

Erasure by Design: Israel's Genocidal Acts as Tools for Territorial Expansion in Gaza



Source: Action For Humanity Instagram @afh_international

“We wake up and go to sleep in fear of continuous bombings in the areas that were provided for safety, proving there is no safety and no security.”

اصبحنا نناد ونصحى من الخوف من التفجيرات المتواصلة على كامل الاراضي التي منحونا بها الامان
اثبت ان هناك لا امن زلا امان



Introduction

This research by Action For Humanity (AFH), based on testimonials from Palestinians forcibly transferred to the designated “humanitarian zone” in the middle/south of Gaza, between Al-Mawasi and Deir al-Balah, uncovers the life-threatening consequences of Israel’s ongoing bombardment, systematic misuse of “evacuation orders” and “humanitarian zones”, and continued blocking of humanitarian aid. We use quotation marks around terms like “evacuation” and “humanitarian zone” because they are being misused to facilitate the forcible transfer of Palestinians, create the conditions for annexation, and sow fear, all under the pretense of adhering to international law and humanitarian principles, or “humanitarian camouflage”. [1]

While the area now holds over one million displaced people, this report draws from a survey of 83 people conducted between 6-12 October 2024, and represents with 95% accuracy the experience of the 200,000 people in IDP camps in Deir al-Balah. It also draws on staff testimonials and an in-depth analysis of documented evidence from media, NGOs, the UN, governments and Palestinian civil society.

The four key findings summarised from this report are:

- Israel’s so-called “evacuation” orders are unclear and misleading, often issued with little notice - sometimes under an hour - frequently late at night, and have forced the majority of the population into shrinking, poorly defined “humanitarian zones.” Rather than serving as a civilian protection measure, this practice places civilians in severe danger and spreads fear throughout the population.
- Military forces repeatedly strike these so-called “evacuation” routes and “humanitarian zones”. Civilians face lethal barriers like unexploded ordnance (UXO), restricted access to transportation, healthcare, psychological support, and enforced family separations, all systematically preventing escape. Though the intensity of Israel’s assault varies by region, it has collectively targeted the entire population, leaving nowhere in Gaza safe.
- The deliberate restriction of essential humanitarian aid - food, water, shelter, hygiene products, and medical supplies - during so-called “evacuations” and within designated “humanitarian zones” reveals a clear intent to eliminate conditions necessary for survival of the population. This deprivation is further intensified by Israel’s blockade and relentless attacks on homes, schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure.
- Local NGOs are key providers of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, despite operating under bombardment, being underfunded and overstretched, while international organisations face restrictions due to Israel’s blockade.

Findings reveal a brutal, deliberate pattern by Israel of systematically inflicting life-threatening conditions on Palestinians in Gaza, involving relentless bombardment, forcible transfers, deprivation of resources essential to the survival of the population of Gaza. A reasonable inference can be drawn that these actions are intended to destroy, in whole or in part, the Palestinian population in Gaza, aligning with Article II of the Genocide Convention, particularly subsections (a) “killing members of the group” and (c) “inflicting conditions of life intended to destroy.” [2] The Israeli military has constructed roads and bases across 26% of Gaza, signaling a permanent presence, alongside reports of a government intent to annex Gaza. [3] This systematic destruction of a people serves not only as a grave atrocity but also as a calculated tool for territorial expansion.

Background

Since October 7, 2023, Palestinians in Gaza have faced forcible transfers at significantly increased rates, with patterns that are deeply rooted in a history of occupation and displacement lasting 76 years. On October 13, 2023, Israel ordered the transfer of 1.1 million Palestinians southward within 24 hours, which UN experts referred to as a crime against humanity and a blatant violation of international humanitarian law. [4] Since October, 2023 and as of 29 October, 2024, the Israeli military has issued over 65 evacuation orders. [5] Israel has also relentlessly attacked hospitals [6], schools [7], aid operations [8], and vital infrastructure. In the most optimistic scenario, UN experts estimate that reconstruction in Gaza could take until 2040, at a cost of \$40bn (£32bn). [9] Gaza faces critical shortages of food, water, and medical supplies, creating severe overcrowding and famine-like conditions. [10]

In 2024, under the guise of conflict objectives, the Israeli military took control of 26% of the Gaza Strip, establishing military bases and paving roads. [11] Recently, satellite images showed Israeli forces laying tarmac on a key road in the Philadelphi Corridor, a crucial area along Gaza's southern border with Egypt. These actions signal Israel's intentions to maintain a long-term military presence rather than withdraw. [12] Nowhere in Gaza is safe.

At the time of writing, the Israeli military is besieging civilians in northern Gaza. Israeli military-ordered mass "evacuations", which amount to forcible transfer, yet many are trapped in their homes, facing targeting if they attempt to flee. [13] Designation of so-called "humanitarian zones" have displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and created panic and fear, marking the largest displacement of Palestinians in 76 years. On 6 October, 2024, the Israeli military announced a military operation in Jabalia refugee camp and, since 1 October, has tightened a siege on northern Gaza. [14] More than 50,000 people have been ordered to leave, however many are trapped in their homes amid relentless bombardment and fighting. [15]

"The Israeli military have imposed a complete seige on northern Gaza, isolating it entirely from the rest of Gaza and threatening the lives of Palestinians. They have prevented the entry of essential supplies to northern Gaza. Dozens of bodies are stranded on the roads as ongoing and intense Israeli bombardment has prevented their retrieval. Infrastructure has been destroyed, making movement through the area [to flee] nearly impossible."

AFH Palestine Country Manager

The Israeli-designated "humanitarian zone" now covers just 13% of Gaza, with a staggering population density of over 30,000 people per square kilometre, intensifying the already dire conditions. [16] Israel continues to systematically block international humanitarian assistance. [17] The continued forcible transfers of civilians from northern Gaza will intensify the already dire humanitarian crisis. With resources already stretched thin, the area cannot support the influx of hundreds of thousands more people. This surge will place unbearable pressure on food supplies, exhaust dwindling water sources and overcrowded shelters, and push already overwhelmed medical services to the brink of collapse.

The UK must urgently address its potential complicity in violations of international law and take concrete actions to oppose Israel's genocidal acts, forcible transfer of Palestinians, and annexation in Gaza.

Israel has been granted a unique status of impunity regarding violations of international law. This situation allows Israel to operate with no accountability for actions that contravene various international agreements, including multiple resolutions from the United Nations and directives from the International Court of Justice. The lack of effective repercussions has fostered a climate where legal norms can be disregarded without consequence.

Israel must be compelled to cease its assault on Palestinians in Gaza and comply with the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) January 2024 order to take "*immediate and effective measures*" to protect Palestinians from the risk of genocide. [18] Israel must halt all actions that aim to destroy, displace, or forcibly transfer the population and ensure the safe return of displaced individuals to their homes, in accordance with the Genocide Convention's prohibition of acts intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. [19] In accordance with the July 2024 Advisory Opinion of the ICJ, Israel must also be compelled to comply with its international legal obligations by withdrawing from the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and ensuring the protection of the civilian population in line with IHL. [20]

Immediate measures should include suspending ALL arms transfers - including F-35 parts - and halting trade agreements until serious breaches of international law are resolved. Additionally, the UK must demand immediate access for aid, medical resources, fuel and other vital supplies, and oppose the transfer of humanitarian aid responsibilities to the Israeli military. Access for international missions must be granted immediately and the vital role of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) must be supported. Strengthening support for local Palestinian organisations as key responders is also critical to addressing overwhelming humanitarian needs.

