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Gaza Crisis 2023 – Shelter Situation Update



Photo: Yousef Hammash/NRC, Oct 2023. Rimal neighbourhood in Gaza City after it was hit by Israeli strikes.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

In the month since the atrocities carried out by Hamas on 7 October, Israel has subjected the Gaza Strip to severe and indiscriminate bombardment. The Ministry of Public Works and Housing in Gaza reports that **90 per cent of the structures damaged are residential** (more than 6,600 buildings), resulting in unprecedented shelter-related concerns.

As of 4 November, the government media office stated that **more than 220,000 housing units are damaged, and over 40,000 units destroyed or rendered uninhabitable, which together accounts for more than 50 per cent of the housing stock in Gaza**. These numbers are still incomplete due to the intensity of the bombardments and lack of access for field assessment, while additional destruction continues to occur. Satellite images updated on 20 October shows the levelling of entire neighbourhoods, including in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Shuja'iyyeh, the area between Gaza City and Ashati refugee camp, and the eastern part of Abasan Al-Kabira. This extensive damage exacerbates outstanding humanitarian needs as a result of prior escalations, pre-existing housing shortages, and widespread prevalence of overcrowded and inadequate housing. In this already difficult context, **the housing of more than 1 million people has varying levels of damage, posing significant protection risks**. Of prime concern over the longer-term is addressing the needs of more than 200,000 people who have no home to return to.

With aerial strikes continuing across the entire Gaza Strip, **over two thirds of the total population – about 1.5 million people - are currently [internally displaced](#)**. Relocation orders from northern Gaza have swelled the population in southern governorates, putting excessive strain on already severely diminished or non-existent resources. Over 700,000 have sought refuge in UNRWA premises, with as many as 150,000 relocating to UNRWA facilities in recent days, seeking food and basic services. Over 220,000 are sheltering in hospitals, mosques, and other public buildings. The remaining IDPs are residing with host families or alternative structures. UNRWA shelters have exceeded their limit, with the average number of IDPs almost four times the intended capacity. As shelters are unable to accommodate new arrivals, increasingly people are sleeping in the open in the surrounding streets in hope of safety, or finding refuge in non-residential or makeshift structures. Lack of access to around 300,000 IDPs remaining in northern Gaza is preventing a clear picture of their needs and conditions.

OVERALL NEEDS AND RESPONSE

The inter-cluster [Flash Appeal](#) (revised 6 November) identifies the whole population of Gaza (2.3 million) as affected by the crisis, and **the Shelter Cluster estimates that essential non-food items (NFIs) and shelter assistance are needed for 1.5 million people** who are displaced seeking safety or who have sustained damage to their home. However, the current situation is hindered by lack of humanitarian access, in particular restrictions on the quantity of assistance allowed through the Rafah crossing. **Significant outstanding gaps remain as a result of the scale of needs, depletion of available stocks in the market, insecurity and lack of access, and restricted entry of humanitarian assistance.**



Photo: Yousef Hammash/NRC, Oct 2023. Destroyed building in AL-Nasr neighbourhood in Gaza City

SHELTER RESPONSE

Needs in UNRWA facilities have been partly met through pre-existing UNRWA stockpiles, supplemented by NFIs from ACTED/MAAN stockpiles and ICRC/PRCS. Limited distributions of kitchen and washing sets have been made to non-UNRWA shelters. The Humanitarian Fund 48-hour allocation will provide NFI support to 5,000 families and the Shelter Cluster is currently tracking the procurement and entry of prioritised items through Egypt and coordinating the targeting and distribution of assistance by cluster partners.

According to initial estimates, 240,000 households urgently require protection from the upcoming winter season through **essential NFIs and emergency shelter materials, including sealing-off kits, bedding sets, winterised family tents, and warm winter clothes**. Tents will be provided where appropriate to provide protected covered living space, balancing the limitations of the urban context with historical considerations to avoid the creation of large-scale camps. In addition, families require other **essential household NFIs** and support to meet basic daily needs, including kitchen and washing sets. Families residing in damaged properties will be prioritised for sealing-off and winterisation assistance, especially if they are providing host family support.

