



UN WOMEN RAPID ASSESSMENT AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY



20 October 2023

Photo: UNICEF/Eyad El Baba

Situation Overview

Following the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel, which resulted in an estimated 1,400 deaths and 4,629 injuries¹, the Israeli Armed Forces launched strikes by land, sea and air against Gaza. To date, this has resulted in over 3,785 Palestinian deaths, and more than 12,500 people injured,² 53 per cent of whom are women and children³. Over one million people – almost half the total population of Gaza – have been displaced, and civilian infrastructure across Gaza has been significantly damaged, with 5,262 buildings destroyed or severely damaged to date. As violence continues, it is spreading beyond Gaza and Israel, with 79 Palestinians killed⁴ in the West Bank since October 7, and fighting taking place in Syria and Lebanon. As the international community seeks to respond to this, the gendered impact of the crisis cannot be overlooked.

UN Women estimates that this eruption of violence and destruction has already resulted in close to **493,000 women and girls being displaced from their homes in Gaza**.

UN Women also estimates that to date **1,487 men have been killed**, the violence has resulted in a surge of widows, **close to 900 new households headed by women**, and **3,103 children who have lost their fathers**. These numbers will increase in the absence of a ceasefire.

UNFPA estimates that there are **540,000 women of reproductive age in Gaza**, among whom 50,000 are currently pregnant, and 5,522 are expected to deliver in the next month.⁵

Even prior to the crises, the situation in Gaza was dire. 97 per cent of men and 98 per cent of women feared for their safety. Depression levels amongst women and men were high due to deep sense of hopelessness and unemployment. 54 per cent of Gaza's men showed signs of anxiety and depression, the highest numbers across the Middle East, mainly due to financial limitations.⁶ In 2022 unemployment rates reached 45 per cent in the Gaza Strip compared to 13 per cent in the West Bank. This equates to 40 per cent of women compared to 20 per cent of men in all of Palestine.⁷

The significant, largely displaced population of women and girls, and new households headed by women, have unique and urgent needs and vulnerabilities that must be recognised and addressed. These needs and vulnerabilities stem from structural gender discrimination, including laws in Palestine which assume women to be under the protection and guardianship of men, which increases women's risks to – amongst other things – gender-based violence and food insecurity. It also makes them more likely than men to be living in sub-standard temporary shelters when displaced.

Lifesaving inputs, such as water, sanitation, food, fuel, and health care, are critical for the survival and well-being of these households. These must be matched with support for women and girls to access safe shelter, protection support and maternal health care.

1. As of October 19th 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-upd-te-13>

2. As of October 19th 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-upd-te-13>

3. UN Women estimate based on trends in deaths reported by the Ministry of Health from the period 7 October until 14 October.

4. As of October 19th 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-upd-te-13>

5. UNFPA Crisis in Palestine. October 13. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA-Situation-Report_Palestine_13Oct2023.pdf

6. International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) Palestine, 2018

7. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Presents the Main Findings of Labour Force Survey in 2022

Key Data: Gaza



The 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) identifies

668,000

(close to 30 per cent of the population)

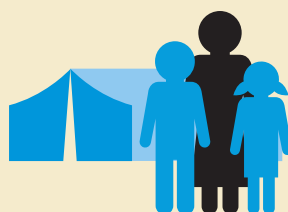
as in need of protection from gender-based violence. This number will have risen.

UN Women estimates



493,000

women and girls being displaced from their homes in Gaza



UN Women estimates that the violence has produced close to

900

new households headed by women

Estimated population:

2.23 million



49.3%

1.1 million females

Household Composition



11%

headed by women

Prior to the current conflict.

Average Household size: 5.6



40%

0-14 years



3%

65 years and above

Photo: UNICEF/Mohammad Ajjour



What this means for women and girls

- Higher risks and levels of gender-based violence and psychological trauma;
- Loss of livelihoods, housing and land disproportionately impacting households headed by women and widows;
- Elevated risk of sexual and labour exploitation, trafficking in persons, and forced marriage;
- Elderly women, particularly those with disabilities, will face the highest level of negligence and violence.

