



FACT SHEET: Children of the Gaza Crisis

15 January 2009

Save the Children is calling for a peaceful solution to the current crisis that endangers the lives of nearly every child in Gaza, and the lives of Israeli children in areas subject to attacks. Save the Children is calling for a cessation of hostilities by all parties including air and ground assaults from Israel and rocket attacks from Gaza. The agency is also seeking free access for humanitarian assistance to allow aid agencies to provide much-needed relief to vulnerable children and so that children and their families can access essential services. Save the Children has so far reached some 21,000 people, including 11,600 children, and we continue to strive to meet the needs of Gaza's vulnerable children and families.

Save the Children seeks to highlight the situation for children living in what the United Nations is calling “a humanitarian crisis coupled with a massive lack of protection for civilians.”

Key Facts

Child casualties:

- At least 235 children have been killed and 786 wounded as a result of the Gaza conflict since it began 19 days ago. This number is expected to rise as more deaths are verified. ([Al Mezan](#)).
- A 7-year-old Israeli boy was seriously wounded in a rocket attack in the city of Beersheba on Thursday. ([Haaretz](#))

Displaced children:

- An estimated 200,000 people have been displaced, among them 112,000 children. ([Al Mezan](#))
- As of 14 January, UNRWA was accommodating 39,669 people, among them approximately 22,215 children, in 41 emergency shelters, most of them in the Gaza Governorate (17 shelters with 13,884 people including around 7,775 children) and in North Gaza (13 shelters with 16,282 people, including around 9,174 children).
- Reports say an estimated 40 percent of the population of Ashkelon in southern Israel, or 43,970 people including 13,656 children, have left the city. ([IRIN](#))

Child health and well-being:

- To date seven hospitals have been hit or damaged, including two pediatric hospitals. Nine other health facilities have been damaged, including one maternal and child health clinic. ([WHO](#))

Education:

- To date 60 schools have been damaged or destroyed from airstrikes and related bombardment in Gaza. ([Al Mezan](#))

Displacement:

Of increasing concern is the number of children and their families fleeing the fighting and bombardment or seeking refuge because their homes have been destroyed or damaged. UNRWA has identified 91 schools to serve as displacement shelters, with capacity to house 40,000 people. OCHA reports that the shelters are severely overcrowded. Shelters also have come under attack: Three have been shelled, killing and injuring people sheltering there.

- An estimated 200,000 people have been displaced, among them 112,000 children (Al Mezan)
- The shelling of the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza on 14 January destroyed hundreds of tons of food and medicines in a warehouse at the site. (UN)

- On 6 January UNRWA Jabalia Prep C Girls School, which is serving as a shelter for displaced people, was hit by three shells, resulting in 42 fatalities, including 13 children. ([OCHA](#)) Asma Elementary School — an UNRWA shelter serving around 400 displaced people from Beit Hanoun, including approximately 224 children — was struck by a missile 6 January, killing three people. ([UNRWA](#))
- At least 472 houses have been destroyed and another 3,000–4,000 severely damaged, forcing the residents, among them thousands of children, to seek shelter elsewhere. ([Al Mezan](#))

Access to water, sanitation and electricity

Children, especially infants, are particularly affected by the lack of clean water and electricity.

- As of 13 January, some 850,200 people including 476,112 children, were without electricity. ([OCHA](#))
- Approximately 500,000 people, among them 280,000 children, are still without running water. ([OCHA](#))
- 80 percent of drinking water in Gaza is not safe for human consumption, according to WHO guidelines. ([UNICEF](#))
- Sewage continues to overflow in many parts of northern Gaza, in particular Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, affecting around 91,727 people including 51,367 children. The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility has also received unconfirmed reports that 200,000 cubic meters of wastewater have leaked from the Gaza City Wastewater Treatment Plant after the embankment of a treatment pond was damaged on 10 January. ([OCHA](#))
- The Gaza Municipality estimates that since 3 January some 3,000–4,000 tons of rubbish have been left uncollected on the streets of Gaza. ([OCHA](#))

Health Care

Lack of access to health care remains critical for infants, children and pregnant women, as movement inside Gaza is extremely dangerous. In addition, 7 hospitals, 9 clinics, and 16 ambulances have been hit and damaged in the course of the conflict, with 13 medical personnel killed and 22 injured in the line of duty. ([WHO](#))

