



## COI QUERY

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| <b>Country of Origin</b>                          | <b>PALESTINE - GAZA STRIP</b>  |
| <b>Main subject</b>                               | <b>Security situation, civilian casualties, damage to civilian infrastructure and displacement in the Gaza Strip, between 1 May 2020-31 May 2021</b>   |
| <b>Question(s)</b>                                | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <a href="#">What was the security situation during the reference period in Gaza?</a></li><li>2. <a href="#">What was the impact of conflict on civilians and on civilian infrastructure during the reference period in Gaza?</a></li><li>3. <a href="#">What was the level of displacement during the reference period in Gaza?</a></li></ol> |
| <b>Date of completion</b>                         | 8 June 2021  |
| <b>Query Code</b>                                 | Q10-2021   |
| <b>Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)</b> | N/A  |

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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision-making authorities. The answer was finalised on 8 June 2021. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

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# COI QUERY RESPONSE

## Security situation, civilian casualties, damage to civilian infrastructure and displacement in the Gaza Strip, between 1 May 2020-31 May 2021

### 1. Security Situation

During the period May-July 2020, some of the violent events that occurred in Gaza include: On 6 May 2020, 'a Palestinian armed group in Gaza fired a rocket towards Israel, after which Israeli tanks shelled a number of military sites in Gaza', without any casualties reported by the source.<sup>1</sup> Between 2-15 June 2020, a 'Palestinian armed group fired a rocket towards Israel, following which, Israeli forces bombed a few military sites and open areas near the perimeter fence', with no casualties reported. Moreover, during 2-15 June 2020, the same source recorded five instances when 'Israeli forces entered Gaza and carried out land-levelling and excavation operations near the perimeter fence, east of Gaza, Beit Lahiya, Jabaliya and Rafah'.<sup>2</sup> On 26 June 2020, a 'Palestinian armed group fired two rockets towards southern Israel', to which the Israeli forces responded with air strikes, and no casualties were reported.<sup>3</sup> On 5 July 2020, a 'Palestinian armed group fired three rockets towards southern Israel', while air strikes launched by Israeli forces damaged 'three Palestinian houses and a farm', and no casualties were reported.<sup>4</sup> Between 30 June-13 July 2020, 'Israeli forces entered Gaza and carried out land-levelling and excavation operations near the fence' three times.<sup>5</sup>

In August 2020, hostilities escalated due to an increase in the number of incendiary balloons launched from Gaza<sup>6</sup>, while between 11-24 August 2020, 'Palestinian armed groups' launched rockets towards Israel, leading to Israeli response attacks.<sup>7</sup> The Israeli authorities also 'reduced the permissible fishing zone and halted the entry of most goods to Gaza', including fuel and construction material, 'though the additional restrictions were loosened by early September' 2020.<sup>8</sup>

On 31 August 2020, it was reported that 'relative calm was restored'.<sup>9</sup> According to the UN, during the approximately three weeks of conflict in August 2020, '63 rockets and mortars' and 'over 400 balloons carrying incendiary devices' were launched from Gaza towards Israel, while the same source claimed that 'Israeli security forces launched over 160 missiles and tank shells against Hamas positions in Gaza'.<sup>10</sup> An unexploded missile was also found 'inside an UN-run school's compound in Gaza's Shati refugee camp'.<sup>11</sup> According to a report by non-governmental organization B'Tselem,

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<sup>1</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 28 April-11 May 2020, 14 May 2020, [url](#), p. 2;

<sup>2</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 2-15 June 2020, 18 June 2020, [url](#), p. 2;

<sup>3</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 16-29 June 2020, 2 July 2020, [url](#), p. 2;

<sup>4</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 30 June-13 July 2020, 17 July 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>5</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 30 June-13 July 2020, 17 July 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>6</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 28 July-10 August 2020, 13 August 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>7</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 11-24 August 2020, 27 August 2020, [url](#), pp. 1-2

