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COI QUERY RESPONSE - Palestine

Security situation in the Gaza Strip and impact on the civilian population

1. Security situation

The reference period for this query response is 7 October 2023 to 31 January 2024 and some additional information was added as a result of the quality review process during the review implementation up until 19 February 2024.

The report of the Secretary-General to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) of 14 December 2023 described the events of the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attack as follows:

‘On the morning of 7 October, during the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups launched a large-scale armed attack on Israel. The attacks, which included the commitment of numerous acts of terror, saw an estimated 3,000 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants from Gaza infiltrating some 20 communities and military facilities in southern Israel, in the Gaza periphery, by land, sea and air, while thousands of rockets were launched towards population centres in Israel, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem’.¹

According to the same source, the attack has left over 1 250 Israelis and foreign nationals killed, 6 200 injured, and reports emerged that ‘horrific acts of extreme violence’ were committed.² The same UNSC report added that, additionally, ‘some 250 people, including both Israelis and foreign nationals and approximately 65 women and 34 children, were abducted and taken into Gaza’.³ The attack on southern Israel has been described by sources as ‘unprecedented’⁴ and a ‘massive surprise’ to Israel, according to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).⁵

According to the Secretary-General’s report to the UNSC, ‘[o]n the day of the attack, the Security Cabinet of Israel declared a state of war with the aim of, according to a post on social media, “destruction of the military and governing capabilities of Hamas and Islamic Jihad”. That same day, Israeli forces began a massive bombardment of what they said were Hamas

¹ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 11

² UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 12

³ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 13

⁴ ACLED, The Resurgence of Armed Groups in the West Bank and Their Connections to Gaza, 14 December 2023, [url](#); France24, Hamas surprise attack a ‘historic failure’ for Israeli intelligence services, 7 October 2023, [url](#); New Humanitarian (The), As the Gaza war dominates, Israeli actions tip the West Bank into an economic and security crisis, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵ CFR, What Is Hamas?, last updated 31 October 2023, [url](#)

sites throughout Gaza'.⁶ According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), following the attack, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) 'vowed to use all means to destroy Hamas'.⁷

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, were identified by the SG-UNSC as the armed actors responsible for the 7 October attack.⁸ The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) noted the existence of a 'loose coalition of several Palestinian militias rather than just Hamas'.⁹ Other groups that have claimed attacks in or from Gaza include the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)¹⁰, the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades¹¹, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).¹²

The December 2023 UNSC report noted that '[i]n some cases, the Israeli military claimed that civilian sites were being used for military purposes'.¹³ According to multiple claims by the Israeli authorities, during the conflict, Hamas has been using civilians as 'human shields'¹⁴,

⁶ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 14

⁷ ACLED, The Resurgence of Armed Groups in the West Bank and Their Connections to Gaza, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 11

⁹ ISW, CTP, Iran Update, October 23, 2023, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰ ISW, CTP, Iran Update, January 27, 2024, 27 January 2024, [url](#), p. 3; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, December 23, 2023, 23 December 2023, [url](#), p. 6; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, December 3, 2023, 3 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, November 8, 2023, 8 November 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹¹ ISW, CTP, Iran Update, January 27, 2024, 27 January 2024, [url](#), p. 3; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, December 3, 2023, 3 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, November 8, 2023, 8 November 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹² ISW, CTP, Iran Update, January 25, 2024, 25 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, October 23, 2023, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 3; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, December 3, 2023, 3 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9; ISW, CTP, Iran Update, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹³ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 18

¹⁴ IDF, IDF Forces Are Conducting an Intelligence-Based Precise Operation in a Specified Area in the Shifa Hospital, 15 November 2023, [url](#); Al Jazeera, What is a 'human shield' and why is Israel using the term in Gaza?, 13 November 2023, [url](#); EUobserver, EU backs Israel on 'human shields' in Gaza, 13 November 2023, [url](#); Times of Israel (The), IDF releases new intel detailing Hamas use of Gaza hospitals for terror purposes, 5 November 2023, [url](#)

including the use of civilian locations for military purposes, namely houses¹⁵, hospitals¹⁶, schools¹⁷, mosques¹⁸, and olive groves¹⁹.

