



Palestinian boy in front of the Gaza port, which was hit during the recent escalation

# State of Palestine 'Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel'

Report No. 3  
24 May 2021

unicef   
for every child

24 May 2021

## Highlights

- On 21 May a ceasefire entered into effect between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, bringing to an end the hostilities that began on 10 May.
- As a result of the heavy conflict, by 23 May, 66 Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip were reported killed. A further four Palestinian children were killed in the West Bank due to severe unrest. Two Israeli children were killed.
- A further 540 Palestinian children were injured in Gaza, 276 Palestinian children in the West Bank and 58 in in East Jerusalem. There were 60 Israeli children injured.
- As of 24 May, following the announcement of the ceasefire, the vast majority of displaced people have returned home, with only 330 people remaining in UNRWA Designated Emergency Shelters (DES).
- A total of 57 education facilities and 29 health facilities in the Gaza Strip suffered damage as a result of the intense hostilities. At least four schools were reportedly damaged in Israel.
- UNICEF distributed 50,000 litres of fuel to restart and extend the operating hours of major WASH utilities in the Gaza Strip. The three major desalination plants are now operating for four hours daily, serving around 370,000 people in the Gaza Strip.
- Between 16-22 May a UNICEF partner providing remote child protection support received over 25,000 calls on its helpline and provided emergency support to 6,182 cases.
- UNICEF requires an additional \$7.71 million for immediate response and preparedness measures for the escalation in Gaza and the West Bank.

## Situation in Number



**72** Children killed (70 Palestinians & 2 Israelis)



**934** Children injured (874 Palestinians & 60 Israelis)



**330** Internally Displaced People in UNRWA DES



**57** Educational facilities damaged



**29** Health facilities damaged

## Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

On 21 May, a ceasefire came into effect between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, ending the hostilities which began on 7 May in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and escalated significantly in the Gaza Strip on 10 May. Some semblance of normality is beginning to return to Gaza, with roads being cleared of rubble and teams working to repair damaged electricity and water lines. The majority of those who sought protection in UNRWA schools and with host families are starting to return home.

As of 21 May, 66 children had been killed and 540 injured in the Gaza Strip. Two Israeli children were killed and 60 injured. Severe unrest in the West Bank (WB), including East Jerusalem (EJ), has resulted in the death of four Palestinian children. The West Bank alone has seen injuries to 276 children by live ammunition, rubber-coated bullets, concussion grenades, and tear gas. Children in East Jerusalem have also been impacted by violence and unrest, with 44 children arrested, and 58 children injured.

According to UNRWA, overnight between 20 and 21 May, over 77,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were seeking protection in 58 UNRWA schools. Following the ceasefire, the vast majority returned home with only 330 remaining as of 22 May. According to the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), the number of people staying with host families, which reached some 36,700 by 21 May, has also significantly reduced.

As of 24 May, the Education Cluster reports that 57 education facilities have been damaged since the start of the escalation, with schools in Gaza remaining closed, affecting almost 600,000 children.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure was also severely affected during the escalation, with wastewater networks, pipelines, wells, a wastewater pumping station and service vehicles sustaining damage. Due to damage to feeder lines and networks, the average power supply remains at seven hours a day throughout Gaza. In total, an estimated 800,000 people lack regular access to piped water. This is of concern both for meeting immediate humanitarian needs and in view of infrastructure investments that require repair to secure water and sanitation provision for the population over the medium and long-term, as a result of the scope of the damage.

### Summary Analysis of Programme Needs and Response Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

According to the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), the average water supply to the Gaza population decreased by 25 to 50 per cent. Furthermore, more than 100,000 cubic metres of untreated or partially treated wastewater is being discharged to the sea daily. The WASH Cluster recorded more than 100 attacks against WASH infrastructure during the escalation, affecting water and sanitation services for more than 1.2 million Palestinians.

With the cessation of hostilities, WASH partners have been able to reach the major water supply and wastewater utilities across Gaza. With the power utility only providing four hours of electricity to WASH services per day, WASH partners will require significant support with fuel. With this support partners will be able to operate emergency generators in order for the desalination plants and other water supply infrastructure to be operational and reliable to meet Gaza's minimum water supply needs and maintain sanitation services.