Legal Frameworks



OCCUPYING POWER RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, an occupying power must protect the safety, well-being, and dignity of civilians under its control. It has a duty to ensure that civilians are treated humanely and that their basic needs are met. [21] [22]



OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION

The Genocide Convention imposes an obligation on all states to prevent and punish genocide. This duty applies once a state knows, or should reasonably know, of a serious risk of genocide. [23]



FORCIBLE TRANSFER AND EVACUATIONS UNDER IHL

International humanitarian law prohibits the forcible transfer of civilians during armed conflict, considering it a violation of their rights. While temporary evacuations for safety or military purposes may be allowed, they must adhere to specific conditions, including the guarantee of return to homes and ensuring access to basic needs such as food and shelter. [24]



ICJ RULING ON THE ILLEGAL OCCUPATION

The ICJ advised that Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constitutes an unlawful occupation and highlights that such actions may amount to apartheid, as defined under international law. The ICJ called for Israel to end its unlawful occupation and urged third-party states to refrain from recognising or aiding in the continuation of this occupation. [25]



ICJ RULING ON GENOCIDE RISK

In the South Africa v. Israel case, the ICJ recognised a "real and imminent" risk of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. The Court directed Israel to avoid any actions that could increase this risk and reaffirmed Israel's obligations under the Genocide Convention. [26]

Summary

Findings reinforce that Israel has failed to provide clear communication or safe "evacuation" routes, and the so-called "humanitarian zones" offer no guarantees of safety or return. These repeated displacements, often triggered by vague and conflicting, poorly defined, "evacuation orders" - with some respondents not having ever directly received an "evacuation order", but some having received "evacuation orders" up to 16 times - have created a cycle of fear, insecurity, and trauma for civilians, some of whom have been forced to flee in less than an hour, and sometimes in the middle of the night. The locations of the so-called "humanitarian zones" and instructions for "evacuations" are unclear or contain conflicting information about designated routes, and with no information about safe locations or shelters. Misinformation, vague instructions, and restricted access to communication channels exacerbate confusion and fear, preventing civilians from making informed decisions. These measures offer no guarantees of safety or return.

Israel has not protected "evacuation routes" or exempted them from military attacks. Military threats, including bombardment, ground incursions, and the presence of unexploded ordnance are key barriers for civilians being forced to leave their homes. Many have chosen not to leave at all due to health issues, including disabilities or conflict-related injuries, psychological factors such as fear and trauma, caregiving responsibilities, or simply the belief that nowhere in Gaza is safe. Further barriers include financial constraints preventing access to transportation, lack of fuel, and fear of the unknown. Civilians who remain in a besieged area do not lose their protected status under International Law, and must not be forced to flee in order to receive aid. [27]

Instead of providing safety, the "humanitarian zones" remain unsafe as Israeli forces continue to attack them. [28] The zones lack the essential infrastructure needed to support displaced civilians. Conditions in designated "humanitarian zones" are described as "poor" or "very poor" by nearly 75% of respondents. There are critical shortages of food and clean water, with 86.75% reporting insufficient food and 68.67% struggling to access clean drinking water. The healthcare situation is dire, with 80.72% lacking adequate medical care. The population is facing starvation, with the latest IPC report, published on 17 October 2024, warning that Gaza is on the brink of famine. [29] Water is scarce and often unclean, and medical supplies are routinely blocked at the border. An independent UN Commission of Inquiry has found that Israel has implemented a policy to destroy Gaza's healthcare system, concluding that Israeli forces have committed the crime against humanity of extermination. [30] Over half of Palestinians forced to leave received no humanitarian assistance during "evacuation", and among those who did receive aid, 92% relied on local NGOs, which are underfunded and overstretched as international organisations face restrictions imposed by Israel's blockade.

Extended Findings



Israel's so-called "evacuation" orders are unclear and misleading, often issued with little notice - sometimes under an hour - frequently late at night, and have forced the majority of the population into shrinking, poorly defined "humanitarian zones." Rather than serving as a civilian protection measure, this practice places civilians in severe danger and spreads fear throughout the population.

Lack of clear information:

85.54% of respondents reported difficulty accessing reliable information about "evacuations". The lack of communication tools (83.13%), misinformation (61.45%), and unreliable news sources (53.01%) have created confusion and fear, leaving civilians without trustworthy updates. 35% of respondents have never received an "evacuation order" directly. 21.69% of respondents couldn't understand "evacuation" instructions. This confusion has made it impossible for civilians to make informed, timely decisions, further increasing their sense of fear and vulnerability.

Frequent, unclear "evacuation orders", without defined boundaries:

The Israeli military's division of Gaza into numbered blocks created confusion among residents, as the boundaries were unclear, making it difficult for people to identify which block their homes were in. This caused uncertainty and fear. Nearly all respondents (98.15%) have been displaced multiple times. Some have received up to 16 "evacuation orders". 24.07% have received evacuation orders ten times or more. These repetitive orders have provided no safety, forcing civilians to move again and again from one unsafe place to another. Constant movement has disrupted families and deepened the trauma of displacement, leaving many unsure of where to go or what is safe.

Ineffective advance warning:

35.19% of respondents were given less than one hour to evacuate. This timeframe is not effective advance warning. Respondents described having no time to gather essential belongings or prepare for relocation. Most were forced to flee within three hours. 27.71% of respondents have on at least one occasion been issued "evacuation orders" to flee at night (12 AM - 6 AM). A significant 20% have received "evacuation orders" in the evening (6 PM - 12 AM). This heightens the danger civilians face, as they are often forced to flee in haste, sometimes in the dark. Those forced to flee at night face increased risks due to being asleep, reduced visibility and lack of preparedness.



Military forces repeatedly strike these so-called "evacuation" routes and "humanitarian zones". Civilians face lethal barriers like unexploded ordnance (UXO), restricted access to transportation, healthcare, psychological support, and enforced family separations, all systematically preventing escape. Though the intensity of Israel's assault varies by region, it has collectively targeted the entire population, leaving nowhere in Gaza safe.

Targeting of "evacuation" routes and "humanitarian zones":

65% of respondents cited military threats, including relentless bombardment, as a primary concern to "evacuation". Many feared crossfire (55%), and 10% were concerned about unexploded ordnance (UXO) along the "evacuation" routes. Israel has not ensured that "evacuation" routes are safe or protected from military attacks, putting civilians at grave risk while they attempt to flee.

Financial and logistical barriers:

45% of respondents could not access or afford transportation to evacuate, and 25% encountered blocked routes, leaving them trapped. Many cited a lack of fuel as a barrier. Financial strain and restricted movement have made it nearly impossible for many to comply with "evacuation orders".

Health and psychological barriers:

Many respondents could not evacuate due to health issues, such as conflict-related injuries, disabilities, or caregiving responsibilities for vulnerable family members.