UN Women's Humanitarian Response in the OPT

UN Women has been supporting Palestinian women since 1997 to achieve their social, economic, and political rights.

Together with OCHA and the Humanitarian Country Team, UN Women produced the Gender in Humanitarian Action Accountability Framework for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), a first-of-its-kind tool to advance gender equality within humanitarian operations in the OPT.

Since the onset of the current crisis, UN Women has been playing a crucial role in the coordination of the United Nations' country team actions, responses, and communications on gender equality. UN Women has been providing analysis of the differentiated impact of the war on women, men, boys, and girls, to ensure adequate responses to their needs. UN Women immediately contacted its partners and women-led organizations who are at the frontlines, providing vital services to those affected by the hostilities and displaced by the war, particularly women and girls.

Our two-pronged approach to the current crisis is based on this deep work.

A. GENDER-RESPONSIVE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

UN Women will mainstream gender equality across humanitarian coordination efforts:

Interagency & Inter-cluster coordination: As Co-chair of the Humanitarian Gender Group (HGG) with OCHA, UN Women will provide leadership and gender expertise across the clusters and the Humanitarian Country Team.

Gender lens analysis: UN Women will ensure the humanitarian response is based on a gender-focused needs assessment and gender analysis across all sectors. UN Women will contribute gender expertise to the Joint Intersectoral Assessment Framework (JIAF) including through qualitative rapid and multisectoral gender analysis of the ongoing crisis. Timely 'Gender Alerts' will be produced, summarizing key findings from gender impact assessments and analyses on the crisis.

Data collection: UN Women will ensure that data collection tools mainstream gender across all sectors in the humanitarian needs assessment (protection, education, health, WASH, etc.).

Flash Appeal: UN Women has contributed concrete gender impact analysis to the OPT Flash Appeal and will continue to review the updated Flash Appeal to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across the document and that a stand-alone gender section is included.

Capacity Building: UN Women will strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors in the OPT, including through Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) trainings to cluster members and women-led organizations during the early response phase of the crisis.

Technical Expertise: UN Women will provide gender expertise to the humanitarian clusters and subgroups, by providing a gender lens and Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) within sector specific and multisectoral indicators.

Inclusion of local women's organizations: UN Women will facilitate access and support for local women's organizations working on the frontlines in Gaza and the West Bank to contribute meaningfully to the humanitarian response planning and implementation.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA): As co-chair of the PSEA Network in the OPT, UN Women will ensure the provision of gender-responsive support, including messages, services and documentation.

Accountability: In line with the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) accountability framework, UN Women will ensure gender equality and women's rights are integrated across the humanitarian response and will promote accountability on gender equality across partners at all levels.

B. GENDER RESPONSIVE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (PHASE I):

Gaza: The immediate multi-disciplinary response includes:

- **Integrated GBV Support:** Psychological First Aid and structured psychosocial support and trauma assistance (group and individual sessions); GBV case management and referral support to women survivors of violence; connectivity services including working mobile lines.



Photo: WHO

- **Cash-Based Initiatives:** Cash assistance and cash vouchers to women heads of household, including through partnership with other relevant UN agencies.
 - **Support to women's leadership and community-based organisations** in their community-based efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance.
- West Bank:** The emergency preparedness response includes:
- **Emergency preparedness:** Develop and implement emergency preparedness plans for GBV shelters in the West Bank and equip these for potential emergencies.
 - **Gender analyses:** Ensure that all the emergency preparedness plans are informed by concrete gender analyses.

UN Women Key Asks and Recommendations in the OPT

- Call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.
- Sustained humanitarian access to facilitate the immediate entry of humanitarian needs including food, water, fuel, and health supplies for women and girls into the Gaza Strip.
- Ensure facilitation and the protection of access of women and girls including survivors of GBV to essential services, and support service providers in taking all necessary measures to prevent SEA considering current escalation of violence and internal displacement.
- Ensure that women-led CSOs have adequate funding to engage effectively in humanitarian crisis planning & response, including through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund's [emergency appeal](#) to support local women's organizations working in the OPT.
- Ensure that women participate meaningfully in humanitarian action.
- Ensure that women participate meaningfully in leadership of political and decision making processes.