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Gaza: Growing humanitarian needs

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One of HI's volunteers in a warehouse in Gaza Strip, October 2023. | © HI

The attacks by Hamas and retaliation by Israel have a devastating impact on civilians. 1,400 people have lost their lives in Israel; more than 3,000 in Gaza.

Present in Palestine since 1996, HI is responding to the emergency. The organisation has started to distribute essential goods to families displaced by the violence and is ready to provide rehabilitation and psychosocial support.

Mental health support

HI's teams and volunteers are currently assessing needs inside shelters crammed with displaced people. We expect to launch psychological first aid.

People are now in "survival mode". Psychological first aid sessions are one-to-one conversations to help stabilise and calm people. This is mostly done through very active listening, giving them the space, the safety and the time to talk about whatever they want, and helping them feel back in control. Their concerns are acknowledged and their feelings of distress and anxiety are validated.

As soon as the security conditions permit, our teams will organise recreational activities for the children. These activities, mainly games, are important to help restore a sense of normality in and ease their anxiety.

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HI's team and volunteers have assessed the needs in 33 shelters and have begun providing essential assistance, including the distribution of crutches and wheelchairs, hygiene items, dignity kits and first aid kits.

“More than one million displaced people in the Gaza Strip are under dire circumstances, with no food, water, electricity, or fuel. HI and its partners rely on a network of 300 trained volunteers to serve as first-line responders. Since the start of hostilities, some of them have found refuge in many shelters where they identify the needs of persons with disabilities, injured or traumatized people, women, and children. They also provide hygiene, dignity, and first-aid kits to the displaced Palestinians after evacuating their bombed homes,” explains HI Advocacy Officer for Palestine Noor Bimbashi.

Prevention messages

We have sent a prevention message to the population via SMS: “Take shelter away from the street and windows. Keep an emergency go-bag to hand. Use stairs to evacuate.”

We have reached 500,000 people with this message, and United Nations Mine Actions Service (UNMAS) has forwarded it to an additional 1 million. Together, we have covered the most severely affected areas in the Gaza Strip, from the northern regions down to the south.

The danger of contamination

We are looking to launch rapid awareness-raising sessions on explosive ordnance risks and conflict preparedness and protection. The explosive remnants and unexploded bombs present in the rubble are a serious threat to the population.

People collecting objects or looking for survivors may inadvertently come across an explosive device. Simple and practical risk awareness messages will inform people about the right actions to take and behaviour to adopt in such situations.

Rehabilitation for the injured

As soon as the humanitarian ceasefires are in place, HI will begin emergency rehabilitation services and psychosocial support (PSS) for the people injured and traumatised by the violence.

HI's team in the West Bank will also visit Palestinian patients and their families who left the Gaza Strip before the hostilities began to receive medical treatment in Ramallah. HI plans to provide psychosocial support to some 35 women and 10 children.

The safety of our staff

HI continues to monitor the wellbeing of its staff in Gaza. So far, all of our employees are coping, although some have had to move from the north to the south. In some cases, their homes have been damaged or destroyed. We are on standby to provide psychologic support.

HI is charging up the phones of the team in Gaza, our partners and our volunteers to maintain contact with them and keep our operations going.

More damage has occurred in the street in which HI's office and guesthouse are located, and the office windows have been broken.

About HI in Palestine

HI launched its first project in Palestine in 1996. For the last 27 years, our teams have been responding to the needs of the Palestinian community – both in West Bank and Gaza – across several sectors. HI Palestine is running projects in Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction, Physical and Functional Rehabilitation, Economic Inclusion and Economic Recovery, and Inclusive Education.



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HI is an independent and impartial aid organisation working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. We work alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, taking action and bearing witness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.

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