

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	588
Land:	Gaza-Vestbredden
Kilde:	ACAPS
Titel:	Briefing note Palestine-Israel war, Humanitarian impact
Udgivet:	13. oktober 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. november 2023

PALESTINE-ISRAEL WAR

Humanitarian impact overview

OVERVIEW

- On 7 October 2023, the Qassam Brigades (the armed wing of Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip) launched a military operation called Al Aqsa Storm with other armed Palestinian groups against Israel (WHO 10/10/2023; Haaretz 08/10/2023; Al Jazeera accessed 08/10/2023). The operation was still underway as at 13 October, with rocket attacks towards Israel continuing from the Gaza Strip (OCHA 09/10/2023 and 10/10/2023).
- The most affected areas in Israel are Kfar Aza kibbutz (1mi away from the Gaza-Israeli barrier), Be'eri, Kissufim, Ofakim, Sderot, Urim, Yad Mordechai, and Yated (The Guardian 11/10/2023; CNN 10/10/2023). Israeli forces have evacuated 25 Israeli communities near the security fence bordering the Gaza Strip (Reuters accessed 11/10/2023; ABC 10/10/2023; Tol 08/10/2023).
- As a response, the Israeli Government declared war on Palestine on 8 October and retaliated using heavy air strikes, military bombardment, and attacks on military and civilian targets (Reuters 09/10/2023; Al Jazeera accessed 09/10/2023; Haaretz 08/10/2023; OCHA 07/10/2023; AP 09/10/2023).
- According to the Ministry of Health in Israel, as at 12 October, the Palestinian armed group attacks had killed around 1,200 people (a mix of Israelis and foreign nationals) and injured an estimated 3,390 (OCHA accessed 13/10/2023; ABC 12/10/2023). According to testimonies, the people killed included women, children, and the elderly, although the Israeli authorities have not confirmed the number of those belonging to these groups (OCHA 11/10/2023; BBC 12/10/2023; CNN accessed 11/10/2023; WHO 10/10/2023). Hamas is also holding hostage at least 150 people, including women, children, and older people. The Israeli authorities have not yet publicly provided specific details about the number or identities of the kidnapped victims (The Guardian 11/10/2023; NYT 09/10/2023).
- As at 12 October, the Israeli air strikes had killed at least 1,400 Palestinians and injured 6,268 (OCHA accessed 13/10/2023; ABC 12/10/2023; The Guardian 12/10/2023; OCHA 11/10/2023). These figures included the death of 447 children and over 240 women (Le Orient 12/10/2023; Reuters 12/10/2023; NYT 12/10/2023). There are also reports of the Israeli military holding the bodies of 1,500 members of Palestinian armed groups who died within Israel (OCHA

11/10/2023; ABC accessed 10/10/2023; NBC 10/10/2023). Access constraints currently prevent an accurate assessment of the affected areas, and figures are likely to increase as information becomes available.

- The situation in the Gaza Strip is dire. Heavy bombardments and the complete siege ordered by Israel are placing civilian lives at risk. As at 12 October, the air strikes had internally displaced almost 423,000 people, who were not allowed to exit the territory (OCHA accessed 13/10/2023). The number of displaced people has been the highest since the hostilities of 2014 and will likely continue to increase (The Guardian 12/10/2023; OCHA 11/10/2023; OCHA 10/10/2023). The air strikes are demolishing entire sections of neighbourhoods and essential infrastructure. As at 12 October, more than 2,540 housing units had become uninhabitable, while an additional 22,850 had sustained damage (OCHA 11/10/2023).
- Between 7–12 October, Israeli forces killed 33 Palestinians, including three children, in the West Bank. They also injured around 500 Palestinians, including 62 children, in the same period (OCHA accessed 13/10/2023). The majority of fatalities and injuries reported occurred in clashes during solidarity protests with Gaza (OCHA 11/10/2023). As at 12 October, settler attacks continued in the West Bank, killing eight Palestinians, including two children since 7 October (OCHA accessed 13/10/2023).

