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GAZA HUMANITARIAN ACCESS SNAPSHOT

Humanitarian Space Further Eroded Amid Displacement Orders By Israeli Forces and Unprecedented Access Challenges

As of 27 August, 40,435 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed and 93,534 reported injured, with many still missing under the rubble. With nowhere to flee, Palestinians face relentless and widespread attacks across the enclave. As the bombardment of Gaza by Israeli forces intensifies, the severely constrained and further shrinking humanitarian space has led to unprecedented challenges, further complicated by forced displacement orders and relentless hostilities by Israeli forces. Since the beginning of August, Israeli forces have issued 16 orders demanding civilians immediately leave the area in which they are residing. These orders have been issued in Rafah, Khan Younis, Deir al-Balah, and North Gaza, affecting approximately 260,000 people, many of whom have already been displaced multiple times.

90% of the population in Gaza is displaced, with more than 88.5% of the Strip under forced displacement orders or marked as no-go zones, pushing the civilian population into a small, overcrowded unilaterally-declared "humanitarian zone" where population density has surged to 30,000 – 34,000 people per square kilometre, compared to just 1,200 before 7 October. This gravely strains basic resources and services and impedes the ability of aid organisations to meet rising needs. For more details, please refer to **OCHA Flash Update.**

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

16 orders by Israeli forces in August forcibly displaced more than 260,000 civilians and severely disrupted access to aid with at least 24 NGOs impacted. Civilians, including humanitarians, were pushed into an ever-shrinking space, unilaterally-designated by Israeli forces as a "humanitarian zone" now just 11% of Gaza.

Ongoing hostilities have severely damaged key infrastructure and increased risks for civilians, including humanitarian workers, leading to the suspension of critical services.

NGOs continue to face significant delays and restrictions in getting aid into and across Gaza due to Israeli forces-imposed bureaucratic obstacles, leading to aid shortages and putting vulnerable populations at greater risk.

Humanitarian workers face immense safety and security risks and operational difficulties due to the deteriorating security situation, prohibitive entry requirements, and cash shortages, making it increasingly difficult to secure aid and deliver the small amount that has reached Gaza.

Critical shortages of medical supplies, food, water, and hygiene products are compounded by the imminent threat of a polio outbreak, with the first case confirmed in August 2024 by the Ministry of Health in Gaza, underscoring the dire health and humanitarian crisis.

CALL FOR ACTION

States with influence over the parties to the conflict must take concrete actions, beyond mere condemnation, to ensure an immediate and permanent ceasefire is achieved and all parties involved must cease hostilities without delay. States must, in accordance with international law, halt the transfer of weapons, parts, and ammunition to parties to the conflict as these are at risk of being used to commit violations of IHL.

The Government of Israel must immediately halt the forced displacement of civilians in Gaza, which is causing unnecessary suffering, trauma, and severely disrupting access to essential aid. States with influence must act decisively to ensure this practice ends.

The Government of Israel must guarantee and facilitate safe, unhindered access for all humanitarian assistance, including vaccines, fuel, associated equipment (including cold chain storage), and specialist staff, through all crossing points into and within Gaza, as well as safe unfettered access for children and families to health points across the Strip.

The safety and security of humanitarian actors must be guaranteed. As they respond to the humanitarian imperative to assist communities, humanitarian agencies must be permitted to bring into Gaza items and means that are essential for their safety and wellbeing.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT ORDERS AND ERODED "HUMANITARIAN ZONE"

"I can see hundreds of people in the street carrying their belongings and leaving, but nobody knows what to do or where to go. I can't comprehend the situation - I feel disoriented, lost and empty-headed. My friends are saying that danger is imminent and that we need to leave now. But if we have to leave our home, we will be left in the street. I can't bear having my children and my wife sleep on the floor or in the street. But I don't know where to go."

Islamic Relief staff member

Israeli forces have been continuously pushing civilians into an ever-shrinking part of Gaza. Israel claims these forced movements are evacuation orders, but in reality, they do not meet the international legal definition of an evacuation. They are more accurately referred to as forced displacement orders.

Israel, under IHL, may "undertake total or partial evacuation of a given area if the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand". But such transfer or evacuation shall ensure, that proper accommodation is provided to receive the protected persons, that the removals are effected in satisfactory conditions of hygiene, health, safety and nutrition, and that members of the same family are not separated. Also, "the evacuated shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased".

