



Palestine Situation Report

May 12, 2021

Overview

What began as peaceful protests by Palestinians in Jerusalem angered by their treatment under occupation, has over the past five days boiled over into the largest conflagration of Israel-Palestine violence since the 2014 Gaza war, or even the 2000-2005 Second Intifada.

As of May 12, 11 pm Jerusalem/Gaza time, Israeli security forces and bombs have killed at least 65 Palestinians, including 16 children. Hamas and Islamic Jihad rockets fired from Gaza have killed six Israelis, including a child and two Palestinian Israelis. Rocket fire from Gaza, and Israeli missiles and bombs into Gaza are continuing for the third straight day.¹

Israel has reportedly cut off access to and from East Jerusalem. Marauding mobs are lighting cars on fire and “near-lynching” motorists. Israeli police report most violence is Jews against Arabs.² As we talk with Anera’s country director in Jerusalem, we hear concussion bombs in Sheikh Jarrah, not far from Anera’s office. Descriptions of ‘skirmishes’ and ‘scuffles’ do not begin to convey the level of targeted violence on the streets.

Anera staff and families in Jerusalem and Gaza are safe for the moment, but do not feel safe. A pharmacist on our Gaza staff says the warfare already feels worse than the 2014 Israel-Gaza war: the Israeli bombs seem bigger and the targets broader this time. And, because of COVID-19, the hospitals and ICUs are already low on beds, medicines and supplies.

Background

This past week, as Ramadan neared its end and the Eid festival approached, frustrations among Palestinian residents of Jerusalem boiled over. Solidarity and protests spread to Palestinian communities throughout the occupied territories and Israel. The Jerusalemites were angered by a series of Israeli government and police actions against Palestinians in the city. These included evictions of Sheikh Jarrah residents from their homes of nearly 70 years to make way for Israeli settlers; restrictions on Palestinians’ movement and access to parts of the Old City, including the closing of a public plaza that is a traditional Ramadan gathering place; and provocative marches by right-wing Israeli groups, aided and abetted by Israeli authorities, through East Jerusalem, shouting “Death to Arabs” and celebrating the anniversary of Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian side of the city.³

¹ [Live Updates | Al Jazeera Media Network](#)

² [Israeli president warns of civil war as Jews, Arabs clash over Gaza](#)

³ [Young people are leading the Palestinian protests in Jerusalem | The Washington Post](#)

Palestinians and progressive Israelis protested peacefully against the Sheikh Jarrah evictions, as they have for 12 years on a weekly basis, but the protestors, including both residents of Sheikh Jarrah and Palestinians from other parts of Israel were met with violence from Israeli police.⁴ Protests against the barricading of the plaza grew more violent with Palestinian youth throwing rocks, shoes, and chairs against the barricading of the plaza.⁵ On May 7, the last Friday of Ramadan, and the eve of Ramadan's holiest night, tens of thousands of Palestinian worshippers prayed at Al-Aqsa mosque, Islam's third holiest site. After the prayers, thousands stayed on the esplanade of the Noble Sanctuary (Al Haram al-Sharif) to protest recent Israeli actions and wave Palestinian and Hamas flags. After the protests, Israeli security forces moved to disperse worshippers praying at the site. There is video of stun grenades fired at worshippers as they prayed the evening prayer. Many Palestinians, forcibly dispersed throughout East Jerusalem, sought sanctuary inside the Al-Aqsa mosque.⁶

Several times over the past five days, Israeli forces fired stun grenades, tear gas and rubber-coated bullets around and inside Al-Aqsa, injuring hundreds of Palestinians, including shooting many in the head and eyes.⁷

In response to the Israeli violence on Friday, Palestinians called for a Day of Rage on Saturday, and Palestinians throughout the occupied territories and Israel joined the protests. Some 90,000 Palestinians headed to Al-Aqsa from all over the West Bank and cities in Israel, including Haifa, Jaffa, Nazareth, Lod and others (Gazans are almost universally confined to the blockaded enclave, otherwise tens of thousands would have joined also). Israeli authorities blocked cars and buses making their way to Jerusalem, so Jerusalem residents went in their cars to ferry as many as possible to the holy site.⁸

All Anera Palestine staff members are safe, but others have not been so fortunate. Staff and family members of one international non-profit have been killed in the bombings of Gaza that started on May 10, 2021. In recent days since violence broke out at Al-Aqsa Mosque, more than 700 Palestinians have been injured in Jerusalem. Lod, Ramle and other cities in Israel have seen violent protests.⁹ Anera and several other international organizations have expressed their concern about the situation.¹⁰ [Read [Anera's statement](#).]

Israel continued bombardments on Gaza today makes this the most intense series of airstrikes since Israel's bombardment of Gaza in 2014.

