



## EDITORIAL;

### Health Issues in Gaza/ Raffah (Palestine)

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Despite Gaza's history of escalation, the current conflict is unprecedented in the amount of death, destruction, and suffering it has caused, with consequences that will last for generations. Between October 7, 2023, and the afternoon of January 15, 2025, almost 47,000 Palestinians were killed and 115,000 were wounded in Gaza. Given that 11.1 million people, or half of Gaza's population, suffer from catastrophic food insecurity. Famine is imminent, according to the most recent IPC assessment. In terms of population share, this is the largest ever observed worldwide. Approximately 80% of those suffering from famine globally are now Palestinians living in Gaza. However, 70 percent of medical facilities have been destroyed by the occupying Israelite military forces, and Israel's siege of Gaza, which includes closed crossings and a shortage of basic supplies like electricity and water, has been a major factor in the humanitarian crisis that is developing. Frequent aerial bombardments in crowded urban areas, massive military ground operations, unexploded ordnance (UXO) risks, widespread insecurity, closures of important crossing points, Israeli government restrictions on movement and access, and infrastructure damage, all contribute to the situation.<sup>1</sup>

The planned Israeli ground invasion of Rafah is expected to destroy life and life-saving aid for the more than 11.3 million civilians, including at least 610 000 children, who are currently under direct fire, according to numerous warnings from humanitarian and human rights organizations. For more than 50 years, Palestine has been caught in a long cycle of hunger, conflict, and despair. This cycle hit previously unheard-of heights in 2023 when hostilities in the West Bank and the occupied Gaza Strip intensified on October 7, leading to widespread destruction, mass displacement, rising food prices, and a depreciating currency. According to a UNRWA report from 2022, the 33% of families in Gaza are extremely poor, and 81% of Palestine refugees reside below the national poverty line.<sup>1</sup>



Typologies of emergency	Main health threats
Conflict	Trauma and injury
Food security	Malnutrition
Displacement	Non-communicable diseases (NCD)
Epidemics Nutrition	Mental Health
	Communicable diseases (Respiratory Tract Infections (RTI), including COVID-19, acute diarrheal illness)
	Maternal and neo-natal health
	Acute Jaundice Syndrome

**Attacks on Healthcare and Functionality:** There were 443 attacks on Gaza's healthcare system between October 7, 2023, and April 23, 2024, resulting in 723 fatalities and 924 injuries. Due to continued hostilities and access issues, Gaza's health system is disintegrating, with an increasing number of hospitals no longer functioning. Now the situation is extremely worst.

**Food Security:** Approximately 80% of the world's famine victims are Palestinians living in Gaza.

**Displacement in Gaza:** A high risk of disease outbreak is maintained by substandard living conditions and limited or nonexistent access to adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities. Nearly 11.7 million internally displaced people (more than 75% of the population) are taking refuge in emergency shelters, which are either public or UNRWA shelters, at unofficial locations, or close to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) distribution and shelter sites as well as in host communities. It is still difficult to determine the precise number of IDPs. Israeli officials' declarations of an impending ground operation in the region and airstrikes on Rafah have raised concerns about the potential effects of the operation on the more than half of Gaza's population that is confined to less than 20% of the Gaza Strip. As more civilians flee the fighting after Israeli evacuation orders, UN agencies have reaffirmed their warnings about the increasing risk of disease throughout Gaza, but especially in Rafah.

## Gender-Based Violence

In addition to reported gender-based violence, IDP tensions have been exacerbated by overcrowding and shortages of essential supplies. IDPs' levels of anxiety, fear, and grief are rising as a result of overcrowding, a lack of privacy, and limited access to essential services. Violent altercations in UNRWA shelters have been reported as tensions rise. Long lines of weary women and children wait to use subpar restrooms in shelters throughout Gaza, forcing people to turn to other coping mechanisms like buckets or open defecation. A damage assessment report released on March 29, 2024 by the World Bank, EU, and UN states that over



60% of homes have been damaged or destroyed, accounting for 72% (US\$13.29 billion) of the total damages, with 80% of the damage concentrated in the governorates of Gaza, North Gaza, and Khan Younis. Roughly 90% of the 4,000 buildings that line Gaza's eastern border have either been destroyed or damaged, according to UNOSAT.