The IDF has engaged in an 'intense air, naval and subsequent ground operation'²⁰ in the Gaza Strip, and 'since then thousands of people have been killed and more than one million have been displaced, as parts of Gaza have been reduced to rubble.'²¹ Israeli airstrikes have hit densely populated residential areas, hospitals, markets, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) facilities, including schools.²² In the period of 7 October 2023 - 10 December 2023, 'over 22,000 terror targets have been struck in the Gaza Strip', according to the IDF²³, reportedly also by using artificial intelligence to identify targets.²⁴

In addition, Israel has imposed a siege on the Gaza Strip, including cutting off electricity, water, as well as severely restricting deliveries of fuel and food,²⁵ which has been described as 'collective punishment' by the UN²⁶ and human rights observers.²⁷ A humanitarian pause was in place in the period of 24-30 November²⁸, during which '86 Israeli and 24 foreign

¹⁵ IDF, Weapons Hidden Under Children's Beds and Underground Terrorist Infrastructure: The 401st Brigade Operated on the Outskirts of Jabalya, 23 November 2023, [url](#); IDF, Hamas Weapons Production Facility Located Next to Children's Bedroom, 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶ AP News, Israel unveils what it claims is a major Hamas militant hideout beneath Gaza City's Shifa Hospital, 23 November 2023, [url](#); IDF, A terrorist squad embedded itself near the 'Al-Quds' Hospital and fired at IDF soldiers, 14 November 2023, [url](#); IDF, A Hamas Terrorist Cell That Hid Inside The "Ibn Sina" Hospital In Jenin And Planned To Carry Out A Terror Attack In The Immediate Period Was Neutralized., 30 January 2023, [url](#); Times of Israel (The), IDF releases new intel detailing Hamas use of Gaza hospitals for terror purposes, 5 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷ IDF, Terrorist Fires From a School, Explosive Devices Located in UNRWA Bags; The Operations of the Nahal Brigade in Northern Gaza, 25 December 2023, [url](#); IDF, Terrorists Hiding in Building Eliminated and Weapons Located During Targeted Raid in Schools in the Sheikh Radwan Area, 24 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸ IDF, Terrorist Tunnel Shafts in Mosque, Rocket Launchers in an Orchard; The Nahal Brigade Operates on the Outskirts of Jabalya and Directs Aerial Forces, 23 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹ IDF, Weapons Production Site in a Backyard and a Loaded Rocket Launcher in an Olive Grove, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁰ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 17

²¹ UN, Israel-Gaza Crisis, Background, n.d., [url](#)

²² OHCHR, Israel/occupied Palestinian territory: UN experts deplore attacks on civilians, call for truce and urge international community to address root causes of violence, 12 October 2023, [url](#)

²³ IDF, Real Time Updates, last updated 9 February 2023, [url](#)

²⁴ NPR, Israel is using an AI system to find targets in Gaza. Experts say it's just the start, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵ International Crisis Group, Surviving the War in Gaza, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁶ UN, Secretary-General's statement to the press - on the Middle East, 15 January 2024, [url](#); OHCHR, Israel working to expel civilian population of Gaza, UN expert warns, 22 December 2023, [url](#); UN, Civilians in Gaza Must Not Be Collectively Punished for Atrocities Committed by Hamas, Speakers Tell Security Council, Urging Ceasefire, 30 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁷ AI, Israel/OPT: Another blackout in Gaza imminent if sufficient fuel is not restored, 15 November 2023, [url](#); HRW, Israel/Palestine: Unprecedented Killings, Repression, 11 January 2024, [url](#); MSS, Immediate ceasefire is needed in Gaza to stop the bloodshed, 28 October 2023, [url](#); Refugees International, Delivering Aid to Gaza, 17 November 2023, [url](#)

²⁸ UNOCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #65 [EN/AR/HE], 10 December 2023, [url](#), p. 5; UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 17; WFP, Gaza - Food Security Assessment - December 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

national hostages were released'.²⁹ Additionally, 240 Palestinians were released from Israeli prisons.³⁰ Reuters reported that as of 24 January 2024, 'around 130 hostages' remained in captivity in Gaza.³¹

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) has stated that '[i]ntense Israeli bombardment from air, land, and sea continued across much of the Gaza Strip on 31 January', with hostilities being 'particularly intense' in Khan Younis, and that '[g]round operations and fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups were also reported across much of Gaza'.³²