Anticipated scope and scale

Humanitarian corridors

As at 11 October, the Gaza Strip was under complete siege, and civilians were trapped in heavy hostilities. Humanitarian organisations including WHO, NRC, Mercy Corps and DCA are calling for a humanitarian corridor allowing civilians to flee the bombardments and access life-saving aid and services (NRC 12/10/2023; DCA 12/10/2023; The Guardian 11/10/2023; Tol 11/10/2023; Mercy Corps 10/10/2023; Franceinfo 10/10/2023). There is also a need to grant humanitarian organisations access to operate. No aid is currently allowed to enter Gaza, and insecurity is highly preventing humanitarian response. The Gaza Strip has limited to no access to water, food, electricity, and fuel as a result of the

KEY FIGURES

IN ISRAEL

1,200

PEOPLE KILLED

3,390

PEOPLE INJURED

IN GAZA STRIP

1,400

PEOPLE KILLED

6,268

PEOPLE INJURED

blockade imposed by the Israeli Government (OCHA 11/10/2023 and 10/10/2023). The blockade, combined with the lack of a humanitarian corridor, is likely to increase the humanitarian needs of the civilians trapped in the territory.

Military ground operation

In Israel, the right-wing Government and members of the centrist opposition formed an emergency unity government on 12 October to respond to the Hamas attacks (NYT 11/10/2023). Prior to this, the Israeli Government had called up 300,000 reservist soldiers in anticipation of a ground operation in the Gaza Strip (Reuters 10/10/2023; WSJ accessed 11/10/2023; Al Jazeera accessed 09/10/2023; Haaretz 08/10/2023). The first plane carrying munitions from the US arrived in Israel on 11 October (The Guardian 12/10/2023). A ground operation would expose the 2.2 million people living in Gaza to conflict and severely deteriorating humanitarian conditions.

Regional escalation

The conflict has extended to other borders. On 10 October, the Hezbollah in Lebanon launched two missiles at an Israeli military post near the village of Arab al-Aramshe. In response, the Israeli Government shelled militant targets in Lebanon and reinforced its northern area with extra units. The Hezbollah has stated that the missiles were a response to the killing of three of its fighters on 9 October (BBC 11/10/2023; Al Jazeera 10/10/2023). There is a risk of conflict escalation in the region.

Increased insecurity in the West Bank

In June 2023, the Israeli Government declared its intentions to annex the occupied territories of the West Bank and gave approval for more than 13,000 new settlement housing units in the territory (UNSG 28/06/2023; Reuters 27/06/2023; NPR 29/12/2022; JPost 28/12/2022). Between 1 January and 8 October 2023, the Israeli authorities demolished, forced people to demolish, or seized 752 Palestinian-owned structures across the West Bank, including 207 inhabited residential structures and 116 livelihood structures. These actions affected over 70,000 people and forcibly displaced 1,182 (OCHA accessed 09/10/2023). There have also been increasing attacks from Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank, often accompanied by the Israeli military to protect the attackers (Al Jazeera 27/02/2023; OCHA 08/07/2023). As at 18 September 2023, more than 215 attacks had resulted in casualties and 580 attacks in property damage, affecting Palestinians living in the West Bank (OCHA 26/09/2023). The current hostilities between Hamas and the Israeli Government are expected to heighten insecurity in the territory and increase the number of casualties and damage to property.

Humanitarian access constraints

Access in and out of the Gaza Strip

- Since 9 October, the Israeli Government has completely cut water, food, electricity, and fuel supply services as part of its complete siege (Al Jazeera 09/10/2023; DW 09/10/2023). The Government has stated that no humanitarian access will be allowed during the siege until all Israeli hostages are released from captivity (The Guardian 12/10/2023).
- As at 11 October, no entry of medical supplies to Gaza was permitted through the Karam Abu Salem/Kerem Shalom checkpoint (WHO 10/10/2023). Since 7 October, patients and caregivers with referrals for medical appointments outside Gaza have been unable to cross Beit Hanoun (Erez) (OCHA 09/10/2023).
- The Israeli authorities have closed all crossings from the West Bank into East Jerusalem and Israel for Palestinian ID holders, including UN and INGO staff members (UNRWA 11/10/2023 a).