**Access to Water and Sanitation (WASH) in Gaza and Rafah:** The conflict has worsened an already dire situation, caused more destruction, and damaged essential waste collection infrastructure. Municipalities are struggling to handle the growing crisis as a result of the destruction of medical waste treatment facilities, waste collection vehicles, and infrastructure. In northern Gaza, 75% of solid waste is dumped without any controls or sanitation services, and 81% of households do not have access to safe and clean water. In contrast to the global norm of one toilet for a maximum of 20 people in a humanitarian emergency, the Rafah has one toilet for every 850 residents, according to UNICEF. Due to a severe lack of sanitary products, water, and restrooms, 690,000 menstruating women and teenage girls in Gaza face immediate difficulties.

**Humanitarian Access:** There are still several obstacles that humanitarian actors must overcome in order to reach Gaza's needy citizens.

**Attacks on Humanitarian Workers:** Even though there are still procedures in place for humanitarian notification and coordination with Israeli authorities, Israeli military operations and airstrikes have frequently damaged medical and humanitarian facilities throughout Gaza and Rafah, killing medical staff, humanitarian workers, and civilians.

## Vulnerable Groups in Gaza and Rafah

- Women and Girls
- Children
- Men
- Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- Older People
- People suffering from mental health disorders

## Health Issues/ Public health risk

- Trauma and injury
- Malnutrition
- Acute respiratory infection (ARI) including COVID-19
- Acute diarrheal illness (including acute watery diarrhoea (AWD), shigella and rotavirus)
- Hypertension/ High blood pressure
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Kidney Disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Maternal and neonatal health
- Mental Health
- Cholera
- Skin infections (including scabies)
- Measles
- Typhoid
- Acute Jaundice Syndrome (AJS) /Suspected hepatitis A
- Hepatitis E
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
- Meningococcal disease
- Chicken Pox
- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis (cVDPV2)
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- HIV/AIDS
- Rabies

## Health Issues in Gaza/ Raffah (Palestine)



Unrelenting conflict has ruined the healthcare system and people's access to medical care. People's basic necessities are not being satisfied during the winter as the temperatures drop.



**Health Issues in Gaza/ Raffah (Palestine)**





Rafah is home to the majority of Gaza's 2 million internally displaced people. In less than four months, Rafah's population has grown by 500%. As a result, the entire population of Gaza is experiencing severe food insecurity. Furthermore, since more than 2 million people rely on UNRWA assistance, the cut is anticipated to worsen the humanitarian crisis.<sup>3</sup>

According to a preliminary assessment released today by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the war in Gaza is having unprecedented environmental effects, putting the community at risk of irreparable harm to its natural ecosystems as well as rapidly increasing air, water, and soil pollution. UNEP restates the demand for an immediate ceasefire in order to save lives and eventually lessen the environmental effects of the conflict.<sup>4</sup> Munitions containing explosive chemicals and heavy metals have been placed in densely populated areas of Gaza, contaminating water and soil and posing a health risk to people that will last long after the fighting has stopped. Children are particularly at serious risk from unexploded ordnance. Lead and other heavy metals are predicted to leak from destroyed solar panels, posing a new threat to Gaza's water and soil.<sup>4</sup>

More than 90% of Gaza's water has been declared unfit for human consumption, and the majority of its citizens are unable to meet their daily calorie needs due to food insecurity and growing poverty.<sup>5</sup> The physical and mental health of people in the Gaza Strip has been negatively impacted by psychological trauma, poverty, and environmental degradation; many, including children, experience anxiety, distress, and depression.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

**Gaza's Health Crisis:** The Immediate Need for International Intervention The ongoing and present conflict in Gaza has caused serious environmental problems, which has led to a health crisis that requires immediate attention and intervention. The region's urgent problems with infectious diseases, mental health, access to healthcare, and water and sanitation have all been thoroughly examined. Following the conflict, mental health problems have increased, especially among children and adolescents, and symptoms related to trauma are predicted to last. With the vast majority of water unfit for human consumption and an increase in infectious diseases, the water and sanitation crises present serious risks to public health. Fuel, medication, and breakdown shortages have had a major impact on women's and girls' access to healthcare in medical facilities. To stabilize the effects on the environment and human health and to permit humanitarian aid to enter Gaza in order to alleviate the dire health conditions, immediate action is necessary.<sup>6</sup>

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