

## Humanitarian impact of escalating conflict in northern Gaza

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On 5 October 2024, Israel launched offensives in Jabalia refugee camp, Beit Lahia, and Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza. On 7, 10, and 12 October, Israel issued evacuation orders covering cities and camps across North Gaza governorate, ordering Palestinians to move south to the Israeli-designed 'humanitarian zone' in Al Mawasi (OCHA 15/10/2024 b; AI 15/10/2024). On 9 October, Israeli forces effectively blocked the Abu Sharekh roundabout, the passageway critical to movement from North Gaza governorate to Gaza City governorate (OHCHR 14/10/2024).

Central Gaza saw at least two mass casualty incidents on 13–14 October, at the Al Mufti UNRWA school in An Nuseirat refugee camp and Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al Balah (OCHA 15/10/2024 b).

It has been estimated that around 75,000 people were displaced between 5–15 October, including around 50,000 who fled Jabalya. Most are internally displaced within northern Gaza, fleeing from North Gaza to Gaza City governorate, as continued fighting and blocked roads prevent movement south (ActionAid et al. 09/10/2024 a; OCHA 08/10/2024 and 15/10/2024 a; AJ 09/10/2024; FEWS NET 18/10/2024).

### ANTICIPATED DEVELOPMENTS

There are fears that Israel is planning to displace all of the estimated people remaining in northern Gaza before sealing and besieging the area (BBC 08/10/2024).

If restrictions on the entry of humanitarian and commercial supplies to northern Gaza continue throughout October, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) has indicated that it will update its risk of famine to a projection of famine (FEWS NET 18/10/2024).

The coming winter season will bring cold temperatures and potential flooding, likely leading to an increase in respiratory infections, other seasonal illnesses, and further compromising WASH access across Gaza, which typically aggravates food insecurity and malnutrition (IPC 17/10/2024).

### CRISIS IMPACTS

#### Shelter

Movement of people from northern Gaza to the Israeli-designated 'humanitarian zone' between Deir Al Balah and Al Mawasi will aggravate already significant overcrowding in this area, where there are around one million Palestinians currently staying, with no available shelter or space for new arrivals (ActionAid et al. 09/10/2024 a; The Guardian 09/10/2024; MSF 08/10/2024). By 8 October, the humanitarian zone occupied around 57km<sup>2</sup>, or 15% of Gaza's landmass, but was supposed to house residents from the remaining 85% of Gaza under evacuation orders (OCHA 08/10/2024).

#### Protection

Palestinians attempting to move south are required to traverse areas affected by active conflict and airstrikes, exposing them to high risk of injury or death. Frequent Israeli attacks also make the so-called 'humanitarian zone', where Palestinians have been instructed to travel, unsafe (ActionAid et al. 09/10/2024 a; The Guardian 09/10/2024; MSF 08/10/2024). By 15 October 2024, nearly 42,500 Palestinians had been killed and over 99,000 injured in Gaza since 7 October 2023 (OCHA 15/10/2024 a).

Pregnant women, people with disabilities, older people, and children face particularly difficult challenges leaving northern Gaza. Those who are unable to evacuate and instead remain are also at risk of injury, death, and starvation (ActionAid et al. 09/10/2024 a; The Guardian 09/10/2024). On 17 October, an Israeli aerial attack hit a school where IDPs were sheltering in Jabalia camp, killing at least 28 people, including an unknown number of children, and injuring up to 160 others (Sky News 17/10/2024; BBC 17/10/2024).

#### Food security and nutrition

By 9 October, Israeli attacks had burnt down the only remaining bakery in operation in northern Gaza and the area's largest flour warehouse (The Guardian 09/10/2024). Wheat flour and canned

food remained the only food readily available in markets, as there were no dairy products and minimal fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, and vegetable oil (OCHA 08/10/2024). By 13 October, 7 of 19 humanitarian-supported bakeries remained functional across Gaza: three in Deir Al Balah and four in Gaza city (OCHA 15/10/2024 a).

