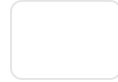


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Five ways the war in Gaza is impacting Palestinians' health

The health consequences of the current crisis go beyond injuries from attacks. Here's a broader view of the dire health situation in Gaza.

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) teams have been responding to a growing humanitarian catastrophe in [Gaza](#) since the eruption of [full-scale war](#) between Israel and Hamas on October 7. To date, at least 3,700 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, and 1,400 people have been killed in Israel according to the Israeli Ministry of Health. Thousands have been injured on both sides.

People in Gaza were already facing a chronic crisis even before the current war started. A 16-year blockade has tightly restricted the movement of basic goods like medical equipment and services, with 95 percent of people lacking access to clean water and more than 85 percent living in poverty. On October 9, Israel announced a total siege on Gaza, blocking food, water, electricity, and fuel for all residents. This is unconscionable and amounts to the collective punishment of 2.2 million Palestinians living in Gaza—nearly half of whom are children.

Civilians in Gaza are threatened by heavy aerial bombardment and indiscriminate attacks by the Israeli military. There have been at least 48 attacks on health care in Gaza—including facilities, ambulances, and medical staff—according to the World Health Organization. MSF is calling for health workers and health facilities to be protected at all times, even in

times of war. Hospitals should never be targeted. Here are some of the other ways the war is putting people's lives and health at risk.

1. Evacuation orders threaten the lives of the most vulnerable

Late on October 2, the Israeli military began warning the one million residents of northern Gaza to evacuate and move to the southern part of the territory within 24 hours. On October 13, Israel gave MSF-supported Al Awda Hospital just two hours to evacuate, followed by a temporary reprieve. There is simply no way to safely evacuate patients from a hospital. These mass evacuation orders force sick and injured people to risk their lives and flee south, or to be left behind to face even greater violence. Many medical personnel also face impossible choices: whether to move south and seek shelter for their families or stay behind to provide lifesaving care for their patients.

2. Hospitals cannot run without fuel and electricity

Hospitals in Gaza have been relying on generators since Israel cut off the electrical supply as part of the total siege. Generators run on fuel, however, and fuel reserves at hospitals across Gaza are nearly depleted, according to UNOCHA. When backup generators shut down, thousands of patients' lives will be at risk, particularly those on life support or those receiving treatment for dialysis. At Al Shifa Hospital, one of the main hospitals in Gaza City, fuel reserves are due to run out any minute.

3. People are suffering from lack of access to essential medicines

The siege leaves no respite for patients in Gaza. In hospitals, medical teams are contending with limited supplies, equipment, and capacity even as more patients arrive following attacks. At MSF-supported Al Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main surgical facility, colleagues have reported a shortage of painkillers, leaving wounded patients screaming in agony. Pharmacies are running out of medicines. People with chronic illnesses could soon face life-threatening complications as a result of the shortage of medical supplies.

Medical supplies were already limited in Gaza before the start of the current conflict due to the years-long blockade. Currently, MSF is preparing medical supplies to be sent to Gaza when access is open. We are calling for the urgent delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza when safe access can be guaranteed.

4. Lack of clean water increases the risk of disease

Access to clean water is now extremely scarce in Gaza, adding to people's distress. People are at risk of dehydration. Many are drinking salty or contaminated water, which can make people sick.

The lack of access to clean water heightens the risk of waterborne diseases, such as [cholera](#). It also further complicates poor hygiene conditions in the makeshift shelters where many displaced people are living in close quarters since fleeing northern Gaza. These conditions create fertile ground for diseases to spread rapidly.

5. Lack of antibiotics could lead to spikes in infection and antimicrobial resistance rates

People with open wounds and fractures caused by airstrikes and gunfire are highly susceptible to infection. With a low stock of medicines and extremely limited access to clean water, the rate of [antibiotic resistance](#) in Gaza is alarming. Some patients require immediate isolation to avoid the spread of bacteria with no known antibiotic treatment. All too often, amputations are required to prevent the infection from spreading and save people's lives.

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