2. Impact of conflict on civilians, including civilian casualties, civilian infrastructure, and humanitarian situation

2.1. Civilian casualties

In December 2023, the Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres stated that '[t]he magnitude of the Israeli military campaign against Hamas and the scope of death and destruction in Gaza have been unprecedented and unbearable to witness. I unequivocally condemn the killing of civilians in Gaza, including women and children.'³³ On 16 January 2024, commenting on the situation in Gaza after over a hundred days of war, a group of UN human rights experts concluded that, '[n]owhere is safe in Gaza'.³⁴

As of 9 February 2024, UNRWA, referring to figures by the Gazan Ministry of Health stated that 'at least 27,947 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip since 7 October. About 70 per cent of those killed are reported to be women and children. Another 67,459 Palestinians have been reportedly injured'.³⁵ The UN has 'so far not been able to produce independent, comprehensive, and verified casualty figures', and it has relied on the figures provided by the Gazan Ministry of Health or the Government Media Office.³⁶

In November 2023, Associated Press (AP) News published an article discussing how the Ministry of Health in Gaza, 'an agency in the Hamas-controlled government', counts casualties of the conflict, mentioning that '[t]he ministry never distinguishes between civilians and combatants', but also the prevailing 'chaos' caused by the security and humanitarian situation that has increased a likelihood of errors.³⁷

²⁹ UNOCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #65 [EN/AR/HE], 10 December 2023, [url](#), p. 5

³⁰ New York Times (The), Freed Palestinians Were Mostly Young and Not Convicted of Crimes, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

³¹ Reuters, Exclusive: One-month Gaza truce focus of intensive talks, sources say, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

³² UNOCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #107, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

³³ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 54

³⁴ OHCHR, Over one hundred days into the war, Israel destroying Gaza's food system and weaponizing food, say UN human rights experts, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁵ UNRWA, UNRWA Situation Report #76 On The Situation In The Gaza Strip And The West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁶ UNOCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 123, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁷ AP News, What is Gaza's Ministry of Health and how does it calculate the war's death toll?, 7 November 2023, [url](#)

As of 5 February 2024, UNRWA reported a total of 154 UNRWA staff members killed since the beginning of the conflict.³⁸ In January 2024, the Secretary General of the UN stressed that the number of fatalities among UN staff members, then at 152, was 'the largest single loss of life in the history of our organization'.³⁹

On 23 December 2023, an Israeli media source, quoting IDF, reported that '8,000 terrorists affiliated with Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) [were killed] in the Gaza Strip since the start of the Israel-Hamas war'.⁴⁰ Neither information on the methodology of how this data was collected, nor any corroborating data could be found by EUAA within time constraints.

As of January, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported at least 92 journalists and media workers killed in the conflict.⁴¹ The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that at least 83 journalists and media workers were among the casualties of the armed conflict.⁴² Reporters Without Borders (RSF) reported that 'Israeli strikes have killed at least 81 journalists in the Gaza Strip, of whom at least 18 in the course of their work or because of the work as journalists'.⁴³

2.2. Civilian infrastructure

For the period of 7 October 2023 to 28 January 2024, in its regularly updated live tracker, Al Jazeera, quoting WHO (World Health Organization), UNOCHA, and Government Media Office in Gaza, presented the following damaged or destroyed infrastructure in Gaza reportedly attributed to Israeli attacks:

- over 360 000 residential units damaged or destroyed, representing more than half of Gaza's homes;
- 392 educational facilities damaged;
- 267 places of worship damaged;
- 11 of 35 hospitals partially functional;
- 123 ambulances damaged;
- 11 bakeries destroyed.⁴⁴

On 30 January 2024, BBC reported that based on its investigation, 'between 144,000 and 175,000 buildings across the whole Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed. That's between 50% and 61% of Gaza's buildings'.⁴⁵ Khan Younis in the south was particularly 'badly

³⁸ UNRWA, UNRWA Situation Report #74 On The Situation In The Gaza Strip And The West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁹ UN, Secretary-General's statement to the press - on the Middle East, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁰ i24news.tv, IDF reports eliminating 8,000 terrorists in Gaza since October 7, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹ IFJ, Palestine: At least ninety-two journalists and media workers killed in Gaza, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴² CPJ, Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴³ RSF, RSF calls for emergency UN Security Council meeting on Israeli violations of Resolution 2222 on protecting journalists, 10 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴ Al Jazeera, Israel-Gaza war in maps and charts: Live tracker, updated 13 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵ BBC News, At least half of Gaza's buildings damaged or destroyed, new analysis shows, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

hit' in January 2024, with over 38 000 damaged or destroyed buildings, according to the same report.⁴⁶