IDPs sheltering in collective centres and host families face severely overcrowded conditions, which combined with lack of access to water is contributing to the spread of infectious diseases and increased protection concerns, including heightened risk of GBV. Additional covered space and **improvements to collective centres**, such as the provision of additional washing and showering facilities and privacy screens are needed. This will be facilitated as possible through **decongestion of shelters** by providing shelter materials to create additional covered space, protect and seal-off or repair damaged properties (where access and security allows for return), and through the provision of winterized tents that can be placed on the site of damaged properties.

Overall shelter needs range from life-saving emergency shelter and NFI assistance to transitional assistance in displacement and minor to major repairs. The [Flash Appeal](#) targets emergency activities that will **mitigate immediate harm, protect from harsh weather and ensure adequate and safe temporary shelter conditions**. This includes:

Activities	Households targeted
Activity 1: Provision of NFIs	240,000
Activity 2: Provision of emergency shelter materials / tents	100,000
Activity 3: Sealing-off and winterization / emergency repairs	200,000
Activity 4: Improvement and decongestion of collective shelters	250 collective shelters
Activity 5: Reintegration cash assistance	34,000

Until now, it has not been possible for Shelter Cluster partners to carry out a damage assessment to determine the extent of damage and subsequent needs. As security and access allows, **there is a need for a comprehensive damage assessment** to inform ongoing response strategy and targeting of assistance, as well as to ascertain the extent of displaced populations due to completely destroyed or uninhabitable housing. There is also a need to support clearing of debris and rubble, taking account of the risk of UXOs.

FUNDING

The funding requirements for the first 3 months are **209.2 million USD**. The Flash Appeal aims to cover activities through the end of the year, with the recognition that **for this to be possible increased access is required, as well as fuel for operations and increased inflow of humanitarian assistance**. Failure to generate sufficient support for critical shelter response will leave thousands at risk of exposure, disease, and death; exacerbate increasingly dire conditions for displaced families already facing significant loss; and contribute to increased frustration, social tensions and volatility.

KEY MESSAGES

- **The right to live in safety and dignity must be safeguarded.** The Shelter Cluster urgently calls for the immediate cessation of bombardment of civilian homes and designated emergency shelters.
- **Barriers to response need to be addressed to avoid further harm.** There must be provision for safe movement of people and goods inside Gaza and the possibility of return to usual place of residence. The supply of fuel is essential to facilitate distribution of aid and operation of heavy machinery to clear rubble.
- **There must be a significant and substantial increase in the quantity of humanitarian aid entering Gaza.** Packing restrictions that hinder sufficient and cost-effective provision of shelter NFIs need to be addressed.
- **Rapid mobilisation of resources is required to meet immediate needs.** Humanitarian funding is urgently required to cover vital Shelter/NFIs needs to protect IDPs during the upcoming winter season.
- **Adequate and timely funding for recovery is critical.** The extent and intensity of damage necessitates a swift and generous commitment to dignified shelter to reduce the compounding impacts of displacement and insufficient shelter protection. There is a need to start providing dignified shelter assistance, such as emergency repairs, as early as possible, to support decongestion of collective sites and minimise reliance on recurrent humanitarian assistance.
- **Holistic and integrated consideration at the neighbourhood level.** Repairs and rehabilitation are key to supporting decongestion and minimizing prolonged displacement and recurrent winterization needs while maximizing already stretched humanitarian resources. This needs to be coordinated with the provision of essential services and community level infrastructure rehabilitation to affected areas, in particular water supply and solid waste removal, to support return and reintegration of displaced populations.



Photo: Yousef Hammash/NRC, Oct 2023. The displacement of families to UNRWA schools in search of a safe place.

The Shelter and NFI response in Gaza is coordinated by the Shelter Cluster Palestine, hosted by Norwegian Refugee Council. For further information contact: **Fadi Shamisti**, coord1.palestine@sheltercluster.org | www.sheltercluster.org/response/palestine