

EMPHNET Emergency Bulletin

The Health Status in Gaza

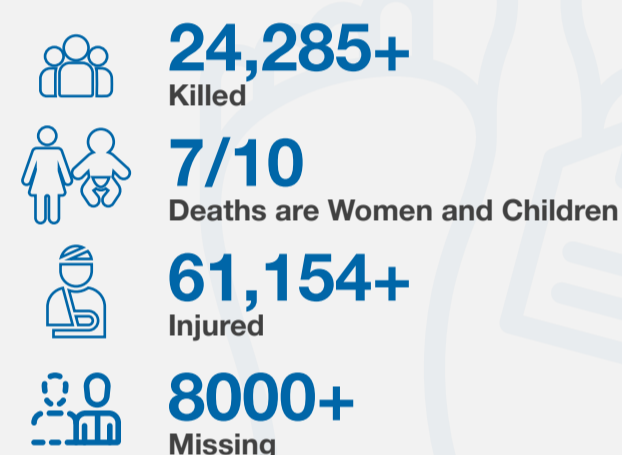
January 18, 2024

Situation Overview

As of today, Gaza is still under intense Israeli bombardment and siege by air, land, and sea. The strip faces a growing humanitarian crisis resulting in a vast number of deaths, injuries and internally displaced persons (IDPs). According to Oxfam International the average death rate in Gaza is estimated to be 250 deaths per day. Major destruction has been inflicted on infrastructure, housing units, and essential services. Food, aid, and medicines are restricted from entering. Moreover, there has been a marked rise in infectious diseases with a notable increase in the number of reported cases of diarrhea, respiratory diseases, hepatitis, meningitis, skin rashes, scabies lice, and chickenpox.

Mortalities and Number of Injuries

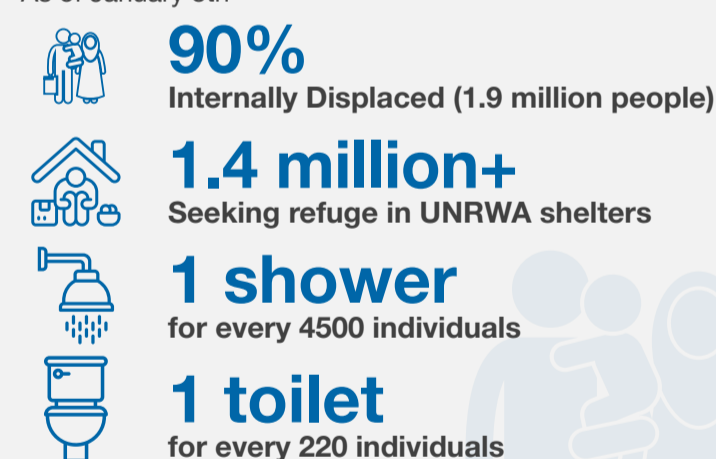
As of January 16th



**It is important to note that the data might not accurately represent the current situation, due to the collapse of the health system, which is impeding the reporting of data. (Source: Palestinian Ministry of Health, Palestinian Red Crescent Society)*

Displacement Crisis in Numbers

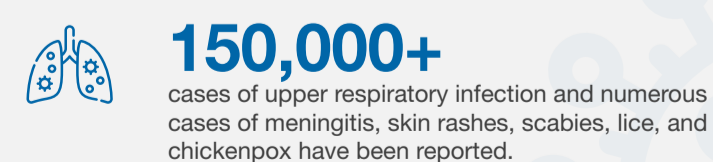
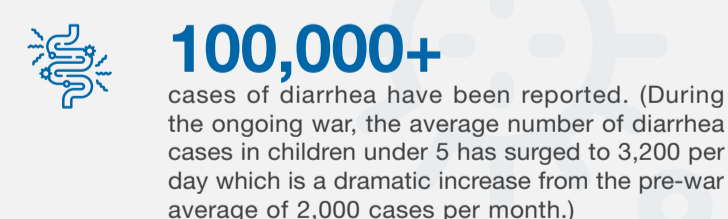
As of January 8th



*(Source: UNRWA)
The Palestinian people are currently witnessing an unprecedented, forced displacement, the magnitude of which has not been experienced since the 1948*

Infectious Disease Updates in Gaza

Since mid-October 2023

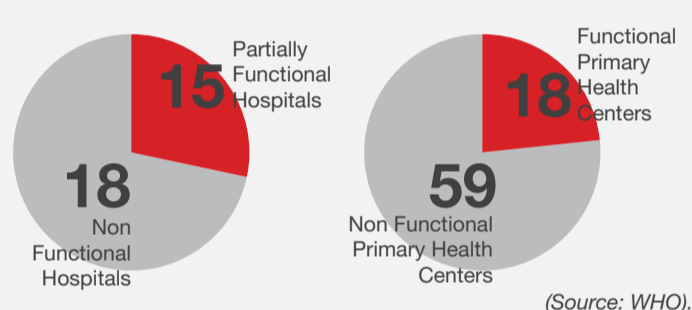


Hepatitis is also suspected, as many people present tell-tale signs of jaundice.

