

### CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

- Since 12 January, heavy rainfall from a harsh winter storm has triggered widespread flooding across the Gaza Strip, inundating hundreds of tents and causing homes to collapse. **By 31 January, at least 24 people had died as a result of infrastructure damage related to the rain**, while an additional **11 children had died from hypothermia** (OCHA 29/01/2026; WAFA 31/01/2026). The number of fatalities resulting from the impact of the weather is likely to have increased since.
- The floods are occurring in the context of prolonged extreme winter conditions affecting both Gaza and the West Bank since November 2025, characterised by severe cold, dropping to 8° C, and strong wind storms of up to 40km/h (UNICEF 20/01/2026; The Guardian 13/01/2026; Arab News 12/01/2026). By 21 January, at least 83,000 households across 686 sites and 63 neighbourhoods in Gaza had been affected, as well as over 120 households in 18 communities in the West Bank (Shelter Cluster 21/01/2026).
- **Deir Al Balah and Khan Younis** are the areas most affected by the extreme weather in Gaza, where high-velocity winds have repeatedly compromised the structural integrity of tents and makeshift shelters. These storms have shattered windows in damaged buildings and triggered several wall collapses, directly contributing to a rising death toll. Between mid-December 2025 and end of January 2026, the Gaza Ministry of Health reported at least 35 storm-related fatalities across Gaza. This total includes 24 deaths caused by collapsing structures (walls and buildings weakened by rain and wind) and 11 children who succumbed to hypothermia (OCHA 29/01/2026 and 19/01/2026).
- By 19 January, Gaza's Al Shifa Hospital was receiving around 500 patients daily, with roughly 200 presenting with acute respiratory symptoms including high fever, shortness of breath, extreme fatigue, cough, and chest pain largely as a result of constant exposure to cold air and overcrowding in displacement areas (PIC 19/01/2026; MEE 21/01/2026).
- By 21 January, Gaza's low-lying depressions meant that **nearly 40% of the population was living in flood-prone locations**, where continued winter storms and flooding have rendered shelters uninhabitable and aggravated humanitarian needs (Shelter Cluster 15/01/2026). In the West Bank, episodes of heavy rain, flooding, and snow since November 2025 have damaged shelters and critical infrastructure, including WASH facilities, and led to repeated shelter losses, particularly among Bedouin and herding communities living in already fragile structures (OCHA 17/11/2025 and 14/01/2026).

- The rainfall raised water levels in inland lagoons – such as Wadi Gaza and Sheikh Radwan, which sit below sea level – heightening the risk of overflow and sewage contamination of water sources. These factors reduce the availability of safe water and increase exposure to waterborne and vector-borne diseases (Health Policy Watch 06/01/2026; Shelter Cluster 15/01/2026).
- By December 2025, around 1.35 million people were living in tents across Palestine (Shelter Cluster 12/12/2025). In Gaza alone, **around 1.3 million people (60% of the population) in 970 displacement sites were in need of shelter assistance** (IRC 19/01/2026; UNFPA 20/01/2026). Tents and makeshift buildings comprise the main sources of shelter across Palestine and have proven inadequate to withstand winter conditions: tarpaulins tear easily, sandbags and walls collapse, and tents provide little protection from wind and cold (Shelter Cluster 12/12/2025).
- Water contamination is common and frequently spoils domestic food supplies in the country. There is also limited access to essential services such as gas and electricity, forcing people to use expensive firewood for cooking (France 24 26/01/2026). As result, shelter, WASH, health, and food security remain among the most urgent humanitarian needs.
- In Gaza and the West Bank, the rainy season generally runs from mid-October–April, with most rainfall occurring between November–March, while summer months remain largely dry (IFRC accessed 30/01/2026; MEM 29/11/2025). In the West Bank, cooler winter temperatures and peak rainfall in December–January account for most annual precipitation and are critical to replenishing water resources after prolonged dry periods (Nomad Season 20/04/2025).

### ABOUT THIS REPORT

#### Aim

This report provides an overview of the humanitarian impacts of winter storms and heavy rainfall in Palestine. The report aims to inform the humanitarian community of both the immediate and medium-term impacts as well as examine how these will compound existing needs in the worst affected areas in order to support response operations.

## Scope

This report focuses on Gaza and the West Bank. The analysis builds on ACAPS's El Niño and Southern Oscillation global anticipatory analysis, as well as its climate analysis and seasonal hazard monitoring in West Asia.

## Methodology

The information was compiled using publicly available data and reports from humanitarian organisations, think tanks, and local and international media, as well as sub-seasonal and weather forecast models.

