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Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza



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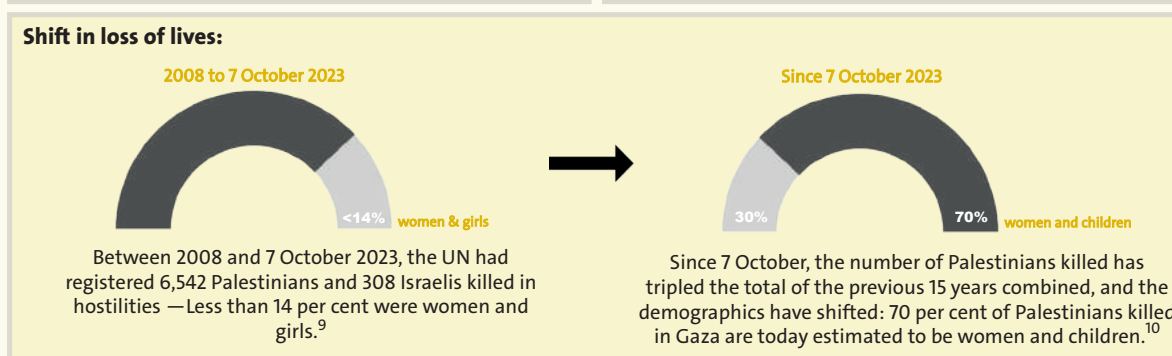
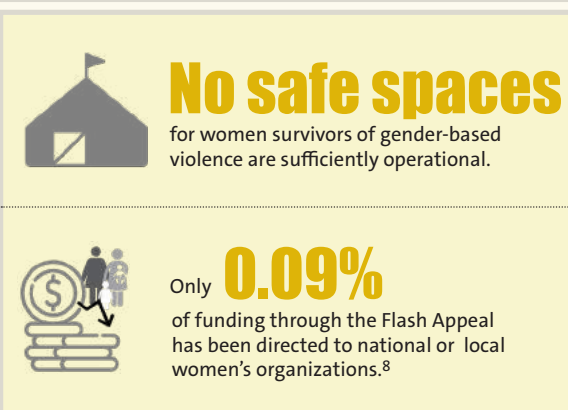
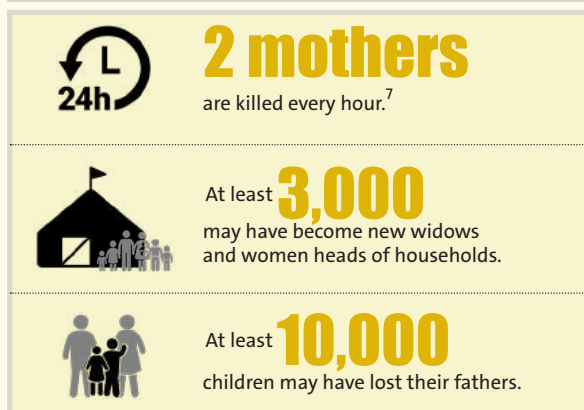
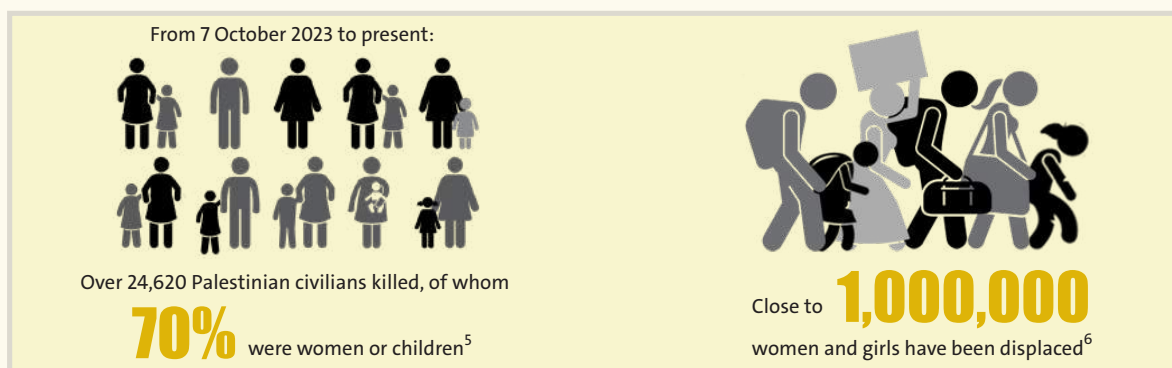
SITUATION OVERVIEW – THE HUMAN BEINGS BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Since 7 October 2023, more than 24,620 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip, 70 per cent of whom were women or children.^{1&2} More than 1.9 million people — 85 per cent of the total population of Gaza

