



# Situation in the occupied Palestinian territory

Humanitarian situation in the Strip, continuing tensions  
in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Israel

..... 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2021

## SITUATION

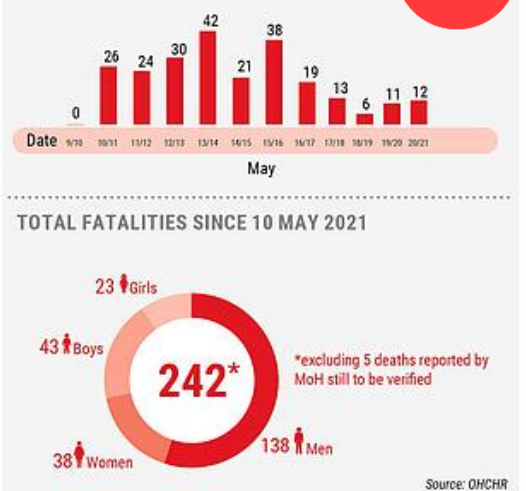
Starting from the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2021, the tensions related to the confiscation of a number of Palestinian houses in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem and the clashes between Israeli settlers, armed forces and Palestinians due to access restrictions to the Old City of Jerusalem, during the holy month of Ramadan, erupted into armed hostilities across all the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. A ceasefire was declared on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May.

### In the Gaza Strip

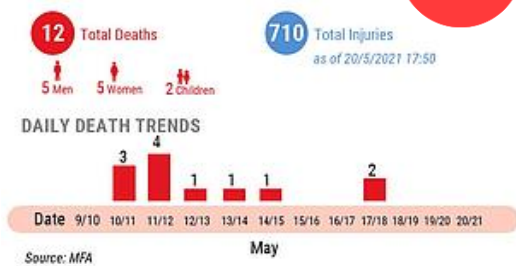
The period between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021 marked one of the most severe escalation in hostilities between Palestinian armed groups in Gaza and Israel Army Forces, not witnessed since 2014. The ceasefire came into force at 2:00 am on Friday the 21<sup>st</sup> of May and was celebrated across the West Bank and Gaza. We World followed closely the unfolding of the events and welcomed the announcement of the ceasefire, yet stressed the need to “[...] ensure that all parties strictly adhere to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the principles of distinction, proportionality and the taking of precautions in attack”.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of writing, the truce has been respected by all parties. Israel has conducted 1.500 air, land and sea strikes over Gaza while armed groups in Gaza targeted Israel with 4.000 rockets and mortars<sup>2</sup>. The population in Gaza lacks a warning and defense system, as well as safe shelters vis-à-vis the highly performative Iron-Dome Israeli defence system.

### Gaza: Palestinian Casualties



### Casualties in Israel



As of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 242 persons are reported dead in the Gaza Strip<sup>3</sup>. Among those victims, 66 children and 38 women (4 of which were pregnant). Total reported injuries are 1.948 (610 children, 398 women). The already compromised humanitarian situation in Gaza dramatically worsened as a result of the latest escalation, with severe damage caused to homes, the supply of basic services and infrastructure (including main roads, hospitals, schools etc.), along with over 77,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

In Israel, 12 casualties in total have been reported as a consequence of the missile strikes, including 2 children and 5 women. Homes, livelihoods and infrastructure were also damaged.

**Infrastructure:** Extensive damage is reported to residential and commercial buildings, schools and infrastructure, including main roads (some of which lead to the hospitals), electricity networks, water installations and agricultural lands. According to Palestinian institutions in the Gaza Strip, 258 buildings, comprising 1.402 housing and commercial units, have been destroyed. 769 housing units suffered major damage and are uninhabitable according to the Shelter Cluster. Additional 14.536 housing units have sustained minor damage.

**Displacement:** According to UNRWA, over 77.000 internally displaced people (IDPs) sought shelter in 58 UNRWA schools. Following the ceasefire, the majority of them have returned home while only 330 remained in UNRWA facilities. Palestinian institutions estimate that around 36.700 people are currently staying with host families.