<sup>8</sup> BBC, Israel warns of Gaza escalation over balloon and rocket attacks, 21 August 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot - August 2020, 18 September 2020, [url](#), p. 1; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021, 2 March 2021, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> UN, Nickolay Mladenov: UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, 25 August 2020, [url](#), p. 3; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 25 August 2020-7 September 2020, [url](#), pp. 1-2

<sup>10</sup> UN, Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of UNSCR 2334 (2016), 29 September 2020, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>11</sup> CBS News, Israel responds to fire balloons from Gaza Strip with fighter jet strikes, 13 August 2020, [url](#)

between 6-31 August 2020, the Israeli military had ‘attacked more than 100 targets in the Gaza Strip using tanks and airplanes’, and had bombed ‘densely-populated areas’.<sup>12</sup>

Between September-December 2020, rocket attacks from Gaza to Israel were recorded, to which the Israeli forces responded with shelling and airstrikes.<sup>13</sup> Civilian targets were reported occasionally, such as on 15 and 21 November 2020, when Israeli air strikes responding to ‘rockets launched from Gaza’ hit ‘military sites’ as well as ‘open areas and farmlands in Gaza’.<sup>14</sup> On 26 December 2020, Israeli airstrikes hit ‘multiple areas’ in Gaza, injuring three Palestinians, and damaging civilian infrastructure including ‘two schools, two factories, a hospital, a mosque, electricity towers and a water carrier’.<sup>15</sup>

On 18 and 19 January 2021, rockets were shot from Gaza into Israel, leading to Israeli airstrikes on military targets in Gaza. According to UN OCHA, ‘one shell hit a Palestinian house in the Al Maghazi refugee camp, injuring a man and causing damage’, while ‘an agricultural field in Khan Younis’ was damaged.<sup>16</sup>

A 25 March 2021 UN report stated that, since 26 February 2021, ‘Palestinian militants’ had ‘launched six rockets and one incendiary balloon from Gaza into Israel’, while the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) responded by firing 11 missiles into Gaza, injuring seven Palestinian civilians.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, on 15 and 16 April 2021, two rockets were fired from Gaza, to which the Israeli forces replied by firing at ‘ Hamas-linked targets’.<sup>18</sup>

On 24 April 2021, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process highlighted ‘the recent escalations [...] around Gaza’, particularly the launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel.<sup>19</sup> On 26 April 2021, an EU ECHO report stated that, between 23-26 April 2021, ‘41 rockets were launched from Gaza to Israel’ to which the IDF ‘responded with retaliation strikes from air, sea and ground against Hamas positions’.<sup>20</sup> Also on 26 April 2021, it was reported that the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) had ‘announced the complete closure of Gaza’s

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<sup>12</sup> B'Tselem, Israeli policy of bombing crowded areas in Gaza takes fresh toll: head injuries in two children and damage to homes, 15 October 2020, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> Euronews, Israeli jets launch strikes on Hamas sites in Gaza Strip after rocket attack, 22 November 2020, [url](#); UNSCO, Nickolay Mladenov Special Coordinator For The Middle East Peace Process Briefing To The Security Council On The Situation In The Middle East, 18 November 2020, [url](#) p. 4; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 20 October-2 November 2020, 2 November 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 6-19 October 2020, 23 October 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 22 September-5 October 2020, 9 October 2020, [url](#), p. 2; AP, Gaza militants fire rockets at Israel as pacts signed in US, 15 September 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 8-21 September 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>14</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 3-23 November 2020, 27 November 2020, [url](#), pp. 2-3