## Limitations

Given Palestine's politicised and polarised context, its information landscape is highly constrained and sensitive. The rapidly changing situation further challenges information-gathering and context-monitoring. It is also difficult to distinguish between the impacts of the winter storm and the overall impact of conflict escalation since October 2023.

## ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

Sub-seasonal forecasts anticipate precipitation to remain near normal until mid-February 2026, indicating that seasonal rainfall is expected to continue in the next few weeks, possibly even intensifying, potentially triggering new flooding in at-risk areas (IRI accessed 30/01/2026). Weather forecasts also indicate that temperatures will improve. This suggests that while daytime temperatures may become slightly milder, persistent rainfall could still aggravate flooding risks in low-lying and displacement areas, prolonging the humanitarian impact of winter storms (Tropical Tid Bits accessed 03/02/2026; Time and Date accessed 03/02/2026).

Persistent winter conditions are expected to aggravate humanitarian needs across the Gaza Strip, particularly in areas with a high density of informal displacement sites. Khan Younis faces the highest risk of losing access to aid distribution, as at least 53% of its population is residing in makeshift sites highly vulnerable to flooding. Similarly, 46% of the population in Deir Al Balah and 31% in Gaza city are sheltering in flood-prone locations (Shelter Cluster 15/01/2026).

Persistent rainfall, low sub-seasonal temperatures, and the accumulation of stagnant water across the region are expected to escalate the prevalence of hypothermia, waterborne disease outbreaks, and preventable mortality. The lack of adequate drainage and insulation in makeshift shelters creates an environment conducive to the rapid spread of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections. Children, older people, and individuals with

chronic illnesses are particularly vulnerable to health impacts, including severe pneumonia and the aggravation of cardiovascular and malnutrition-related conditions (CNN 24/01/2026; IMEMC 19/01/2026). These risks are further compounded by the destruction of health facilities and limited access to vaccinations, which significantly constrain prevention and treatment efforts and likely aggravate the overall health situation.

Israel continues to restrict the entry of shelter and reconstruction materials into Gaza and the West Bank, prolonging affected communities' continued exposure to the elements and elevating risks to life and health (OCHA 14/01/2026 and 07/01/2026).

## CRISIS IMPACTS

### Shelter, displacement, and NFIs

By 21 January, an estimated 92% of homes in Gaza and the West Bank had been damaged or destroyed by the escalation of conflict, leaving nearly 1.35 million people in need of safe shelter (UNFPA 20/01/2026; CNN 24/01/2026). Between 8–15 January, almost 3,500 temporary shelters were damaged by heavy rain, affecting over 19,000 displaced people (UNRWA 21/01/2026). By 21 January, at least 2,000 housing units had also been damaged or destroyed in the northern camps of the West Bank (Shelter Cluster 21/01/2026). Most displaced people cannot afford the means to stay warm and, as such, 46% of those displaced in Gaza rely on waste burning as an alternative to fuels such as firewood (Food Security Cluster 12/2025; Africa News 22/01/2026).

The situation in Gaza is compounded by the widespread presence of unexploded ordnance, which severely restricts movement and access to safer locations. As a result, many families are forced to remain in areas exposed to extreme weather, where tents are collapsing, shelters are flooding, and sewage-contaminated water is spreading through living spaces, heightening health and protection risks (UNFPA 20/01/2026; CNN 24/01/2026).

### Health

According to the WHO, acute respiratory infections and acute watery diarrhoea are the most frequently reported illnesses in Gaza, accounting for 60% and 39% of reported morbidities respectively, with a spike in infections usually observed during the winter season (Arab News 27/01/2026). In December, Médecins Sans Frontières reported a sharp increase in respiratory infections, warning that cases were expected to rise amid harsh winter conditions, which pose a particular threat to children under five (MEM 19/12/2025; Al Mayadeen 20/12/2025).

Children face heightened health risks during cold weather, as physiological and nutritional factors limit their ability to regulate their body temperature. In Gaza, persistent food insecurity and limited access to adequate nutrition have reduced children's fat stores and energy reserves, increasing susceptibility to hypothermia and cold-related illnesses. Premature and low-birth-weight infants are those most vulnerable to such illnesses (Rabayaa and Rabaya 07/01/2026).

Diseases are likely to continue spreading in Gaza, particularly within the high-density displacement hubs of Deir Al Balah, Khan Younis, and the Mawasi coastal zone, where around 1.3 million people are exposed to sewage or faecal matter within metres of their homes, posing a risk of spread of waterborne and vector-borne diseases (Arab News 27/01/2026; Dardona et al. 14/10/2024). With over 250 (89%) critical water and sanitation facilities nonfunctional across the Gaza Strip, the flooding of existing facilities will significantly affect access to adequate WASH services and health outcomes (UNRWA 21/01/2026; WHO 11/11/2025).