On 16 January 2024, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 'Israel has also destroyed more than 60% of Palestinian homes in Gaza', making the territory 'uninhabitable'.⁴⁷

A BBC investigation found that 72 mosques and two churches were damaged or destroyed between 7 October and 31 December 2023.⁴⁸ The same source noted that according to Hamas, '378 mosques and three churches had been hit up to 9 January [2024], though this figure has not been independently verified'.⁴⁹ According to reports, Gaza's oldest mosque⁵⁰ and a historical Greek Orthodox church⁵¹ were among the damaged buildings.

2.3. Humanitarian situation

Following the start of hostilities after the October 7 attack, United Nations⁵² and European Union⁵³ expressed their grave concerns in relation to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. According to a December 2023 report by World Food Programme (WFP), '[t]he ongoing conflict in Gaza [...] has resulted in unprecedented humanitarian crisis, widespread destruction and displacement, limited access to food, water, electricity, cooking gas and other essential needs and services'.⁵⁴ The December 2023 UNSC report described the impact of the war on civilians as 'catastrophic', including lack of food and fuel, and destruction of civilian infrastructure.⁵⁵ According to a news release by WHO on 15 January 2024, '[t]he conflict has also damaged or destroyed essential water, sanitation and health infrastructure and services and limited capacity to treat severe malnutrition and infectious

⁴⁶ BBC News, At least half of Gaza's buildings damaged or destroyed, new analysis shows, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷ OHCHR, Over one hundred days into the war, Israel destroying Gaza's food system and weaponizing food, say UN human rights experts, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁸ BBC News, Israel-Gaza war: Counting the destruction of religious sites, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹ BBC News, Israel-Gaza war: Counting the destruction of religious sites, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰ BBC News, Images show major damage to Gaza's oldest mosque, 8 December 2023, [url](#); Haaretz, One of Gaza's Oldest Mosques Damaged in Fighting; It Was Used by Hamas, IDF Says, 10 December 2023, [url](#); NPR, Israeli strike leaves Gaza's oldest mosque in ruins, 9 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹ Al Jazeera, 'We were baptised here and we will die here': Gaza's oldest church bombed, 20 October 2023, [url](#);

Washington Post (The), Historic church sheltering civilians struck in deadly Gaza City blast, 20 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵² UN, Press Conference by Secretary-General António Guterres at United Nations Headquarters, 6 November 2023, [url](#); UN News, Gaza humanitarian crisis deepens as fighting rages on across the Strip, 11 December 2023, [url](#); UNSC, Resolution 2720 (2023), 22 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵³ Council of the European Union, Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council, 25 October 2023, [url](#); European Council, European Council meeting (26 and 27 October 2023) – Conclusions, [url](#); Council of the European Union, Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on humanitarian pauses in Gaza, 12 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴ WFP, Gaza - Food Security Assessment - December 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁵ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 38

disease outbreaks'.⁵⁶ On 29 January 2024, UN warned of a 'looming threat of famine, disease and displacement' for the people in Gaza.⁵⁷

On 29 January 2024, The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported that '[a]t least 12 employees of the U.N.'s Palestinian refugee agency had connections to Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel and around 10% of all of its Gaza staff have ties to Islamist militant groups, according to intelligence reports'⁵⁸ presented by Israeli authorities.⁵⁹ Following Israel's information on the alleged links of UNRWA employees, the Agency launched an investigation and fired the accused employees.⁶⁰ As of 31 January 2024, 17 countries have suspended their funding to UNRWA⁶¹, including the USA, Japan, and Germany, some of the Agency's biggest donors.⁶² The European Commission urged UNRWA to carry out 'an audit of the Agency to be conducted by EU appointed independent external experts' and a 'review of all UNRWA staff [...] to confirm they did not participate in the attacks'.⁶³ Following the cuts in funding, aid organisations have warned of a possible 'complete collapse' of humanitarian response in Gaza.⁶⁴

During his remarks made on 31 January 2024, António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the UN, stated that he was 'extremely concerned by the inhumane conditions faced by Gaza's 2.2 million people, as they struggle to survive without any of the basics'.⁶⁵

