



765

Number of  
Palestinians killed in  
Gaza

4000

Number of  
Palestinians injured  
in Gaza

18

Number of  
Palestinians killed in  
the West Bank

100

Number of  
Palestinians injured  
in the West Bank

37\*

Attacks on Health  
Care since 7 October  
2023

Ministry of Health figures

\* From WHO SSA

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

- In the early morning hours of October 7, Hamas fired thousands of rockets into southern and central Israel. A senior Hamas military commander later announced the launch of Operation “Al Aqsa Storm”, which was joined by other armed Palestinian groups and is still ongoing.
- Israel has declared a state of war and initiated a large-scale operation called, “Swords of Iron”, which continues.
- Fighting continued between Israeli forces and the armed Palestinian groups that infiltrated Israeli towns, cities, and military facilities near the Gaza Strip. According to the media more than **900 Israelis, including foreign nationals were killed** and at least **2,616 were injured** according to the Ministry of Health in Israel. The media reports that over 100 members of the Israeli armed forces and civilians have been captured and taken to Gaza.
- The ongoing air strikes on the Gaza Strip have caused substantial damage in densely populated areas - including to public health infrastructure - rapidly increasing the number of casualties and fatalities, and acutely displacing huge numbers of people. Some 137,500 people are currently sheltering in UNRWA facilities in the Gaza Strip.
- The situation remains tense in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, with increase in confrontations between settlers and Palestinians.

- Numerous restrictions on movement put in place by Israeli authorities continue. Many checkpoints between the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Israel remain closed. The Allenby Crossing between Israel and Jordan is closed for Palestinians. Ben Gurion airport is operational, but most flights are cancelled.

## HEALTH NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

- Trauma and emergency care efforts at hospitals in Gaza need to be bolstered through the provision of medical supplies and equipment, given the rapidly rising number of casualties and fatalities, which have overburdened the already fragile health system. WHO-supported mass casualty response plans and protocols have been activated in the main hospitals. However, restrictions on movement are obstructing the delivery of medical supplies into Gaza as stocks begin to deplete, creating an acute shortage. This is hindering the emergency health response.
- Access to essential health services must be maintained. This is especially the case for emergency obstetric care, management of non-communicable diseases, and treatment of common infections. Rapid scale up of mental health and psychosocial services is also a priority.
- Reinforcement of surveillance and control efforts for infectious diseases is vital. The damage to water and sanitation infrastructure, and overcrowding in displaced persons settlements increase the risk of disease outbreaks.
- Both in Gaza and the West Bank, pre-hospital care through ambulances and emergency medical teams remains pivotal in providing timely care to the injured and the sick. Access to treatment in the first hour after injury is crucial to saving lives.
- A humanitarian corridor must be urgently set up to facilitate the unimpeded movement of lifesaving humanitarian and health supplies, personnel, and patient referrals.
- Israeli authorities ceased supplying electricity to the Gaza Strip on 7 October. Hospitals only have 3-4 hours of electricity per day and need to rely heavily on generators, which is further driving up the demand for fuel. WHO is concerned that some hospitals only have fuel to last up to four days.
- There is also an increased demand for fuel for ambulances, which could be hard to meet given that fuel and other resources are not allowed into Gaza due to movement restrictions.

## HEALTH ATTACKS

- WHO has documented 34 attacks on health care in the occupied Palestinian territory since 7 October:
  - 22 attacks in the Gaza Strip have resulted in six fatalities of health care workers, eight injuries, and affected 13 health care facilities and 15 ambulances.
  - 15 attacks on health care in the West Bank include 13 attacks involving obstruction to delivery of health care; five involving physical violence towards health teams; four involving detention of health staff and ambulances; and three involving militarized search of health assets.

## HEALTH ACCESS

- Beit Hanoun (Erez) checkpoint remains inaccessible due to the security situation, and no entry of medical supplies to Gaza is permitted through the Karam Abu Salem/Kerem Shalom checkpoint.
- From the Gaza Strip, an estimated 130 referral patients and their companions each day require access across Beit Hanoun (Erez) checkpoint to reach scheduled medical appointments.
- Despite severe challenges, most health facilities in the Gaza Strip continue to partially function in line with the emergency plans. Beit Hanoun Hospital is out of service because of the repeated air strikes in its vicinity, causing damage to the hospital and preventing access for health staff and patients.
- The closure of checkpoints and increase in violence in the West Bank have disrupted health services, including access for health staff and patients and functioning of Ministry of Health (MoH) medical facilities, UNRWA health centers, and mobile health clinics.

## WHO RESPONSE

- WHO is reprogramming \$1 million to procure urgently needed medical supplies from the local market to ensure the continuity of essential health services, including emergency obstetric care, management of chronic diseases, and infectious disease control. It is also working with the Ministry of Health to ensure access to mental health and psychosocial services for the most vulnerable among the population.

- WHO is collaborating with the Ministry of Health and partners, including UNRWA, to ensure that disease surveillance and control measures are reinforced, especially in over-crowded schools and other collective centers where displaced persons are congregating.
- Seven major hospitals in the Gaza Strip have activated the hospital emergency plans, prepared with support from WHO, to better manage the surge in casualties.
- An additional stock of WHO trauma supplies is being mobilised to support the treatment of up to 500 severely injured people. Given the rapidly rising casualties, this stock will only be enough to cover health needs over a 24-hour period.
- Plans for the delivery of additional resources are in progress as part of the overall UN Flash Appeal. WHO is coordinating with Egypt and the Palestinian Red Crescent partners to share urgently needed medical supplies with under pressure health facilities.
- WHO continues to systematically monitor health attacks within the Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care, as well as to document and report on health needs and restrictions on health access.

## HEALTH RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

- The Inter-agency Contingency Plan for Gaza, which includes the Health Cluster Contingency Plan, has been activated. The plan has not yet been activated in the West Bank, the Health Cluster continues to monitor the situation there.
- Health Cluster partners have deployed surge staff to support case management at Gaza hospitals. The two Gaza National Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) have been deployed to support Shifa, Aqsa, and Abu Yousuf Al Najjar hospitals in expanding their emergency departments' capacity and to open new Green Zones (for walking patients to receive treatment) within the hospitals.
- Some primary health care clinics, which have the capacity to provide minor surgeries, stitches, dressing and health care for medical emergencies are also helping in treating the injured.
- Health Cluster partners have reprogrammed \$1.3 million to procure urgently needed medical supplies.
- The Humanitarian Health Response 2023 remains only 30% funded due to which resources cannot be adequately reprogrammed to support the ongoing emergency health response.

## WHO RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediate end to hostilities.
- Ensure the protection of civilians against attacks, including acts of retaliation.
- Ensure respect and the protection of health care at all times.
- Ensure the injured have immediate and unhindered access to health care.
- Ensure continuity of essential health services.
- Rapidly reinforce infectious disease surveillance and control measures.
- Establish a humanitarian corridor to facilitate the immediate entry of humanitarian and health supplies into the Gaza Strip and access for patients for outside referrals.

### Further information:

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