— have been displaced,³ including what UN Women estimates to be nearly 1 million women and girls. The entire population of Gaza — roughly 2.2 million people — are in crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity.⁴

BOX 1

Key Data Points



1 UN Women has an office in Palestine to help women achieve their social, economic, and political rights. This Gender Alert provides a synthesis of the data on the situation of women and girls in the Gaza strip since October 7, 2023.
 2 OCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, [Flash Update #96](#), 18 January 2024
 3 Ibid.
 4 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification: [Gaza Strip, November 2023-February 2024](#).
 5 OCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel, [Flash Update #96](#), 18 January 2024
 6 According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 49.3% of the population in Gaza is female. With a reported displacement of 1,900,000 as of 15 January 2024 by UNRWA, the approximate number of female individuals in the population would be close to 1 million.
 7 The calculation estimating two mothers killed every hour is based on the OCHA report released on December 8, 2023, which reported 5,153 women killed on day 63 of hostilities. According to PCBS estimates, 58% of adult women in Gaza are married. Given this statistical framework, the calculation involves multiplying the total number of women by the percentage of married women, resulting in an estimated 2,988.7 mothers. Subsequently, this figure is divided by the duration of the hostilities (63 days) and then by 24 hours to determine an hourly rate of 2 women.
 8 Based on UN Women analysis of [Financial Tracking Service data for the Flash Appeal](#) as of 18 January 2024.
 9 [Data on casualties | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory \(ochaopt.org\)](#)
 10 OCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel: <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-85-enarhe>, 5 January 2023

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF DISPLACEMENT



Photo: UNFPA

In Gaza, the loss of life and severe humanitarian needs are at unprecedented levels, in a context where needs were already dire prior to the current escalation. In January 2023, it was estimated that approximately 2.1 million Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory required some form of humanitarian assistance, of whom 49.2 per cent were women.¹¹

As of early 2024, the majority of the population of Gaza has been forcibly displaced on foot multiple times. Displacement exacerbates people's

vulnerability, erodes their coping mechanisms, and impacts them differently based on gender. Since the ground operation started in Gaza, it has been reported that men faced arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance.¹² According to media reports,^{13&14} while on the displacement journey, women also faced risks of arbitrary detention and harassment. For families with elderly relatives or family members with disabilities who simply cannot move, it is women who disproportionately stay behind as caregivers.

¹¹ 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan for the OPT.

¹² Israel - Occupied Palestinian Territory situation, 100 days on | OHCHR

¹³ Israel detains 142 Palestinian women and girls from Gaza (newarab.com)

¹⁴ Israel Detained 153 Gazan Women, Some With Their Babies, Says Palestinian Prisoners' Club Head - Israel News - Haaretz.com

Gendered experiences of displacement



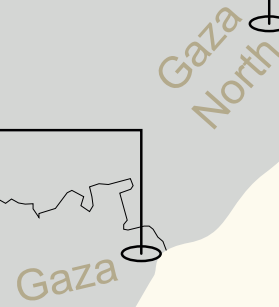
As a father, I have been searching for work, loans, and assistance, but nothing seems to work; nothing is coming to people like us in the north; some of us must find any way to secure food and basics for our children, even if we must steal; we are hungry and if we don't die from the missiles, we will die from hunger and despair.

Male, 38, North Gaza



I can never leave my humble house except when I die. My husband can hardly move, and he has no intention of staying or dying in anyone else's place. ... Many older people like us stayed behind and are left to our fate. I am scared, exhausted, and expecting the worst. God will have mercy on us.

Female, 72, Gaza City



This was the most humiliating experience of my life. I am used to decency and privacy, but they made me strip and walk in my underwear in public and in the cold. All my confidence and self-esteem are gone. I feel emasculated. How will I ever feel like a man or be treated as one?

Male, 19, Jabalya originally, Dier Al Balah at present



Two weeks after the war started on my due date, I went to the hospital knowing that I was risking my life and that of my long-awaited baby... My doctor decided to use a private clinic that was not fully equipped as it was the only solution available at that time. I risked my life and I hope that I didn't bring my baby to this world for him to just be killed for no reason!

Female, 30, Mughraqa, Middle Area of the Gaza Strip



I was always an A+ student in my school... What else is there to do in Gaza for a girl?! Now, I am just sitting around ... I am afraid that, with time, my parents will use the pretext of the overall insecurity and the closure of schools, as well as our status as strangers in the community, to have me married.

Female, 17, Beit Lahiya originally, Khan Younis at present



On my way to the south with my family members and hundreds of other people, I was ordered to throw away all packages that I was carrying... I screamed and begged, and the soldier threatened to start shooting at us if I didn't comply. Now everything is lost, and the future is so uncertain. Most of all: will I ever go back home?