**Health:** According to the Health Cluster, 17 health facilities in the Strip were damaged<sup>4</sup>. The risk of Covid-19 transmission has increased, especially considering the destruction of the only medical laboratory testing for Covid-19, the huge number of displaced people seeking shelter inside and outside the Designated Emergency Shelters (DES) and the substantial

<sup>1</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2105\\_Gaza%20Statement%20VFinal%20formatted.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2105_Gaza%20Statement%20VFinal%20formatted.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> All information come from UN sources, clusters information and the rapid assessment conducted by We World staff concerning our projects' facilities

<sup>3</sup> Data provided by the Ministry of Health in Gaza

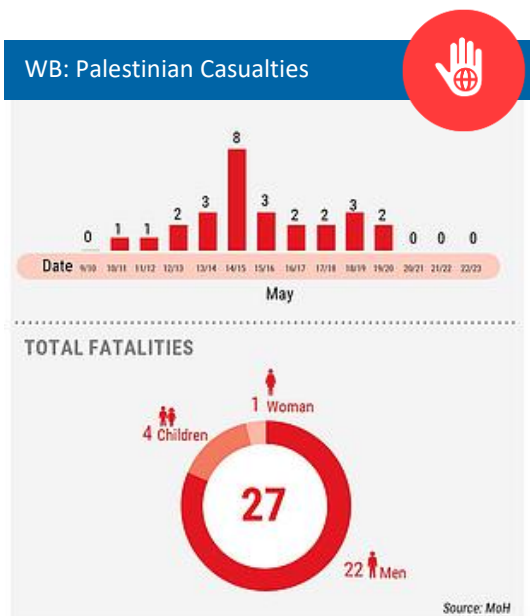
<sup>4</sup> Among them, 6 hospitals and 11 primary healthcare facilities (one of which severely damaged – i.e. Hala Al-Shawa primary health care clinic)

interruption of the vaccination programme<sup>5</sup>

**Water, Sanitation, Hygiene:** Water and Sanitation infrastructures have been heavily compromised, including wastewater networks, wells, pipelines among others. The main desalination plants have re-started their operation, yet with limited capacity due to the power cuts. As a result, around 400,000 people have no regular water supply. Due to the damages on the Gaza Governorates' main sewer pressure pipeline, more than 20,000 cubic meters of untreated water is currently discharged in the sea daily. Additionally, the average power supply across Gaza is 5-7 hours per day on average.

**Education:** The Education Cluster reports that 54 education facilities<sup>6</sup> have been affected during the escalation, some of which were directly hit. The Ministry of Education have announced the end of the school year on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June and the suspension of most final exams except the final cycle's one (Tawjihi), while UNWRA schools remain currently closed. The learning needs of approximately 600.000 students were impacted by the escalation, with additional psychosocial consequences.

**Access:** Regardless of the ceasefire, Erez crossing, the main crossing point between Israel and the Gaza Strip, remains closed since the beginning of the escalation, except for 60 international humanitarian staff who were granted access starting from the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, and for just 7 hours on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, for international staff only. Gazan patients transferred to the West Bank or East Jerusalem for medical treatment before the escalation are still awaiting for access to re-open. The Kerem Shalom crossing (the main crossing for goods) remained closed during the 11 days of the conflict with the exception of just a few hours on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. It was partially re-opened on the 21<sup>st</sup> for the entrance of 50 truckloads of humanitarian goods and 27 of animal fodder. The crossings towards Egypt are now reopened. No indication was given regarding the permission to resume fishing activities, having been forbidden since the beginning of the conflict. At the moment, no information regarding the normal reopening of the Erez crossing is provided.



### In the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 27 Palestinians have been killed and 6,794 were injured during the hostilities with the Israeli forces and groups of Israeli settlers. The episodes of settlers' violence against Palestinians are increasing.

Mass demonstrations across the West Bank welcomed the ceasefire. Following the demonstrations, clashes have been reported all over the West Bank and East Jerusalem with 413 injured Palestinians (including 3 children).

International negotiations are ongoing, yet besides the efforts in formalising the ceasefire, there have not been significant outcomes for what concerns long-term solutions to the conflict.

