



Palestine Situation Report

March 21, 2024

Background

Information about the ongoing war in Gaza and escalations in the West Bank is summarized in Anera's last [Palestine Situation Report \(February 2024\)](#).

Overview

Over five months of ongoing Israeli bombardments by land, sea, and air have elapsed, and the war in Gaza persists. The toll of the conflict is relentless, with the Ministry of Health in Gaza reporting at least 31,341 Palestinians killed and 73,134 wounded since October 7, 2023.¹ The city of Rafah has now become a focal point of the hostilities, with over a million internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently seeking refuge as Israeli operations gear towards attacks on one of the last places within the Gaza Strip in which people have been forced to evacuate.²

The Israeli military has recently indicated its plans to direct many of those living in Rafah towards “humanitarian islands” located in the center of the territory ahead of this anticipated offensive; Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated a directed offensive in Gaza’s central refuge is crucial to destroying Hamas.³ With humanitarian aid primarily funneled through Rafah, the potential repercussions loom large, leaving civilians to continue bearing the overwhelming and catastrophic suffering wrought by the ongoing conflict.

Mental Health - Children

The combination of five months of enduring violence, displacement, hunger, and illness, compounded with nearly 17 years of blockade, has inflicted profound psychological damage on children in Gaza.⁴ Parents and caregivers interviewed by Save the Children have reported the ways in which their kids have lost hope in imagining a future without conflict.⁵ The constant fear of bombings, the loss of loved ones, the harrowing escape through streets strewn with debris and corpses, and daily uncertainties of whether or

¹ [Israeli Forces Kill Six in New Attack on Gaza Aid Seekers. March 2024 | Al Jazeera](#)

² [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel. February 2024 | UNOCHA](#)

³ [Israel Plans to Direct Palestinians Out of Rafah Ahead of Planned Offensive. March 2024 | AP News](#)

⁴ [“Complete Psychological Destruction”: Children in Gaza have Suffered “Relentless Mental Harm” During Five Months of War. March 2024 | Save the Children](#)

⁵ [“Complete Psychological Destruction”: Children in Gaza have Suffered “Relentless Mental Harm” During Five Months of War. March 2024 | Save the Children](#)



not they are going to eat have left caregivers overwhelmed. This dire situation makes it increasingly impossible for them to cope and provide support to the most vulnerable members of society, which includes infants and young children who are simply unable to care for themselves, as they desperately need guidance and protection from those entrusted with their well-being.

UNICEF warns that children in Gaza are facing an ever-growing mental health crisis and are in desperate need of psychosocial support. The deterioration in the mental health of children is much worse than that of previous escalations of violence. Before the war, an estimated 500,000 children were already in need of mental health and psychosocial support; for example, a 2020 study concluded that 54% of Gazan children experienced some level of PTSD.⁶ Today, nearly all children (approximately 1 million) require support. Due to the conflict, children are at a heightened risk of experiencing anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and a myriad of other adverse mental health conditions.⁷

Water

The result of the war on Gaza's water situation continues to be catastrophic. At the onset of the war, Israel shut off pipes supplying the strip, announcing a complete siege on Gaza.⁸ Even before the war, Gaza struggled with water supply, with the enclave's water supplies deemed unsafe in 2017 and 96% of the water from Gaza's sole aquifer unfit for human consumption.⁹

There is an acute scarcity of water for essential purposes such as cleaning, flushing, drinking, and cooking. Displaced communities are facing an alarming shortage, with access to an estimated 1.5 to 2 liters of water daily; this falls drastically short of the international emergency standard of 15 liters per day, leaving Gazans with a fraction of what is deemed necessary for survival.¹⁰ As a result, according to the U.N., up to 70% of the population is drinking salinised and contaminated water.¹¹

The prevention of safe drinking water provision is a blatant breach of international law, putting displaced populations at risk of dying of thirst and diseases related to drinking

⁶ [Consequences of War-Related Traumatic Stress Among Palestinian Young People in the Gaza Strip: A Scoping Review, December 2023 | Mental Health and Prevention](#)

⁷ [Addressing the Mental Health Crisis Among Children in Gaza, February 2024 | The Lancet](#)

⁸ [In Gaza, Israel has Turned Water Into a Weapon of Mass Destruction, January 2024 | +972 Magazine](#)

⁹ [Why Gaza's Dire Water Crisis has been Decades in the Making, February 2024 | The Telegraph](#)

¹⁰ [Why Gaza's Dire Water Crisis has been Decades in the Making, February 2024 | The Telegraph](#)

¹¹ [Israel Must Stop Using Water as a Weapon of War: UN Expert, November 2023 | UNOHCHR](#)



contaminated water.¹² By denying water, Israel has perpetuated an unparalleled health crisis, risking irreversible ecological damage and contributing to even more preventable deaths.

