



Palestine Situation Report

September 16, 2021

Background

The immediate background to the current period of unrest, sporadic violence, and increased humanitarian need is summarized in Anera's last [Situation Report \(August 20\)](#). Information on Anera's work on food insecurity in Gaza is available in Anera's blog post, [Combating Food Insecurity in Gaza and Lebanon](#). Ongoing updates may be found on our [Updates on the Crisis in Palestine blog](#).

Overview

Over the weekend of August 21, the heaviest cross-border fighting since May occurred in Gaza. Clashes began in response to a Palestinian protest organized to mark 52 years since the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque.¹ Fighting continued into Monday, August 23, and 41 Palestinian civilians were injured in the hostilities.² Fourteen more protesters were injured on Wednesday, August 25, during a protest of the blockade of Gaza. In response to the protest, Israel announced that it will allow the entrance of more goods and equipment into Gaza for civilian and international projects. Israel also plans to issue more business permits for Palestinian businessmen to enter Israel from Gaza. These changes are conditional upon the preservation of security, according to the Israeli defence ministry.³ Palestinians continue to protest in the West Bank and Gaza, despite recent changes, and forces continue to disperse protesters using crowd control measures that cause injuries to civilians.

Material and Livelihood Restrictions

The blockade of Gaza for the past 14 years has devastated the economy and exacerbated humanitarian needs among Gazans. Goods deemed as "dual-use" are restricted from entering Gaza, which prevents Gazans from obtaining communications equipment, construction materials, steel elements, drilling equipment, and some medical equipment. These restrictions limit Gazans from reconstructing residential and commercial buildings damaged or destroyed during the bombardment in May. Gazans need more than a million tons of cement each year in order to construct and maintain schools, homes, water infrastructure, health clinics, and other critical infrastructure. However, access to cement in Gaza is severely limited.⁴

¹ [Israel fires on protesting Palestinians in Gaza, 24 wounded | Arab News](#)

² [Israel fires on protesting Palestinians in Gaza, 24 wounded | Arab News](#)

³ [In a bid to ease tensions, Israel says will allow goods into Gaza | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁴ [Gaza: Israel's May Airstrikes on High-Rises | Human Rights Watch](#)

Following the announcement that more goods and equipment would be allowed to enter Gaza, dozens of truckloads of construction materials crossed into the territory. The materials included 30 truckloads of cement, 120 truckloads of gravel, and 15 truckloads of steel.⁵

Israel's imposition of extensive restrictions on crucial construction materials severely limits reconstruction efforts. A June 2021 report published by the Palestine News and Info Agency (WAFA) revealed that in the midst of a global increase in the price of iron, the demand for iron increased as China decided to reduce its production. In Palestine, iron reached record prices. Demand for iron is high because of destruction from the May bombardment and increased restrictions on imports. Prices have reached about \$1,200 for a ton of iron.

COVID-19

Over the past three weeks, the average daily number of new infections in Palestine has risen by more than 1,800. Palestine now faces 71 percent of its peak of COVID-19 cases, and the number of new cases daily continues to rise. As of September 1, an average of 2,019 new cases are reported each day. Since the beginning of the pandemic, a total of 374,257 cases and 3,956 deaths have been reported in Palestine.

Palestine has administered at least 1,392,299 vaccine doses, which is enough to have vaccinated around 15 percent of the population. At the rate of current vaccination, which is administering an average of 21,158 doses a day, it will take 45 days to vaccinate an additional 10 percent of the population.⁶

According to the chief of hospitals in the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the COVID-19 situation is worsening due to the delta variant. There has been an increase in virus-related hospitalizations, and approximately 70 percent of the active COVID-19 cases in Palestine are the delta variant.⁷

The West Bank is currently experiencing its fourth wave of COVID-19, while a third wave is affecting Gaza. Officials confirmed the presence of the delta variant in Gaza on August 23. Around 364 patients are currently being treated in COVID-19 departments across Palestine, including 86 ICU patients with 12 on ventilators (compared to 10 ICU patients and 1 on a ventilator in July).⁸

Medical Needs and Supplies

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are in need of emergency medical services to respond to injuries sustained during protests and clashes with security forces. The prepositioning of supplies would ensure trauma and emergency response preparedness. In addition to emergency health services, Palestinians need health services across a wide spectrum of specialties – primary care, non-communicable disease management, maternal and child health, mental health and more. In order to better address the