#### Current Response:

UNICEF and partners are undertaking urgent repairs and maintenance to damaged water supply and wastewater infrastructure. With the distribution of 50,000 litres of fuel by UNICEF, partners have restarted and extended the operating hours of major WASH utilities in the Gaza Strip. The CMWU and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) have been able to restore minimum water and sanitation services for some affected areas through emergency and temporary maintenance of the affected WASH infrastructure. The three major desalination plants, Northern Gaza, Middle Area and Southern Gaza Desalination plants, are back in operation, operating for four hours each day, compared to twelve hours per day pre-escalation, serving approximately 370,000 people in Gaza. The Gaza Coastal Municipalities Water Utility has also commenced four wastewater pumping stations using emergency generators, reducing the accumulation and flooding of wastewater in households in Gaza's northern and central districts.

The WASH Cluster is undertaking a basic assessment on the damage to WASH facilities and has started to review partners operational capacities and stockpiles to map out available resources for a required WASH response. WASH Cluster partners have initiated several WASH response interventions to support WASH service providers in restoring and maintaining their services in the most affected areas through the provision of emergency fuel and the provision of the required maintenance and operation materials for critical WASH facilities.

#### Planned Response:

UNICEF will continue to support essential repair and rehabilitation, operations and maintenance to damaged WASH infrastructure, providing support to service providers and civil society partners through ensuring a sustained pipeline of essential WASH spare parts and fuel. With WFP, hygiene items will be provided for the most affected households through e-vouchers in the Gaza Strip for 4,000 families.

### Child Protection (CP)

With the ceasefire coming into effect on 21 May 2021, Gaza child protection partners are rapidly assessing the current impact on their operational capacities, including damage to staff members' houses and the family centres. One Family Centre is confirmed damaged, but the extent of damage is not yet clear.

The majority of community-based protection interventions have been suspended due to hostilities, including office and in-person based services, rehabilitation and other community service delivery activities. None of the 12 UNICEF supported Family Centres, nor the 30 outreach sites are physically operational, and services are being provided using remote outreach platforms. Service providers and partners report significant mental health distress and trauma.

#### Current Response:

- Between 16-22 May, a West Bank partner helpline received 25,682 calls and provided emergency support to 6,182 (24 per cent). A total of 242 counselling sessions were provided to 145 men, 94 women and three not confirmed (77 per cent of the calls from Gaza). In Gaza, out of the 174 counselling sessions, 102 were provided to children (58 per cent). Specific psychosocial support was provided to 46 boys and 25 girls in Gaza, many of whom were extremely traumatized by the intense bombardments.
- Recreational kits (348) are in place at the Gaza warehouse for distribution, and 300 psychosocial kits in the UNRWA Rafah warehouse. An additional 300 Psychosocial Support (PSS) kits are under procurement to support children and families in Gaza. These kits will be distributed through existing partnership in Gaza based on identification of the most vulnerable
- During the hostilities a local partner managed to reach children and caregivers through social media platforms and over the phone. A total of 598 children (263 boys and 335 girls) and 149 caregivers were reached through existing WhatsApp groups; 950 caregivers were reached through Facebook; 71 children (26 boys and 45 girls)

were reached over Skype for counselling support; and 629 children were reached through other social media platforms.

Child Protection interventions provided to date have included:

- Awareness-raising sessions provided for caregivers on best practices with their children during emergencies and conflicts.
- Expressive Art facilitators implemented art activities with children to reduce their fears through drawing, storytelling and entertainment activities.
- A local partner shared their digital activities via social media platforms to provide easy access for the children and caregivers.
- Case managers and counsellors contacted children and their caregivers by phone to check on them and provide psychological support.
- Guidelines on child protection during emergencies, and on safe displacement were shared.
- Explosive Remnant of War (ERW) messages were shared with children and caregivers.
- Case management.

#### **Planned Response:**

- Towards strengthening remote counselling support, UNICEF is scaling up partnerships with nine mental health and psychosocial support actors across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- UNICEF has existing partnerships in place with five NGOs in East Jerusalem and two in the Gaza Strip, which provide Psychological First Aid, including specialist psychosocial support and counselling to children affected by the crisis. There are 143 available trained counsellors (51 trained counsellors in East Jerusalem and 92 in the Gaza Strip) although 85 in Gaza are not fully operational due to the intense shelling.
- Conduct a needs assessment and analysis, including mapping CP risks through support to the joint Emergency Assessment Teams led by OCHA and remote protection monitoring through Governorate Protection Focal Points.
- Implement remote CP and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) emergency response through partners, and if needed, as a service provider of last resort. This will include remote counselling; telephone hotlines; specialized CP services, including CP case management and referral to appropriate actors; PSS services and Psychosocial First Aid (PFA); parenting support; identification of separated children and family tracing, engagement with community-based CP networks.
- Where Designated Emergency shelters (DES) are being used by displaced families, UNICEF will support child-friendly spaces based on identified needs from UNRWA.