2.3.1. Humanitarian access

⁵⁶ WHO, Preventing famine and deadly disease outbreak in Gaza requires faster, safer aid access and more supply routes, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷ UN, Gaza: 'Simply not enough food' to go around, warn UN humanitarians, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸ WSJ, Intelligence Reveals Details of U.N. Agency Staff's Links to Oct. 7 Attack, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Al Jazeera, Israeli intelligence accuses UNRWA staff of kidnap, seizing body, 29 January 2024, [url](#); AP News, Israel issues its most detailed warning yet to Hezbollah, while the war in Gaza marks 4 months, 3 February 2024, [url](#); France24, Israel spells out accusations against UNRWA workers linked to Hamas attack, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰ UNRWA, Serious allegations against UNRWA staff in the Gaza Strip, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶¹ Le Monde, UNRWA: Who funds the UN agency dedicated to Palestinian refugees?, 31 January 2024, [url](#); NPR, UNRWA loses funding after charges that some employees took part in Hamas attack, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶² Le Monde, UNRWA: Who funds the UN agency dedicated to Palestinian refugees?, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶³ European Commission, European Commission Statement on UNRWA, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴ UNRWA, Joint Statement By 28 NGOs: UNRWA Cuts Threaten Palestinian Lives in Gaza and Region, 31 January 2024, [url](#). For more information on the cuts in the aid to UNRWA, see: International Crisis Group, Why Donors Should Not Suspend Aid to UNRWA, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵ UN, Secretary-General's remarks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [as delivered], 31 January 2024, [url](#)

Following the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, Israeli authorities imposed a ‘complete siege’⁶⁶ of the Gaza strip with a blockade on electricity, food, fuel⁶⁷, water⁶⁸, and medicine⁶⁹. On 19 October 2023, an agreement to allow ‘up to 20 trucks of food, medicine, and water into Gaza’ was reached.⁷⁰ The first 20 trucks with aid entered through the Rafah crossing on 21 October 2023; between that date and 24 November 2023, when the humanitarian pause started, an average of 50 trucks entered Gaza every day.⁷¹ During the pause, 170 trucks/day with aid entered Gaza on average⁷², which has dropped to a daily average of 80 trucks/day after the pause, according to the UNSC report from 14 December 2023.⁷³

In the same report, UNSC noted that ‘[t]he Erez and Kerem Shalom border crossings with Israel have remained closed since 7 October, and both have been subjected to Hamas rocket attacks.’⁷⁴

UNSC further reported that ‘[s]tarting on 27 October, Israel Defense Forces has periodically cut off communications within Gaza and to the rest of the world, especially during the conduct of Israeli operations inside Gaza, making humanitarian delivery and response nearly impossible’.⁷⁵ Instances of a ‘communication blackout’ were also reported in November 2023⁷⁶, December 2023⁷⁷, and January 2024.⁷⁸

On 11 January 2024, The New Humanitarian reported that ‘small amounts of humanitarian aid’ were allowed into Gaza through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt as well as through the

⁶⁶ CNN, Israeli defense minister orders ‘complete siege’ of Gaza, as Hamas threatens hostages, 9 October 2023, [url](#); European Commission, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, EU announces €125 million in initial humanitarian aid for Palestinians for 2024, 8 December 2023, [url](#); Times of Israel (The), Defense minister announces ‘complete siege’ of Gaza: No power, food or fuel, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷ CNN, Israeli defense minister orders ‘complete siege’ of Gaza, as Hamas threatens hostages, 9 October 2023, [url](#); Times of Israel (The), Defense minister announces ‘complete siege’ of Gaza: No power, food or fuel, 9 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸ CNN, Israeli defense minister orders ‘complete siege’ of Gaza, as Hamas threatens hostages, 9 October 2023, [url](#); OHCHR, Over one hundred days into the war, Israel destroying Gaza’s food system and weaponizing food, say UN human rights experts, 16 January 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Gaza Strip: devastated by conflict and Israel’s economic blockade, 12 October 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹ OHCHR, Over one hundred days into the war, Israel destroying Gaza’s food system and weaponizing food, say UN human rights experts, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰ HRW, Israel: Unlawful Gaza Blockade Deadly for Children, 18 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 40

⁷² UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 40

⁷³ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 40

⁷⁴ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 42

⁷⁵ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 39

⁷⁶ WSJ, Gaza’s Communications Go Down for Third Time, 6 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Times of Israel (The), Communications blackout, rising hunger compound suffering in Gaza on 11th week of war, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Le Monde, Gaza internet blackout lasts more than a week, 19 January 2024, [url](#); NPR, As Gaza’s communication blackout grinds on, some fear it is imperiling lives, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