Articles 49 and 53 of VI Geneva Convention

Due to immense damage and destruction of residential buildings in Gaza, it is likely that many such displacements will not be temporary, adding another dimension as to why current forced displacement orders would not constitute a lawful evacuation, but rather a proscribed act of forcible transfer. Such orders are now near daily, with the time between the issuance of a forced displacement order and the subsequent shelling of that area becoming increasingly short. This raises serious concerns as people, particularly vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, and those with disabilities or injuries, are unable to relocate within the given timeframe, triggering severe waves of panic. Repeated displacements also cause profound psychological trauma, leaving civilians in a state of constant fear and uncertainty, which, alongside the disruption of access to basic necessities like water, sanitation, and aid, further exacerbates the humanitarian crisis.

The shrinking of the "humanitarian zone" has had grave impacts, affecting at least 24 NGOs operating in the area.

- **ActionAid**, **Al Rowan**, **Anera**, **Association for Palestine Youth**, **CESVI**, **Danish Refugee Council partners (DRC)**, **IBC**, **Islamic Relief**, **Mercy Corps**, **Middle East Children's Alliance**, **Médecins du Monde**, **Project HOPE**, **Save the Children**, **War Child**, **Humanity & Inclusion (HI)**, **WeWorld** , **Oxfam**, and **Solidarités International** all have staff members who were displaced due to orders by Israeli forces.
- **ActionAid** partner **WEFAQ** had to evacuate and dismantle their operations, including a shelter for displaced people, a food distribution warehouse, and their offices, relocating to Western Khan Younis. Meanwhile, another partner, **Ma'an**, was besieged by tanks in Deir El Balah. The **Ma'an** community centre, vital for supporting displaced families, is now severely compromised, hampering aid efforts.
- On 25 August, Israeli forces issued a forced displacement order to part of block 128, where Al Aqsa Hospital, a major health facility for Central Gaza, as well as premises of 10 humanitarian organisations are located. The threat of evacuation orders and related hostilities by Israeli forces have triggered panic with hundreds of patients fleeing the hospital.
- **CARE International (CARE)**, **HI**, **DanChurchAid/NorwegianChurchAid (DCA/NCA)**, **International Rescue Committee (IRC)**, **Middle East Children's Alliance**, **Islamic Relief**, **War Child**, **Oxfam** and **Médecins du Monde** have all had to suspend aid delivery and activities in areas that were impacted by these orders.
- **Mercy Corps** was directly impacted by displacement orders with their office, staff and shelter housing 60 people impacted.
- Numerous INGOs, including **Oxfam**, the **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**, **Save the Children**, and **IRC**, report that their premises are now less than one kilometre from heavy fighting. Many organisations took precautionary measures and relocated due to the close proximity of the fighting and in anticipation of further forced displacement orders, which followed on the 25th August.
- NRC reported that 12 water reservoirs were located within blocks told to relocate, making them inaccessible, which will result in a 70% reduction of water available for domestic purposes.
- Numerous warehouses, including four UN and one **HI** warehouse, have reported that their locations are no longer within the "humanitarian zone", leaving them with no space to store supplies being shipped into Gaza.
- Service providers, including those delivering essential items like water or food, face challenges in reaching targeted locations close to these sites, affecting their ability to receive and distribute aid.

Israel has imposed a grid system onto Gaza, dividing the Strip into blocks. Numerous blocks that recently received forced displacement orders encroach into the middle of the "humanitarian zone" raising concerns that the zone may be split into two separate areas which would further cut off communities from vital aid.

Palestinian organisations remain the primary source of aid delivery to much of Gaza. Due to intensive military operations, 70% of reporting NGOs have been forced to reduce the majority of their aid delivery to the "humanitarian zone". In line with international law, humanitarian actors must be granted rapid and unimpeded access to provide assistance to those in need, wherever they are located, and this access cannot be denied arbitrarily.

IMPACT OF HOSTILITIES ON OPERATIONS

The ongoing hostilities have had a profound and detrimental impact on humanitarian operations, preventing the delivery of critical services to vulnerable populations. The environment is also impacted by the massive use of explosive weapons which pollute air, water, soil and other resources. With attacks by Israeli forces targeting areas where humanitarian personnel operate, the risks faced by field teams have increased, further complicating the provision of essential assistance.