<sup>15</sup> MEMO, Israel launches airstrikes on Gaza Strip, 26 December 2020, [url](#); Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Al Mezan condemns Israel’s military attacks on Gaza and calls for urgent international intervention to protect civilians and their properties, 27 December 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 22 December 2020-4 January 2021, 8 January 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>16</sup> UNSCO, Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (as delivered by UN Special Coordinator Wennesland), 26 January 2021, [url](#), p.4; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 5-18 January 2021, 22 January 2021, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 19 January-1 February 2021, 4 February 2021, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>17</sup> UNSCO, Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of UNSCR 2334 (2016), 25 March 2021, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>18</sup> UNSCO, Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, 22 April 2021, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>19</sup> UNSCO, Statement by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, on recent escalations in Jerusalem and around Gaza, 24 April 2021, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> EU ECHO, Israel - Palestine - Rising tensions and violence in Jerusalem and Gaza (DG ECHO, EUDEL, media) (ECHO Daily Flash), 26 April 2021, [url](#)

fishing zone'<sup>21</sup>, although on 29 April 2021 the fishing restrictions were lifted.<sup>22</sup> UNOCHA reported that, between 13-26 April 2021, 'hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza' protested 'near the Israeli perimeter fence', without any casualties being recorded at that time.<sup>23</sup>

On 10 May 2021, tensions again escalated in Gaza, in response to the events in East Jerusalem, where several Palestinian refugee families living in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood were at risk of forced eviction by Israeli settlers, as well as to the storming of Al Aqsa mosque by Israeli police on 7 and 10 May 2021.<sup>24</sup> During 10 May 2021, ' Hamas and other armed groups launched a heavy rocket barrage towards Israel', to which Israel 'responded with intense airstrikes in Gaza including shelling, missiles fired from fighter aircraft and attacks from the sea'.<sup>25</sup> After 11 days of conflict, a ceasefire was agreed upon, and entered into effect at 02:00 on 21 May 2021. <sup>26</sup> On 23 May 2021, UN OCHA quoted 'Israeli sources' claiming that, 'during the hostilities, Israeli forces carried out over 1 500 strikes from air, land and sea across the Gaza Strip, while Palestinian armed groups fired more than 4 000 rockets and projectiles towards Israel'.<sup>27</sup> As of 27 May 2021, a UNOCHA report stated that no 'further hostilities' had been reported in Gaza since the beginning of the ceasefire.<sup>28</sup> Between 21-26 May 2021, ACLED did not record any violent events in Gaza.<sup>29</sup>

Data on violent incidents provided below is based on EASO analysis of publicly available curated datasets from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of this COI Query Response, the following types of events were included as violent incidents in the analysis of the security situation in the Gaza strip: battles; explosions/remote violence; and violence against civilians. Protests were also included in the analysis. The ACLED data provided below refer to the timeframe between 1 May 2020 and 31 May 2021.

According to data collected by ACLED between 1 May 2020-31 May 2021, there were 335 violent events recorded, of which: 4 were recorded as battles; 231 were recorded as explosions/remote violence; and 100 were recorded as incidents of violence against civilians. Moreover, 118 protests were recorded by ACLED during the same period.<sup>31</sup>

Distributed by month, the violent events were recorded as following:

- May 2020: 8 violent events (2 Battles, 2 explosions/remote violence; 4 incidents of violence against civilians), and 1 Protest;
- June 2020: 7 violent events (6 explosions/remote violence; 1 incident of violence against

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<sup>21</sup> Al Mezan Center For Human Rights, Press Release: Israel's arbitrary closure of Gaza fishing zone is a form of collective punishment: Al Mezan condemns the act and warns of further deterioration in humanitarian conditions, 27 April 2021, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 13-26 April 2021, 30 April 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>23</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 13-26 April 2021, 30 April 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>24</sup> NYT, After Years of Quiet, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Exploded. Why Now?, 15 May 2021, [url](#); Euronews, Sheikh Jarrah: A small neighbourhood making a big impact in the Gaza conflict, 20 May 2021, [url](#); Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Atrocity Alert No. 252: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, 13 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> UN Human Rights Council, To avoid next round of violence, root causes must be addressed – Bachelet on escalation in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian territory, 27 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Flash Update #12 - Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel (as of 12:00 21 May – 12:00 23 May), 23 May 2021, [url](#), pp. 2,3