### Food insecurity

Between 16 October and 30 November 2025, around 1.6 million people in Gaza (77%) faced Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and above levels of food insecurity, including over half a million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 104,000 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). The situation is expected to remain severe, with around 1.6 million people expected to continue experiencing IPC 3+ levels of food insecurity until April 2026 (IPC 19/12/2025).

Despite the dire situation, this represents an improvement from the Famine (IPC Phase 5) conditions that affected the enclave in September 2025. The improvement remains fragile, however, as the onset of winter combined with recent damage and flooding has intensified already severe risks to public health. Rising cases of winter-related illnesses threaten to overwhelm health services and accelerate deterioration. This could trigger a rapid escalation in food insecurity and malnutrition, heightening the risk of famine recurrence, particularly if coupled with continued access restrictions (IPC 19/12/2025; ICRC19/01/2026). Children, older people, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. In Gaza, an estimated 132,000 children under five are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition through mid-2026. Malnutrition weakens immunity, leaving affected individuals more vulnerable to winter-related diseases (OCHA 16/12/2025; WHO 19/02/2024).

In the West Bank, humanitarian organisations are increasingly concerned about worsening food insecurity, as Israeli military operations, displacement, and movement restrictions are disrupting markets and limiting access to food. Since mid-January 2025, tens of thousands of people have been displaced, compounding the strain on households already facing

deteriorating economic conditions. These disruptions, together with rising unemployment, have eroded families' purchasing power, leaving even basic food items unaffordable. Three out of four households surveyed are unable to cover their most essential needs, and half of children are regularly skipping meals (WVI 02/07/2025; WFP 14/03/2025). Many families are resorting to coping mechanisms with potential harmful effects, including borrowing money, purchasing on credit, and cutting back on essential expenditures, including healthcare and education (FAO 22/12/2025).

### Protection

The storms may also raise protection risks, as the destruction of shelters and inadequate WASH facilities also means privacy and security is compromised for women and girls, potentially increasing the risk of gender-based violence (HPN 21/01/2026; UNFPA 25/04/2025; UN Women 01/04/2024; Sphere 06/11/2018). Winter conditions in Gaza's displacement sites have intensified women's psychological stress by increasing their unpaid caregiving burden under extreme scarcity. With limited blankets, clothing, and heating, women prioritise children and older relatives while enduring the cold themselves, leading to feelings of guilt, helplessness, and survival anxiety (PCHR 09/01/2026). The combination of poverty and dependence on aid also increase women's exposure to exploitation and other protection risks.

## COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Collapse of healthcare

Across Palestine, only 53% of the 886 health service points, including ambulance and emergency centres, hospitals, and mobile clinics, were fully functioning by 23 January 2026. Health response capacity remained critically constrained as a result of damaged facilities, staff shortages, and limited medical supplies. By 23 January, there had been 1,734 reported attacks on health facilities – 18 hospitals in Gaza and 59 facilities in the West Bank – since October 2023 (Health Cluster accessed 30/01/2026; UNFPA 20/01/2026; IMEMC 19/01/2026). At the same time, patients with serious and life-threatening conditions have been unable to leave Gaza for specialised care, as Israeli authorities have refused to permit medical evacuations to hospitals in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This has already caused the death of at least 1,000 people, with more deaths expected as access to healthcare remains limited (Haaretz 27/01/2025). These restrictions significantly increase the risk of preventable deaths among those in Gaza in need of urgent and advanced medical treatment.

## Destruction of WASH facilities and contamination of water sources

In Gaza, more than 80% of WASH facilities have been destroyed since October 2023, leaving nearly half the population with access to less than the minimum emergency standard of 6L of water per day for drinking and cooking (UNRWA 29/12/2025). Severe limitations on access to fuel are disrupting the provision of WASH services, including water production, distribution, solid waste management, stormwater management, and repair activities. There is also a shortage of essential humanitarian items such as generators (Oxfam 14/01/2026).

In the West Bank, Jenin, Nur Shams, and Tulkarem have experienced widespread WASH infrastructure damage and destruction as a result of Israeli military operations. Clean water supplies have been contaminated with sewage, creating a serious public health risk (OCHA 13/02/2025; UNRWA 29/12/2025).