Lynn Hastings, the Humanitarian Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory and Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace

Process, visited Gaza in the past few days and witnessed the dramatic situation: "[...] *One message I heard repeatedly is that people in Gaza are traumatized more than ever; girls, boys, women and men. The intensity of the strikes were without pause; too many homes lost and loved ones gone. Many people told me they feel helpless – and no longer have hope. Parents say they cannot reassure their children that this won't happen again. How can they after so many wars? [...]*".<sup>7</sup> She also announced that Emergency funds<sup>8</sup> will be released this week to restore access to basic services such as healthcare and water.

UN Secretary General António Guterres welcomed the ceasefire announced on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, stressing the duty of both parties to comply with it, adding that "*Israeli & Palestinian leaders have a responsibility beyond the restoration of calm to start a serious dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict*" while the Security Council released the first statement since the burst of the conflict calling for a "*full-adherence*" to the ceasefire and a retrieve of the two-state solution negotiations<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The main vaccination centre in the north was heavily damaged and it will no longer be able to offer its services. Shortages of Drugs stocks and Human Resources in hospitals have been reported, while the access to main hospitals have been compromised due to damages in the main roads leading to the hospitals, specifically Al-Shifa and Indonesian hospitals. The Health Cluster is conducting a further assessment of health facilities focusing on emergency services' facilities.

<sup>6</sup> Including 46 schools, three kindergartens, one UNRWA vocational center, two Ministry of Education (MoE) directorate buildings and the premises of the Islamic University

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-lynn-hastings-humanitarian-coordinator-occupied-palestinian-territory>

<sup>8</sup> \$18 million from the oPt Humanitarian Fund and \$4 million from the Relief Coordinator in New York

<sup>9</sup> UN Security Council Statement: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1092572>

## WE WORLD INTERVENTION

We World mission in Gaza has currently 6 national staff, with 5 new employees recently having started. At the present, no expatriate staff is deployed in the Strip, and neither were any allowed to enter after the ceasefire was announced. All our Palestinian colleagues and their families are safe, even if the majority had to leave their houses during the bombings and suffered minor damage to their properties.

The implementation of activities has been suspended during the 11 days of escalation due to severe security issues, yet our staff has already restored functioning communication with donors, partners and beneficiaries to assess the status of our implemented activities. Following the declaration of the ceasefire, We World staff in Gaza conducted a rapid assessment on the damages sustained in our previous and ongoing interventions, in order to calculate loss and re-prioritise our action.

In 2020 and 2021, We World interventions in the Gaza Strip were funded by the European Union, AICS, UN OCHA and GIZ, and were focused on: a) improving water supply and water quality by intervening at infrastructural level; b) providing electricity supply through sustainable energy sources in Households and medical facilities; c) construction/rehabilitation of PWD adapted and gender sensitive sanitation facilities; d) innovative and sustainable wastewater management; e) improving the wastewater infrastructure systems.

In the next days, We World, in partnership with Save the Children and ILS LEDA, and with the support of the European Union, will initiate the project "*GREEN: Gaza Resilient Economy and Environment*", aimed at increasing the economic resilience of the Gazan population and preventing long-term aid dependency. We World believes that in this circumstance, the essential humanitarian support aimed at restoring access to the basic needs of the population must be accompanied by actions aimed at rebuilding the social and economic fabric that was heavily damaged by the conflict.

### We World Advocacy

We World has been monitoring closely the 11 days of conflict, [joining the call](#) for an immediate ceasefire. Following the de-escalation, a [public statement](#) was released, together with bilateral lobby activities, to welcome the ceasefire, while calling for compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) . We World launched a [fundraising campaign](#) in support of women and children in the Gaza Strip.

The **rapid assessment conducted by We World staff** has revealed that at least **3 facilities<sup>10</sup>** supported by We World during the last year with GIZ funds were damaged due to the bombing of nearby locations. A **solar energy system (44 panels) located at the health clinic of Palestinian Red Crescent Society in North Gaza was totally destroyed**, with additional damages to doors and windows, for an **estimated value of over 25,000 USD**. In addition to that, another 20 solar panels that were installed at the **desalination plant** in eastern Gaza city were destroyed, with an **estimated cost of 5,000 USD**.

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<sup>10</sup> We World has contributed to improving the WASH and health services for thousands of vulnerable people through the provision of renewable power source (solar energy by panel) for 28 facilities in Gaza strip (7 health care facilities, 3 family centers and 18 water desalination plants).