Impact on humanitarian personnel and facilities

- Humanitarian workers have been targeted while assisting civilians in Gaza. As at 12 October 2023, the attacks had killed 23 humanitarian and health workers and injured 21 health workers (OCHA accessed 13/10/2023; Insecurity Insight 11/10/2023; UN 11/10/2023; UNRWA 11/10/2023 b). The Israeli air strikes had also struck 18 healthcare facilities and 20 ambulances as at 12 October (OCHA 11/10/2023; Reuters 11/10/2023; UN 11/10/2023; UNRWA 11/10/2023 b). As at 12 October, WHO had recorded 42 attacks on healthcare staff and resources in the West Bank, included 28 attacks obstructing health service provision, airstrikes on 20 ambulances, and 20 instances of physical violence towards health personnel (OCHA 11/10/2023; OCHA accessed 13/10/2023).
- Both Hamas and Israeli government air strikes are targeting infrastructure and facilities providing services and humanitarian aid. In Israel, rocket fire has hit a hospital, and attacks have killed a paramedic and severely injured a nurse. In Gaza, 51 incidents have been recorded, including the Israeli forces using explosive weapons that have killed 16 health workers and injured 20 (Insecurity Insight 11/10/2023; OCHA 11/10/2023). Many offices and facilities providing services have closed because of security concerns. The constant air strikes are restricting movement (OCHA 09/10/2023). As at 8 October, at least 14 UNRWA installations had sustained damage (UNRWA 08/10/2023).

HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OVERVIEW

Israel

As at 12 October, the Hamas attacks had killed at least 1,200 people and injured 3,390 in Israel. Although there are no official reports yet, according to testimonies, the people killed included women, children, and the elderly (OCHA 11/10/2023; BBC 12/10/2023; CNN accessed 11/10/2023; WHO 10/10/2023). Hamas is also believed to be holding hostage an estimated 150 people, including women and children (The Guardian 11/10/2023; NYT 09/10/2023).

The most affected kibbutzim and towns are Be'eri, Kfar Aza, Kissufim, Ofakim, Sderot, Urim, Yad Mordechai, and Yated. On 10 October, more than 100 bodies were reported to be found in Be'eri kibbutz, and many people had been taken hostage. Hamas fighters also attacked a music festival site outside the kibbutz, where more than 260 bodies were later found, as Palestinian armed groups infiltrating Israel targeted civilians. Some of the houses and cars in the affected kibbutz and towns have been burnt or looted (NYT 11/10/2023; CNN 10/10/2023 and 12/10/2023).

As at 11 October, there were no clear evacuation plans for foreigners (BBC 11/10/2023). Air transportation has been disrupted, and several airlines have cancelled all their flights to Israel (BBC 11/10/2023; Al Jazeera 10/10/2023).

As at 10 October, the Israeli forces had evacuated around 25 Israeli communities near the security fence with the Gaza Strip. These people are seeking safety in bomb shelters (Reuters accessed 11/10/2023; ABC 10/10/2023; Tol 08/10/2023). Affected people will need health services to treat injuries, as well as mental health and psychosocial support services, because of the severe nature of the attacks (ABC 10/10/2023).

Gaza

Essential infrastructure

The only power station in Gaza stopped working on 11 October (CNN accessed 11/10/2023). The Israeli Electric Company, which provided 120MW of the 210MW of the electricity supply in Gaza, cut its supplies on 7 October, reducing electricity in the strip to three to four hours per day. The fuel-dependent Gaza Power Plant, which provides 60MW of the remaining 90MW, is expected to run out of fuel within days. The Israeli authorities have also cut off the water supply to the area. The immediate impact will affect 610,000 people and result in drinking water shortages in Gaza (OCHA 09/10/2023; NBC 23/08/2022; Tol 07/10/2023).