## Loss of livelihoods

Following Israel's military invasion of Gaza, unemployment rose to around 80%, the highest rate globally, as military operations and the blockade have dismantled businesses and disrupted nearly all economic activity (AJ 06/01/2026). High mortality and widespread life-altering injuries have also left many households without primary income earners. By late 2025, an estimated 83% of Gaza's economic value had been lost, pushing the entire population below the poverty line and making humanitarian assistance the main source of survival for most households (UNCTAD 24/11/2025). As a result, families are largely unable to afford heating fuel, winter clothing, or shelter reinforcement, leaving them highly exposed to cold and flooding (Al Araby 29/12/2025; France 24 26/01/2026).

By late 2025, unemployment in the West Bank had risen to 28.5% among men and 33% among women as a result of a sustained contraction of income opportunities (ILO 27/10/2025). Since October 2023, Israel has sharply restricted Palestinian access to work permits, cutting off a key income source for more than 115,000 workers and their dependents (Gisha 25/05/2025). The withholding of tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority has further reduced household incomes by limiting civil servant salaries (Wafa 11/10/2025). Intensified movement restrictions have also disrupted economic life, restricting access to farmland, markets, and services (Food Security Cluster 28/01/2026; ILO 27/10/2025). As a result, 74% of households now live below the minimum standard of living, compared to just 21% in 2023 (WVI 02/07/2025). While cold weather and storms are likely to aggravate these pressures by increasing living costs, reducing agricultural productivity, and damaging work premises, there is currently limited evidence directly attributing recent weather events to livelihood outcomes in the West Bank. Any impacts are expected to be indirect, cumulative, and difficult to isolate, potentially emerging over time through reduced harvests, higher expenditure on repairs and heating, and diminished resilience to future shocks.

## Conflict escalation and airstrikes

Despite the ceasefire, clashes continue across Gaza and the West Bank, while airstrikes persist in Gaza. Between 7 October 2023 and 14 January 2026, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health, 71,439 Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip and 171,324 injured (UNRWA 21/01/2026).

Between 19–22 January, airstrikes, shelling, and gunfire were reported across the Gaza Strip, particularly in northern and eastern Deir Al Balah, the southeast of Gaza city, east of Jabalia in North Gaza, east and south of Khan Younis, and west of Rafah. These are all areas also affected by the storms (OCHA 23/01/2026).

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

This information may not cover all efforts, particularly community support and initiatives, given information gaps and the time constraints of this analysis.

### Response capacity

On 2 February 2026, the Rafah border crossing resumed limited operation after more than 18 months of complete closure. The restoration of this corridor is projected to alleviate supply chain constraints for food and medical supplies and restore vital access to external healthcare facilities for displaced people (MEM 02/02/2026).

By 21 January, approximately 50,000 tents, 172,000 tarpaulins, 235,000 blankets, and other items (including kitchen sets, clothes, and mattresses) had been distributed to at least 135,000 households to address needs arising from the bad weather conditions (Shelter Cluster 21/01/2026).

In the wake of recent heavy rainfall, UNRWA, together with other implementing organisations, mobilised rescue and emergency teams to respond to multiple life-threatening incidents in Gaza city, Khan Younis, and Rafah, providing urgent assistance, evacuations, and support to affected households (UNRWA 21/01/2026; OCHA 30/12/2025). Israeli administrative and bureaucratic impediments continue to impede and slow the response, however, preventing the entry of enough aid and service restoration to meet the immense need (UNRWA 29/01/2026; OCHA 05/01/2026).

## Humanitarian constraints

On 30 December 2025, Israel banned 37 INGOs from operating in Gaza and the West Bank for failing to comply with new regulations requiring humanitarian organisations to provide sensitive information about their staff, including detailed personnel lists and other operational data, as a condition of registration or continued access. Humanitarian responders contend that this requirement risks staff safety and contravenes humanitarian principles (OHCHR 15/01/2026; Oxfam 06/05/2025). The Israeli Government's decision to implement this requirement seriously disrupts humanitarian operations, delaying or blocking the delivery of aid supplies to the affected population and making it harder to respond to needs (Prism 20/01/2026).

