

Alert note

Palestine - Gaza Escalation 2023

Completed by: George Stephan- DSPR / ACT Palestine Forum Coordinator
Date completed: 18th May 2023
Forum: ACT Palestine Forum

Type of emergency: Escalation
Date of emergency (if rapid onset): 9th May 2023

1. The nature of the emergency

On the 9th of May Israeli escalation against the Gaza Strip induced catastrophic humanitarian situation in the lives of the people living in Gaza. According to Palestinian ministry of health (MOH) on 13th May at 11:00 AM, 33 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, including 6 children and 3 women, and more than 190 were injured including 64 children and 38 women, many of them were serious injuries and might have a long-term disability that needs further intervention to be familiar with the new cases¹.

The initial governmental report showed that hundreds of housing units were totally destroyed or damaged, where hundreds of Palestinians have had to leave their homes in Gaza due to the ongoing air strikes targeting their homes which were completely, partially damaged or their houses at risky areas with a potential to be targeted by bombardment, multiple water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure were also damaged. Beside of the current aggression against the people living in Gaza, the humanitarian situation is already deteriorated due to restrictions and the Gaza imposed siege, the recent escalation doubles the people's suffering more and more. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) decried the loss of life among civilians in the Gaza Strip and stated that "the current escalation in hostilities exacerbates an already severe humanitarian situation for Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, among them many women and children"².

Access to the sea for fishing was suspended during the escalation affecting more than 4,400 fishers and their families, as well farmers were unable to safely access farmlands near the Israeli perimeter fence for irrigation, harvesting, feeding livestock and other essential activities, critically undermining their livelihoods, and leading to scarcity of fresh vegetables and other food commodities in local markets.

The hostilities continued until a ceasefire came into effect at 22:00 on 13 May. The ceasefire continues to largely hold, despite incidents involving the exchange of fire, shortly after the ceasefire on 14 May¹.

2. The impact and scale of the emergency

In Gaza, the Israeli occupation and 16 years of an Israeli imposed blockade/movement restrictions and recurrent escalations on Gaza have contributed to Gaza's dire living conditions, resulting in further casualties and damages. As a result, on the current escalation, extensive damage is reported to residential and commercial buildings, schools and infrastructure, including roads, the electricity network, water installations and agricultural land. The Ministry of Public Works and Housing in Gaza reported that a total of 2,943 housing units sustained damage, including 103 destroyed, 140 severely damaged and 2,700 that were otherwise damaged since the start of the escalation on 9 May, leaving 1,244 Palestinians internally displaced; 20 schools administered by the Palestinian Authority and 6 schools administered by (UNRWA) were damaged to various degrees¹.

The closure has prevented the exit and entry of hundreds of people, including patients and workers, among them aid workers. It has also prevented the entry of vital items such as food, medical supplies and fuel, at a volume of over 300 truckloads per day¹.

According to WHO, the fragile health system in Gaza has been severely challenged by the recent escalation. It has exacerbated existing shortages of essential medicines and supplies needed for critical health services,

¹ [Humanitarian situation in Gaza | Flash Update #5 as of 17:00, 15 May 2023 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory \(ochaopt.org\)](#)

² <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/135759>

including to treat those injured in the Gaza Strip. Increased need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as information from hotlines (receiving a high number of calls) suggests that many people reportedly experience psychosocial distress, fear, anxiety, insecurity, panic attacks, and trauma especially among children and women¹.

The rapid assessment conducted by Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, showed that 94.4% of the mothers expressed that their children experience nightmares, sleeping disorders, behavioral changes, lack of concentration, all in severe posttraumatic stress disorder³. This assessment was conducted between the period of **9th to 13th May 2023** covering the Gaza Strip area, where 104 of the respondents were from Gaza city, 15 from the north of Gaza , 13 from middle area and 40 were from Khan Younis and Rafah.

Per the initial assessments conducted by the different interested organization, the intended emergency is considered medium scale emergency. The primary geographical focus of the interventions is centralized around target areas where ACT members already have presence.

DSPR Gaza will target the areas in which it works covering a population of more than 250,000 people. DSPR Gaza has presence in Gaza City in the north, Khan Younis in the center and Rafah in the south mainly through its clinics in Shijaia, Daraj, and Khirbet Al-Adas.

3. Local and national capacity

The need in Occupied Palestinian Territories continues to be high; the governmental bodies, NGOs and INGO's working in the country continue to function despite challenges and funding gaps. The recent war on Gaza comes to add the pressures on already fragile economy and effect populations who in majority rely on UN organizations and INGOs to address humanitarian and recovery needs resulting from continued contextual challenges.