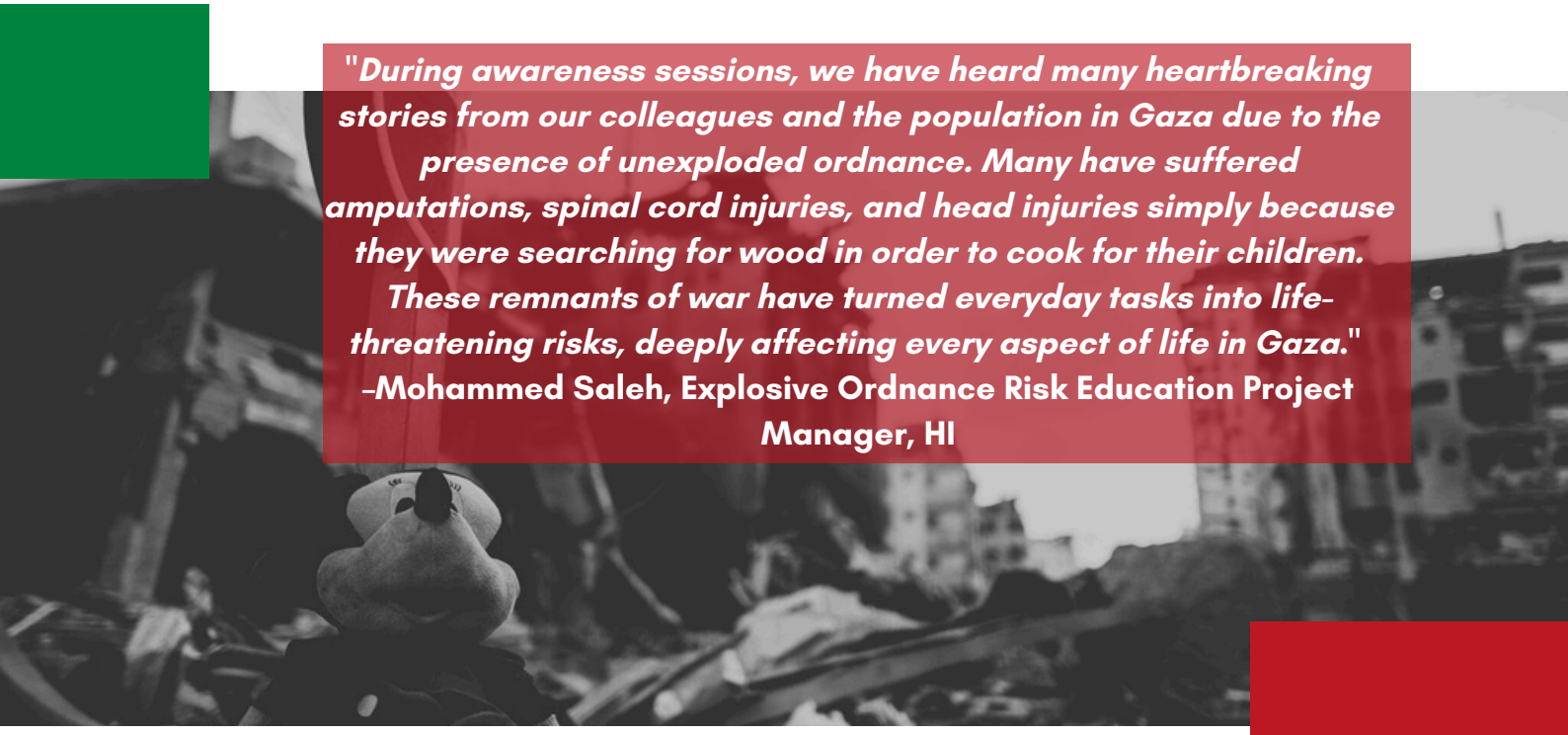
- The escalation of attacks by Israeli forces on shelters and[1] schools has forced organisations such as **Médecins du Monde** and **War Child** to pause services such as medical and psychosocial support and education activities for children at a time when 17,000 children are estimated to be unaccompanied.
- **Plan International** reported that their partners are unable to access the Kerem Shalom/Karam Abu Salem border, to pick up offloaded cargo due to the intensification of hostilities.
- **ActionAid** had to cancel their planned operations to distribute clean water in Khan Younis due to the increased risk of attacks that impeded the truck's passage.
- The intensification of hostilities has significantly constrained one of HI's operational units, **Atlas Logistique**'s, ability to provide much needed warehousing services for humanitarian aid. Meanwhile, **Islamic Relief**'s vital food distributions and activities have been severely disrupted, delaying the delivery of essential meals to vulnerable families and worsening an already dire situation. With the "humanitarian zone" constantly shrinking and the area becoming increasingly crowded with displaced people, it has become impossible to identify new premises for storage.