Shelter

As at 12 October, the Israeli bombardments had displaced almost 423,000 Palestinians inside the Gaza Strip (The Guardian 12/10/2023; OCHA accessed 13/10/2023). Around 270,374 were sheltering in 102 UNRWA schools, 14,837 had taken refuge in public schools, and the remaining were staying with relatives or neighbours (OCHA accessed 13/10/2023). The number of displaced people has been the highest since the hostilities of 2014 (OCHA 11/10/2023 and 10/10/2023).

As at 12 October, the Israeli air strikes had rendered more than 2,500 housing units uninhabitable and damaged an additional 22,850 (OCHA 11/10/2023). The displaced Palestinians in the Gaza Strip require shelter and cash assistance (OCHA 09/10/2023). Bedding sets and NFIs are among the immediate shelter needs (Anera 08/10/2023; OCHA 09/10/2023).

Health

As at 10 October, 13 healthcare facilities and nine ambulances had been attacked in different locations across Gaza, resulting in six fatalities and four injuries among healthcare workers. The attacks have also damaged essential oxygen stations and equipment (OCHA 09/10/2023 and 07/10/2023). As at 11 October, hospitals in Gaza had electricity for only three to four hours per day, making them rely mostly on fuel-powered generators. As at 9 October, most hospitals had fuel to last for up to four days to run the backup generators. All health facilities in Gaza are only operating partially (OCHA 09/10/2023).

The health sector in Gaza is overstretched and poorly equipped, with limited staff and high dependency on humanitarian aid. The limited access of humanitarian aid is likely to aggravate the current situation (IMC accessed 10/10/2023; WHO 06/07/2022). Referral patients and their caregivers are not able to cross the Beit Hanoun (Erez) checkpoint to reach medical appointments each day (OCHA 09/10/2023). This poses a high risk for people with chronic diseases, pregnant women, and people with disabilities that require medical attention. Gaza lacks an adequate supply of medical equipment, such as emergency surgery equipment, dialysis supplies, and x-ray machines (MEMO 28/03/2023; Reuters 05/01/2023; NBC 12/10/2023).

Psychosocial and psychological support

Most UNRWA social services staff are providing services remotely because of the insecurity (UNRWA 08/10/2023). Limited communication services are likely to disrupt remote social services (OCHA 09/10/2023).

Prior to the current hostilities, approximately 373,000 children required direct and specialised psychosocial support because of the impact of military operations and Israel blockade (UN 21/08/2014). Two-thirds of adolescents in Gaza have post-traumatic stress disorder. People

in Gaza are constantly exposed to triggers of psychological trauma because of the blockade and frequent air strikes (IR 13/09/2021; The Nation 02/07/2015). Around 71% of the adult population exhibits symptoms of depression according to the WHO-5 wellbeing index (WB 14/06/2023).

Food security

UNRWA food distribution, which normally provides food assistance to more than one million Palestinians in Gaza through 14 distribution centres, is on hold. The distribution hold took effect before the third food distribution cycle, with 112,759 of 541,640 people yet to receive food assistance (UNRWA 06/04/2022, 07/10/2023, and 08/10/2023).

Wheat flour stocks in shops are expected to last for one week. The entire season's production for Gaza of strawberries, tomatoes, and olives is at risk of being lost, with insecurity hampering farm access to irrigate, harvest, and service the land. Livestock and poultry dependent on fodder imported through Kerem Shalom crossing are endangered, affecting 10,000 producers and food security for Gazans. Electricity and fuel shortages are affecting food harvest, production, and storage. 35,000L of milk is expected to be spoilt daily as a result of access and storage challenges (OCHA 09/10/2023).

