

Israel-Gaza Conflict

project
HOPE



*Project HOPE's health workers operate a primary health clinic at the Jafar Al Tayar Medical Point in Rafah, Gaza.
Photo by Motaz Al Aaraj for Project HOPE, 2024.*

Situation Report #8

March 7, 2024

Special Note

Project HOPE is devastated to announce that our esteemed colleague, Mohammed Hamed Mansour Madi, was killed in a senseless airstrike on his home in Khirbat al 'Adas in Gaza on March 3, 2024.

Mohammed was a nurse in our primary health clinic in Rafah, where he worked long hours in unimaginable conditions to treat patients who had been displaced by the ongoing conflict. His family home was hit by an airstrike, which killed Mohammed and seven of his relatives, including a child and a pregnant woman.

We are outraged and heartbroken by the loss of Mohammed, his relatives, hundreds of other humanitarian and health workers, and thousands of other civilians who have died during this conflict.

Project HOPE continues to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and expanded humanitarian access to deliver lifesaving aid.

Despite the inescapable conflict, our team of Palestinian health workers remains dedicated to providing essential, lifesaving medical care to civilians and displaced families at our clinics in Rafah and Deir al Balah.

As this conflict reaches the five-month mark and our team continues to respond to health and humanitarian needs, our thoughts are with Mohammed's remaining family, friends, and all those who have been affected by this devastating loss.

Situation Overview

On October 7, 2023, after years of tension and episodic conflict in the region, Hamas militants launched major air and ground attacks on Israel, killing more than 1,200 people, including 33 children, and taking 240 people hostage. Since then, 110 hostages have been released and 130 remain captive. In response, Israel launched a military offensive in Gaza, which has killed more than 30,000 Palestinians, including 12,000 children; injured at least 72,000 people; and displaced nearly 2 million people — more than 85% of the population — over the past five months.

Nearly all Gazans are living in dismal conditions, either in informal tent settlements or abandoned buildings. In this environment, without access to proper hygiene, sanitation, clean water, electricity, and basic health care, infectious diseases will continue to spread.

The United Nations has declared that famine is imminent in Gaza, with the entire population at “Crisis” levels of hunger or above. Fifty percent of the population is facing an “Emergency” level of hunger, and over 25% are facing a “Catastrophe” level.

This is the largest share of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity that the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, an agency tasked with tracking food security globally, has ever classified for any given area or country.

Without a substantial increase in the amount of aid entering Gaza, this problem will only continue to grow and have further devastating effects. Yet, the humanitarian community continues to face enormous challenges delivering aid to Gaza, including access difficulties, insecure movement within the territory, and the breakdown in civil order caused by extreme desperation.

Key Updates

- After five months of intense conflict, **the entire population of Gaza is at “Crisis” levels of hunger or worse**, with half the population facing an “Emergency” level of hunger.
- Project HOPE is providing critical, lifesaving care at our **primary health clinics** in Deir al Balah and Rafah, Gaza.
- Project HOPE is partnering with the Jordanian Health Aid Society to deploy **specialized teams of surgeons and emergency and trauma care nurses** to support Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir al Balah.
- Project HOPE is providing **mental health care programs** to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank through three local partners — the Sharek Youth Forum, Hakini Foundation, and the Treatment & Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture — to support those dealing with trauma, uninterrupted acute stress, grief, and the chaos of war.



The Jafar Al Tayar camp in Rafah, which houses displaced Gazans. Photo by Motaz Al Aaraj for Project HOPE, 2024.

The security concerns facing humanitarian aid organizations include active fighting, potential air attacks, and looting caused by the immense scale and desperation of need. On multiple occasions in the last month the World Food Program paused food deliveries to northern Gaza, citing “complete chaos and violence due to the collapse of civil order,” and last week Israeli forces fired shots on a crowd of people who had surrounded a truck carrying humanitarian aid.



Shoroq, a doctor working with Project HOPE, provides medical care and screens children for malnutrition in Rafah. Photo by Motaz Al Aaraj for Project HOPE, 2024.

Before October 7, 2023, approximately 500 trucks crossed the border daily to meet basic humanitarian needs. Now, an average of 129 trucks are cleared daily, with only 57 trucks crossing into Rafah each day between February 9 and February 20, far less than what is needed.

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Johns Hopkins Center for Humanitarian Health project that if an immediate ceasefire was to take effect tomorrow, at least 6,000 and as many as 11,000 people would still die from injuries, infectious diseases, noncommunicable disease complications, and a lack of access to maternal and neonatal health care.

Project HOPE’s mental health experts project that the need for Psychological First Aid, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and protection services will increase as Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank continue to endure acute stress, process the trauma of five months of conflict, and grieve the loss of friends, family, and community members.

Project HOPE’s Response in the Palestinian Territories

Five months into the Israel-Gaza conflict, Project HOPE’s teams in Egypt, Gaza, and Israel continue to implement an array of response activities, in coordination local authorities, UN agencies, and civil society, to support those affected by the worsening humanitarian crisis.

Project HOPE is partnering with the Jordanian Health Aid Society – International (JHASi), to deploy teams of trauma and emergency care specialists to provide care at Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir al Balah. Since this partnership began in January, four teams have rotated into Gaza. Altogether, these specialized teams have treated hundreds of patients and conducted dozens of surgeries on children and adults experiencing the violent impact of war.