#### **Health and Nutrition**

The current escalation risks worsening an already poor health situation in the Gaza Strip, where the fragile health sector is further weakened by a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the infrastructural damage hindering access to health facilities, partners maintain their response in treating injuries in Gaza. The evacuation of injured people remains a challenge due to damaged infrastructure and rubble.

The internal displacement of people might further increase the risk of spreading COVID-19 and impacting the COVID-19 vaccination efforts. On 20 May, the Ministry of Health (MoH) coordinated with UNRWA to start COVID-19 testing among displaced people hosted in UNRWA schools. However, the MoH central laboratory for PCR COVID-19 testing was shut down for three days after being damaged during hostilities

Of immediate concern is the Gaza power supply, which has been reduced, disrupting healthcare and other essential services, including water, hygiene, and sanitation. One hospital is not functioning due to a lack of electricity. The Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) has reported additional damage to feeder lines and networks, with an average power supply of 7 hours a day throughout Gaza.

As civil unrest continues across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the health cluster partners, and community volunteers continue to treat a substantial number of injuries. There is growing concern about the number of live ammunition injuries, as it further threatens the security of medical staff attempting to reach those in need of medical services.

An estimated 2,500 women will give birth in the next week across Palestine (1,000 in the Gaza Strip and 1,500 in the West Bank). The ongoing crisis impacts women's ability to give birth safely due to damage in health facilities, physical inaccessibility, and checkpoints across the West Bank. It is essential to ensure the continuation of life-saving services such as safe delivery and essential new-born care to prevent maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Assessments are ongoing to evaluate the impact of the escalation and emergency needs.

**Current Response:**

UNICEF continues to support the health system to address COVID-19 prevention and treatment measures and the provision of vaccines through the COVAX facility. UNICEF also delivered Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) supplies, including 6,000 litres of Ethyl Alcohol (70 per cent), and Glutaraldehyde (two per cent solution) for disinfectant and sterilization of medical equipment and surfaces in Gaza health facilities for around two and a half months of use. On 25 May, a total of 102,960 doses of Pfizer vaccines were expected to be delivered to the State of Palestine through COVAX in partnership with WHO. Of these vaccines 46,800 doses were planned to be delivered to the Gaza Strip.

UNICEF, with UNFPA, WHO and partners in the Gaza Strip, are working on establishing a mechanism for the continued provision of essential maternal and child health care services, including remote counselling on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) for the most vulnerable pregnant, lactating women and babies.

**Planned Response:**

In collaboration with health cluster partners, UNICEF plans to support the procurement of essential drugs and medical consumables for 24,000 conflict-affected people in the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem to cover needs for three months. The drugs and consumables are based upon on the WHO-led assessment of the East Jerusalem hospitals and a request by the Ministry of Health in Gaza. UNICEF, jointly with partners, will support around 200 malnourished young children in Gaza through the procurement of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RTUF) and high energy biscuits.

**Education and Adolescents**

The Education Cluster reports that 57 education facilities have been damaged since the start of the escalation, with schools in Gaza remaining closed, affecting almost 600,000 children. Verification of these reports is underway. A further 21,300 education staff are also affected. The impact of the 11 days of escalation in the Gaza Strip has overwhelmed families and the already weak education system, electricity, and internet services, and it will be a while before the children in Gaza resume face-to-face learning. The Ministry of Education has ended the academic year for Grades 1 to 11 in Gaza with immediate effect. The academic year was supposed to end on 17 June 2021. Furthermore, the national Tawjih Examination was also postponed to 24 June 2021.

Children in the West Bank lost two days of learning following a decision by the Ministry of Education to close all schools as a security risk mitigation measure due to a general strike across the State of Palestine on 18 May.