<sup>27</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Flash Update #12 - Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel (as of 12:00 21 May – 12:00 23 May), 23 May 2021, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>28</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Response to the escalation in the oPt Situation Report No. 1: 21-27 May 2021, 27 May 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>29</sup> EASO analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Palestine – Gaza Strip, 1 May 2020 – 26 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), Dashboard, last updated 4 June 2021, [url](#)

<sup>31</sup> EASO analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Palestine – Gaza Strip, 1 May 2020 – 26 May 2021, [url](#)

- civilians), and 4 Protests;
- July 2020: 1 violent event (1 explosion/remote violence), and 3 Protests;
  - August 2020: 35 violent events (31 explosions/remote violence; 4 incidents of violence against civilians), and 4 Protests;
  - September 2020: 6 violent events (3 explosions/remote violence; 3 incidents of violence against civilians), and 3 Protests;
  - October 2020: 12 violent events (6 explosions/remote violence; 6 incidents of violence against civilians), and 14 Protests;
  - November 2020: 16 violent events (10 explosions/remote violence; 6 incidents of violence against civilians), and 11 Protests;
  - December 2020: 10 violent events (4 explosions/remote violence; 6 incidents of violence against civilians), and 3 Protests;
  - January 2021: 24 violent events (1 Battle, 8 explosions/remote violence; 15 incidents of violence against civilians), and 4 Protests;
  - February 2021: 16 violent events (16 incidents of violence against civilians), and 15 Protests;
  - March 2021: 21 violent events (1 Battle, 3 explosions/remote violence; 17 incidents of violence against civilians), and 10 Protests;
  - April 2021: 36 violent events (21 explosions/remote violence; 15 incidents of violence against civilians), and 30 Protests;
  - May 2021: 143 violent events (136 explosions/remote violence; 7 incidents of violence against civilians), and 16 Protests.<sup>32</sup>

## 2. Impact of conflict on civilians

### Civilian Casualties

Estimates with regards to the number of civilian fatalities in Gaza during the reference period vary slightly, depending on the source used. A UNOCHA database recorded 127 civilian deaths between 1 May 2020-31 May 2021.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, figures quoted by UN OHCHR claimed that, only during the violent events that occurred between 10 May-21 May 2021, some 128 of the total 256 Palestinians killed in Gaza were ‘believed to be civilians’.<sup>34</sup>

A frequent occurrence in Gaza during the reference period has been the firing of ‘warning shots’, by Israeli forces, in ‘the areas adjacent to Israel’s perimeter fence, and off the sea coast, while enforcing access restrictions’. Between May-December 2020, some 456 such incidents were recorded by UNOCHA<sup>35</sup>, and civilian casualties were occasionally reported: between 28 April-11 May 2020, ‘two

<sup>32</sup> EASO analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Palestine – Gaza Strip, 1 May 2020 – 26 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory – Data on casualties, accessed 3 June 2021, [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Response to the escalation in the oPt Situation Report No. 1: 21-27 May 2021, 27 May 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>35</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 28 April-11 May 2020, 14 May 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 12 May-1 June 2020, 4 June 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 2-15 June 2020, 18 June 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 16-29 June 2020, 2 July 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 30 June-13 July 2020, 17 July 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 14-27 July 2020, 30 July 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 28 July-10 August 2020, 13 August 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 25 August 2020-7 September 2020, [url](#), pp. 1-2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian

fishermen were injured in one incident and two boats sustained damage<sup>36</sup>; between 12 May-1 June 2020, ‘two fishermen were injured in two separate incidents’, while the source highlighted a ‘noticeable increase in the number of shooting incidents at the sea since April 2020’<sup>37</sup>; on 2 October 2020, one Palestinian civilian was shot and injured after approaching the security fence in Gaza<sup>38</sup>; between 3-23 November 2020, one fisherman was injured<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, between January-April 2021, some 182 instances of Israeli forces firing warning shots ‘in the areas adjacent to Israel’s perimeter fence, and off the sea coast’ were recorded by UNOCHA. <sup>40</sup> On occasions, these resulted in casualties: for instance, between 2-15 March 2021, two fishermen were shot and injured.<sup>41</sup>

