



PROTECTION SITUATIONAL UPDATE

7,326 KILLED ¹	18,967 INJURED ²	6,179 DESTROYED BUILDINGS
26,684 HOUSEHOLDS DISPLACED DUE TO DAMAGED BUILDINGS	1,431,001 DISPLACED	656,726 IDPs in UNRWA premises

PROTECTION SITUATION OVERVIEW

The situation in Gaza, previously a protection and humanitarian crisis is now a catastrophe. People who had been living under blockade and occupation now find themselves under siege and under bombardment. **2.3M Palestinians in Gaza are without protection.** There are no safe spaces and there are no routes to escape. People in Gaza have endured 21 days of the most intense conflict marked by relentless Israeli airstrikes, attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, continual denial of essential services (water, fuel and electricity) and humanitarian aid (including food and medicines). **Evacuation orders affecting 1.226 million people (including 636,764 children) in Northern Gaza** (including Gaza city) have led to forced displacement at a level vastly exceeding anything experienced in previous Gaza escalations. With the population increasingly concentrated in the southern areas of Rafah and Khan Younis, and the Middle, the capacity at UNRWA's 92 Designated Emergency Shelters (DESS) in these locations is completely overwhelmed with people sleeping on the streets outside the facilities and in adjacent areas. Elsewhere, **in North Gaza and Gaza governates, 57 UNRWA schools had been sheltering close to 159,968 IDPs before the evacuation orders;** UNRWA is no longer able to assist or protect people in these areas and there is little information about their situation or living conditions. Serious psychosocial distress is pervasive across all population groups (men, women, boys and girls) including first line responders due to exposure to life-threatening events, displacement, loss of family members or friends, family separation, and lack of access to food, water and medicines.

Protection partners, including local NGOs on the ground in Gaza have always been and will remain the backbone of protection responses. However, these are the very same people who are being injured, displaced, separated, traumatized and are grieving their loved ones. Communication with partners is unreliable at best and non-existent in some cases. In these conditions, the protection cluster is forced to prioritize the most immediate, life-saving and time critical responses possible within the current constraints. At the same time, the Areas of Responsibility within the cluster (Child Protection, GBV, Legal Aid, Mine Action) are preparing a minimum protection response package to be rolled out when security and access improve and appropriate levels of aid can be delivered.

PRINCIPLES OF PROTECTION RESPONSE IN GAZA

SAVE LIVES	MUST BE CONSIDERED FROM THE OUTSET	REQUIRE DONOR SUPPORT AND FLEXIBILITY	IMPROVE IMPACT AND REACH OF OTHER HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE	RELY ON THE EXPERTISE AND NETWORKS OF PARTNERS IN GAZA (INCLUDING LOCAL NGOS)
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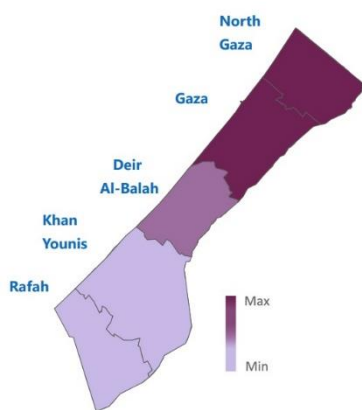
¹ Sources: UNOCHA: Casualties, IDPS, and Damages Trackers as seen on 27 of October 2023 @ 17:00.

PROTECTION RISK ANALYSIS

With Gaza under heavy bombardment, essential services collapsing and connectivity (phone and internet) lacking, it is impossible to assess the protection needs in detail. AoRs and partners are using available information however incomplete, proxy data and protection observations from partners on the ground to build a picture of where specific protection risks and resulting needs of vulnerable groups may be most prominent. The situation is incredibly fluid.

The risk analysis presents individual drivers of protection risk (also described as stressors or sources of harm). However these drivers do not act in isolation. There are already early indications of how the stressors are combining (e.g. high concentrations of people alongside denial of essential services and humanitarian assistance) and creating deeper and more complex protection needs. Similarly some broad categories of vulnerable people are highlighted– these categories are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive and protection partners are acutely aware that intersectional vulnerabilities (e.g. such as those faced by an older woman with impaired mobility, or an unaccompanied child with serious medical condition) will result in people facing extreme levels of insecurity, and be at grave risk of violence, abuse and neglect.

ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS



Attacks on civilians are resulting in deaths, life-threatening and life-changing injuries and contributing to large scale and chaotic displacement, family separation and impairing psychosocial distress. An average of 145 number of children have been killed every day in Gaza since the 7th of October.

At risk: the entire population of Gaza is at risk, with areas of Gaza (central) and North Gaza having sustained the heaviest number of casualties to date.

Vulnerable groups face heightened risk especially when unable to relocate quickly. These include people with disabilities, the elderly, female headed households, those housed in group accommodation/ care homes/ places of detention people in need of medical services.

ATTACKS ON CIVILIAN OBJECTS



Attacks on civilian objects are widespread and continue in governates in southern Gaza despite Israeli Forces ordering the population in evacuate to these areas.

At risk: the entire population of Gaza is at risk, including those sheltering in UN premises which have been hit on at least multiple occasions, patients and IDPs sheltering in hospitals (24 of which have sustained damages) and those who remain in or displaced to residential housing blocks (an estimated 16, 441 housing units have been destroyed and a further 11,340 rendered uninhabitable).