1 According to the UN, 80% of schools have been destroyed or damaged in Gaza since 7 October 2023. This amounts to scholasticide

- Contractors and suppliers report severe risks when attempting movements and operating inside school shelters, as reported by **WeWorld**, given the closeness to fighting areas and potential risk of being directly targeted.

- The heightened security situation has severely affected staff mobility, as reported by **DCA/NCA**. Between Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah, a distance of 10 km, roads are extremely crowded with displaced people and traffic causing the journey time to have increased to 3-4 hours, compared to 1.5 - 2 hours before the latest wave of forced displacement orders and 15-20 minutes prior to 7 October.

- Reports from local communities and humanitarian workers, as reported by **War Child**, **HI**, **CARE**, have indicated the presence of unexploded ordnance contamination (UXOs) creating significant risks for anyone attempting to access roads, services, distribution centres, or sheltering in destroyed buildings. The presence of unexploded ordnance additionally limits access to services, threatens civilians on the move, and increases the risk of new accidents. Unexploded ordnance under debris is impeding the removal of solid waste.



"During awareness sessions, we have heard many heartbreaking stories from our colleagues and the population in Gaza due to the presence of unexploded ordnance. Many have suffered amputations, spinal cord injuries, and head injuries simply because they were searching for wood in order to cook for their children. These remnants of war have turned everyday tasks into life-threatening risks, deeply affecting every aspect of life in Gaza."
-Mohammed Saleh, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Project Manager, HI

AID SUPPLIES

Delays and bureaucratic obstacles

One of the most significant obstacles remains delays imposed by the Israeli authorities in approving cargo to enter Gaza. Food and essential medical supplies are at risk of expiring before they can be approved for entry into Gaza, while fresh produce such as vegetables continue to be denied entry at key crossings such as Zikim, and meat on cold chain trucks continues to remain held up pending approval.

Blocked supplies include 19 **ActionAid** trucks containing dignity and hygiene kits and **Médecins du Monde** hygiene kits held at Al-Arish, **War Child** partner medical and food supplies, 7 **Plan International** trucks containing food, hygiene supplies, and water at Kerem Shalom/Karam Abu Salem, and **WeWorld** trucks containing 1,534 family hygiene kits.

A substantial amount of aid remains in Egypt, unable to enter Gaza due to the closure of the border following the Rafah offensive in May and control by Israeli forces of the Gaza side of the border, despite this being contrary to the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, which stipulated that the area remain demilitarised. For instance, **HI** aid is still waiting in Egypt, including 1,000 kits of adult diapers, 700 kits of baby diapers, 1,765 dignity kits, 3,120 hygiene kits, 1,000 kits of clothes, 484 wound dressing kits, and 43 food kits; **IBC** aid includes 1,800 food parcels, 1,800 hygiene kits, and large quantities of tinned meat; and **CESVI** and **Welthungerhilfe** aid includes 1,400 food parcels.

In addition, **Mercy Corps** reports 1,350 hygiene kits and 1,030 food parcels stuck in Egypt waiting to cross into Israel since 4 June and **CARE** reports 3,700 dignity kits waiting in Egypt; **Save the of Children** continues to have 15 pallets of temperature-controlled medicines stuck in Al-Arish, Egypt, without approval from Israeli authorities. The only available means of entry is transport on the "fenced road", external to Gaza, to Gate 96, with Israeli authorities allowing just three convoys of 30 trucks each on this road per week. Yet, this is at the arbitrary discretion of Israeli forces, and often only 10 to 15 trucks per week are provided access. **Mercy Corps** on the 23rd August, successfully delivered 1,000 food parcels and 1,000 hygiene kits to northern Gaza, after 4 months of delays caused by Israeli authorities' last-minute introduction of new customs requirements 2 days prior.

Restricted Items & Movement

Dual-use Items: Often prevented from entry due to concerns that they could be used for military purposes, despite being critical humanitarian items.

o E.g., **CARE International** reports:

weeks-long delays

obtaining permissions for a truck holding 23 pallets carrying:

health supplies

hibernation kits

baby kits

to Southern Gaza

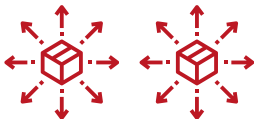
Even after receiving approval, they are still facing issues with delivering these essential supplies due to the ongoing backlog at the Kerem Shalom/Karam Abu Salem crossing.