(Source: WHO)

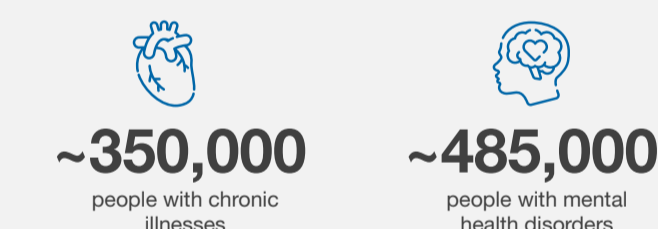
Hospitals Functionality

As of January 16th

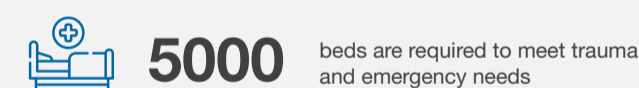


(Source: WHO).

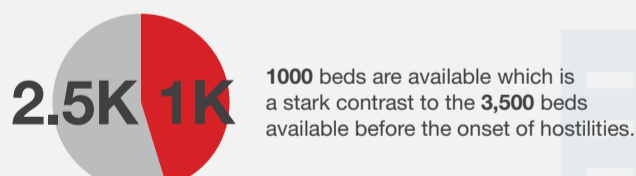
Hospitals in Gaza operate at three times their capacity while facing critical shortages of basic supplies and fuel. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the occupancy rates in inpatient departments have risen to 206%, with intensive care units experiencing a staggering occupancy rate of 250%. Approximately 10,000 cancer patients are facing life-threatening circumstances due to the closure of the Turkish as Sadaqa Hospital, which was the Gaza's sole cancer treatment facility.



The Health Cluster estimated:



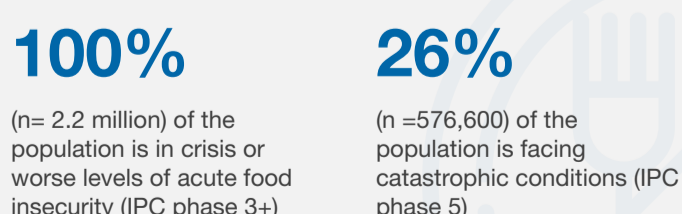
as of January 9



Food insecurity

The situation of food insecurity in conflict zones around the world is severe, with millions enduring harsh conditions due to ongoing conflicts. However, the state of food insecurity of the population in Gaza is alarmingly high and unparalleled, standing out even in the context of global crises.

According to a recent estimation by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, which spanned the period of 8 December 2023 to 7 February 2024



(Source: IPC)

Implications of the current war on Gaza's health system and recommendations

The current war has drastically exacerbated the health crisis. A ceasefire is imperative for restoring the well-being of the people of the Gaza Strip.

As shown above, the numbers are alarming. The continuous bombardment, imposed siege, and restriction of humanitarian aid are risking people's lives as well as their physical and mental health. **We reiterate the call for a ceasefire and the immediate provision of medical services to the population of Gaza.**

Most of the hospitals and health facilities are non-operational, thus failing to meet the critical health needs of the population and consequently placing lives at serious risk. There is an urgent need for immediate lifesaving health services for trauma and critically ill patients. However, with the ongoing bombardment, and limited availability of health care services are leaving the population extremely vulnerable. Prioritizing the rebuilding and rehabilitation of the health system is essential, as well as re-establishing a referral mechanism that spans across primary, secondary, and tertiary care should be prioritized.

In addition to the main health system, mobile clinics and medical teams are crucial for addressing some of the population's needs in Gaza. However, the current situation, with extensive damage to infrastructure and ongoing bombardment, severely limits the ability of the mobile clinics to reach those in need, and provide accessible healthcare. Furthermore, the siege on Gaza hampers the functioning of a referral system for specialized services, leaving many cancer and chronic illness patients without essential care.

The health system is also burdened with several outbreaks of

infectious diseases. Ideally, an Early Warning and Alert and Response Network (EWARN) should be strengthened with an emphasis on response procedures. Such procedures should cover the areas of outbreak investigation, case management, and vaccination. Within this context, several factors severely hinder the implementation of an effective surveillance and response system in the Gaza Strip. These factors include; the overcrowding of residential areas, destruction of health facilities, lack of a referral system, lack of specialized services, lack of laboratory diagnosis, and the severely weakened routine surveillance.

They inevitably make it extremely difficult to detect, control, manage, and treat cases of infectious diseases, as well as contact cases. To avert vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, poliomyelitis, cholera, and chicken pox, mass vaccination is recommended. However, the safe transport, storage, and administration of vaccines will be near impossible due to the lack of biosafety measures and constant electricity shutdown, which affect the efficacy of the cold chain and vaccines. To avert waterborne diseases, water desalination plants should be provided in sufficient amounts, and sanitation infrastructure should be re-built for sewage treatment. Further destruction of sanitation infrastructure should be immediately stopped. Furthermore, nearly all of the population of Gaza is facing a food crisis, whereby food insecurity leads to malnutrition, which in turn makes the population susceptible to infectious diseases, worsening the endless cycle of disease.

The war has caused the health status in the Gaza Strip to be severely deteriorated. It will take years, if not decades, to rebuild Gaza's health system. Meanwhile, there will be long lasting impact on the health of its population. Therefore, we call, once again, for a ceasefire and the protection, and promotion of the health of the population.



Gaza, 2023

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This report is compiled by EMPHNET's Public Health Emergency Management Center (PHEMC)