These developments will aggravate the already severe food security and nutrition situation, which is expected to deteriorate in the coming months. Between November 2024 and April 2025, 1.95 million people, or 91% of Gaza's population, are projected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or above levels of food insecurity, with 16% (nearly 345,000 people) facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) levels (IPC 17/10/2024).

By 1 September 2024, fighting had damaged nearly 68% of cropland across Gaza, with North Gaza experiencing the highest proportion of damage per governorate (FAO 03/10/2024). This has contributed to prolonged food insecurity and loss of livelihoods. Destruction of olive trees, presses, and low access to fuel are severely restricting the October–November olive harvest season (OCHA 15/10/2024 a; AJ 06/11/2023).

## Health and WASH

On 9 October, Israel called for the evacuation of three hospitals in northern Gaza: Kamal Adwan, Awda, and the Indonesian Hospital (The Independent 14/10/2024). By 13 October, these hospitals were functioning at minimum capacity, with 285 patients between them, including eight children and five adults on ventilators in intensive care. The hospitals were receiving an estimated 50–70 new patients daily and were overwhelmed by the numbers requiring treatment (OCHA 15/10/2024 a; CARE 17/10/2024). By 15 October, no primary healthcare centres were functioning (OCHA 15/10/2024 b).

WHO estimates that Israel's early October offensive in North Gaza and Gaza City governorates will disrupt the operations of ten hospitals, 19 primary healthcare centres, and 32 medical points. The offensive also threatens to disrupt the second phase of the polio vaccination campaign (The Guardian 09/10/2024; OCHA 08/10/2024).

The Israeli-designated 'humanitarian zone' in Al Mawasi is overcrowded, with almost no access to WASH infrastructure, requiring people to queue for hours to use latrines and showers. A lack of hygiene facilities has contributed to a high rate of skin and respiratory infections and waterborne disease (MSF 08/10/2024 and 02/09/2024).

By 8 October, nearly 1,000 health workers had been killed in Gaza since 7 October 2023 (OCHA 08/10/2024).

## HUMANITARIAN ACCESS AND RESPONSE

- Evacuation orders for the north have forced humanitarian staff to relocate, disrupting aid delivery and causing the loss of essential supplies (ActionAid et al. 09/10/2024 b).
- Between 2–14 October, no humanitarian assistance entered northern Gaza. On 15 October, the UN confirmed fewer than 50 trucks had entered the north since 12 October (BBC 15/10/2024; MSF 08/10/2024).
- Security, bureaucratic, and logistical constraints often prevent humanitarian responders from collecting and distributing aid from the small number of trucks that enter Gaza. By 17 October, Israeli forces had only permitted the collection of 30 of the fewer than 50 trucks that entered Gaza in the preceding days (BBC 17/10/2024).
- As of 17 October, the WFP will run out of bread within a week and supplies for warm meals within ten days if aid deliveries do not dramatically increase (FT 17/10/2024).
- There are reports that Israeli authorities have stopped processing requests for commercial food imports to Gaza since around 11 October, which will aggravate severe shortages of food and other basic goods. Persistent looting also decreases the available supply of commercial and humanitarian goods that enter Gaza (Reuters 17/10/2024; FEWS NET 18/10/2024).
- By 16 October, the Kerem Shalom-Karem Abu Salem border crossing remained open, but severe bureaucratic restrictions were inhibiting the passage of aid. Since the 8 September attack on three Israeli workers at the Allenby Bridge crossing from Jordan, the crossing has remained closed to cargo (but not passengers) (ActionAid et al. 09/10/2024 b; OCHA 15/10/2024 a; CNN 09/09/2024).
- Humanitarian organisations continue to be delayed for hours at checkpoints or denied permission to move within or into Gaza (ActionAid et al. 09/10/2024 b). From early September, Israel introduced a new customs rule for UN-chartered truck convoys bringing aid from Jordan to Gaza via Israel. The rule requires staff to complete a form with personal details and accept liability for any false information on a shipment, exposing humanitarian staff to legal repercussions for the potential misuse of aid. The rule prevented UN-charted convoys from entering Gaza from Jordan from at least 19 September to 2 October (Reuters 02/10/2024).