

Potential implications of the indefinite partial closure of border crossings in Gaza

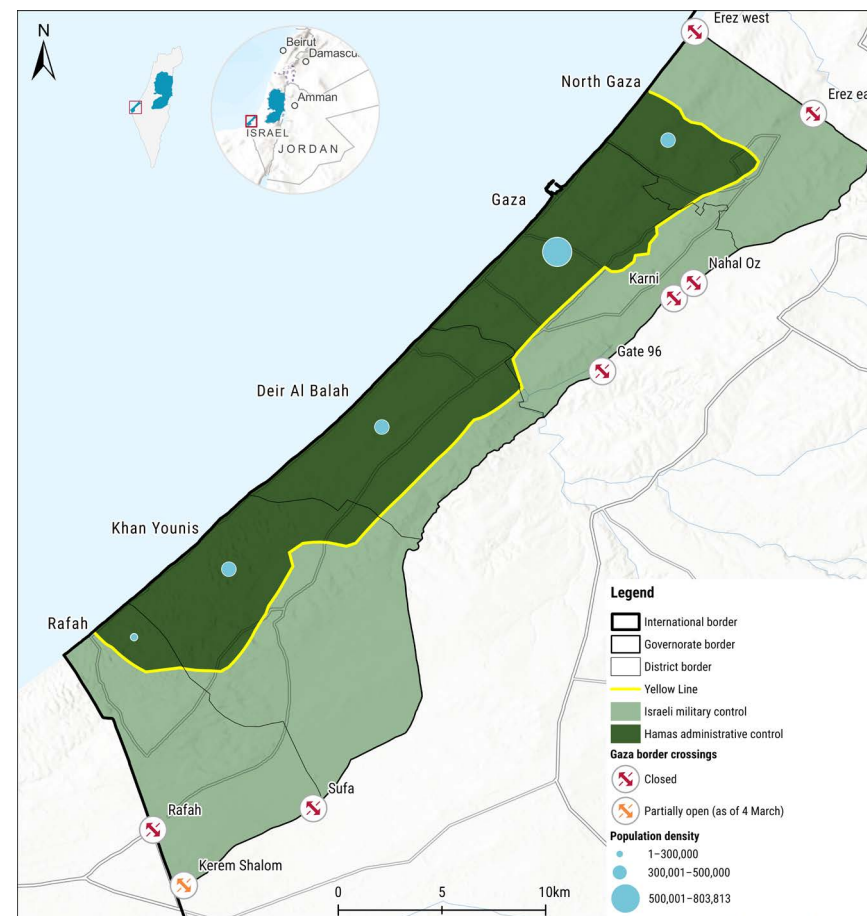
CURRENT SITUATION

On 28 February, the United States and Israel began striking Iran, resulting in regional tensions and military escalations affecting at least 12 countries, including Palestine, in the Middle East via either direct attacks, airspace closure, economic impacts, or a combination of all. By 4 March, no missile strikes related to this escalation had been reported in Gaza, and Hamas had not officially declared involvement in this conflict. **Israel, however, announced the indefinite closure of crossings into Gaza** for security reasons, as a precautionary measure amid regional escalations, including the Rafah border crossing, effective from 1 March (Reuters 28/02/2026; AJ 01/03/2026). Only the **Kerem Shalom border crossing was reopened** on 3 March for limited humanitarian cargo and fuel, subject to security conditions¹ (Times of Israel 02/03/2026; MAP 03/03/2026; OCHA 03/03/2026).

The reduced operational capacity of border crossings is likely to lead to **disruptions to the flow of humanitarian aid and the suspension of operations** in Gaza. The World Central Kitchen already announced the temporary suspension of meals distribution starting 5 March, as warehouse supplies are running low (WCK 01/03/2026). EUBAM Rafah, which monitors and assists movement through the Rafah border crossing, suspended all its activities starting 2 March (EUBAM Rafah 02/03/2026). Many UN operations could soon be suspended as well. Other services, such as solid waste collection services, have already been suspended since 2 March because of fuel shortages (OCHA 02/03/2026).

Humanitarian access was expected to improve in March as the Israeli High Court of Justice announced on 27 February that it had halted changes to INGO registration requirements in Palestine, meaning that the 37 INGOs that received notification of their registration expiring on 31 December 2025 would have been able to resume operations in March (OCHA 28/02/2026; NRC 02/01/2026; AJ 27/02/2026). The Rafah border crossing had recently been opened on 1 February, allowing for the medical evacuation of 94 patients by 24 February (The New Aarab 01/02/2026; OCHA 27/02/2026).