Denial of Movement: The refusal to allow essential aid within Gaza is putting communities at great risk.

o E.g., One **NGO** reports:

one week period

denial of water trucking movement



impacted 20-25 distribution sites

across Northern Gaza

Therfore severely affecting communities reliant on this once-weekly water distribution.

Transport Restrictions: Moving goods from northern to southern Gaza is significantly hindered, affecting civilians, particularly those forcibly relocated to the south due to no-go zones and forced displacement orders.

Logistics & Fuel Shortages: Truck delays

stuck at a crossing point

in Egypt

no progress on their movement

Fuel Restrictions: Driven-up prices strain the capacity of civil society organisations essential for reaching communities outside the "humanitarian zone".

o E.g., Hospitals, like Al-Awda, are struggling to remain operational due to fuel shortages. Al-Awda declared on 18 August that they are again at risk of suspending operations if fuel is not urgently delivered.

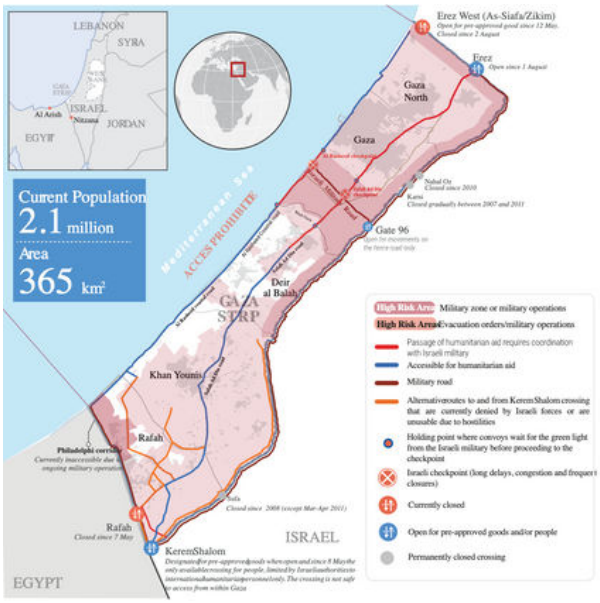
Delays in Essential Equipment: **Oxfam** reports that a desalination unit, pre-cleared by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), faced delays in entering Gaza since February. The unit could not be moved from Kerem Shalom/Karem Abu Salem to Gaza due to Israeli authorities rejecting the entry of essential generators at the crossing.

Loss of Aid

- **Oxfam**, **NRC**, and **ActionAid** report the loss of critical aid items, the reason of which is near impossible to ascertain. Such items include latrine superstructure, tents, and hygiene kits.
- **NRC** reports that since February, only 53% of the tents they have received in Egypt can be accounted for, with 22% lost in transit and 25% yet to be received in Gaza, which has resulted in a loss of at least $375,000 in tents alone. The continued loss of aid critically undermines efforts to assist communities already deprived of necessary support.
- In addition to the substantial issues humanitarian actors face in getting aid to distribution points, communities face excessive challenges to reach distribution points. Within the zone designated as "humanitarian" by Israeli authorities, the presence of Israeli military personnel, road closures and increased risks of attacks prevent communities from accessing distribution points.

Status of Crossings

Erez West/Zikim/As-Siafa: Closed since August 2. Previously used for pre-approved goods since May 12 but currently not operational.
Erez East/Beit Hanoun: Open; receiving cargo shipments from Amman (Jordan) and Ashdod (Israel), though with capacity limitations.
Kerem Shalom/Karam Abu Salem: Receiving cargo from Egypt but experiencing heavy congestion due to security challenges and access constraints, which are causing delays in moving the cargo.
Gate 96: Open for movements on the fence road only. Provides access in a limited capacity, requiring coordination for humanitarian aid.
Rafah Crossing: Closed since May 7.
Philadelphi Corridor: Currently inaccessible due to ongoing military operations.
Fenced Road Convoy: Open only for select and priority items.



Source: OCHA reported impact snapshot – Gaza Strip (August 7, 2024)

Personnel & Operational Challenges

The deteriorating security situation has placed immense strain on humanitarian workers and local partners who are forced to take unprecedented safety risks to operate. There are no viable risk mitigations available to humanitarian actors. The two safety provisions put in place by Israeli forces—the so-called "humanitarian zone," which lacks legal underpinning and provides no safety due to repeated attacks within this zone, and the humanitarian notification system, which also fails to offer any real protection due to the repeated targeting of deconflicted sites, including INGO premises—are ineffective.