People from marginalised groups face heightened risks. Family separations are common, and the emotional toll is severe as many experience fear, trauma, and attachment to their homes, making it psychologically difficult to leave.



The deliberate restriction of essential humanitarian aid - food, water, shelter, hygiene products, and medical supplies - during so-called "evacuations" and within designated "humanitarian zones" reveals a clear intent to eliminate conditions necessary for survival of the population. This deprivation is further intensified by Israel's blockade and relentless attacks on homes, schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure.

Poor conditions in the “humanitarian zones”:

Nearly 75% of respondents described the conditions in “humanitarian zones” as poor (38.89%) or very poor (35.19%), with overcrowded shelters and unsanitary living conditions. Overcrowding, lack of privacy, and deteriorating shelter conditions have made these zones uninhabitable, yet civilians have no other option.

Destruction of food systems and food insecurity:

86.75% of people reported insufficient food. Of these, 77.1% received food that was nutritionally inadequate, while 7.23% reported that the food they received was spoiled or contaminated. Hunger and malnutrition are spreading rapidly, and 7.23% of respondents have no food at all, signalling an imminent humanitarian collapse, starvation and famine.

Destruction of water systems and limited water:

68.67% of respondents are struggling to access clean drinking water, with 21% receiving unsafe water and 18% having no access to clean water at all. Dehydration and the risk of waterborne diseases are increasing, further endangering the health of displaced civilians.

Destruction of medical infrastructure and blocking of medical supplies:

80.72% of respondents have no access to adequate medical care. The lack of medical supplies and poor hygiene is causing widespread disease, with 66.27% citing an increase in diseases and infection and 43.37% suffering from gastrointestinal issues due to contaminated water.

The healthcare crisis in these zones is deepening, leaving civilians without the medical attention they desperately need.



Local NGOs are the main providers of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, delivering critical assistance despite operating under bombardment, being underfunded and overstretched, as international organisations face restrictions due to Israel's blockade.

Local NGOs are the primary source of humanitarian assistance:

53% of respondents received no humanitarian assistance during “evacuation”. Among those who did receive support, 92% stated that local NGOs were their primary source of aid. International organisations were involved in 76% of cases, but local groups have been the backbone of the response. 28% of respondents received support from community members.

Local NGOs are carrying the humanitarian effort, crucially offering access, a better understanding of the local context, trust by communities, and sustainability.

Israel's so-called "evacuation" orders are unclear and misleading, often issued with little notice - sometimes under an hour - frequently late at night, and have forced the majority of the population into shrinking, poorly defined "humanitarian zones." Rather than serving as a civilian protection measure, this practice places civilians in severe danger and spreads fear throughout the population.

"The Israeli military has divided Gaza into numbered blocks. However, the areas have been designated in such a way that residents are often unclear about which block their homes fall under. For instance, an evacuation order may direct people to leave 'Block 4,' but without clear boundaries, many are left uncertain about where they belong."

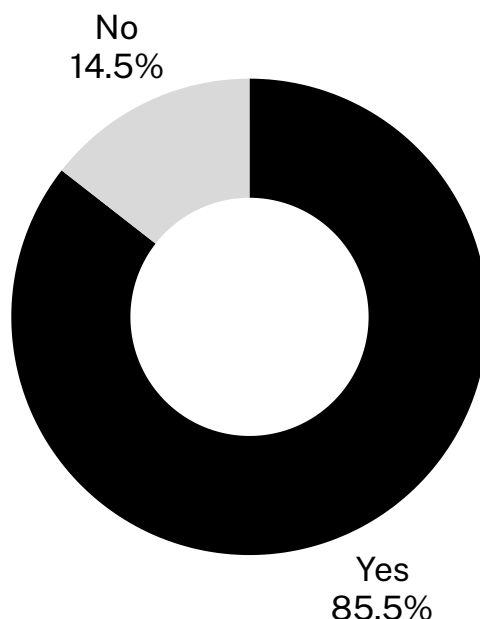
AFH Gaza Team Leader

All 83 respondents described a lack of clear information about "evacuation" routes and safe locations. The maps in Israel's "evacuation" system for Gaza deployed a grid-based layout that divides the territory into blocks. Each block is numbered, supposedly allowing the Israeli military to issue targeted evacuation orders by specifying the numbered blocks civilians should "evacuate" from.

Accessing the maps was difficult for many civilians due to limited electricity and frequent telecommunications outages. An overwhelming 86% of respondents (71 people) reported difficulties, with the lack of communication tools such as mobile phones and internet being the most significant barrier, affecting 83.13% of respondents. Reports indicate that the QR codes which access an online system, which is inaccessible to those without power or network access and is a key barrier to "evacuation". [31]

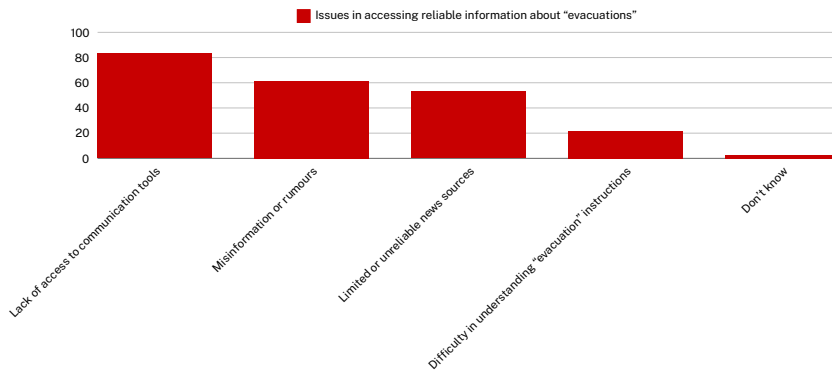
61% of individuals encountered misinformation or rumours, and 53% cited limited or unreliable information sources as a major obstacle, leaving them without trustworthy updates. A smaller but still concerning 22% (18 people) said they faced difficulty in understanding "evacuation" or safety instructions. "Evacuation" warnings were known to be inconsistent, with boundaries not aligning with the block numbers listed, causing further confusion. These challenges severely undermine civilians' ability to make informed, timely decisions during transfer, increasing their risk in an already dangerous environment.

Have you experienced any challenges with access to reliable information about "evacuations"?



83 out of 83 respondents answered this question. The percentages are based on all 83 respondents.

What have been the main issues you face in accessing reliable information about “evacuations”?