Map 1. The status of Gaza border crossings as of 4 March 2026



Disclaimer: this map uses 2026 population projections from the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, which estimate the population to be 10% lower than 2023 figures following assessments of fatalities and the impact of escalations in Gaza since October 2023 (PCBS accessed 01/03/2026).

¹ We will refer to the partial closure of border crossings hereafter to indicate that all border crossings except Kerem Shalom are closed as of 1 March and that Kerem Shalom is operating at reduced capacity.

CURRENT VULNERABILITIES

Any further disruption to aid flows caused by partial border closures is likely to have immediate and severe consequences, given the population's **extreme dependence on humanitarian assistance**.

People in Gaza already have **very high humanitarian needs** as a result of continuous Israeli bombardment since October 2023. The last two years have left nearly the entire population (2.1 million people) in need of humanitarian assistance: by July 2025, 77% of roads had been destroyed; by October 2025, 81% of structures had been damaged; by February 2026, 89% of WASH facilities had been destroyed; and by March 2026, over 58% of health service points had been rendered nonfunctional (OCHA 18/02/2026; Health Cluster accessed 04/03/2026). Almost the entire population is displaced, living in overcrowded, unsafe, or makeshift conditions, and in need of emergency shelter and essential NFIs. It is estimated that nearly half the population cannot access the survival minimum of 6L of drinking water per day. More than 496,000 cases of acute watery diarrhoea had been reported by the end of 2025 amid continued medical supply shortages (OCHA 16/12/2025 and 12/02/2026). At least 1.6 million people are projected to remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or above levels of food insecurity by mid-April 2026 (IPC 19/12/2025). People are highly dependent on humanitarian assistance, as 80% of families had already lost their main source of income or were unemployed by June 2024 (ILO 07/06/2024). In 2026, unemployment rates are likely even higher.

As the partial closure of most of Gaza's border crossings is indefinite, humanitarian staff rotations have been postponed indefinitely, as international aid workers are unable to enter or leave (PBS 02/03/2026). Even during the period after the ceasefire, only 43% of planned aid deliveries (an average of 260 of the 600 planned daily deliveries) between 10 October 2025 and 10 February 2026 were permitted to enter, indicating that renewed or **prolonged closures could significantly reduce truck entries and reverse limited post-ceasefire access gains** (AJ 25/02/2026).

According to the INFORM Severity Index, Gaza scored a 4 (High) by February 2026 and a 5 (Extreme) regarding access constraints by December 2025.



Source: ACAPS (accessed 01/03/2026); ACAPS (12/2025)

EXPECTED CONSEQUENCES AND HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

Deterioration of food security levels

The **likelihood of the further deterioration of food security in the Gaza Strip has increased** amid tightening humanitarian access constraints, which often lead to the depletion of food stocks, disrupted humanitarian operations, and a spike in the price of food items.

When the ceasefire began and access was partially restored, the IPC projected that Gaza would remain at risk of Famine levels of food insecurity until mid-April 2026 (IPC 19/12/2025). If sustained, the closure of most border crossings from 1 March could increase the likelihood of deterioration, as humanitarian responders have warned that **access is likely to be severely restricted** (MAP 03/03/2026; OCHA 03/03/2026). Aid convoys, medical supplies, and winter relief will be further delayed or suspended, worsening conditions for Gazans, especially after flooding from storms since December, which had affected at least 83,240 families by 24 February. Floods damaged shelters and increased vulnerability to food shortages among affected households (Shelter Cluster 21/01/2026; OCHA 27/02/2026). Without unimpeded access to aid, basic needs such as food and water will likely remain unmet, increasing hardships among the population.

Prior to the partial border crossing closure and suspension of operations, organisations reported that a significant scale-up of assistance and sustained humanitarian access were required to maintain a steady improvement in the overall

humanitarian situation, including the slight improvement in food security or a projected reduction in the population facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) levels of food insecurity (MSF 27/02/2026; IPC 19/12/2025). Between November 2025 and mid-April 2026, 1.6 million people are projected to remain in IPC 3 or above. At the same time, the number of people facing IPC 5 conditions is projected to decrease from 104,000 to 1,900 by mid-April because of the ceasefire agreement and restoration of humanitarian access (IPC 19/12/2025). If access constraints persist, however, **projected improvements could be undermined**.