**Current Response:**

UNICEF has provided Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Education (MoE) to support development of a costed Response Plan that outlines needs, response, gaps and coordination with partners. UNICEF is procuring essential education in emergencies stationery kits adequate for 60,000 conflict-affected children. These supplies will help the most vulnerable children continue learning and accessing distance education opportunities for the immediate response. In partnership with a local partner, UNICEF is mobilizing over 1,000 adolescent volunteers to be engaged in rebuilding their communities after the conflict, including clean-up efforts and providing support to the internally displaced persons. Furthermore, preparations are underway to train all public-school teachers in Gaza during the summer break on how to provide Psychological First Aid (PFA). This training aims to support children injured in conflict-related incidents in collaboration with child protection actors. Verification of information on the damaged schools and needs of the affected children, especially the Internally Displaced Persons, has been the main challenge in providing the most needed response.

**Planned Response:**

UNICEF's response will focus on the following:

- UNICEF supports remedial education to enhance children's literacy and numerical skills and to provide Psychosocial Support for 5,000 conflict-affected children whose schooling was interrupted with school closure, this will be continued during the summer break.
- Provision of essential education in emergencies teaching and learning materials to the affected children.
- During the summer break, in July and August, support learning and recreational programs to keep children engaged and mitigate learning loss.
- Rehabilitation and repairs of the damaged schools to make them usable when schools re-open for the new academic year in September 2021.
- Support safe administration of the national Grade 12 examinations, once a decision has been made by the Ministry of Education.
- As the Education Cluster co-lead, UNICEF will lead the assessment of the damaged schools and education facilities.

**Communications for Development (C4D), Accountability to Affected Population**

The current escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with the increasing number of casualties especially among children, requires strong communication with communities, especially children and young people. As the situation is expected to deteriorate, there is a heightened need for on the ground and digital engagement with the affected populations especially inside shelters. The need to ensure an effective feedback mechanism, (Accountability to the Affected Population and Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation), established with the affected population will be key in ensuring that community concerns and questions are timely addressed.

**Current Response:** UNICEF is working with other agencies, including UNMAS to support affected communities to access information, education and communication (IEC) materials including on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) to reduce the risk of vulnerable populations in the Gaza Strip from injury to unexploded ordinance. UNICEF also continues to support evidence-based community awareness-raising through Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) work around the conflict and COVID-19 prevention. This remains important given that the State of Palestine continues to face the second wave of COVID-19.

With UNICEF support, the Gaza Municipality initiated a campaign that engaged thousands of youth, families, and Civil Society Organisations. The campaign with the slogan “We Will Rebuild It” aims to clean up the destruction wreaked by the heavy bombardment on the Gaza Strip that lasted more than 10 days.



Young volunteers clearing rubble from streets in Gaza to bring back life after the destruction

**Planned Response:** UNICEF, with other agencies and implementing partners, will support youth mobilization and community engagement activities inside and outside Designated Emergency Shelters, including for the clean-up work as well as in reimagining community support initiatives as a result of the recent crisis.

### Social Protection

The current crisis adds to existing vulnerabilities and it is likely to increase poverty, vulnerability and loss of livelihoods exacerbating an already dire situation.

### Current Response:

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Social Development and other Social Protection actors to support them on the roll out of the national Social Protection response for displaced people in Gaza. The Ministry of Social Development has issued an Emergency Response Plan to Support the Basic Needs of families who have lost their homes including through the provision of cash, non-food items and MHPSS support. UNICEF will support the national response roll out.

### Planned Response:

UNICEF will continue to work with the MoSD and WFP to provide humanitarian cash and voucher support to the most vulnerable affected households to provide humanitarian social protection support including given high levels of underlying poverty in the Gaza Strip.

### Supplies Overview

#### UNICEF has:

- 50 Early Childhood Development (ECD) kits to support around 2,500 children in 25 ECD spaces.
- 348 Recreation kits to support around 31,000 displaced children in child-friendly spaces for 2 months.
- 118 stationery kits and school bags to support 118 children; 416 recreational kits to support 20,800 children, and 10 adolescent kits to support 500 adolescents.
- 300 Psycho-Social kits to support around 1,500 children in 300 families in households.
- 16 collapsible water tank with a capacity of 10,000 litres to benefit around 5,300 affected or displaced people per day (water consumption 30 l/c/d), and 16 collapsible water tank with a capacity of 5,000 litres to benefit around 2,560 people (water consumption 30 l/c/d).
- 19,497 collapsible jerry cans with a capacity of 20 litres to benefit around 12,998 affected/displaced people per day.
- 828 non-food item (NFI) kits (including jerry cans, garbage plastic bags, and laundry bucket) to benefit around 4,223 affected people and has 283 NFI kits (including winter blankets, mattresses, and pillows) to benefit 1,443 affected people.