⁵ [Building materials allowed into Gaza after Israeli assault in May | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁶ [Palestinian territories: the latest coronavirus counts, charts and maps | Reuters](#)

⁷ [Epidemiological situation of COVID-19 in Palestine "getting worse" | XinhuaNet](#)

⁸ [Response to the escalation in the oPt Situation Report No. 9 \(August 2021\) | UNOCHA](#)

pandemic, the Palestinian healthcare sector needs support with COVID-19 testing, management, prevention, and vaccination.⁹

Education

On August 15, some 1.2 million Palestinian children returned to school for the new academic year.¹⁰ The return to school follows many significant disruptions to education for Palestinian children throughout 2021, especially in Gaza. Not only has COVID-19 forced students to adapt to remote learning, but the school year also ended early due to the May hostilities in Gaza. Many students in Gaza also don't have access to electricity, wifi and/or the personal devices they need to learn remotely.

Anera's Response

Livelihoods

Through its Women Can program, with funding from Islamic Relief USA, Anera provides economic and livelihood opportunities to vulnerable Palestinian women heads-of-household. Beginning in September 2020, Women Can 2 has helped to empower 113 women in the West Bank by training them on COVID-19 awareness, social empowerment, and starting and running a business during a pandemic. Anera also provided the materials and equipment the women needed to get started or to grow their businesses. Since the beginning of the first Women Can program in September 2019, Anera has provided 222 women livelihood opportunities. Women Can 2 will allow Anera to target a total of 122 additional women, 30 of whom reside in Gaza.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene WASH Infrastructure

In response to Gaza's water crisis, Anera is installing reverse osmosis (RO) desalination units at healthcare facilities, schools, and community centers. Anera recently [installed six RO units](#) in three different Gaza governorates, with plans to erect two more at healthcare facilities in the near future.

Anera also conducts a long-term [WASH program](#), funded by Islamic Relief USA. Through the WASH IV program, Anera is rehabilitating water and sewage networks, repairing wells, and installing stormwater drainage systems that direct water to Gaza aquifer. In addition, Anera is conducting health awareness sessions to teach best practices to prevent water-borne illnesses. The WASH IV program will directly benefit more than 70,000 Gazans.

Medical Donations

Following the May 2021 bombardment, Anera sent three shipments of [medical aid](#) into Gaza, the first of which was mere hours after the two parties announced a ceasefire. Since then, Anera has delivered eight shipments of medications and supplies, with more slated for delivery in the next six weeks. The shipments include over-the-counter medications, insulin, IV solutions, PPE, antibiotics, hand sanitizer, hygiene supplies, and inhalers.

⁹ [Response to the escalation in the oPt Situation Report No. 9 \(August 2021\) | UNOCHA](#)

¹⁰ [It's back to school for 1.2 million children in Palestine | UNOCHA](#)

Anera's immediate medical response also included providing support for the Central Blood Bank Society (CBBS), which is the only nonprofit blood bank in Gaza. CBBS reported having zero stock of blood testing kits following the bombings, preventing the blood bank from enduring that donated blood was free of HIV and hepatitis B and C. In response, Anera, with the support of institutional donors such as Americares and Penny Appeal USA, provided blood testing kits, blood donation bags, and other vital supplies for a year of operation for CBBS. Anera is also installing solar panels at CBBS to provide reliable, renewable energy and save the blood bank \$3,000 in generator funds each month. This money can be redirected to purchase essential supplies and upgrade facilities.

Education

As kindergarteners began school in August, Anera launched its back-to-school program to support their return. Through the program, Anera is making alterations and upgrades to classrooms in 10 kindergartens across Gaza. Anera will also provide supplies for the kindergartens, including reading and literacy packs for 1,000 children. The goal of these activities is to enable children to overcome social, emotional, and cognitive difficulties resulting from the conflict in Gaza, to build resilience, and to develop coping mechanisms.

Anera has also completed construction of three new preschools in the West Bank communities of As Sammu, Abu Dis, and Deir Qaddis. The schools provide stimulating, inspiring learning environments for young children who otherwise might not be able to attend preschool at all.