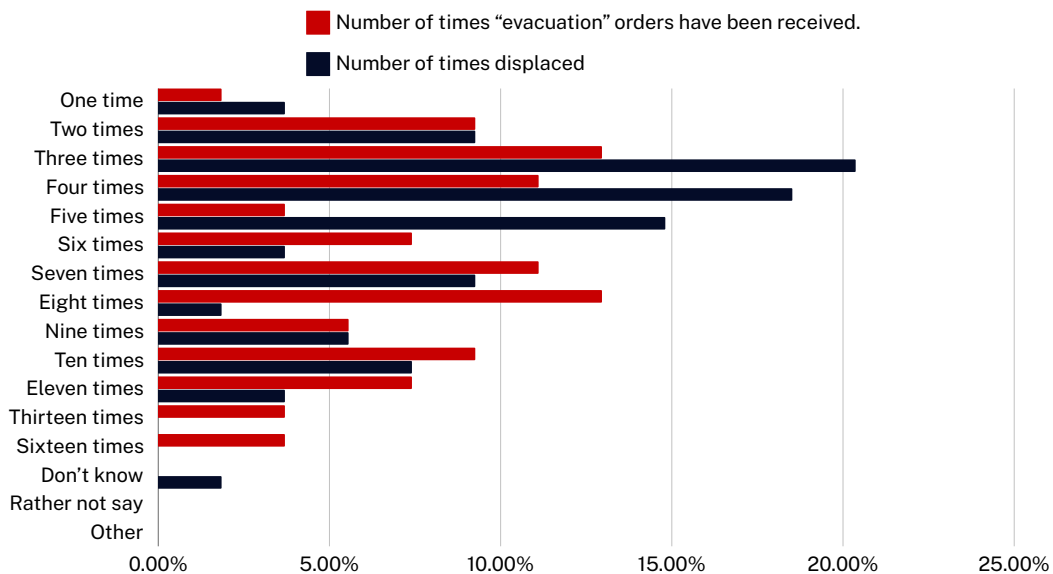


83 out of 83 respondents answered this question. The percentages are based on all 83 respondents.

100% of the respondents of this survey had been displaced at least once, yet only 65% of respondents have received “evacuation orders”, which is concerning given that they have already had to evacuate. This suggests that a significant portion of the population may be left without critical “evacuation” warnings, putting them at even greater risk.

Approximately 98.15% of the 54 respondents received orders more than once, with some receiving orders as many as 16 times. Nearly a quarter of respondents received orders 7-8 times while approximately 24.07% of the 54 respondents have received “evacuation orders” ten times or more.

Comparison of number of vacuation orders received and instances of forcible transfer



“Evacuation orders” are often issued at night with minimal notice, sometimes giving civilians less than an hour to respond

Over 35% of respondents reported being given less than one hour to evacuate after receiving the order, a dangerously short timeframe that severely limits their ability to gather belongings and find safety. The majority of respondents had less than six hours, highlighting the extreme pressure and lack of adequate time for civilians to respond to life-threatening situations.

The timing of “evacuation orders”, particularly those issued at night, also posed significant challenges for civilians. While 33% of respondents received orders in the early morning (6 AM - 12 PM), a notable 20% were forced to flee during the night (12 AM - 6 AM), when people are most likely to be sleeping. Nighttime orders severely hinder civilians' ability to respond quickly, as they must evacuate in the dark, which reduces visibility and increases the potential for disorientation and confusion. Evacuating at night also adds additional risks, as people are less prepared, and navigating unsafe or unfamiliar routes becomes even more dangerous.

“لم تتوفر المدة الكافية لتحديد مكان آمن ومناسب للعائلة للانتقال إليها”

"Not enough time was given to determine a safe and suitable place for the family to move"

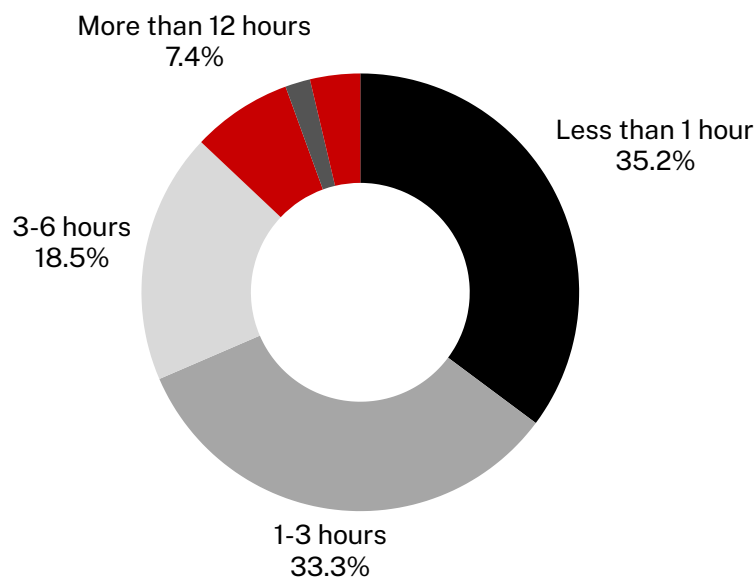
“لا يوجد مكان امن”

“There is no safe place”

“عدم معرفة الاماكن التي وصلناها صعوبة التنقل”

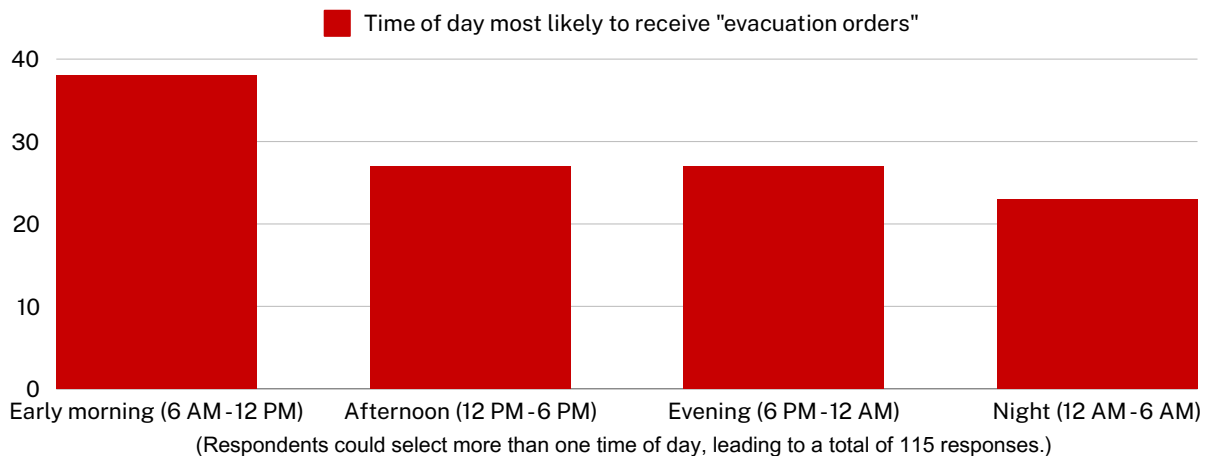
“Not knowing the places we reached and the difficulty of movement”

How much time were you given to “evacuate” after receiving the order?



54 out of 83 respondents answered this question. (29 were without data.) The percentages are based on the 54 respondents who answered.

What time are you most likely to receive “evacuation” orders?



Military forces repeatedly strike these so-called “evacuation” routes and “humanitarian zones”. Civilians face lethal barriers like unexploded ordnance (UXO), restricted access to transportation, healthcare, psychological support, and enforced family separations, all systematically preventing escape. Though the intensity of Israel's assault varies by region, it has collectively targeted the entire population, leaving nowhere in Gaza safe.