Project HOPE team members work with our local partner, Anera, to package dignity items, including pads, diapers, and other hygiene items, for distribution in southern Gaza. Photo by Motaz Al Aaraj for Project HOPE, 2024.

Also in Deir al Balah, Project HOPE staff continue to provide direct primary health care services at our clinic. Our health workers see up to 200 people each day. Since opening the clinic in early December, the Project HOPE clinic has seen nearly 8,000 patients, of which over 60% were displaced by the conflict. Project HOPE is scaling our operations to a second location dedicated to providing sexual and reproductive health care, which is expected to open within the week.

Nearly 10% of children under 5 that our team has screened at the Deir al Balah Clinic are acutely malnourished, with 43% of those children facing severe acute malnutrition. The number of pregnant women showing signs of acute malnutrition has also increased at the clinic in the past weeks, with 25% now considered acutely malnourished.

People are resorting to eating nothing but white bread, as fruit, vegetables, and other nutrient-dense foods are nearly impossible to find and too expensive to afford when they are available. Project HOPE continues to screen all pregnant women and children under 5 for malnutrition at every consultation.

In Rafah, Project HOPE recently set up a medical tent clinic in an underserved camp housing internally displaced people (IDPs). Project HOPE's health workers are providing free care to those in and around the camp, in partnership with MedGlobal. Also in Rafah, Project HOPE has been providing mobile medical services to a school serving as an IDP camp. Patients living at this school reported not having access to health care for several months. In total, our teams in Rafah have conducted over 3,000 medical consultations in the last few weeks.



Hakini Foundation staff conduct a mental health workshop for displaced children in Rafah. Photo by Hakini Foundation staff for Project HOPE, 2024.

Project HOPE also facilitated the delivery of five Interagency Emergency Health Kits (IEHKs) and seven Trauma Emergency Surgical Kits (TESKs) into Gaza last week. These kits represent nine tons of vital pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, which will support Project HOPE's clinics in Deir al Balah and Rafah, as well as Al Aqsa Hospital. In the first few months of the response, Project HOPE was able to deliver 750 hygiene kits and dignity items for thousands of women and girls, along with 12,000 blankets and 6,000 mattresses for displaced individuals.

In both Gaza and the West Bank, Project HOPE has partnered with Sharek Youth Forum, Hakini Foundation, and Treatment & Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture (TRC) — three local Palestinian organizations — to provide MHPSS services and activities to men, women, and children. To date, Sharek Youth Forum has provided more than 168 psychosocial group sessions in Rafah and Deir al Balah, reaching more than 4,400 Palestinians, and Hakini Foundation has supported families and IDPs in Gaza with MHPSS support across Gaza (North, Middle area, Deir al Balah, and Rafah), reaching over 1,700 people.

Hakini Foundation has also supported 22 teachers, 301 parents, and 119 students in the West Bank through 32 psychosocial support, trauma support, and psychoeducation sessions. TRC, in partnership with Project HOPE, is building the local capacity of mental health service providers and recently conducted training for 20 mental health service providers on Psychological First Aid and crisis intervention.

Project HOPE's Response in Israel

In Israel, Project HOPE has focused on providing MHPSS services to the affected population through several local partnerships.

One local partner, the Yuri Shtern Holistic Center, has provided stress management through touch therapy for over 500 people affected by the conflict, and NATAL, a national Israeli mental health organization, is using its network of mental health professionals to provide mobile psychological sessions to hundreds of displaced individuals across the country. We have also partnered with Shamir Medical Center to provide civilians experiencing mental distress with counseling to identify those with post-traumatic stress disorder and treat patients with an innovative hyperbaric oxygen treatment protocol.



A family living in a camp housing those displaced by the conflict receives a mattress distributed by Project HOPE and our local partner, Anera. Photo by Motaz Al Aaraj for Project HOPE, 2024.

Project HOPE is also working to support health infrastructure at regional hospitals by providing medical equipment and supplies and repairing damaged medical structures. The team has delivered a mobile ultrasound machine to Shamir Hospital in Be'er Ya'akov and procured five clinical defibrillator monitors for Barzilai Medical Center. At Barzilai, Project HOPE is also looking to support the rehabilitation of the Children's Developmental Rehabilitation Center, which was critically damaged by rocket fire in October. Once reopened, the center will provide support to children with developmental challenges.

Our team has also successfully procured specialty wheelchairs, shower seats, seat cushions, and an electric stimulator for patients in the spinal cord injuries unit at Sheba Medical Center. In Jerusalem, Project HOPE is working with Hadassah Hospital to support the equipment needs of the Gandel Rehabilitation Center, which will serve people injured in the conflict once it opens in the coming weeks. Lastly, our team is supporting local emergency response capacity by procuring a generator for the Emergency Dispatch Community Center in Netivot.

As the conflict persists, Project HOPE's team will continue to adapt our programs to respond to emerging needs and challenges with the goal to support as many individuals as possible.

Project HOPE continues to act in coordination with partners in Israel, Gaza, Egypt, the West Bank, Jordan, and Lebanon to assess how and when we can best support the health and humanitarian needs of impacted communities, while remaining committed to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.



Project HOPE's local partner, The Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, trains mental health care providers in Hebron, West Bank on Psychological First Aid. Photo by TRC staff for Project HOPE, 2024.