Disruptions in Disease Management for Chronically Ill Patients

Chronically ill patients face significant challenges in disease management due to the collapse of the healthcare system and subsequent infrastructure. As of March 1st, the International Rescue Committee reports that 12 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are only partially operational.¹³ Al Aqsa, one of the partially functional hospitals that remain, has 140 health workers serving 650 hospitalized patients and 250 patients treated in the emergency room daily.¹⁴ The lack of clean water, in combination with the lack of adequate medications, means many in Gaza are left with an inability to safely control their conditions.¹⁵

Dialysis and kidney transplant patients have no choice but to skip medications necessary for survival, as shipments of medicines are refused entry into the territory. When medication is allowed, there are little to no ways for safe distribution, as patients are unable to reach the places where they are stocked due to constant and indeterminate airstrikes. Transplant patients have little hope for survival without adequate immunosuppressants and clean water; furthermore, without food, they become susceptible to infection.¹⁶

Without insulin and testing strips, patients with diabetes are susceptible to rising sugar levels, resulting in a breakdown of fat and muscles and an increased risk of death.¹⁷ The psychological stress and trauma of living through conflict both exacerbate and contribute to worsening health outcomes for patients in dire need.

Menstruation

Among the affected population, there are more than 690,000 women and young girls of menstruating age who require menstrual hygiene products, stocks of which are either entirely depleted or dangerously low.¹⁸ The lack of access to pads, toilet paper, and even

¹² [Israel Must Stop Using Water as a Weapon of War: UN Expert, November 2023 | UNOHCHR](#)

¹³ [The Collapse of Gaza's Health System, March 2024 | International Rescue Committee](#)

¹⁴ [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, March 2024 | UNOHCA](#)

¹⁵ [Patients with Chronic Illness in Gaza Failing to get Treatment, Doctors Warn, February 2024 | The Guardian](#)

¹⁶ [Patients with Chronic Illness in Gaza Failing to get Treatment, Doctors Warn, February 2024 | The Guardian](#)

¹⁷ [Type 1 Diabetes, 2023 | NHS Inform](#)

¹⁸ [Bombardment, Displacement, and Collapsed Health Care: A Crisis for Women and Girls in Gaza, January 2024 | UNRWA](#)



running water and bathroom facilities put women and girls in Gaza at risk of reproductive and urinary tract infections, which, if incurred, cannot be adequately treated due to the destruction of Gaza's healthcare system.

When sanitary products do appear on store shelves, prices are inflated to five and six times their usual rates, a cost that is now out of reach as 85% of the population is unemployed.¹⁹ Women and girls desperate for relief have resorted to several alternative methods, including contraceptive pills to delay menstruation.²⁰ While period-delaying pills offer temporary relief, they are not meant to be taken regularly, with potential side effects including irregular bleeding, nausea, dizziness, and mood swings.²¹ Additionally, as health centers close and evacuation orders persist, continued access to these kinds of contraceptives is far from guaranteed, and not all menstruating women can take birth control medication. As a result, some women turn to old clothes, towels, or tent scraps to use as pads, all of which are ineffective, uncomfortable, unhygienic, and pose a myriad of negative implications to women's physical and mental well-being.²²

Crumbling Infrastructure

Israel's ongoing bombardment has left an estimated 157,200 buildings damaged or destroyed, equivalent to more than half of all buildings in Gaza's most populated areas and approximately three-fourths of infrastructure in the northern parts.²³ The U.N. Agency for Palestinian Refugees reports more than 70% of civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, homes, and schools is destroyed or severely damaged.²⁴ According to the United Nations Satellite Centre, from October 7 to November 26, the Israeli bombardment damaged 37,379 buildings, or 18% of the total structures in Gaza.²⁵ In comparison, in 2014, 51 days of bombardment damaged 22,737 structures.²⁶

Violence in Distribution Centers

¹⁹ ['My Period has become a Nightmare': Life in Gaza Without Sanitary Products, March 2024 | The Guardian](#)

²⁰ [Another Layer of Misery: Women in Gaza Struggle to Find Menstrual Pads, Running Water, January 2024 | NPR](#)

²¹ [No Privacy, No Water: Gaza Women use Period-Delaying Pills Amid Israel War, October 2023 | Al Jazeera](#)

²² [Women in Gaza are Desperately in Need of Washrooms, Privacy, Pads | NPR](#)

²³ [In Gaza, Satellites Show 157,200 Damaged or Destroyed Buildings, March 2024 | Undark](#)

²⁴ [Israeli Bombardment Destroys more than 70% of Civilian Infrastructure in Gaza: UN Agency, February 2024 | Anadolu Agency](#)

