unrwa flash appeal
initial 30 day response

hostilities in gaza and mounting tensions in the west bank
may 2021
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There has been a dramatic intensification in violence in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) in recent days, including an escalation in hostilities leading to massive Israeli airstrikes on Gaza, which began on 10 May, and clashes in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In Gaza, UNRWA is already responding to the humanitarian needs of affected populations (refugees and non-refugees), including the tens of thousands of people who have sought safety in Agency schools in Gaza including Designated Emergency Shelters (DESs) which are equipped to host internally displaced persons (IDPs) during times of conflict.

With this Flash Appeal, UNRWA urgently seeks US$ 38 million. This is needed to respond to the immediate food, non-food, health, psychosocial, WASH and emergency response capacity needs and to carry out essential emergency interventions during the hostilities in Gaza. Activities cover an initial 30-day emergency response, from the start of the escalation on 10 May, and support to up to 50,000 individuals seeking safety in 50 DESs. This represents around fifty percent of emergency preparedness contingency plans. Unit costs are consistent with those plans and the Agency’s recent responses to acute crisis in Gaza. UNRWA is monitoring the situation continuously and will update its assessment of needs accordingly. Early recovery and reconstruction needs are not reflected in this Flash Appeal.

This Appeal also includes a component of emergency needs in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the sectors of health, shelter, education, security and protection, where needs have risen as a consequence of the mounting tensions.
situational overview

Gaza

Gaza is experiencing the most intense airstrikes and violence since the 2014 conflict, with devastating impacts on the civilian population. As of 17 May, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 200 people had been killed in Gaza since the start of hostilities on 10 May, adding another layer of psychological distress onto a population that has been traumatized several times over. Israeli air strikes have also caused substantial damage to physical infrastructure, including homes. Gaza’s only two crossing points with Israel have been closed by Israel, and restrictions on movement and access for people and goods are causing significant challenges for the provision of humanitarian assistance. This is the fourth round of major violence in the past 13 years, following conflicts in 2008/9, 2012 and 2014. Entrenched poverty, high unemployment, the economic, social and psychological challenges associated with almost 15 years of blockade and trauma of war, as well as the lack of a political horizon - including the recent postponement of Palestinian elections - are eroding coping mechanisms and people’s sense of hope for the future.

Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, demands for humanitarian assistance in Gaza are increasing with the collapse of the economy. The overwhelming majority of the population, including the 1.4 million Palestine refugees who account for around two-thirds of the population, are reliant on UNRWA and other humanitarian actors for lifesaving support, particularly at times of unrest and hostilities.

West Bank

Since mid-April 2021, an escalation in violence and hostilities has been recorded in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Israel, due to a combination of factors. These include the pending evictions of Palestine refugee families in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem, limitations placed on gatherings of Palestinians in and around Jerusalem’s Old City during Ramadan, restriction of access for Palestinian worshippers to Al Aqsa and raids on the compound by Israeli Security Forces (ISF), the excessive use of force against Palestinian demonstrators, including tear gas, live ammunition and violent arrests. Violence in East Jerusalem has spilled over to Gaza, and hostilities there have triggered inter-communal violence in urban areas throughout Israel, including hate speech and incitement against Palestinians, and widespread demonstrations and clashes across the West Bank. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, as of 17 May, 21 Palestinian fatalities had been recorded in the West Bank including East Jerusalem. This includes five refugees. A further 3,363 people have been injured, with 569 injuries resulting from live ammunition.
humanitarian needs

Gaza

As at 9:00 am on 18 May, more than 48,000 IDPs had sought safety in emergency shelters operated by UNRWA in all five areas throughout the Gaza Strip (North, Gaza, Middle, Khan Younis and Rafah) following heavy bombardment by Israeli Forces. Numbers have increased rapidly since the airstrikes began. The Agency has started providing humanitarian support to those displaced. The Agency is planning to meet the needs of up to 50,000 persons. This will require schools to be activated to serve as shelters, in addition to those already equipped as DESs.

Not all displaced persons are seeking refuge in UNRWA schools; substantial numbers of families are sheltering with relatives or friends.

Many of those fleeing have left their possessions behind, and opportunities to secure basic food and hygiene needs are scarce due to the severity of the security situation. Most of the time, it is simply not safe to move in most parts of Gaza. IDPs seeking shelter in DESs have particular health and hygiene needs owing to the crowded conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic poses increased risks, and special measures are needed in shelters to minimize the spread of the pandemic. Having witnessed death and injury, damage or loss of property, IDPs face trauma and require psychosocial support, with coping mechanisms already eroded by years of blockade and previous experiences of violence. Domestic protection risks are increasingly exacerbated, especially for vulnerable populations such as children and specifically unaccompanied minors, women and the elderly. Risk of injury or death due to explosive remnants of war is heightened. Given the dire circumstances, insecurity and duress, violence in general and all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) specifically are known to increase in times of hostilities and even more so in emergency collective shelters. Prevention, detection, response and monitoring of protection concerns in DESs is imperative, as is provision of specific support to identified survivors of abuse.

Families that have found refuge with friends or relatives require specific support – many were already facing dire living conditions due to high unemployment and COVID-19.