- An estimated 3,400 babies have been born since 27 December. Around 600 of them, under normal circumstances, would have to be delivered by Caesarean section. To date, no deliveries have been made by C-section as all operating rooms are being used for surgeries related to the conflict. ([UNFPA](#))
- On 15 January, the Al Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital, Al Fata Hospitals and the Al Quds Palestinian Red Crescent Society Hospital – received direct hits and sustained damage. WHO has expressed deep concern about the serious implications to patients, many of whom are children, the medical staff, health infrastructure and the provision of critical health services. ([WHO](#))
- Dorah Pediatrics Hospital, which has been closed for seven days except for emergency services (after sustaining damage), was hit again on 13 January. ([WHO](#)) That same day, missiles destroyed a maternal and child health clinic of in Al-Shuja'ia area. ([WHO](#))
- Women who seek obstetric care are not assured of receiving it. There are reports that deliveries are taking place inside homes, often without trained assistance. In Khan Younis, only five specialized obstetricians are working at the Naser hospital. Reaching the facility is extremely difficult for people from remote or rural areas. (MoH)
- Of 56 Primary Health Care centers managed by the Ministry of Health, only 37 are functioning, and these only with major interruptions due to security and limitations on movement. Of UNRWA's 18 clinics, 15 are operating. ([WHO](#))
- The childhood vaccination program had virtually ceased between 27 December and 13 January, but has resumed in parts of Gaza. Reduced vaccination coverage could result in outbreaks (of, for example, measles, polio and hepatitis), a risk increased by Gaza's high population density and collapse of basic services, including water and sanitation. ([WHO](#))

- On 7 January, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) found four weak and emaciated children next to their dead mothers in the Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City, an area to which the ICRC did not gain permission to enter to evacuate the wounded. ([ICRC](#))

Food and Nutrition

Even before the latest outbreak of violence, 50,000 Gazan children were malnourished; more than two-thirds of all children suffered from vitamin A deficiency and almost half of children under age 2 were anemic. Lack of access to food, clean water and medical supplies exacerbates threats to children's health and well-being. Currently, not enough food is entering via Kerem Shalom crossing. Distribution of food that does enter is limited due to security concerns.

- Three shells hit an UNRWA warehouse at its headquarters in Gaza City — which was sheltering 700 people at the time — igniting a fire that destroyed fuel and tons of food and medicines. UNRWA has suspended its operations in Gaza for the second time. ([Al Mezan](#))
- Gaps are currently reported in infant and child nutritional supplies in Gaza. (WFP)
- Approximately 90 percent of Gaza's population – some 1,275,300 people including 714,168 children – currently depend on food assistance. ([OCHA](#))
- A child in Gaza is five times more likely to be stunted than in a healthy population. ([UNICEF](#))
- The risks of infection or malnutrition from using breast milk substitutes prepared with contaminated water are high, yet three-quarters of Gaza's infants under 6 months of age — around 30,000 babies — are not exclusively breastfed. ([UNICEF](#))
- Only 50 percent of the World Food Program's (WFP) warehouse capacity is being used (3,700 metric tons). An additional 4,000 metric tons of food (150 trucks) is needed to ensure adequate food supplies for WFP distribution in the coming period. ([OCHA](#))

Education

As of 14 January 59 schools have been damaged from airstrikes and related bombardment in Gaza ([Al Mezan](#)). Of these, eight received direct hits. In Israel, two schools have been hit by rockets fired from Gaza.

- Gaza's 346 government schools, 28 private schools and 214 UNRWA schools are closed, affecting around 441,452 students. ([UNRWA](#)) and ([MoE](#))
- Schools in southern Israel have reopened under strict security rules. ([IRIN](#))
- Eight UNRWA students were killed and another 18 injured while waiting for UN buses. ([OCHA](#))
- The final exams of the current semester were disrupted and have been postponed because of the ongoing conflict. ([OCHA](#))

General Gaza Statistics

- The total population of Gaza is 1,417,000. ([PCBS](#))
- The total number of children in Gaza is approximately 793,520, or 56% of the population. ([PCBS](#))
- There are a total of 1,048,125 refugees in Gaza, or 74% of the total population. Among them, approximately 586,950 are children. ([UNRWA](#))

For Case Studies and video documentation, please visit:

<http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/>

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