²⁵ [Economic Impact of the Destruction in Gaza, January 2024 | UNCTAD](#)

²⁶ [Economic Impact of the Destruction in Gaza, January 2024 | UNCTAD](#)



Israeli forces have hit food distribution centers and warehouses in the eastern part of Rafah; the distribution hit is one of the two central distribution centers in the city.²⁷ Twelve distribution centers have been directly targeted; among the aid workers operating in these centers, a total of 27 fatalities have been reported.²⁸ Eight instances of damage to distribution center infrastructure have been reported, complicating aid delivery efforts. Due to the damage, there has been an average delay of three days in delivering essential supplies to affected civilians.²⁹ An estimated 45,000 civilians have been affected by disrupted aid distribution, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.³⁰ Violence has additionally halted 23 aid shipments, hampering relief efforts, with financial costs of damages estimated at \$2.5 million.³¹ These attacks also constitute violations of international humanitarian law, with 17 reported instances of such violations related to attacks on distribution centers.³² During the first two weeks of March, a total of 12 humanitarian aid missions to northern Gaza were facilitated; six were denied, and six were postponed.³³

Shrinking Safe Areas of Gaza/Access to Northern Gaza

At the onset of the war, Israel forcibly instructed Palestinians located in north Gaza to evacuate south for safety. Once operations moved south, Palestinians were once again ordered even further south. Today, evacuation orders have forced more than one million people into a space that now holds three and a half times its prewar population in Rafah, Gaza's southernmost governorate.³⁴

Access to people in Gaza City is insufficient, with only 25% of aid missions planned to the North facilitated by Israeli Authorities.³⁵ As a result, food insecurity has reached an extremely critical state.³⁶

²⁷ [The Situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, March 2024 | UNRWA](#)

²⁸ [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, March 2024 | UNOCHA](#)

²⁹ [Gaza Aid In-Depth: Response Leaders Warn of Extreme Obstacles, Even with a Ceasefire, February 2024 | The New Humanitarian](#)

³⁰ [Famine Imminent in Gaza, Humanitarian Officials Tell Security Council, Calling for Immediate Ceasefire, February 2024 | United Nations](#)

³¹ [Israel and Hamas Conflict in Brief: Overview, U.S. Policy, and Options for Congress, March 2024 | Congressional Research Service](#)

³² [UN Report Calls for Accountability, Justice for Violations by all Parties in OPT and Israel, February 2024 | UNOHCHR](#)

³³ [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, March 2024 | UNOCHA](#)

³⁴ [War has Forced Half of Gaza into Rafah. Palestinians there are at a Breaking Point, March 2024 | NPR](#)

³⁵ [Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, February 2024 | UNOCHA](#)

³⁶ [Israel has Denied Access to Many Planned Aid Missions to Northern Gaza Strip: UN, February 2024 | Anadolu Agency](#)



Palestinians remain trapped in Gaza and have nowhere left to turn. To the north, people who have taken shelter are surrounded and confined by constant violence. To the south, the areas that host the largest numbers of IDPs are at threat of yet another forced evacuation, with no clear indication of where they will end up. There are no safe places in the entire Gaza Strip.

Anera's Response

Mental Health - Children: To address the escalating mental health crisis among children in Gaza, Anera has facilitated 118 psychosocial support sessions, engaging hundreds of children per session, some of whom are coping with war-related injuries, disabilities, and/or the loss of family members.

Food and Water: As of March 18, Anera has provided 20,432,663 meals to IDPs in Gaza, including food parcels, vegetable baskets, hot meals, and flatbread. Anera now manages seven Tekias (community kitchens) in Rafah, Khan Younis, the Middle Area, and Jabalia – Anera's kitchen in North Gaza. These expanded efforts address food security for a larger number of IDPs throughout Gaza. Additionally, Anera has distributed 185,244 bottles of water to address the critical water access issues faced by all Gazans. For the month of Ramadan, Anera will work with its partners to distribute hot meals from Anera's Tekia community kitchens. For vulnerable families farther away from the community kitchens, Anera will provide produce baskets and suhoor food parcels for meals before sunrise. In the West Bank, Anera will improve families' food security by providing them with redeemable vouchers of \$100 each.

Disease Management/Health and Hygiene: Anera has distributed over 3,000,000 medicines and healthcare supplies, as well as provided 44 free healthcare and treatment days, strategically set up near shelters for ease of access. Anera has also distributed over 33,000 hygiene kits, including items meant for maintaining personal health as IDPs endure prolonged stays in overcrowded shelters.

To date, Anera has delivered 341 truckloads of supplies, including food, water, cooking equipment, and medicines to Gaza.