Military threats

Military threats were the most commonly reported concern civilians faced when being ordered to “evacuation”, with 65% of the 54 respondents citing this as a primary concern. Among these, 55% mentioned fear of being caught in crossfire or targeted by military forces. Additionally, 10% highlighted the presence of landmines or unexploded ordnance along “evacuation” routes.

Physical barriers, such as roadblocks and destroyed infrastructure, were cited by 25% of 54 respondents. Civilians attempting to flee encountered blocked or damaged routes, making it impossible to reach safer areas.

“Repeated bombing and the surrounding environment” | القصف المتكرر والبيئة المحيطة

“Bombing and occupation” | القصف والاحتياح

“Indiscriminate bombing and gunfire” | القصف العشوائي واطلاق النار

“Transportation routes are unsafe” | طرق النقل غير آمنة

“Evacuation routes are unsafe” | طرق الاخلاء غير امنة

Financial constraints

Financial barriers were reported by 45% of the 54 respondents, who highlighted the inability to afford the costs of transportation, fuel shortages or the high cost of transportation and fuel as the most significant concern to “evacuation”. This critical shortage makes it impossible for many families to comply with “evacuation orders”, leaving them trapped in dangerous areas.

“Lack of suitable place and insufficient funds” | عدم توفر المكان المناسب وقلة الحصول على المال الكاف

Family separation and health issues

Health-related barriers affected 15% of respondents, with the lack of medical care, conflict-related injuries, and the responsibility of caring for sick or elderly family members creating significant obstacles to “evacuation”. Vulnerable groups, such as older people, persons with disabilities, the sick and injured, and pregnant women, face even greater risks during forced displacements. Repeated displacements also contribute to family separation—reported by 20% of respondents—with 15% staying behind to care for at-risk relatives. These disruptions often result in the loss of essential assistive devices like hearing aids, glasses, or wheelchairs, further limiting access to information and aid, and increasing the risk of exclusion from critical humanitarian assistance.

“Health problems” | مشاكل صحية

“Physical problems and injuries” | مشاكل جسدية واصابات

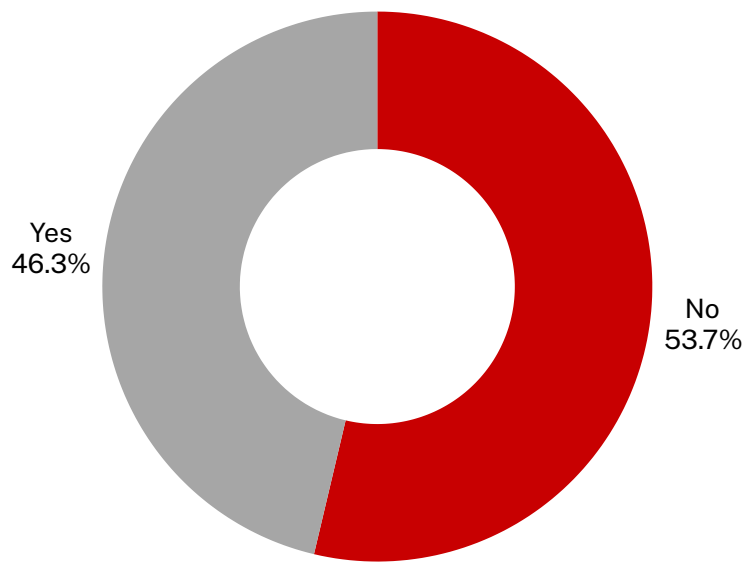
“Spread of diseases and air raids” | انتشار الأمراض والقصف الجوي

“My son was injured by the bombing” | إصابة ابني من القصف

The deliberate restriction of essential humanitarian aid - food, water, shelter, hygiene products, and medical supplies - during so-called "evacuations" and within designated "humanitarian zones" reveals a clear intent to eliminate conditions necessary for survival of the population. This deprivation is further intensified by Israel's blockade and relentless attacks on homes, schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure.

Another alarming finding from the survey is the sheer number of evacuees who reported not receiving any humanitarian assistance during "evacuation". Of the 54 respondents, 53% stated that they did not receive any form of assistance, a staggering failure of the international community in compelling Israel to fulfil its obligations under IHL and stop blocking aid.

Did you receive any humanitarian assistance during the "evacuation" process?



54 out of 83 respondents answered this question. (29 were without data.)The percentages are based on the 54 respondents who answered.

The data highlights the severe inadequacy of the living conditions at the locations displaced civilians evacuated to. Out of the 54 respondents who answered the question about the conditions at the "humanitarian zone" they "evacuated" to, 74% rated the conditions as either poor or very poor, with 39% of respondents describing the conditions as poor, and 35% classing them as very poor. Only a small percentage of respondents (7%) felt that the conditions were good, and just 2% rated them as very good. Other respondents highlighted a lack of knowledge of the area and the inability to secure safe and sufficient accommodation in the supposed 'humanitarian safe zones'.

“لعدم توافر الخدمات. ومراكز للايواء بشكل كافي”

“Due to the lack of services and adequate shelters “

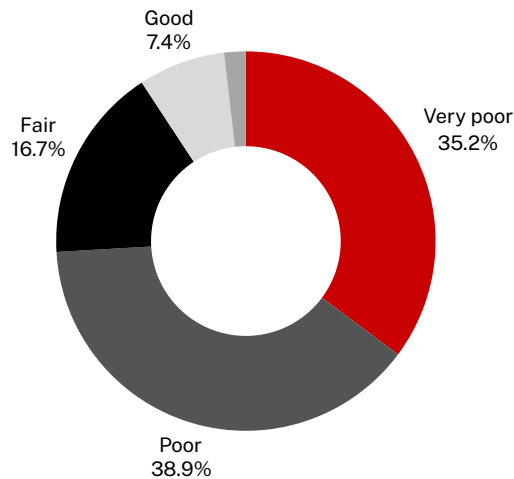
“عدم الحصول على المكان المناسب”

“Inability to secure a suitable place”

“وجودي في خيمة لا يمكنني من الشعور بالسلامة على سبيل المثال الحيوانات ، الرصاص الطائش أو السرقات”

“Being in a tent does not allow me to feel safe, for example, due to animals, stray bullets, or theft”

How would you describe the conditions at the place you “evacuated” to?



54 out of 83 respondents answered this question. (29 were without data.) The percentages are based on the 54 respondents who answered.