Vulnerable groups include the population who were unable or unwilling to evacuate south to the Israeli Forces’ -designated ‘Mawasi’ area. The nearly 50, 000 pregnant women and girls including the estimated 5, 500 who are expected to give birth in the coming month are acutely impacted by the ongoing attacks on healthcare facilities.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT



An estimated 1.43 million people are displaced and close to half of these are in 92 UNRWA facilities in central and southern Gaza. The forced displacement at this unprecedented scale is a consequence of the relentless Israeli bombardment of residential areas, including the wholesale destruction of entire neighbourhoods coupled with the evacuation orders issued by Israeli forces.

At risk: the entire population of Gaza is at risk. The highest displacement rates are seen in Northern Gaza and Gaza (central), however multiple displacements are common as people fail to find any essential services, humanitarian aid or even space to shelter; UNRWA facilities are overwhelmed. Many households fled without basic supplies, change of clothes or personal documents – they are particularly vulnerable and for most of those whose houses are destroyed or uninhabitable they face long-term displacement. Displacement affects women and men differently and can create additional risks for women and children including GBV.

CONCENTRATION OF IDPs



Gaza, before this escalation, was densely populated and suffering from overcrowding, inadequate housing and the effects of 16 years of blockade. As a result of the forced displacement, the concentration of population in **Rafah, Khan Younis and Middle** areas especially is now overwhelming.

At risk: With 656,726 people in 149 UNRWA-designated emergency shelters (DES), overcrowding compounded by the enormous levels of stress and trauma is leading to serious protection risks. These include rising community tensions, risks of violence including GBV, and significant challenges to identifying vulnerable individuals. All shelters of these DESs are hosting **more than double their designated capacity** with the worst case of concentration seen at a facility sheltering 11 times its intended capacity. For those who remain in their residences, many are hosting large numbers of displaced family and friends, often in the most basic of accommodations. Unbearable overcrowding, dire conditions and lack of services coupled with the continued airstrikes on the areas the Israeli Forces directed people to evacuate towards, has driven some people to return to their residential areas in northern and central Gaza.

DENIAL OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE³

Israel has imposed an electricity blackout and announced a “total siege” on Gaza. Humanitarian supplies positioned at the Egyptian border are prevented from entering and the woefully inadequate number of trucks that have entered are restricted to carrying limited food, water and medical supplies. Live-saving fuel for water desalination and hospitals, shelter, WASH and NFI supplies and communication equipment remain blocked. The protection risks which arise begin with threat to life; without immediate and sustained humanitarian aid, preventable deaths from hunger, thirst and communicable diseases are inevitable.

Vulnerable groups: The entire population of Gaza is vulnerable to the effects of denial of humanitarian assistance; overcrowded shelters see unsustainable rationing of assistance, markets are seeing supplies exhausted. The population in Gaza City and North Gaza areas are particularly vulnerable to deliberate denial of services and assistance.

³ The available secondary data does not yet allow an analysis per governorate.

PROTECTION RESPONSE AND ADVOCACY MESSAGES

Protection Clusters, the Areas of Responsibility and protection partners have identified an approach to ensure the most critical protection activities can continue or be established; these cannot await a ceasefire of the securing of unhindered humanitarian access. It is comprised of the following axis, that are now under definition together with primary responders in Gaza.

TRACING AND REUNIFICATION

Establish an emergency, responsive and timely **identification, documentation, tracing and reunification of missing persons and respond to unaccompanied or separated children.**

MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

Provision of **primary material assistance** to address critical protection needs and ensure timely support to most vulnerable groups. Examples include protection-specific NFIs, adaptive devices for people with disabilities and dignity kits.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE MECHANISM

Establishing community response mechanisms and providing support to community-led initiatives. This includes pre-existing networks that are reforming and providing real-time support, sharing critical information about available services (where bakeries or ATMs are still operating) and emerging structures that providing neighbour level responses especially in areas where key humanitarian actors are no longer operational (for example in the facilities in Gaza City and Northern Gaza where UNRWA is no longer able to provide services).

PROTECTION RESPONDERS

Emergency multi-functional **protection responders** responding wherever possible to pre-existing caseloads, identifying and resolving critical protection problems within their immediate vicinity (inside or outside shelters) and providing information and links to assistance or services wherever they exist. This work can expand alongside activities of other sectors including distributions when access improves.

CRITICAL RISK MITIGATION

Risk mitigation measures including communication campaigns avoid further harm to families, vulnerable groups and children, during primary response and distribution. This includes Explosive Ordinance Risk Education, preventing family separation, MHPSS self-care, GBV prevention and PSEA communications among others.

KEY PROTECTION ADVOCACY MESSAGES

Civilians must be protected.

An immediate humanitarian ceasefire is needed.

Continuous delivery of aid that corresponds to enormous need is urgently required to prevent further death and suffering.

- All parties must respect international humanitarian law; they must immediately cease attacks targeting civilians and attacks expected to cause disproportionate death and injury of civilians or damage to civilian objects.
- Humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach those in need as a matter of urgency. Israeli actions that cut off civilians from access to essential goods and services as a form of collective punishment violate international law.
- All civilians captured and held by Palestinian armed groups must be released immediately and unconditionally. The taking of hostages is prohibited under international law.
- Those found responsible for violations of international law must be held to account