Female, 48, Gaza City originally, Khan Younis at present

Rafah



Photo: UNFPA

In severely overcrowded shelters, in the streets amid the rubble, women and girls are seeking safety from airstrikes under unspeakable conditions. Yet, nowhere and no one is safe in Gaza. Once displaced, families take shelter where they can, including at facilities designated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) or with host families, who also face security risks themselves. As the war continues, people in Gaza are experiencing an almost complete erosion of individual and collective coping mechanisms. Tensions within families and communities are increasing, which in turn increases the risks of gender-related protection concerns, including gender-based violence (GBV).

The crisis also impacts power dynamics and gender relations, which must be taken into account in the delivery of humanitarian aid. Loss of families in full or in part, loss of parents or a breadwinner, and loss of home and community lead to changes in family formation including from predominantly nuclear and extended families to super-extended families, which impact gender relations, roles, and dynamics. Women increasingly fear that, in light of food shortages, school closures, and loss of educational opportunities, families will resort to desperate coping mechanisms including early marriage, especially given the high number of young girls who have lost one or both parents.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND GENDERED CONSIDERATIONS



Photo: WHO

While humanitarian assistance is hardly reaching any segment of the population, women and girls are further disadvantaged by gender inequality in access to supplies, services, and resources. This is particularly true for women-headed households, a distinctively vulnerable group whose numbers may have surged by 3,000 in only six weeks and now bear the sole responsibility to feed, protect, and provide for their families. Such difficulties are further compounded by severe food shortages, lack of protection, and lack of income generation opportunities. Approximately 85 per cent of workers in the Gaza Strip have been out of work since the conflict started.¹⁵ A small number of women in Gaza had an income before the crisis, and that group has only gotten smaller — at the same time, many women have lost their spouses and their family's breadwinner.

For the first time in Gaza's history, there is now an imminent risk of famine — and that risk is increasing each day due to unceasing hostilities combined with restricted humanitarian access.¹⁶ With acute food insecurity levels at unprecedented levels,¹⁷ women and girls are expected to be hit the hardest, as women tend

to vastly deprioritize their food intake when access to food is restricted. Pregnant and lactating women are at even higher health and malnutrition risks, not only to themselves but to their babies. Women generally — but female heads of households, older women, and women with disabilities in particular — also face security and protection obstacles when attempting to access food distribution.

Despite the distinct vulnerabilities that women face, gender-specific services — as with all other services — have been severely disrupted, with the only functional maternity hospital in northern Gaza expected to run out of fuel imminently, as the delivery of fuel is severely challenged by insecurity.¹⁸ UNFPA estimates that 5,500 women are expected to give birth in Gaza in the next month, of whom 840 are likely to experience pregnancy or birth-related complications, needing additional medical care that is not available. UN Women has documented that Gaza's only two women's shelters, both in Gaza City, are now closed, and telecommunications and electricity blackouts are severely restricting remote gender-based violence service provision precisely while risks are highest.

¹⁵ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099721412142313834/pdf/IDU043992ccb0c283048bd0941e073dbfc46633b.pdf>

¹⁶ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification: "Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for 24 November - 7 December 2023 and Projection for 8 December 2023 - 7 February 2024"

¹⁷ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification: "Gaza Strip: Famine Review of the IPC analysis"

¹⁸ OCHA, 20 December 2023. Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel: Flash Update #74

BOX 3

Key gender considerations

UN Women estimates that at least 3,000 women may have lost their husbands, and more than 10,000 children may have lost their fathers. Women-headed households are in urgent need of immediate humanitarian assistance.

UN Women estimates that nearly 1 million women and girls are displaced and desperately seeking protection for themselves and their families.



Food Security:

Women and girls often deprioritize themselves in crisis situations, reducing their consumption when families become food insecure. Pregnant and lactating women are particularly at risk of under-nutrition or malnutrition, heightening the risk of birth defects or death. Women who head households face security and protection risks, making their families particularly vulnerable to severe food insecurity.



Protection:

The lack of protection for women and their families is severely impacting women's psychosocial health. The trauma of daily bombardment leaves both mental and physical scars for women and girls who survive.



Shelter:

Overcrowding and lack of privacy in temporary shelters, coupled with scarce resources, can lead to disputes and violence, including gender-based violence.



WASH:

Lack of access to adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities for menstrual hygiene management, and a lack of sanitary supplies and facilities to dispose of them properly, affects women's and girls' dignity as well as their mental and physical health.

