monitor population movements, provide emergency medical services and distribute high-energy biscuits, bread and hot meals. Over 200 volunteers from 20 protection partners were also present along routes, providing people with psychological first aid and informational materials on explosive remnants of war. In addition, 25 ambulances were deployed, including 10 in the north and 15 in the south, by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), MoH, Palestinian Civil Defense (PCD), Al Awda Association and Public Aid. As of 12:00 on 28 January, the Site Management Working Group (SMWG) [reported](#) that over 376,000 people were observed crossing northward on 27 January and between 6:00 and 12:00 on 28 January, with men accounting for about half of returnees and women and children each accounting for approximately a quarter. Pregnant or lactating women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, people suffering from chronic illnesses or in need of urgent medical support and unaccompanied minors were key vulnerable groups observed among the returnees making the arduous journey by foot, according to SMWG. Media reports citing medical sources [indicate](#) that 250 displaced people had been admitted to the hospital for exhaustion during their return to the north and one elderly Palestinian man reportedly [died](#) along the journey, which is at least a seven-kilometre walk only to cross the Netzarim corridor itself.
- Since the ceasefire took effect, coordination with Israeli authorities for humanitarian aid missions is no longer required, except mainly for entering the buffer zones. Humanitarian partners and assistance are now reaching areas that were previously hard or impossible to access, such as North Gaza, areas in southern Gaza city, Al Fukhkhari and Abasan areas in Khan Younis, and eastern Rafah. To strengthen response planning to address the needs of returnees within central and southern Gaza, OCHA visited on 26 January Al Fukhkhari and Abasan areas, in eastern Khan Younis, where approximately 10,000 and 45,000 people are present, respectively. In Abasan, people were sheltering in schools and makeshift sites due to damage to their homes. During the same period, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and UNRWA carried out [assessments](#) covering 133,752 people in makeshift sites and collective centres in Khan Younis, Deir al Balah and Gaza. The assessments largely indicated that tents, tarpaulins, water and latrines, in addition to increased food distributions, are among the priority needs identified by affected people.
- According to a field assessment conducted by the PWA in the first two days of ceasefire, up to 70 per cent of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in North Gaza have sustained damage, rendering water availability at just three litres per person per day. In Gaza city, PWA reported severe damage—exceeding 90 per cent—to the seawater desalination plant, the only such facility north of Wadi Gaza that used to supply water to the northern and western neighbourhoods of the city. The plant's damage has left a critical gap in water supply, with rehabilitation estimated to cost US\$5 million and to take about a year to complete.
- In terms of municipal services and activities, rubble removal, the re-opening of roads and repairs to water and sewage networks remain a priority, given high levels of infrastructure damage and to facilitate the return of people to their homes. This was emphasized this week by the heads of [Khan Younis](#) and [Rafah](#) municipalities, as thousands of internally displaced people have been moving to their homes, or what remains of their homes, in Rafah from Khan Younis. Prior to October 2023, Rafah was home to about 275,000 people, but has incurred massive levels of infrastructure damage, especially following the launch of the Israeli military ground operation in the governorate in May 2024. According to Médecins Sans Frontières ([MSF](#)), the return of people to their homes in Rafah is challenging as many neighbourhoods have become unrecognizable due to enormous destruction. Healthcare and other basic services are largely unavailable, and many areas are too dangerous to return to due to the prevalence of unexploded ordnance and remnants of war.
- According to a preliminary debris quantification [assessment](#) conducted by UN-Habitat and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the debris generated by the war in the Gaza Strip amounted to 50,773,496 tonnes by 1 December 2024, which is 17 times more than the combined sum of all debris generated by other escalations of hostilities in Gaza since 2008. On average, there is over 365 kilogrammes of debris for each square kilometre. In November 2024, based on satellite imagery assessments conducted by UNOSAT in September 2024, UNEP [estimated](#) that disposing of about 47 million tonnes of debris, without recycling and using 105 trucks, is expected to take up to 20 years and cost nearly US\$909 million.
- Clearing vast amounts of rubble in Gaza remains highly dangerous. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) chief, Achim Steiner, [highlights](#) that "the level of destruction in the Gaza Strip is without precedent," emphasizing that "[w]e are dealing literally with a situation where most Gazans will return to either a heavily damaged building they cannot move back into or simply a pile of rubble ... But that rubble is still dangerous. Not only are there potentially bodies that have never been evacuated from there, there are also unexploded ordnance, landmines. It's a highly toxic environment." Within this context, immediate rehabilitation interventions to repair critical infrastructure, debris management, retrieval of bodies, and addressing explosive ordnance contamination in Gaza remain critical to enable safe population movements, the further scale up of humanitarian aid and restoration of essential services. For example, on 27 January, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reported that it has conducted explosive hazard assessments on the Rafah logistics base, warehouse, and Al Shaboura clinic to ensure that the location is confirmed as low risk for explosive contamination and initiated the rehabilitation process.
- On 28 January, the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA) [announced](#) that the banking system in Gaza has resumed operations. The first phase includes opening at least three branches in Deir al Balah and An Nuseirat, followed by an increase in the number of

branches in the north and south of Gaza. The PMA said people can access free online banking until cash is made available in the Strip.

- A [study](#) published by the medical journal The Lancet estimates that life expectancy in the Gaza Strip has been nearly cut in half (-46.3 per cent) since the war began in October 2023. The study found that life expectancy dropped from a pre-war average of 75.5 years to 40.5 years for the period between October 2023 and September 2024. The decrease in life expectancy was higher for men (-51.6 per cent), dropping from 73.6 years pre-war to 35.6 years, than for women (-38.6 per cent), dropping from 77.4 years pre-war to 47.5 years. The authors conclude that the approach to estimating life expectancy losses in this study is conservative as it does not take into consideration the indirect effects of the war on mortality, such as lack of access to health care and malnutrition. While noting that actual losses are likely higher, the study indicates that the war generated a life expectancy loss of more than 30 years during the first 12 months of the war. Further details on the methodology and additional findings can be found in the report.

Funding

- As of 28 January 2025, Member States have disbursed approximately US\$145.3 million out of the \$4.07 billion (3.6 per cent) requested to meet the most critical humanitarian needs of three million out of 3.3 million people identified as requiring assistance in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in 2025 under the 2025 [Flash Appeal](#) for the OPT. Nearly 90 per cent of the requested funds are for the humanitarian response in Gaza, with just over 10 per cent for the West Bank. Moreover, during December 2024, the oPt Humanitarian Fund (oPt HF) managed 111 ongoing projects, totalling \$82.2 million, to address urgent needs in the Gaza Strip (86 per cent) and the West Bank (14 per cent). These include 64 projects implemented by international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), 34 by national NGOs and 13 by UN agencies. Of the 77 projects implemented by INGOs or the UN, 46 are being implemented in collaboration with national NGOs. For more information, please see OCHA's Financial Tracking Service [webpage](#) and the oPt Humanitarian Fund [webpage](#).

* Asterisks indicate that a figure, sentence, or section has been rectified, added, or retracted after the initial publication of this update.