For people whose homes have sustained serious damages, displacement will likely be prolonged, until such a time as their homes can be rehabilitated or reconstructed.

Once violence stops, these families will be faced with the burden of having to rebuild their lives and homes, in an already fragile and constrained environment, affected by years of protracted humanitarian crisis.

West Bank

Palestine refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are faced with daily clashes and significant unrest in urban areas, refugee camps, and around checkpoints, increased settler violence, restricted movement and the ongoing threat of COVID-19. Despite this, UNRWA has continued to provide essential services and protection to meet critical needs.

The ongoing protests and confrontations across the West Bank, are generating additional humanitarian and protection needs amongst Palestinian refugees. Use of live ammunition by Israeli forces is a major protection concern. It is resulting in a high number of injuries and increased need for psycho-social support, particularly amongst children. Damage to property in the West Bank, including refugee homes, has also been reported.
operational approach

Gaza

UNRWA is ensuring the continuity of vital services to the extent possible in the current circumstances, including access to primary health care through its health centres and telemedicine, operation of water wells and environmental health services in camps, and distance learning for students. Security permitting the Agency also aims to operate its food security programme for more than 1.1 million Palestine refugees in Gaza.

As an immediate response to the new emergency in Gaza, linked to the ongoing internal displacements, UNRWA will provide assistance in all operational emergency shelters. This will include food, potable water, primary health care and necessary non-food items. In addition, psychosocial support and protection measures for vulnerable groups and especially children and women will be implemented. This includes mechanisms to prevent, detect and respond to abuse, including GBV. UNRWA will use the checklists of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all the components of its response.

Displaced families hosted outside of UNRWA DESs, and most vulnerable families, who are identified as cash-strapped even in normal circumstances, will be supported with immediate one-off multipurpose cash to help in covering their most immediate needs. UNRWA strives to achieve COVID-19 occupational health and safety measures for its staff and the community in all emergency activities. Needs in Gaza are costed for an initial 30 day period, from the start of Israeli air strikes on 10 May.

In parallel with delivery of immediate and life-saving emergency assistance, UNRWA is collecting data and creating an evidence-based early recovery plan that will integrate shelter assessments for reconstruction of fully and partially damaged shelters, and fixed one-time support for shelter repairs. UNRWA infrastructure supporting camps will be addressed, such as damages to the water and sanitation networks, repairs to UNRWA installations impacted by hostilities and the repair and refurbishment of school buildings that have been used as DESs, transitional cash assistance for families seeking rental support, and systematic early recovery information tracking and monitoring and evaluation support activities. Early recovery efforts will be undertaken through the Agency’s existing organizational structure – Infrastructure and Camp Improvement, Education, Health, and Relief and Social Services Programmes. Costs related to early recovery are not included in this Flash Appeal.

The response in this Flash Appeal is directly related to the Agency’s strategic objective of mitigating the effects of humanitarian emergencies on affected populations and providing services in a dignified and safe manner. It covers the needs of displaced families seeking refuge both in UNRWA DESs, and with the community, and those identified as most vulnerable even if not displaced.

West Bank

The Agency seeks funding to maintain the provision of essential health services and for emergency first aid, as needed; enhance the provision of psychosocial support (PSS) including for school children; deliver multipurpose cash assistance to vulnerable refugee families whose properties have sustained damage from confrontations; and to ensure that UNRWA staff are able to continue providing services safely and securely to vulnerable refugees in need. Lastly, UNRWA – with a clear protection mandate for over 860,000 Palestine refugees in the West Bank - will continue to document violations, advocate for their protection, and promote their rights. Funding requirements in West Bank cover a period of up to six months.

UNRWA continues to coordinate closely with humanitarian clusters in the oPt and the activities in this Appeal will be included in any OCHA-led appeal.

funding requirements

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<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Gaza</th>
<th>West Bank</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food in emergency shelters</td>
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<td>20,126,296</td>
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<td>Non-food items</td>
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<td>Management and Capacity, including security</td>
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<td>36,944,320</td>
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Food in Designated Emergency Shelters (DES)

In Gaza, UNRWA provides basic food commodities including bread, corned beef or tuna, dairy products and fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as potable water, to all individuals staying at the Agency’s Designated Emergency Shelters. The daily distribution of basic food rations, including tomatoes, cucumbers and apples three times per week, allows families to cover their minimum caloric needs, as per World Health Organization (WHO) standards, ensuring sufficient protein, fat, vitamins and minerals. Based on previous experience, UNRWA is planning to assist up to 50,000 individuals – just over 8,100 families – in shelters over an initial 30-day period. Additional in-kind assistance for other commodities to supplement the ration is being contributed by approved emergency preparedness partners.

Non-food Items (NFIs)

Given the displacement scenario of around 8,100 families in DESs in Gaza, UNRWA will distribute NFIs to each family. The conditions, duration and needs influence which items are distributed. Families will receive items such as:

- blankets (one per person), mattresses (one per adult and one between two children), and one thin mat (one per family);
- kitchen set (plates, pan, bowls, utensils etc.) and one jerry can;
- family hygiene kit (towels, soap, toothbrush, sanitary towels, shampoo, detergent, etc.);
- baby hygiene kits (baby soap, shampoo, wipes, blanket etc.) and baby diapers;
- NFIs for coping with minor repairs using nylon/ tarpaulin sheeting.