There remain strict requirements and prohibitions in place for staff entering the Gaza Strip. Most notably, this includes prohibiting any Palestinian staff or staff with Palestinian heritage from entering Gaza.

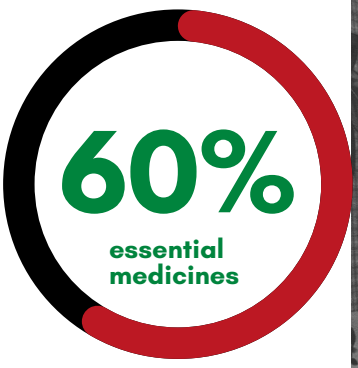
ActionAid, **Anera**, **CARE International**, **CESVI**, **HI**, **Oxfam**, **Médecins du Monde**, **Project Hope**, **Welthungerhilfe**, and **WeWorld** all report significant challenges related to cash for operations that are carried by staff entering Gaza. Staff entering Gaza on rotations are permitted to carry a total of 2,800 USD per person. This cash is vital for supporting operations in Gaza. Due to the liquidity crisis, many organisations need to pay for basics such as food and rent in cash, as well as staff salaries.

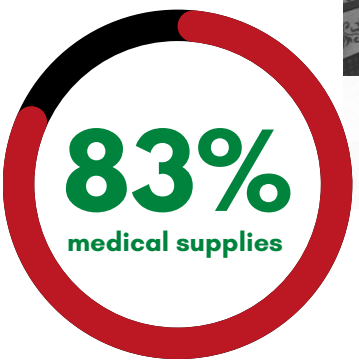
Organisations such as **CARE International** and **Médecins du Monde** emphasise the difficulty of accessing banks and the closure of bank branches. **Oxfam** reports that access to cash for field operations and salaries is highly problematic due to the liquidity crisis and all the risks associated with withdrawing cash when the bank has cash available, such as threats of criminality or being exposed to airstrikes.

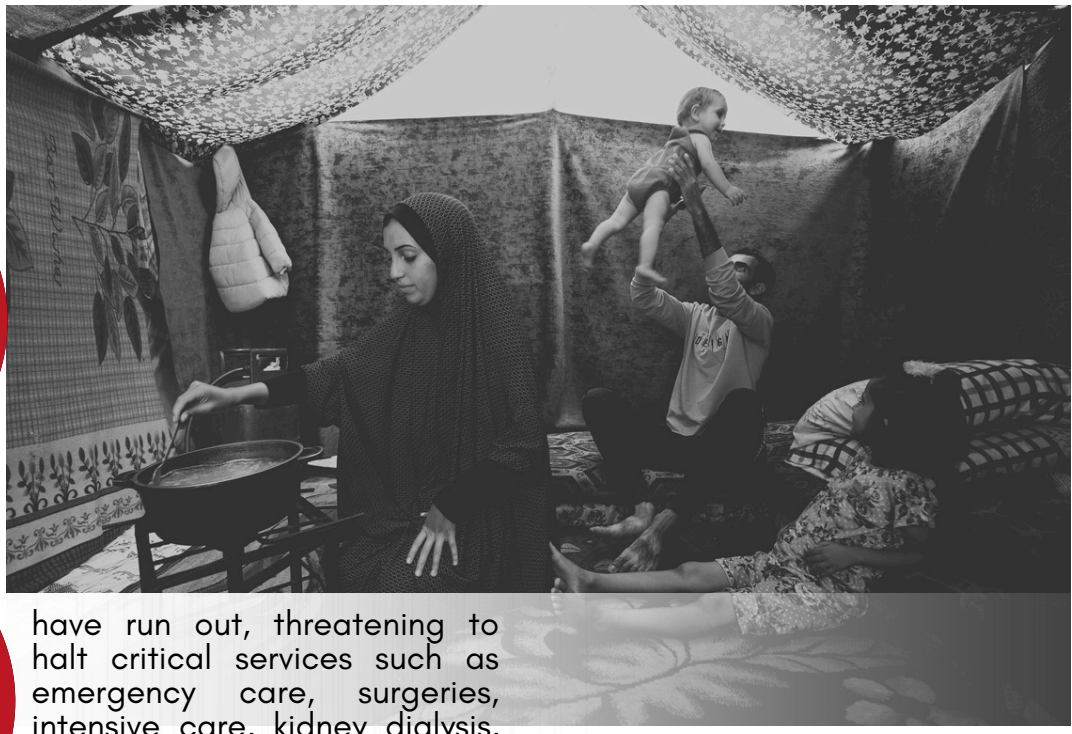
INGOs are extremely concerned that the cash allowance could be further reduced, making it impossible for some INGOs to operate in Gaza, as they would be unable to cover basic necessities.