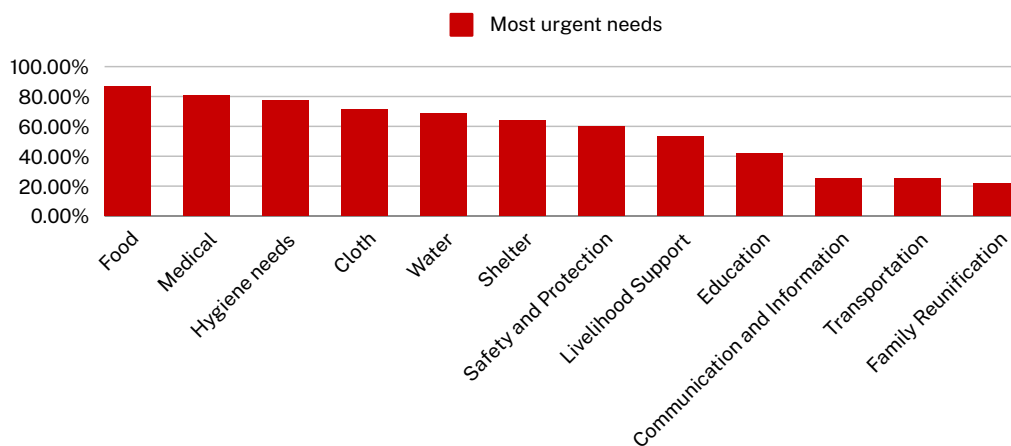
The situation in the “humanitarian zone” is already at breaking point, with displaced civilians facing extreme shortages of food, water, medical supplies and shelter. This area, like the rest of Gaza, has not been spared from Israeli air strikes, proving it is far from safe. Overcrowded and suffering from appalling sanitary conditions, respondents describe facing severe shortages of food, clean water, medical supplies, education, livelihoods and hygiene products, leading to outbreaks of infections and skin diseases. Basic items like shampoo and detergent are either unavailable or priced beyond the reach of most residents.

“Entire neighborhoods have been wiped out, leaving thousands without homes. They are forced to flee to areas without basic needs. The suffering has been immense, especially for children and the most marginalised. Food, water, electricity, and healthcare are nearly impossible to access.

The trauma and loss are overwhelming, and those who survived face unimaginable pain every single day.”

AFH Palestine Country Manager

What are your most urgent needs?

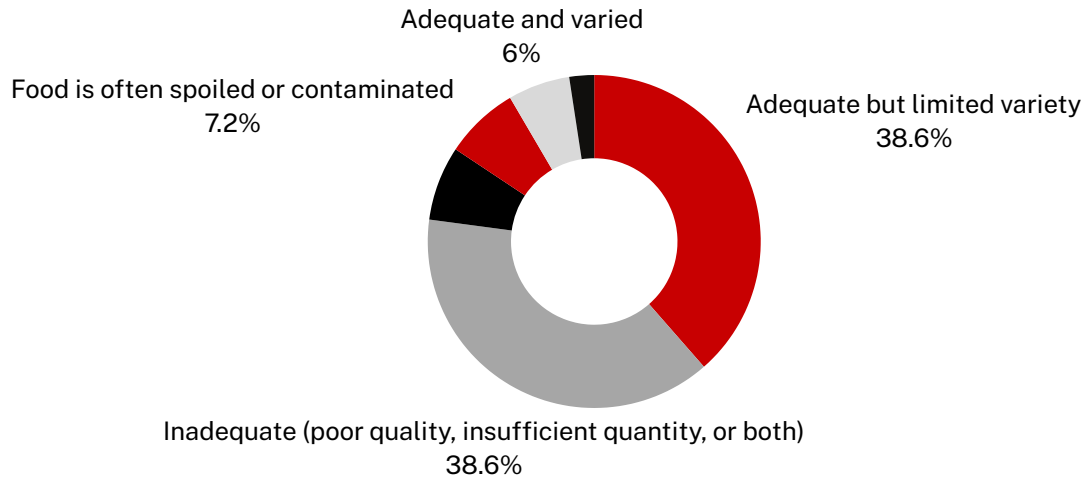


The total number of respondents is 83, and there were 561 total selections (since respondents could choose multiple options).

Food insecurity

Among the 83 survey respondents, 87% identified food as their most urgent need. A significant majority, 77%, reported that the food they receive is either inadequate in quality, insufficient in quantity, or lacks variety, leaving them nutritionally deprived. Alarming, 7% stated that the food is often spoiled or contaminated, posing serious health risks, and 7% of respondents reported having no food available at all.

What are your urgent food needs and quality concerns?



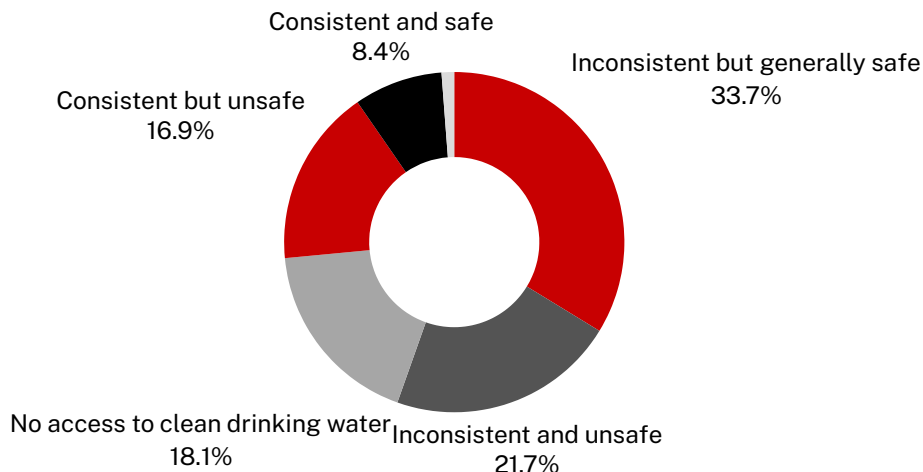
83 out of 83 respondents answered this question. (0 were without data.) The percentages are based on all 83 respondents.

Water shortages

Access to clean water is similarly insufficient. 69% of respondents stated that they are struggling to access clean drinking water. Of those, 34% have inconsistent but generally safe access, while 22% reported that the water they receive is unsafe, and 18% have no access to clean drinking water at all.

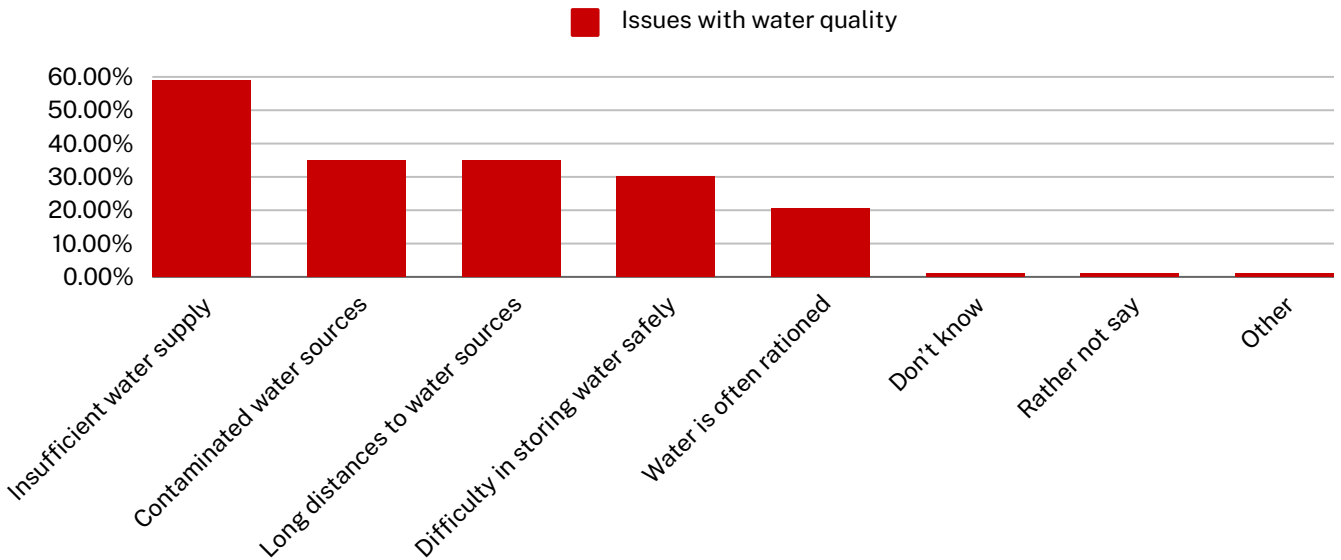
The most common problem reported is an insufficient water supply (59.04%), indicating this as a major concern. A significant number also reported issues with contaminated water sources and long distances to water sources, each selected by 34.94% of respondents. Additionally, 30.12% of respondents face challenges in safely storing water, and 20.48% experience water rationing.