WASH

On 8 October, Israel cut the water supply to Gaza, causing severe drinking water shortages in the strip (OCHA 11/10/2023). Before the current attacks, Gaza already suffered from severe safe drinking water shortages, as less than 4% of freshwater in Gaza was drinkable, and only 16% of the items needed to develop and rehabilitate water and sanitation were available because of Israel's blockade on Gaza (Oxfam accessed 12/10/2023). People in Gaza depend on the supply of chlorine for water treatment for drinking water, as chlorination is an important step in disinfecting water and preventing waterborne diseases. Gaza is currently using an emergency supply of chlorine, which will need to be replenished soon (OCHA 09/10/2023; CDC accessed 09/10/2020).

As at 12 October, the Israeli air strikes had struck seven water and sewage facilities, affecting 1.1 million people depending on these facilities (OCHA 11/10/2023). All UNRWA solid waste collection services and transfers to landfills remain on hold. The Gaza population of 2.2 million people produce around 2,000 tons of waste daily (OCHA 20/07/2020; UNRWA 08/10/2023). Sewage and solid waste are starting to accumulate on the streets in some neighbourhoods, creating health risks (OCHA 11/10/2023).

Prior to the current hostilities, around 90% of available water in Gaza was unfit for public consumption. The Gaza coastal aquifer, the main water source in Gaza, is over extracted and infiltrated by sewage, rendering it unfit for human consumption (WASH Cluster 29/06/2021; IR 09/10/2023). Families are highly dependent on purchasing drinking water from unregulated private vendors who do not necessarily treat the water to make it safe for drinking (PCBS/PWA 22/03/2021).

More than 100,000m³ of sewage is discharged untreated into the sea daily, polluting more than 75% of the shorelines, as the blockade is limiting the sewage treatment capacity of Gaza and restricting repair and rehabilitation (WASH Cluster 29/06/2021; Al Jazeera 12/10/2021).

Education

All UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip, including vocational centres, have closed, affecting the 300,000 students of these schools and centres (UNRWA 08/10/2023). The UNRWA Rehabilitation Centre for Visually Impaired, which provided services to around 500 children between 4–12, has also closed (UNRWA 09/08/2023 and 08/10/2023).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE GAZA STRIP

Population

In 2022, about 5.35 million people were living in Palestine, with 2.72 million men and 2.63 million women. The estimated population of the Gaza Strip was 2.17 million (1.1 million men and 1.07 million women) (PCBS 07/07/2022; UNFPA 30/03/2023). An estimated 41% of the population (around 900,000 people) in the Gaza Strip were children under 14, and only 3% of the population (around 66,000 people) were 65 years old or older (PCBS 11/07/2022). About 2.4% of the population had a disability, of whom 20% were children (HRW 03/12/2020; PCBS 03/12/2019). The median age for both men and women was 18 years old, and about 65% of the population was under the age of 24 (Reuters accessed 11/10/2023).

Density

Gaza is one of the most densely populated territories in the world, with 2.2 million people living in an area that is 365 km² with a population density of 5,800 per square kilometres (OCHA 16/12/2021; UNFPA 30/03/2023). Comparatively, the population density in Israel is 426 people per square kilometre, while the average in the Middle East and North Africa is between 43–48 people per square kilometre (WB accessed 05/01/2023).

Blockade, movement and humanitarian access restrictions

There has been a 16-year blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel since 2007, constraining the movement of people and goods. Travel in and out of the Gaza Strip into Israel is restricted for Palestinians unless they can obtain an Israeli permit. This has affected humanitarian responders working for UN agencies, national NGOs, and INGOs (OCHA 23/05/2023; OCHA 09/08/2019; OCHA 25/01/2023). The limited import of essential goods in and out of the strip,

especially relief items and equipment that qualify as dual-use items with potential military use, constrained daily lives and humanitarian activities. Many of the current restrictions were first imposed in the 1990s but intensified in 2007 when Hamas took over the governance of the strip (HRW accessed 11/10/2023; B'Tselem 11/11/2017; OCHA accessed 10/10/2023).

For many years, humanitarian organisations operating in Gaza also faced bureaucratic restrictions by Hamas, including taxes, regular audits, review of NGO staff and beneficiary lists, interference in surveys and assessments, and work restrictions in certain areas and sectors (ICNL accessed 10/10/2023; OCHA 16/12/2021).