Kerem Shalom border crossing with Israel.⁷⁹ According to a WHO report from 15 January 2024, WHO reported that '[h]umanitarian action is seriously limited by the closure of all but two border crossings in the south'.⁸⁰ Delivery of the aid has been adversely affected by continuing hostilities.⁸¹

According to a report published by OHCHR on 16 January 2024, '[w]hile the majority of aid distribution is concentrated in the southern governorates, since 1 January, only 21 per cent (5 out of 24) of planned deliveries of aid containing food and other lifesaving supplies reached their destination north of Wadi Gaza. The [UN human rights] experts are particularly alarmed about conditions in northern Gaza, where the population faces prolonged food shortages and extremely restricted access to essential resources. In southern Gaza, a large concentration of individuals resides in inadequate shelters or areas devoid of basic amenities, escalating the brutal situation'.⁸²

International Crisis Group noted that '[a]t present, both Rafah and the Kerem Shalom crossing from Israel are operating, but no more than 200 trucks bearing humanitarian aid are entering Gaza daily. [...] Before the war, at least 500 truckloads would come in every day, while needs have grown manifold since then'.⁸³

2.3.2. Food and water security

On 21 December 2023, WHO reported on 'catastrophic levels of food insecurity' in Gaza and warned about an increasing risk of famine.⁸⁴ According to Human Rights Watch, Israel 'is using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in the Gaza Strip'.⁸⁵ In a news release from 8 February 2024, UN stated: 'The latest nutrition assessments carried out by humanitarians indicated that the risk of famine in Gaza is increasing by the day'.⁸⁶

According to a report by WFP from 6 December 2023, 97% of households in Northern Gaza had 'inadequate food consumption', while the number for the IDPs in the south was 83%.⁸⁷ Eight days later, WFP reported that '[n]early all IDP households reported inadequate food consumption, rising from 83% to 93%'.⁸⁸

⁷⁹ New Humanitarian (The), Inside Gaza's supposed 'safe zone', where displaced Palestinians struggle for survival, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰ WHO, Preventing famine and deadly disease outbreak in Gaza requires faster, safer aid access and more supply routes, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹ New Humanitarian (The), Inside Gaza's supposed 'safe zone', where displaced Palestinians struggle for survival, 11 January 2024, [url](#); WHO, Preventing famine and deadly disease outbreak in Gaza requires faster, safer aid access and more supply routes, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸² OHCHR, Commissioner for Human Rights), Over one hundred days into the war, Israel destroying Gaza's food system and weaponizing food, say UN human rights experts, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸³ International Crisis Group, Surviving the War in Gaza, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴ WHO, Lethal combination of hunger and disease to lead to more deaths in Gaza, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵ HRW, Israel: Starvation Used as Weapon of War in Gaza, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶ UN, Gazans 'stalked by hunger, disease and death', warns UN's top aid official, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷ WFP, Gaza - Food Security Assessment - December 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁸⁸ WFP, Food Security Update For Internally Displaced Populations in Southern Gaza Strip, 14 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

WHO noted that '[w]ithout the ability to produce or import food, the entire population of Gaza relies on aid to survive'.⁸⁹ According to the same source, 'WFP has been providing food to people inside Gaza every day since 7 October and reached more than 900 000 people with food assistance in December'.⁹⁰ In January 2024, UNRWA continued to 'distribute flour outside of shelters in the southern governorates. A total of 323,482 families have been reached so far'.⁹¹

Over 20 % of agricultural land and some 70 % of the fishing fleet in Gaza have been destroyed during the war, and people face a lack of food and fuel to cook.⁹² BBC's analysis based on satellite imagery, published on 30 January 2024, indicates an 'extensive' damage to the farmland across Gaza.⁹³

Regarding water security, as a result of a lack of clean water, '[m]ost Gazans are forced to resort to non-potable water sources', according to a report by British NGO Oxfam published in November 2023.⁹⁴ As of 6 December 2023, people in northern Gaza had '1.8 Liter of clean water per person/per day'.⁹⁵ According to a WFP report from 14 December 2023, '[a]ccess to water remains severely constrained, with less than 2 Liters per person per day, falling short by 15 Liters of the basic survival-level water requirement as per the Sphere Standards'.⁹⁶ As of 16 January 2024, UNRWA reported that 'water wells in Jabalia (north), Khan Younis and Rafah (south) were operational. Nearly 3,000 cubic metres have been pumped. Khan Younis and Rafah water wells have operated in two shifts (12 hours) to provide potable/domestic water supply services'.⁹⁷