### Human Interest Stories and External Media

Since the last SitRep UNICEF has issued the following statements

[Briefing by UNICEF Special representative Lucia Elmi on the situation of children in the State of Palestine](#) (21 May 2021)

[News Note: UNICEF delivers lifesaving assistance to the Gaza Strip](#) (21 May 2021)

[Statement by UNICEF Executive Director calling for Immediate humanitarian access needed to stave off disaster for Gaza's children](#) (19 May 2021)

## Photo Stories and videos:

- [A child's dream](#) – Video
- [Impact of violence on children's life](#) – Photo Story
- [Life of displaced children](#) – Photo Story
- UNICEF has also issued [staff testimonies](#) such as this [example](#)

## Coordination

UNICEF work is part of inter-agency programming for the immediate humanitarian response and towards the post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. UNICEF is working with humanitarian partners to develop an inter-agency Flash Appeal, and to support the initial needs assessments both for humanitarian needs and for a damage needs assessment. The inter-agency response is coordinated through the cluster system. UNICEF is a key member of the Humanitarian Country Team, leads the WASH Cluster and co-leads the Education Cluster with Save the Children. UNICEF also leads the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP-AOR), and leads the Nutrition Working Group under the Health Cluster.

## Funding Status\*

The current UNICEF State of Palestine HAC appeal for 2021 is severely underfunded and is being further increased to integrate the new requirements to respond to the escalation of conflict. UNICEF urgently needs \$7.71 million to respond to the life-saving and growing needs—of this, \$3.49 million is required to cover critical response until mid-July 2021 and \$4.22 million is for preparedness measures should the conflict continue to escalate (full details of this immediate funding requirement are outlined below).

Based on preliminary government and cluster assessments in Gaza and hospitals in East Jerusalem, the additional \$7.71 million is to address the immediate needs of the affected populations and adopt essential preparedness measures for two months to ensure continuity of humanitarian assistance. The situation will continue to be monitored and thus the additional requirements are subject to revision.

UNICEF has reprogrammed \$200,000 from UNICEF regular resources, and a further \$463,732 is available from other grants following agreements with donors, to be used for the immediate response and recovery efforts. The Country Office (CO) has also received an Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) loan of \$1.5 million from UNICEF HQ. Furthermore, the CO is working with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to mobilise additional resources through the United Nations Global Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the Humanitarian Pooled Fund, and other partners.

## Funding Requirements

UNICEF extends its sincere appreciation for the support of the Government of Finland and the French National Committee for UNICEF for their vital support to the children of Gaza. UNICEF is also highly grateful to the Government of Ireland for their support to the UNICEF flash appeal, and the Government of Norway for their support to urgent UNICEF Education and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) activities.

Sector	Urgent Requirements	Preparedness Requirements	Total
Health	\$ 1,300,000	\$ 885,000	\$ 2,185,000
Nutrition	\$ -	\$ 59,000	\$ 59,000
Child Protection	\$ 390,000	\$ 142,500	\$ 532,500
Education	\$ 240,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 740,000
WASH	\$ 1,080,000	\$ 1,800,000	\$ 2,880,000
Social Protection	\$ -	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
Communication for Development/ RCCE	\$ 62,300	\$ 75,000	\$ 137,300
Cluster Coordination	\$ 114,145	\$ 137,326	\$ 251,471
Operational Support	\$ 308,500	\$ 371,150	\$ 679,650
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,494,945</b>	<b>\$ 4,219,976</b>	<b>\$ 7,714,921</b>

UNICEF State of Palestine: <http://www.unicef.org/oPt>

UNICEF State of Palestine on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/unicefstateofpalestine>

UNICEF State of Palestine on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UNICEFpalestine>

UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2021: [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/state\\_of\\_palestine.html](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/state_of_palestine.html)

Who to contact for further information: **Lucia Elmi**  
Special Representative  
UNICEF State of Palestine  
Tel: +972 (0)2 584 0400  
Email: [lelmi@unicef.org](mailto:lelmi@unicef.org)

**Etona Ekole**  
Deputy Special Representative  
UNICEF State of Palestine  
Tel: +972 (0)2 584 0400  
Email: [EEKOLE@unicef.org](mailto:EEKOLE@unicef.org)

**Iain Murray**  
Chief of Planning, Monitoring  
and Evaluation  
UNICEF State of Palestine  
Tel: +972 (0)2 584 0419  
Email: [imurray@unicef.org](mailto:imurray@unicef.org)