Humanitarian conditions

OCHA categorises the humanitarian situation for 29% of the households in the Gaza Strip as Catastrophic or Extreme, and 81% of these households reported challenges in meeting basic needs, such as food and health (OCHA 29/06/2022 and 25/01/2023).

Unemployment and average earnings

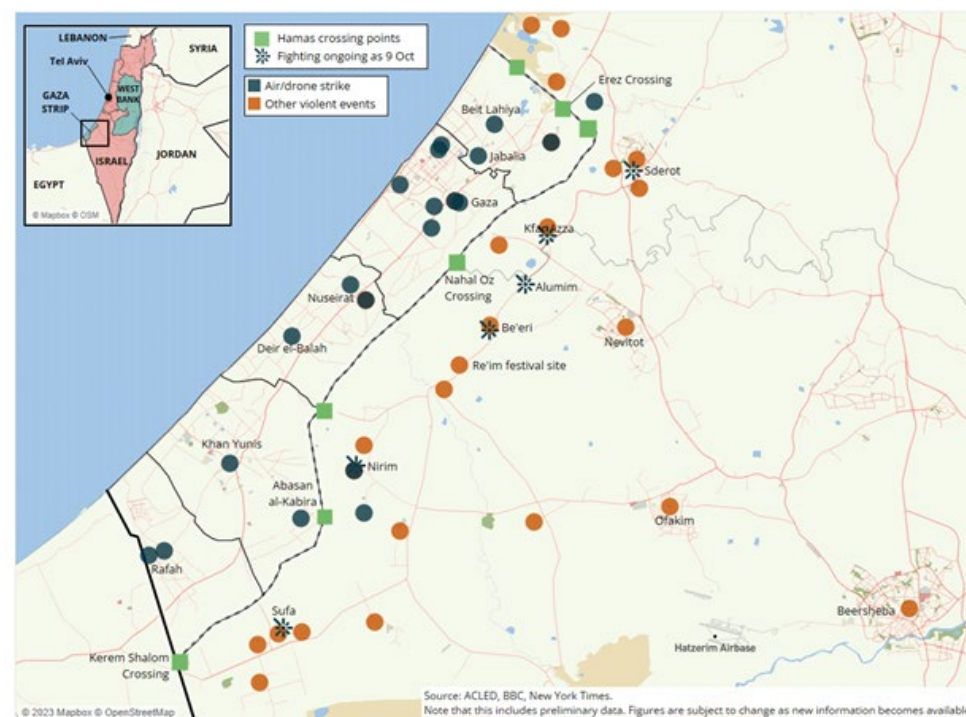
During the third quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate in Gaza governorate reached 46.6%, which was significantly higher among women (72%) compared to men. Unemployment rates were the highest among youth graduates (PCBS 15/02/2023). The high unemployment and poverty rates were correlated with high rates of school dropouts among young children (UNRWA accessed 06/07/2023). The average monthly earning in Gaza is about USD 200 (Gisha 04/01/2023; TE accessed 10/10/2023). The Palestinian economy is fragile, and there is insufficient investment to create job opportunities (Palquest accessed 14/03/2023).

Escalation of hostilities

Although the current intensity of hostilities is unprecedented, Gaza and Israel have experienced many escalations of hostilities in the past, notably in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. In 2014, during the Protective Edge Operation, around 485,000 people, more than one-quarter of the population of Gaza at the time, were displaced. Around 20,000 Palestinians remained displaced and were rendered homeless after the operation was concluded (OCHA 03/08/2014). Air strikes destroyed 18,000 housing units and 128 businesses (IMEU 10/09/2014).

There has been a chronic housing crisis in Gaza, with at least 21,300 houses falling below the minimum standards for overcrowding, the provision of basic services, and protection against adverse weather (NRC/Shelter Cluster 26/04/2021; MPWH accessed 05/01/2023).

Map 1: Gaza-Israel areas of fighting as at 9 October



Source: ACLED (09/10/2023)