⁴ [Sheikh Jarrah's peaceful protests | Seth Freedman | The Guardian](#)

⁵ [Hundreds hurt as Palestinians protest evictions in Jerusalem | Al Jazeera Med](#)

⁶ [200 Palestinians hurt in Al-Aqsa clashes with Israeli police, medics say | CBS News](#)

⁷ [Al-Aqsa under attack: How Israel turned holy site into a battleground | Middle East Eye](#)

⁸ [ibid](#)

⁹ [Israel-Gaza: Fears of war as violence escalates | BBC News](#)

¹⁰ [Gaza tower block collapses after Israeli strike: Live News | Al Jazeera Media Network](#)

Anera Gaza Medical Donations Program Coordinator Ahmad Najjar observes:

“This escalation comes at a time when our hospitals are suffering from the COVID situation, which increases their needs for all medicines and medical supplies. In addition, the ICU rooms were almost full with COVID patients, so according to the Ministry of Health officials, if the escalation continues for a few days, it could completely overwhelm the health system in Gaza.”

The situation continues to worsen, as Israeli airstrikes destroyed all of the Palestinian police headquarters buildings in Gaza City and many of the interior ministry buildings early Wednesday morning.¹¹ The same morning, the Israeli army sent tanks to the southern border with Gaza and targeted neighborhoods in Khan Younis with more airstrikes, forcing residents to flee their homes as entire neighborhoods evacuated. Anera will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground.

The growing number of individuals injured from bullets, rockets and tear gas, combined with reduced funding for humanitarian aid in recent years, has radically reduced options for care and treatment from traditional sources like UN agencies and American non-profits. This in turn puts even greater pressure on healthcare service providers. Anera’s team in Gaza continues to monitor the situation as it develops and has worked quickly to identify critical needs to mitigate the impacts of the airstrikes.

Gaza has suffered 14 years of blockade, which has had long-term effects on Palestinians’ physical and mental health. There is a chronic shortage of essential medicines and health care supplies. Hospitals are not well prepared to respond to normal medical emergencies, let alone crises like bombings and a pandemic. Due to border closures, fuel for the sole power plant in Gaza is expected to run out on Saturday, May 15th, which will deprive hospitals and clinics of electricity and refrigeration. If borders and ports remain closed, Gazans will be forced to go without the medication and medical care necessary to manage their chronic conditions, which can lead to long-term damage or even death.

According to recent reports from the Ministry of Health and Al Shifa Hospital, Al Shifa has a 60% shortage in essential medicines and lab materials and a 45% shortage in medical supplies. Al Shifa serves the entire population of two million, providing almost 70% of the public medical services in Gaza and almost 90% of emergency medical services.

¹¹ [Live Updates | Al Jazeera Media Network](#)

Anera's Proposed Response

Our office and distribution networks in Gaza mean that we can respond to needs on the ground immediately, as we did in 2014. Following the Gaza bombing in the summer of 2014, Anera provided \$13 million in relief and development, employing funds from a multitude of organizations to give Gaza families access to water, medicines, food, and clothing. Anera was one of the first organizations to deliver relief during and after the 51-day bombardment.

Procuring medicines and medical supplies

During emergencies in Gaza, Anera responds quickly, arranging overseas air shipments. Often the crisis requires more immediate action than an air shipment can provide, especially in Gaza where healthcare facilities are stretched so thin. In these cases we use funds to locally procure items like antibiotics and surgical supplies for hospitals like Al Shifa.

Anera also supports the Central Blood Bank Society (CBBS), a local, non-profit organization located in Gaza. As the only health non-profit working in the blood banking field in Gaza, CBBS provides all hospitals in the area with their required blood units, following Palestinian Ministry of Health guidelines and maintaining the highest standards of quality in its services provided to patients in hospitals in Gaza. However, CBBS is facing a financial crisis as well as a shortage of supplies, made worse by the current conflict escalation. **Anera will help the bank locally procure bags for donated blood, blood testing kits, and other necessary supplies to increase their capacity to respond to the medical needs arising from the situation on the ground.**

Shipping medical aid

Although port shipments into Gaza are currently closed, Anera's medical donations team is diligently working to increase shipments of needed chronic medicines, PPE for COVID-19, and emergency medical supplies to health facilities in Gaza. Anera currently has three shipments of medical donations waiting at ports for entry into Gaza, and will be ready to bring them into Gaza as soon as it is feasible. The shipments of donated medical aid that Anera coordinates include acute and emergency medicines, such as antibiotics and surgical supplies, as well as medicines to manage chronic conditions like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure, upon which thousands of Gaza residents rely to stay well.

Anera has scores of healthcare partners in Gaza and the West Bank that receive medical aid from the medical donations program and benefit 250,000 vulnerable individuals. In the past 12 months alone, Anera has delivered \$38.5 million in medicines, equipment, and medical supplies to Palestine, with more shipments awaiting approval. Anera's emergency medical responses ensure that doctors have the medicines and supplies necessary to treat the onslaught of patients injured during crises, and so that individuals do not have to forgo life-saving medicines because they are unavailable at the hospital or are prohibitively expensive at private pharmacies or on the

grey market. This assistance lessens the burden on the health sector in Gaza and helps countless individuals who may not receive medicine or medical attention otherwise.

>>> If you want to know more or help, contact hjordan@anera.org

>>> or [DONATE directly](#) here.