URGENT SUPPLY NEEDS

According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza:







have run out, threatening to halt critical services such as emergency care, surgeries, intensive care, kidney dialysis, primary health care, and mental health, risking the lives of patients and the injured.

"The worst thing is fetching water. It is only connected once every week and we do not have enough containers to collect all the water we need. We use cooking pots, water bottles, and any other container we can find. We have to walk long distances through destruction to reach the water sources."

– A female staff member at an Islamic Relief partner in Gaza who is currently displaced.

1. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

"My little ones are starting to get lice. There is no shampoo or anything to use to wash the children. A rash has appeared on my children, along with lice and head lice. We need personal care items to keep our children clean. We need the authorities to provide us with aid. We need clean water. We demand an end to the war so that we can return to our homes and the clean conditions we once had."

-Palestinian woman who has been forcibly displaced multiple times

There remains an urgent need to ensure access to hygiene supplies, clean water, and sanitation reported by organisations. This includes soaps, shampoo, sanitizers, menstrual hygiene products, jerry cans for water storage and chlorine to treat drinking water. Water purification systems, including desalination and filtration, are also desperately needed to prevent waterborne diseases and maintain basic hygiene.

2. Health and Medical Supplies

Organisations emphasised the need for pharmaceuticals, including medications such as Amoxicillin, Albendazole, and antibiotics. The importance of medical equipment, lab reagents, vaccines, and psychotropic medications are also highly needed. The call for assistive devices like wheelchairs and crutches further highlights the urgent need to support those with disabilities and injuries to ensure that essential medical care is accessible to all.

3. Food and Nutrition

Organisations stressed the importance of providing fresh and nutritious food.

4. Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)

Tents and blankets, as well as essential non-food items such as kitchen utensils and clothes, are vitally needed.

5. Fuel

Concerns around the high cost of fuel and the low availability continue to hamper aid operations.

6. Transport & Communication

Aid actors continue to highlight the need for essential safety items to ensure the protection of their staff, including personal protective equipment (PPE) and satellite communication devices.

HEALTH SECTOR

Polio Outbreak

The Ministry of Health **confirmed the first case** of polio in a 10- month- old child in Gaza on 16 August 2024, and the **World Health Organisation** has found traces of polio in wastewater.

Organisations do not have the necessary access to effectively respond to Polio. A WHO-led vaccination campaign is planned for 31 August with a number of vaccinations arriving in Gaza on 25 August according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. Several organisations are preparing to respond to the polio outbreak in Gaza, focusing on surveillance, awareness-raising, and vaccination efforts, despite significant access constraints.

Médecins du Monde, **CARE**, and **Project HOPE** are preparing for the upcoming polio vaccination campaign, with each organisation supporting awareness-raising efforts and vaccination distribution through primary health centres and mobile units.

Médecins du Monde is also involved in polio case surveillance. **ActionAid,** through its partner **Al-Awda**, is delivering awareness training, while **Islamic Relief**, **CESVI**, **WeWorld** and **Solidarités International** are focused on providing clean water, hygiene items, and cleaning services in shelters, though their efforts are challenged by supply chain limitations and intense bombardment.

Medical Evacuations

Physicians for Human Rights Israel has been advocating for the immediate medical evacuation of all Gaza patients urgently requiring it and the establishment of a clear and permanent medical evacuation system. While the process of medical evacuations through the Rafah crossing was inadequate even before Israeli forces seized control of it in May, no alternative mechanism has been put in place since. Following extensive efforts and coordination, only 161 patients and their accompanying family members have been allowed to exit through Kerem Shalom/Karam Abu Salem. Of the 93,000 people injured in Gaza, more than 14,000 are in urgent need of evacuation. This number is expected to rise further amid the ongoing destruction of civilian infrastructure and healthcare facilities, the blockade of medical supplies, and severe restrictions on access to health services.

SIGNATORIES