Spike in food prices and cash transfer commission rates

As a result of the closure of most border crossings, merchants and 'cash traders' may increase the price of goods and commission rates in response to market shortages. People's purchasing power will likely diminish again to levels seen before the ceasefire, and access to health, WASH, food, and other services will likely be disrupted, leading to increased reliance on humanitarian assistance and heightened competition over scarce resources.

As soon as the US and Israeli strikes on Iran began on 28 February, many **consumers and merchants in Gaza started hoarding food** and other necessary items, as they anticipated the partial border closures (PBS 02/03/2026; KII 02/03/2026; Yaffa News Network 28/02/2026). People are likely afraid that items such as flour, milk, and diapers will become scarce very quickly, as observed prior to the ceasefire (PBS 02/03/2026).

Early reports indicate a spike in food items, but not as severe as pre-ceasefire levels, especially those seen in August 2025, when the Gaza Consumer Price Index soared by more than 1,290% compared to pre-October 2023 (KII 02/03/2026; CNN 20/08/2025). Similarly, the liquidity crisis in Gaza has meant that commission rates imposed on cash transfers **have slightly increased**, but not to the nearly 50% rates seen during July–August 2025 (KII 02/03/2026; Independent 04/08/2025). This is aggravated by the Bank of Palestine-imposed USD 2,000 cap on total monthly transactions, also as a result of the liquidity crisis, which severely restricts people's ability to purchase goods (Metras Instagram 20/02/2026).

Most people report that if the partial border closures persist beyond several days, **stocks will likely be depleted within a week**, and the price of goods and commission rates may spike again to levels seen in July–August 2025. **Food prices may also**

increase again, especially for eggs, milk, and wheat flour (KII 02/03/2026). Even with the ceasefire and the improved availability of food, many people report consuming protein-rich foods or vegetables only once a week because of high prices (ACF 19/12/2025). A significant and prolonged reduction in aid flows into Gaza is likely to lead to **worsening malnutrition**, especially among children. Over 101,000 children between the ages of six months and five years are already estimated to be acutely malnourished (IPC 19/12/2025).

POTENTIAL AGGRAVATING FACTORS

A **collapse of the ceasefire and return to conflict** would likely result in the long-term obstruction of humanitarian access and a return to a state of severe food shortages similar to pre-ceasefire conditions. People's coping capacities have largely been depleted, and they are highly dependent on humanitarian assistance.

On 10 October 2025, a new ceasefire was agreed between Hamas and Israel, following two previous attempts between 24–30 November 2023 and 19 January to 18 March 2025, both of which proved to be short-term and fragile (The Guardian 30/11/2023; BBC 01/12/2023; AJ 18/03/2025). Under the current ceasefire agreement, Israel and Hamas committed to a withdrawal and unimpeded humanitarian access; Israel began marking a 'Yellow Line' by 20 October as its withdrawal boundary (OCHA 18/12/2025). A large-scale Israeli offensive in Gaza remains a plausible escalation scenario, however, considering Israel's continuous violation of the ceasefire from its onset. Between 10 October 2025 and 10 January 2026, according to the Gaza Government Media Office, Israel violated the ceasefire at least 1,244 times. If violations persist and diplomatic efforts fail, this **could increase the risk of escalation** (The New Arab 15/01/2026; QNA 15/01/2026).

Despite the ceasefire requiring Israel to withdraw from the 'Yellow Line' area, reports show that Israeli military positions remain established across Gaza, in roughly 58–60% of the territory, including key areas in Rafah, Khan Younis, and parts of Gaza city. This continued military presence may affect the sustainability of the ceasefire and increase tensions among affected communities, contributing to a re-escalation (Vision 05/01/2026). Renewed hostilities would likely result in further border closures and aid disruptions.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Aim

This anticipatory analysis aims to alert humanitarian responders to the potential humanitarian implications of the indefinite partial closure of Gaza's border crossings and how a collapse of the ceasefire would further aggravate needs.

Methodology

The report follows the [ACAPS Risk Methodology](#); monthly updates will be provided on the [ACAPS Risk Radar](#). One key informant interview was conducted with a citizen in Gaza.

Limitations

The volatile situation in the Middle East and Gaza may limit the lifespan of this analysis. Continuous developments are likely to create new variables, affecting the trajectory of identified triggers and impacts.