

FACT SHEET:  
January 19 2009

## Children of the Gaza Crisis

Save the Children is calling for a peaceful solution to the current crisis that endangers the lives of nearly every child in Gaza, and the lives of Israeli children in areas subject to attacks. Save the Children is calling for a cessation of hostilities by all parties including air and ground assaults from Israel and rocket attacks from Gaza. The agency is also seeking free access for humanitarian assistance to allow aid agencies to provide much-needed relief to vulnerable children and so that children and their families can access essential services. Save the Children has to date has reached some 30,000 people, including 16,800 children, with food. The agency has also provided 7,120 people, including 3,987 children, with hygiene kits; 100 parents with baby hygiene kits; and 387 parents with packages of diapers. In addition, Save the Children provided around 2,000 people, including 1,120 children with plastic mats to serve as a barrier between the cold ground and mattresses. We continue to strive to meet the needs of Gaza's vulnerable children and families.

Save the Children seeks to highlight the situation for children living in what the United Nations is calling “a humanitarian crisis coupled with a massive lack of protection for civilians.”

### **Key Facts: Child Protection**

#### **Child casualties:**

- At least 280 children have been killed and 860 wounded as a result of the Gaza conflict since it began 27 December. This number is expected to rise as more deaths are verified. ([Al Mezan](#)).
- No Israeli children have been killed since the latest outbreak of hostilities, and at least one child has been injured. ([Haaretz](#))
- Handicap International estimates that up to 50 percent of people injured, which would mean around 430 children, have sustained severe injuries such as fractures, amputations, burns and head injuries that, without proper rehabilitation, could result in permanent disability. There is also a significant risk for others of becoming permanently disabled as a result of infections, contractures or secondary amputations. ([OCHA](#))

#### **Displaced children:**

- An estimated 200,000 people have been displaced, among them 112,000 children. ([Al Mezan](#))
- As of 19 January, UNRWA was accommodating 46,234 people, among them approximately 25,891 children in 44 shelters across Gaza.
- Reports say an estimated 40 percent of the population of Ashkelon in southern Israel, or 43,970 people including 13,656 children, have left the city. ([IRIN](#))
- On 17 January, a shell hit UNRWA Beit Lahia Boys School, which is being used as a shelter for displaced people. As the shelter was evacuated, another shell hit a classroom, breaking through the roof and exploding on the ground, killing two children. ([OCHA](#))

#### **Child health and well-being:**

- At least 21 incidents of direct and indirect damage to health facilities have been recorded since 27 December, and at least 16 ambulances have been damaged or destroyed. Several facilities, including Dora Pediatrics Hospital, have been hit more than once. ([WHO](#))

#### **Education:**

- At least 61 schools have been damaged or destroyed from airstrikes and related bombardment in Gaza. ([Al Mezan](#))

### **Access to water, sanitation and electricity**

Children, especially infants, are particularly affected by the lack of clean water and electricity.

- Most Gazans are now receiving power intermittently. ([OCHA](#))
- As of 18 January, approximately 400,000 people, among them 224,000 children, are still without running water. ([OCHA](#))
- A sewage pump that carries sewage from Beit Hanoun to the Beit Lahia Wastewater Treatment Plant is still damaged. On 18 January, it was reported that sewage was pouring into the streets of Beit Hanoun at the rate of 30 cubic meters per hour, affecting around 91,727 people including 51,367 children. ([OCHA](#))
- It has now been confirmed by CMWU that all of the two million litres of wastewater in the lagoon at Gaza City Waste Water Treatment Plant, shelled on 10 January, leaked into surrounding agricultural land. ([OCHA](#))
- 80 percent of drinking water in Gaza is not safe for human consumption, according to WHO guidelines. (UNICEF)
- The Gaza Municipality estimates that since 3 January some 3,000–4,000 tons of rubbish have been left uncollected on the streets of Gaza. ([OCHA](#))

### **Health Care**

Lack of access to health care remains critical for infants, children and pregnant women, as movement inside Gaza is extremely dangerous. In addition, 7 hospitals, 9 clinics, and 16 ambulances have been hit and damaged in the course of the conflict, with 13 medical personnel killed and 22 injured in the line of duty. ([WHO](#))