The UN Protection Cluster is closely monitoring the situation, with OHCHR and cluster partners monitoring and documenting possible violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as civilian fatalities. The Protection Cluster has updated contingency contact lists and put key partners on alert. So far 27 protection partners have indicated that they will be active during the emergency and provide remote and in-person services in Gaza.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has initiated an emergency mass-media campaign through various platforms, including social media and radio stations, to send out messages of explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and on conflict preparedness and protection (CPP) to as many people as possible. The aim is to mitigate the risk of death and injury posed by explosive ordnance or bombing. EORE and CPP digital content have also been widely shared with Mine Action Group partners, the Protection Cluster, OCHA and other UN partners, to share via their networks and platforms. UNMAS is supporting UNRWA in assessing damage caused to two UNRWA schools.

The Child Protection Area of Responsibility (AoR) continues to assess the impact of the situation on vulnerable groups, especially children. As with previous escalations, it anticipates that responses will be needed, including expanded, structured and specialized child protection, case management, and MHPSS aimed at supporting vulnerable children and affected families. The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) in Gaza has activated the Child Protection networks in five governorates.

During the escalation DSPR NECC continued with its services in the MCH clinic with limited number of staff who could make it to the clinics and continue to provide psychosocial support through the E- consultations.

NECC has a long experience in responding to emergency interventions, including health services and providing medicines and supplements for sick children and mothers, psychosocial support, cash relief, and cash vouchers, distribution of feed and non-food items and vouchers. DSPR -NECC operates in Gaza since the year 1952 and coordinates its work with local partners and stakeholders, and with community-based organizations and community entities and with the ACT Palestine forum and uses their premises for awareness and community related activities. In addition to that, NECC coordinates with the UN-led health and nutrition clusters in order to ensure complementarity and exchange lessons learned with different players.

DSPR NECC continues to coordinate with forums, Palestinian authorities and UN clusters, PNGO, AIDA and all represented members in Gaza to coordinate interventions.

4. Key needs and gaps

³ Situation report, Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, May-2023.

Food and Non Food Distribution: Based on its initial assessment which showed the highly need to food assistances even before escalation, DSPR Gaza plans on intervening in providing nutrition and food assistance through food vouchers and hygiene kits for families who are unable to afford the basic needs of nutrition and food for their children. The targeted population will include affected families by recent escalations in Gaza, and families with low economic status, children with anemia and malnutrition, and people with disabilities.

Health: Additional needs emerged in the field of health support services (including medication and medical supplies and medical fees) as there is a noticeable increase in the caseload attending the NECC clinics to seek medical and health services along with chronic shortages of drugs in governmental primary health care centers.

Psychosocial Support: MHPSS interventions for children, women, Staff care and TVET students including psychosocial First Aid sessions, debriefing sessions, relaxation techniques sessions, stress release and building resilience, recreational trips, open fun days, and case management of affected and traumatized women, children, and TVET students at NECC catchment areas.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i>)	X
Regional Appeal (<i>intended for large scale emergencies</i>)	

Capacity details of forum members with the intention to respond are given below.

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise	Support required	Estimated Budget range
DSPR	Gaza Strip	Health Food and Non Food Protection	Financial Support	USD 150 K

5. Potential responses

This RRF will be implemented in three highly vulnerable areas in the Gaza Strip served by the DSPR NECC namely “Shajaia and Darraj” in Gaza Governate and Kherbet Al Adas in Rafah, the southern part of Gaza. The three localities accommodate around 250,000 inhabitants, most of them are poor and highly vulnerable, with focus children and women and families who affected by the recent escalation. Since the current ACT appeal was limited and underfunded for that we opted to ask ACT alliance for RRF urgent support.

- DSPR Gaza will provide the interventions in several sectors including, providing nutrition and food assistance and hygiene kits for families, where families are unable to afford the basic needs of nutrition and food for their children, they reported in the recent survey conducted by NECC through need assessment they are highly in need to food assistances even before escalations.
- Health Support: To provide medications, and medical follow-up of cases affected by the conflict, as there is a noticeable increase in the caseload attending the DSPR NECC clinics to seek medical and health services in the light of severe shortages of drugs in governmental primary health care centers.
- Psychosocial components include psychosocial First Aid, Debriefing, stress relief, recreational activities and recreational trips, support, and professional counseling to traumatize children, women, TVET students, and staff care to NECC employees, family members, and friends.
- DSPR Gaza will target the following geographic areas (Gaza City, Khan Younis in the center, and Rafah in the south, mainly through its clinics in Al-Shijaeya, Al-Daraj, and Khirbet Al-Adas in Rafah).
- The number of beneficiaries across the different interventions in Gaza is expected to be households 500 HH Food Vouchers and Hygiene Kits, 1,130 beneficiaries receive PSS including 130 NECC-DSPR employee, board committee, and consultancy staff, 3,000 patients receive health services); the estimated budget for these interventions is expected to be in the range of USD 150K.