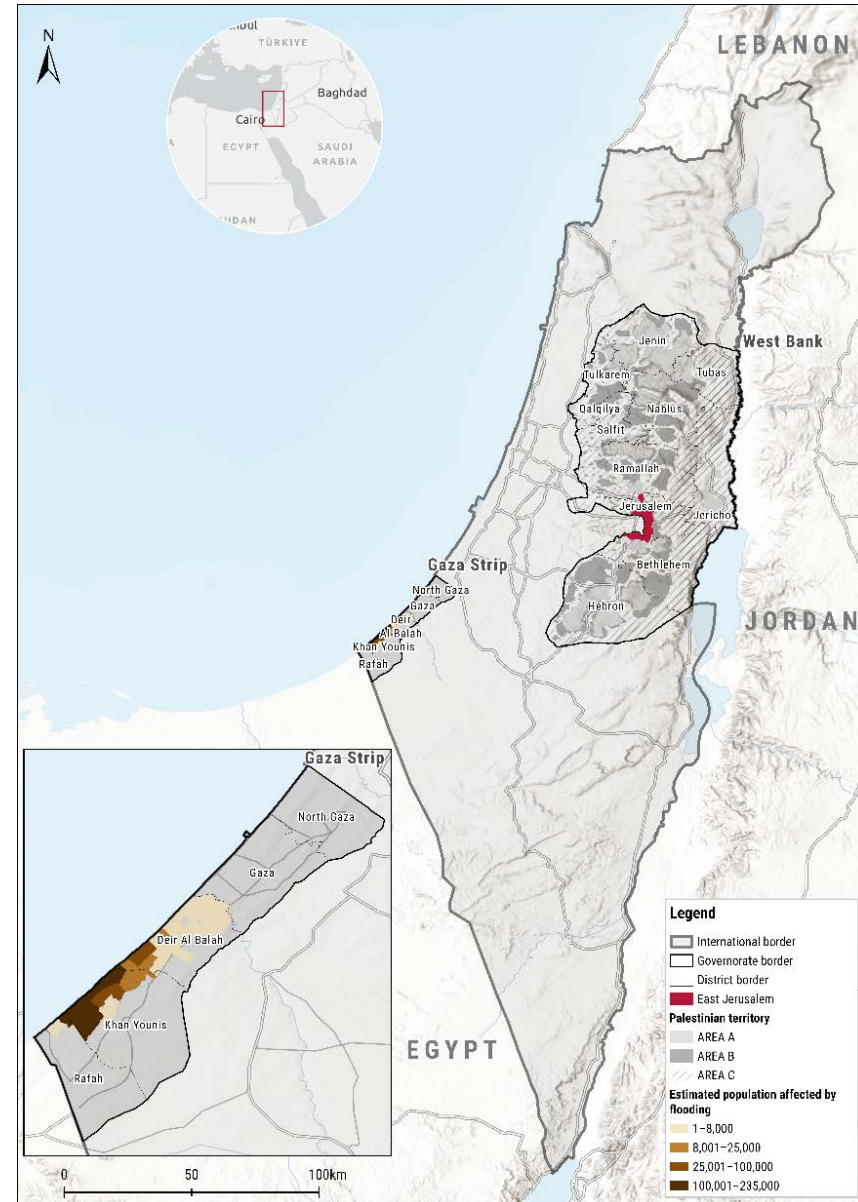
Palestinians in the West Bank have faced a sharp rise in Israeli-imposed movement restrictions, with obstacles such as checkpoints, closed road gates, and barriers, which have reached nearly 800, tightening control over Palestinian movement across the territory, disrupting trade, lengthening travel times, and hindering access to work, inputs, and markets for farmers and small businesses (The Guardian 15/03/2025; OHCHR 13/03/2025). Expanded movement and access restrictions also severely restrict Palestinian access to healthcare, essential services, and employment opportunities (UNGA 20/05/2025).

As aid workers have been targeted in attacks, humanitarian operations are increasingly constrained by greater risks to staff safety, limiting access in some areas. These challenges are compounded by Israel's refusal to grant entry visas or permits to Palestine for international UNRWA staff since the end of January 2025 (UNRWA 21/01/2026).

In Gaza, constraints related to supply chain predictability and approval processes have significantly affected the humanitarian response by delaying the procurement, entry, and distribution of essential relief items. Requirements for the detailed pre-approval of specific items, particularly where dual-use classification is unclear, have complicated logistics planning and slowed the delivery of supplies into the territory. Shelter kits, for example, must be broken down into individual components for approval, adding administrative burdens and extending processing times. Regulatory requirements such as mandatory INGO registration and the provision of donor reference numbers for customs clearance have also created bureaucratic impediments that further impede the flow of humanitarian goods, restricting organisations' ability to maintain consistent pipelines and respond rapidly to needs (Shelter Cluster 21/01/2026).

The presence of unexploded ordnance further limits the movement of humanitarian responders throughout all affected areas of Gaza (CNN 24/01/2026).

## Estimated Total Population Affected by Flooding as of 15 January.



Source: ACAPS with data from Shelter Cluster 15/01/2026.