2.3.3. Access to healthcare

WHO reported on 'soaring rates of infectious diseases' in Gaza, including cases of diarrhoea, upper respiratory infection, meningitis, skin rashes, and scabies⁹⁸, with the spread of infectious diseases 'inevitable' due to lack of sanitation and 'collapsing health system'.⁹⁹

⁸⁹ WHO, Preventing famine and deadly disease outbreak in Gaza requires faster, safer aid access and more supply routes, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰ WHO, Preventing famine and deadly disease outbreak in Gaza requires faster, safer aid access and more supply routes, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹ UNRWA, UNRWA Situation Report #67 On The Situation In The Gaza Strip And The West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹² OHCHR, Over one hundred days into the war, Israel destroying Gaza's food system and weaponizing food, say UN human rights experts, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹³ BBC News, At least half of Gaza's buildings damaged or destroyed, new analysis shows, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Oxfam, The Unfolding Water Catastrophe in Gaza, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵ WFP, Gaza - Food Security Assessment - December 2023, 6 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁹⁶ WFP, Food Security Update, For Internally Displaced Populations in Southern Gaza Strip, 14 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁹⁷ UNRWA, UNRWA Situation Report #67 On The Situation In The Gaza Strip And The West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸ WHO, Lethal combination of hunger and disease to lead to more deaths in Gaza, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹ WHO, Lethal combination of hunger and disease to lead to more deaths in Gaza, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

OHCHR reported that the ‘healthcare system [...] collapsed due to the wide-spread destruction of hospitals’ in the Gaza Strip.¹⁰⁰ MSF reported that the access to health care in Gaza ‘drastically diminished’ and that ‘[t]he healthcare system in Gaza [...] virtually collapsed’.¹⁰¹

CFR reported on 8 January 2024 that ‘[a]ttacks on medical infrastructure and a lack of basic supplies have reduced the number of functioning hospitals to only nine, all of which are in the south’.¹⁰²

On 23 January 2024, WHO reported that seven hospitals in the northern Gaza and seven hospitals in southern Gaza were ‘partially functional’.¹⁰³ This represents 14 out of 36 hospitals in Gaza.¹⁰⁴

3. Displacement

Out of the estimated 2.2 million population of Gaza, 1.7 million people have been displaced inside the Gaza Strip as of 26 January 2024, according to UNRWA estimates.¹⁰⁵

In a report published on 14 December 2023, UNSC reported that ‘[a] limited number of foreigners, Palestinians with dual nationalities, some staff of international organizations and a significant number of sick or injured Palestinians have been allowed to exit through Egypt’.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, according to the same source, ‘[t]housands of Palestinian workers from Gaza were returned to Gaza by Israel using the Kerem Shalom crossing on 3 November, while some were reportedly detained by Israeli security forces and others returned voluntarily with the facilitation of the Palestinian Authority’.¹⁰⁷ According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), ‘thousands of workers from Gaza’ were held ‘in incommunicado detention for several weeks following the October 7 attacks’, reportedly to interrogate some of them in relation to the October 7 attack.¹⁰⁸

On 13 October 2023, IDF issued an announcement calling ‘for the evacuation of all civilians of Gaza City from their homes southwards for their own safety and protection and move to the area south of the Wadi Gaza’.¹⁰⁹ On 18 October 2023, IDF reiterated the call for evacuation

¹⁰⁰ OHCHR, Over one hundred days into the war, Israel destroying Gaza’s food system and weaponizing food, say UN human rights experts, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ MSF, Evacuation orders and bombing around Gaza hospitals leaves people with few healthcare options, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰² CFR, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, updated 8 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³ WHO, New mass displacement of Palestinians fleeing fighting, health facilities crammed with people seeking refuge, food, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ UNOCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel I Flash Update #107, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ UNOCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel I Flash Update #107, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 42

¹⁰⁷ UNSC, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); Report of the Secretary-General, 14 December 2023, [url](#), para. 45