How would you describe your access to water?



83 out of 83 respondents answered this question. (0 were without data.) The percentages are based on all 83 respondents.

Are there issues with water quality or availability?

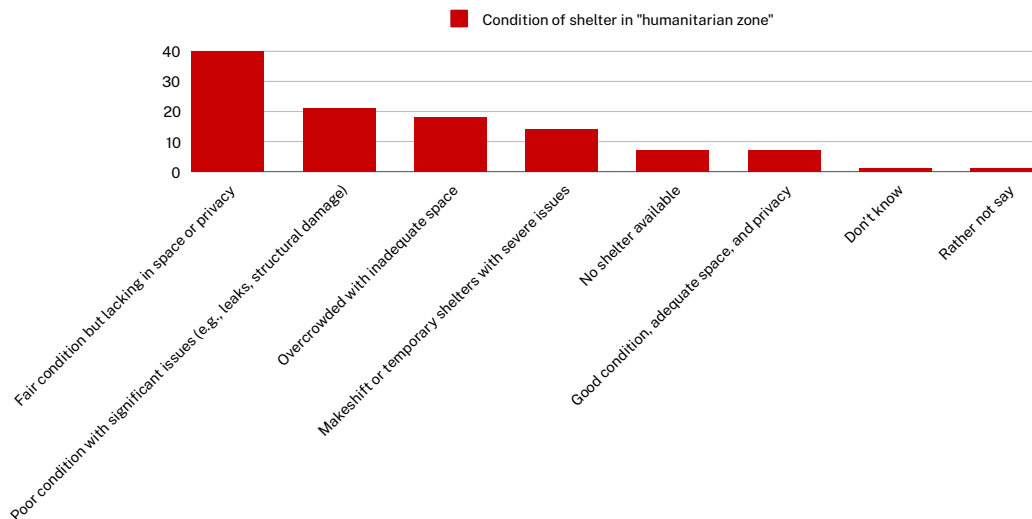


The total number of respondents is 83, and there were 152 total selections (since respondents could choose multiple options)

Shelter

The lack of adequate shelter in the “humanitarian zone” presents another urgent issue. 64% of respondents reported that their shelters are insufficient. Of these, 48% said their shelters provide only minimal protection from the weather and are overcrowded and lack privacy. 25% of respondents reported significant structural damage, leaks or other critical issues with their shelter. Meanwhile, 17% are living in makeshift or temporary shelters with severe deficiencies, and 8% have no shelter at all.

How would you describe your access to and quality of shelter?



The total number of respondents is 83, and there were 131 total selections (since respondents could choose multiple options)

Medical needs and health risks

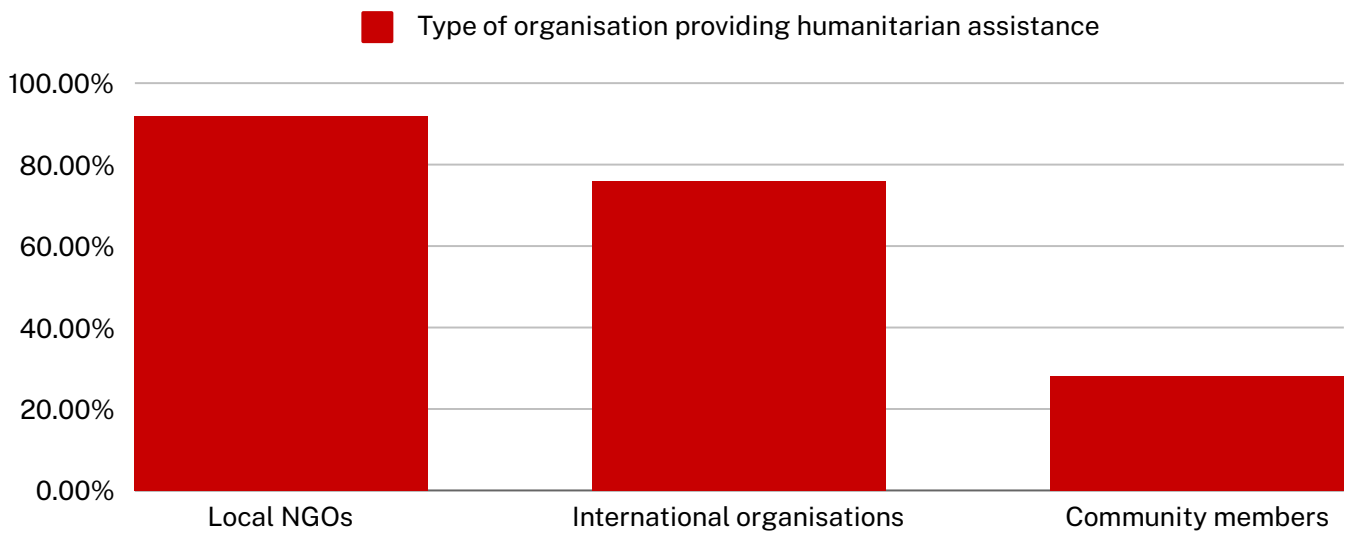
Medical supplies and access to healthcare remain highly insufficient in the “humanitarian zone”. 80% of respondents reported not having access to adequate medical care. Health conditions are deteriorating rapidly due to unsanitary conditions, lack of hygiene products and contaminated water. 66% reported an increased risk of infections and diseases, with 43% suffering from gastrointestinal issues due to poor sanitation.

Local NGOs are key providers of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, delivering critical assistance despite operating under bombardment, being underfunded and overstretched, as international organisations face restrictions due to Israel's blockade.

Despite the gaps in international assistance, the data reveals that local organisations have been the most present and active in delivering aid. Among those who received humanitarian assistance during “evacuation”, 92% reported that local NGOs were the primary source of support. In contrast, international organisations were involved in 76% of cases, and 28% of respondents received support from community members.

The pivotal role that local organisations play in supporting displaced populations cannot be overstated. These organisations have been at the forefront of humanitarian response, filling critical gaps in services and resources. However, it is clear that they are stretched to their limits and cannot meet the immense needs on their own.

Which type of organisation have you received support from?



The total number of respondents is 25, and there were 49 total selections (since respondents could choose multiple options).