- An estimated 3,600 babies have been born since 27 December. UNFPA remains concerned over reports of premature labor and delivery, and the exposure of premature and newborn infants to cold temperatures from lack of power and heating, putting them at risk of hypothermia.. ([OCHA](#))
- Women who seek obstetric care are not assured of receiving it. There are reports that deliveries are taking place inside homes, often without trained assistance. In Khan Younis, only five specialized obstetricians are working at the Naser hospital. Reaching the facility is extremely difficult for people from remote or rural areas. (MoH)
- Antenatal care services for new mothers resumed on 18 January with 70% attendance. ([OCHA](#))
- WHO warns of the risk of an outbreak of epidemic disease due to unrecovered bodies, many now severely decomposed, and due to the sewage flowing in Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia. ([OCHA](#))
- The childhood vaccination program had virtually ceased between 27 December and 13 January, but has resumed in parts of Gaza. Reduced vaccination coverage could result in outbreaks (of, for example, measles, polio and hepatitis), a risk increased by Gaza's high population density and collapse of basic services, including water and sanitation. ([WHO](#))
- The Al-Quds Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Hospital in south Gaza City was still closed on 18 January after the building was shelled on 15

January. Forty patients were evacuated to Shifa Hospital in Gaza City and 200 people who had been seeking refuge in Al-Quds Hospital are now at an UNRWA shelter. At Al Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital in east Gaza City, staff are working despite the building being damaged on 15 January. ([WHO](#))

- Of 56 Primary Health Care centers managed by the Ministry of Health, 44 are functioning with interruptions. ([WHO](#))

### **Food and Nutrition**

Even before the latest outbreak of violence, 50,000 Gazan children were malnourished; more than two-thirds of all children suffered from vitamin A deficiency and almost half of children under age 2 were anemic. Lack of access to food, clean water and medical supplies exacerbates threats to children's health and well-being. Currently, not enough food is entering via Kerem Shalom crossing. Distribution of food that does enter is limited due to security issues.

- While shops have reopened and access to them has improved in most areas due to the cessation in fighting, families in Gaza continue to face difficulties accessing food due to the shortage of food items on the market, the increase in food prices, and the lack of banknotes. ([OCHA](#))
- On 16 January, three shells hit an UNRWA warehouse at its headquarters in Gaza City — which was sheltering 700 people at the time — igniting a fire that destroyed fuel and tons of food and medicines. ([OCHA](#))
- Gaps are currently reported in infant and child nutritional supplies in Gaza. ([WFP](#))
- Approximately 90 percent of Gaza's population – some 1,275,300 people including 714,168 children – currently depend on food assistance. ([OCHA](#))
- A child in Gaza is five times more likely to be stunted than in a healthy population. ([UNICEF](#))
- The risks of infection or malnutrition from using breast milk substitutes prepared with contaminated water are high, yet three-quarters of Gaza's infants under 6 months of age — around 30,000 babies — are not exclusively breastfed. ([UNICEF](#))

### **Education**

As of 14 January 61 schools have been damaged from airstrikes and related bombardment in Gaza ([Al Mezan](#)). Of these, eight received direct hits. In Israel, two schools have been hit by rockets fired from Gaza.

- Children are expected to miss the first 8 days of the second school term this year, which normally would have begun on January 17, affecting around 441,452 students. ([UNRWA](#)) and ([MoE](#))
- A total of 44 schools are being used as emergency shelters. ([OCHA](#))
- Schools in southern Israel have reopened under strict security rules. ([IRIN](#))
- Eight UNRWA students were killed and another 18 injured while waiting for UN buses. ([OCHA](#))
- The final exams of the current semester were disrupted and have been postponed because of the ongoing conflict. ([OCHA](#))

### **General Gaza Statistics**

- The total population of Gaza is 1,417,000. (PCBS)
- The total number of children in Gaza is approximately 793,520, or 56% of the population. (PCBS)
- There are a total of 1,048,125 refugees in Gaza, or 74% of the total population. Among them, approximately 586,950 are children. (UNRWA)

For Case Studies and video documentation, please visit:  
<http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/>

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