¹⁰⁸ HRW, Israel: Rafah Evacuation Plans Catastrophic, Unlawful, 9 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ IDF, IDF Announcement Sent to the Civilians of Gaza City, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

and asked the residents of the northern Gaza and Gaza city to move to Al-Mawasi near Khan Younis.¹¹⁰

Commenting on the evacuation orders, Human Rights Watch wrote that '[t]here's nowhere to go, except—for some—to relatives' overcrowded homes in the southern half of the strip', while border crossings with Egypt and Israel were closed.¹¹¹ International Crisis Group noted that '[h]undreds of thousands of Palestinians stayed in the north after the Israeli warnings to evacuate'¹¹², having decided not to move south despite the orders, including for fear that the journey was not safe.¹¹³

On 22 November 2023, a group of humanitarian organisations released a joint report warning that even though the Israeli authorities have announced 'humanitarian pauses', 'humanitarian corridors', and 'safe zones' in Gaza, hostilities continued to be reported during these pauses, including on the routes meant for safe transportation to the south and in the areas where civilians were told to relocate to.¹¹⁴ Similarly, media sources reported on security incidents leading to casualties among civilians along evacuation routes.¹¹⁵ For instance, on 16 October 2023, BBC News reported that a convoy of cars with people traveling south was hit by a strike. BBC described the scene as a 'total carnage', leaving at least 12 people dead, while the Palestinian Health Ministry claimed that 70 people died.¹¹⁶ On 4 January 2024, Save the Children reported that: '[f]ourteen people, the majority of them children under 10 years old, were reportedly killed by Israeli airstrikes near Al-Mawasi this morning, an area designated a "humanitarian zone" by Israeli authorities, to which Israeli forces ordered civilians to evacuate for their safety'.¹¹⁷

On 24 January 2024, BBC reported that the IDF 'ordered residents of western Khan Younis to move immediately to the al-Mawasi area, on the Mediterranean coast, for their own safety'.¹¹⁸ According to the UN, the area was inhabited by some half a million people.¹¹⁹ As of 8 February 2024, estimated 1.4 million people were sheltering in Rafah, a city originally with a population of 250 000 people.¹²⁰ According to a Human Rights Watch report from 9 February 2024, Israeli army has been ordered 'to submit to the cabinet a plan to evacuate Rafah, Gaza's

¹¹⁰ IDF, IDF Calls Residents of Gaza to Evacuate to Humanitarian Area in Al-Mawasi, Where International Humanitarian Aid Will Be Provided, 18 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹ HRW, Nowhere to Go in Gaza, 13 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹² International Crisis Group, Surviving the War in Gaza, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³ International Crisis Group, Surviving the War in Gaza, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ Action Against Hunger USA et al., Pauses, Corridors, and Safe Zones in Gaza: Rhetoric vs. Reality, 22 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 1-3

¹¹⁵ BBC News, Strike on civilian convoy fleeing Gaza: What we know from verified video, 16 October 2023, [url](#); CNN, 'No safe area': CNN journalist details his family's desperate flight south from Gaza City, 16 October 2023, [url](#); Save the Children, No Safe Place In Gaza: 14 Killed, Mostly Children, By Israeli Airstrikes Near So-Called "Humanitarian Zone" Al-Mawasi, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ BBC News, Strike on civilian convoy fleeing Gaza: What we know from verified video, 16 October 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Save the Children, No Safe Place In Gaza: 14 Killed, Mostly Children, By Israeli Airstrikes Near So-Called "Humanitarian Zone" Al-Mawasi, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ BBC News, Khan Younis: Israel says forces have encircled Gaza's second city, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Reuters, Israel hits Khan Younis amid talks on one-month Gaza truce, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁰ UN, Gazans 'stalked by hunger, disease and death', warns UN's top aid official, 8 February 2024, [url](#)



southernmost governorate', with a purpose 'to attack Hamas battalions in the area', according to the prime minister of Israel.¹²¹

On 21 January 2024, UNRWA estimated that 'in total at least 335 internally displaced people (IDPs) sheltering in UNRWA shelters have been killed and at least another 1,161 injured since the start of the war'.¹²²

¹²¹ HRW, Israel: Rafah Evacuation Plans Catastrophic, Unlawful, 9 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²² UNRWA, UNRWA Situation Report #67 On The Situation In The Gaza Strip And The West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, 21 January 2024, [url](#)

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