Refugee families staying with relatives outside of UNRWA run shelters, will receive similar assistance on a needs basis upon approaching UNRWA area offices. Materials for emergency repair (nylon and tarpaulin), hygiene kits, blankets and mattresses have been pre-positioned across each of Gaza’s five governorates to ensure a rapid response to all different needs.

One-off multi-purpose cash assistance

In Gaza, displaced families who are seeking refuge with their relatives or friends, will be supported through one-off multi-purpose cash to help them and their hosts in covering their most immediate needs with the dignity of choice. With poverty already high amongst Palestine refugees in Gaza, and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, many families were already facing challenges even before the current hostilities. As well as supporting IDPs sheltering outside of UNRWA DESs, this intervention will also target the most vulnerable families even if they are not facing displacement. Those identified as poor and cash-strapped will be prioritized through a multi-vulnerability assessment formula. Dependent on level of funding, a one-off emergency multi-purpose cash transfer of NIS 800/family (equivalent to almost US$ 250) will be distributed to approximately 29,000 families to cover their immediate needs.

In the West Bank, UNRWA will reinforce its existing medical staffing and supplies stock to maintain essential health services at its health centres and Qalqilya hospital and provide first aid to injured refugees.

COVID-19 Prevention in Designated Shelters

In order to reduce the risk of exposure and spread of COVID-19 inside DESs in Gaza, UNRWA will implement several preventive measures, including setting up triage point and (if the situation permits) a respiratory unit in each DES; and the provision of PPEs to staff and Palestinians seeking shelter in DESs in Gaza.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

The initial phase of the Agency’s intervention in Gaza is designed to assist children and adults staying in DESs to mitigate the impact of the current military escalation, through short-term activities aimed at strengthening their psychosocial resilience, coping capacities and mental well-being. Psychosocial support is provided by a trained counselor assigned to the DES, who organizes both collective activities and individual or family sessions. Child Friendly Spaces are created in the DESs to provide children with an atmosphere of safety and security, and to engage them in creative play and learning activities. Once the emergency has ended, further psychosocial support will be provided in UNRWA schools either in person or remotely depending on the situation.

In the West Bank, UNRWA will enhance the provision of psychosocial support services, including to school children, to address the additional trauma caused by the current violence.
Protection

In Gaza, UNRWA will seek to create a safe and dignified environment for persons staying in the DESs by employing mechanisms to prevent, detect and respond to abuse, including GBV. UNRWA joined the "Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies" in 2017 and developed tools to respond, prevent and mitigate the GBV risks. These include guidelines for GBV risk mitigation, a related e-learning and a training package on the survivor-centered approach to GBV. A refresher on these tools will be offered to staff involved in the emergency response. Trained and designated staff will be assigned to respond to reports of any manner of abuse and gender related violence. Protection incidents will be monitored, documented and responded to and exposure to protection threats minimized in so far as possible. Female friendly spaces are needed to maintain their security and psychological well-being. Costs of protection interventions are embedded across other activities and are not presented separately.

Emergency Response Capacity

In order to ensure effective management of the emergency response, the enhancement of staff capacity is crucial. In Gaza, UNRWA will operate hotlines and helplines for remote assistance during the emergency. Due to the increased risk of death or injury from Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) has increased, especially amongst children, training of trainers for risk assessments, rendering sites safe, and risk education, will also be conducted.

UNRWA assists families displaced to DESs in Gaza through a team of UNRWA staff trained on emergency response. Lessons learned from previous conflicts and the ongoing pandemic response, including how to further the mainstreaming of GBV risk mitigation, have been incorporated in UNRWA protocols. UNRWA staff and personnel are given training on the neutrality of installations, including DESs, and to ensure that only civilians are granted entry and only humanitarian support is provided.

In the West Bank, given the deteriorating security situation, UNRWA will enhance its security measures in all areas across the West Bank, including the UNRWA compound in East Jerusalem, to ensure compliance with UN standards and security recommendations.

Primary coordination and implementation of the Agency’s humanitarian response to displaced people and the most vulnerable in the community in Gaza is led by five Area Emergency Response Teams through their Area Operations Room. A Field-level Emergency Response Team, through a Central Operations Room is responsible for overall coordination, operational decision making and allocation of resources to area teams, based on the Gaza-wide needs overview. Additional support is provided by UNRWA HQ programmes, including back-office and surge support.

Environmental Health (WASH)

UNRWA will ensure that the environment at the DES is consistent with health standards; that sufficient points for garbage collection, and solid waste disposal mechanisms, are available in each facility; and that families are briefed about these arrangements on their arrival. Because of COVID-19, crowding around water points needs to be reduced, and a number of schools hosting the displaced are already above their intended capacity. As such, extra potable water capacity is being mobilized using bottled water. UNRWA aims to recover/recycle locally all water bottles to local vendors who repurpose plastic into other products.
Flash appeal - Gaza hostilities and tensions in the West Bank

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