WORKING WITH AND FOR WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

BOX 4

A rapid survey of UN Women partners in November 2023, representing 12 women-led organizations and one youth-led organization, shows that:



83 per cent of women's organizations surveyed in the Gaza Strip have reprogrammed their efforts and are at least partly operational, mainly focusing on the emergency response.



76 per cent of women's organizations state that they are able to influence humanitarian coordination structures, including the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), the GBV sub-cluster, and the National Committee for Resolution 1325.

However, UN Women's analysis of funding to the 2023 Flash Appeal reveals that only 0.09 per cent of funding has directly gone to national or local women's rights organizations.

Women-led and women's rights organizations continue to operate despite the escalation of hostilities. Many of their staff, however, are themselves forcibly displaced, and the majority of their physical infrastructure has been destroyed. Ten out of twelve women's organizations in the Gaza Strip reported being partly operational in November 2023, with work including sourcing and distributing emergency items, providing services remotely where possible, documenting and responding to protection concerns, and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.

These organizations have access to some of those most in need in Gaza, and have throughout the years built deep trust with their communities as well as strong partnerships to leverage humanitarian assistance. Most have extensive experience in service delivery

during previous crises in Gaza. Yet prior to the current escalations, only three national or local women's rights organizations received funding directly through Humanitarian Response Plans or Flash Appeals,¹⁹ with the total funding standing between 0.14 per cent and 0.36 per cent of total funding of each HRP – a testament to how inaccessible humanitarian funding is for local women's organizations.²⁰ Of the funding reported under the 2023 Flash Appeal, that figure stands at a mere 0.09 per cent.²¹

A significant number of organizations that scaled down or suspended their operations cited reasons including lost funding. All organizations surveyed reported their most pressing needs as additional funding, strengthened partnerships, and investments in safety and security.

BOX 5

Key asks from women's organizations

From the rapid polling of women's organizations, their call to action to the humanitarian system is to:

Support the urgent need for immediate ceasefire.

Prioritize **flexible funding for women's organizations to remain operational**, recognizing their vital role in providing lifesaving services.

Ensure that **women's organizations are meaningfully participating in humanitarian response planning, implementation, and monitoring**. Recognize their roles as primary responders and significant humanitarian actors, with the understanding that the participation of women's organizations can increase the gender responsiveness of humanitarian programming.

19 Based on data reported to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service.

20 Based on UN Women analysis of Financial Tracking Service data for 2020 (part of the 2018-2020 HRP), 2021 HRP, 2022 HRP, 2023 HRP, and 2023 Flash Appeal, accessed 21 December 2023.

21 Based on UN Women analysis of Financial Tracking Service data for the 2023 Flash Appeal, accessed 18 January 2024

UN WOMEN'S 6-MONTH MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE



As the crisis in Gaza deepens and the needs for lifesaving supplies intensify, humanitarian actors continue to struggle with the delivery of humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza. UN Women's immediate six-month multi-sectoral response plan is comprised of the following key elements:

Immediate Humanitarian Assistance provided

as of 31 December 2023

- Providing emergency food assistance to over 14,000 women-headed households, representing one-third of all women-headed households in Gaza, in partnership with the World Food Programme.
- Supporting the distribution of items requested by women on the ground, including non-food items such as clothing, sanitary products, and baby formula, in partnership with key UN entities.
- Worked with the Egyptian Red Crescent and the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization to distribute 14,000 dignity kits, 2,300 winter clothes packages, 3,200 women's kits, and 3,793 children's kits.
- Providing recreational activities for 2,500 boys and girls, psychosocial assistance to 224 women and girls, and mental health support services via mobile mental health clinics to 316 women and girls and 94 men and boys.
- Partnering with women-led organizations to provide gender responsive multisectoral services including GBV and livelihood responses to women and girls most affected including women IDPs, women widows, women heads of households, and women with disabilities.
- Establishing women-led protection and response committees in IDP shelters and in host communities to strengthen the participation of

women in delivering humanitarian response, advocate for women's protection and access to services, and amplify women's voices.

- Convening regular consultations with women's organizations in Palestine, to discuss the challenges they face while responding to the crisis and to amplify their voices.

Humanitarian Coordination

as of January 2024

- Leading national-level gender coordination efforts, including through co-chairing the national-level Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA) and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network.
- Providing technical support to bodies such as the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), National Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (NICCG), and relevant cluster and working groups (protection cluster, GBV Sub-cluster, CASH working group, etc.) to ensure women's needs are considered in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the crisis response.
- Supporting gender mainstreaming in key strategic planning documents, such as the [Flash Appeal](#), and highlighted the gendered impacts of hostilities on women and girls.

UN Women has had an office in Palestine since 1997 to help women achieve their social, economic, and political rights, and we will remain.

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