Findings reveal a brutal, deliberate pattern by Israel of systematically inflicting life-threatening conditions on Palestinians in Gaza, involving relentless bombardment, forcible transfers, deprivation of resources essential to the survival of the population of Gaza. A reasonable inference can be drawn that these actions are intended to destroy, in whole or in part, the Palestinian population in Gaza, aligning with Article II of the Genocide Convention, particularly subsections (a) “killing members of the group” and (c) “inflicting conditions of life intended to destroy.” The Israeli military has constructed roads and bases across 26% of Gaza, signaling a permanent presence, alongside reports of a government intent to annex Gaza. This systematic destruction of a people serves not only as a grave atrocity but also as a calculated tool for territorial expansion.

We reiterate our calls on the UK to end its potential or actual complicity in violations of international law, and act urgently to:

- Unequivocally and publicly oppose Israel’s forcible transfer of Palestinians and annexation in northern Gaza, ensuring that civilians are protected and their urgent needs met.
- Forcible transfers of civilians must cease immediately, and Israel must be compelled to facilitate the safe return of displaced Palestinians to their homes. International actors should monitor and enforce this requirement, ensuring Israel does not impede the right of return for forcibly transferred people and communities.
- Suspend all arms transfers, including F-35 parts, which continue to facilitate atrocities committed by Israeli forces.
- Take bold and concrete steps to ensure Israel complies with the ICJ’s orders to prevent genocide, and implement the Court’s Advisory Opinion to refrain from aiding or assisting Israel’s unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory, and to take immediate measures to ensure its rapid termination. Formally recognise Israel as state carrying out policies of apartheid.
- Suspend all trade agreements or negotiations with Israel pending a thorough review and the cessation of serious breaches of IHL. Trade and economic relations must not support or enable ongoing violations.
- Implement a territorial clause in all trade relations with Israel, explicitly excluding the applicability of any agreements to the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967.
- Demand that Israel increase humanitarian aid access in all of Gaza. Israel must lift its blockades and allow for the unhindered entry of essential supplies, particularly food, water, fuel, medical supplies, and hygiene products, which are critically lacking.
- Access for International missions must be granted immediately and the vital role of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) must be supported.
- Strongly oppose transferring Gaza’s humanitarian aid responsibility to the Israeli military, and any other actions that risk compromising impartiality, violating international law, or escalating security concerns.
- Urgently increase financial and logistical support to local Palestinian organisations, particularly WROs, WLOs, DLOs and organisations led by other marginalised groups, to ensure they are able to scale up operations and address the overwhelming humanitarian needs. Advocate for other donors to follow suit.

Methods

This research was based on a survey conducted by Action For Humanity's Gaza team in a designated "humanitarian zone" between Al-Mawasi and Deir Al-Balah, where Action For Humanity shelters house XXX individuals. The goal of this assessment was to understand the conditions in the "humanitarian zone" and the experience of "evacuation" since October 7, 2023, not solely focusing on the situation since October 1, 2024. That said, 46 respondents are from Northern Gaza, including Jabalia refugee camp.

AFH Gaza team is operating in an incredibly dangerous and stressful environment, but the safety and well-being of the team was our top priority, and we were led by them in determining the timing and appropriateness of the survey. To minimise disruption and stress, the survey was integrated into broader aid activities.

83 people responded to the survey. Where possible, respondents were asked open-ended questions to allow for greater consultation and more meaningful insights. Conducted digitally, the survey adhered to GDPR regulations to ensure the privacy and protection of participants' data. Informed consent was explained clearly, and participants were free to withdraw at any time. Counselling and referral services were also made available to support participants.

End notes

[1] <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session55/advance-versions/a-hrc-55-73-auv.pdf>

[2] 225. Article 4(2)(c) of the Statute provides that genocide can be committed by "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part": <https://cld.irmct.org/notions/show/173/conditions-of-life-calculated-to-bring-about-physical-destruction>

[3] Historical precedents, such as the Armenian Genocide and the Circassian Genocide, illustrate how acts of genocide have been employed as a means to eliminate a specific population, with the intent to consolidate territorial control.

[4] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/israel-must-rescind-evacuation-order-northern-gaza-and-comply-international>

[5] <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-233-gaza-strip-enarhe>

[6] <https://www.map.org.uk/news/archive/post/1632--amap-sides-firmly-with-the-healthcare-system-and-its-service-of-the-people-voices-from-nasser-hospital>

[7] <https://www.savethechildren.net/blog/education-under-attack-gaza-nearly-90-school-buildings-damaged-or-destroyed>

[8] <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/inflicting-unprecedented-suffering-and-destruction-seven-ways-the-government-of-621591/>

[9] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/02/rebuilding-homes-in-gaza-will-cost-40bn-and-take-16-years-un-finds>

[10] <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/untangling-reality-famine-gaza>

[11] <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/security-aviation/2024-07-08/ty-article-static/.premium/israel-seized-26-of-gaza-now-jewish-settlers-see-their-chance/00000190-77cd-d705-a7f5-ffffbc0000>

[12] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cewlqpk9e99o>

[13] Israel's practices of forcible transfer in Gaza have been widely condemned by human rights groups as war crimes and were notably cited by South Africa in its legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where concerns were raised that Israel's actions could amount to genocide: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/gaza-icj-ruling-offers-hope-protection-civilians-enduring-apocalyptic>

[14] <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-229-gaza-strip-enarhe#:~:text=On%206%20October%2C%20the%20Israeli,Palestinian%20armed%20groups%20toward%20Israel>

[15] <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-229-gaza-strip>

[16] <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-206-gaza-strip>

[17] <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/israel-government-continues-to-block-aid-response-despite-icj-genocide-court-ruling-says-oxfam/>

[18] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/gaza-icj-ruling-offers-hope-protection-civilians-enduring-apocalyptic>

[19] <https://www.ecchr.eu/en/glossary/genocide/#:~:text=In%20December%201948%2C%20the%20United,ethnic%2C%20racial%20or%20religious%20group>

[20] <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/204176>

[21] Specifically, Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that the occupying power must ensure the humane treatment of civilians and must respect their rights, safety, and dignity. Furthermore, Article 55 emphasises the duty of the occupying power to ensure the food and medical supplies of the population are adequate.

[22] <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/title/commentary/1958>

[23] https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf

[24] <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule129>

[25] <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/204176>

[26] <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203454>

[27] <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/protection-civilian-population-during-sieges-what-law-says#:~:text=Civilians%20who%20remain%20in%20a,a%20direct%20part%20in%20hostilities>

[28] On 13 and 14 October, at least two mass casualty incidents took place in Deir al Balah governorate. On 13 October, at about 21:30, 22 Palestinians, including 15 children, were killed and 80 others injured, according to the Government Media Office, when Al Mufti UNRWA school sheltering over 6,200 IDPs was shelled in An Nuseirat refugee camp: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-229-gaza-strip>

[29] <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1157986/>

[30] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-inquiry-accuses-israel-crime-extermination-destruction-gaza-health-system-2024-10-10/>

[31] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/02/israeli-grid-system-makes-life-in-gaza-macabre-game-of-battleships-say-aid-workers>