Other indicative events that occurred during the reference period include:

- Between 12 May-1 June 2020, a boy died after an ERW exploded ‘near his house in Beit Lahiya’.<sup>42</sup>
- On 1 June 2020, one civilian was injured by two armed men who opened fire on ‘multiple commercial stores [...] in Al-Zaitoun neighbourhood, in the east of Gaza city’.<sup>43</sup>
- On 31 August 2020, two Palestinian children were injured by an ERW explosion near Khuza’a village, Khan Younis.<sup>44</sup>
- According to the UN, during the approximately three weeks of conflict in August 2020, eight Israeli civilians and ten Palestinian civilians were injured.<sup>45</sup>
- Between 3-23 November 2020, two Palestinians boys were injured in ERW explosions in Rafah and Deir al Balah.<sup>46</sup>
- On 23 January 2021, a house in Beit Hanoun town that was allegedly used for storing explosives, was destroyed in a blast, injuring 47 people. According to the source, ‘multiple civilian structures, including 172 houses, three schools, a hospital and a police station, were damaged’.<sup>47</sup>

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territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 8-21 September 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 8-21 September 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 6-19 October 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 20 October-2 November 2020, 6 November 2020, [url](#) p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 3-23 November 2020, 27 November 2020, [url](#), pp. 2-3; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 24 November-7 December 2020, 10 December 2020, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 8-21 December 2020, 24 December 2020, [url](#) p. 1; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 22 December 2020-4 January 2021, 8 January 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>36</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 28 April-11 May 2020, 14 May 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>37</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 12 May-1 June 2020, 4 June 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>38</sup> UNSCO, Nickolay Mladenov Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, 26 October 2020, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>39</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 3-23 November 2020, 27 November 2020, [url](#), pp. 2-3

<sup>40</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 30 March-12 April 2021, 15 April 2021, [url](#), p. 1; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 16-29 March 2021, 2 April 2021, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 2-15 March 2021, 16 March 2021, [url](#), p. 1; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 16 February-1 March 2021, 5 March 2021, [url](#), p. 1; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 2-15 February 2021, 15 February 2021, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 19 January-1 February 2021, 4 February 2021, [url](#), p. 2; UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 5-18 January 2021, 22 January 2021, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>41</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 2-15 March 2021, 16 March 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>42</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 12 May-1 June 2020, 4 June 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>43</sup> Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, One child injured and properties damaged in armed attacks in Gaza, reflecting gap in the rule of law, 2 June 2020, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 25 August 2020–7 September 2020, [url](#), pp. 1-2

<sup>45</sup> UN, Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of UNSCR 2334 (2016), 29 September 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>46</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 3-23 November 2020, 27 November 2020, [url](#), pp. 2-3

<sup>47</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of Civilians Report | 19 January-1 February 2021, 4 February 2021, [url](#), p. 2;

- On 21 and 25 February 2021, two Palestinian men and one child were injured in two separate incidents by ERW explosions ‘in northern Gaza’.<sup>48</sup>
- In March 2021, in its 2021 Freedom in the World report, Freedom House highlighted that civilians in Gaza were suffering ‘serious hardship, due to ‘Israel’s *de facto* blockade of the territory, periodic military incursions, and rule-of-law violations’. The same source highlighted that ‘freedom of movement for Gaza residents is severely limited. Israel and Egypt exercise tight control over border areas, and Hamas imposes its own restrictions on travel’.<sup>49</sup>
- During the conflict of 10-21 May 2021, according to figures released by UNOHCHR, and quoted by UNOCHA, some 256 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, ‘of whom 128 were believed to be civilians’. The same source reported that ‘almost 2 000 Palestinians were injured during the hostilities’<sup>50</sup>. Meanwhile, in Israel, at least 12 people, of which 11 were civilians, were killed, and ‘hundreds were injured’, according to UNOCHA<sup>51</sup>, while non-governmental organisation Doctors Without Borders recorded 13 Israeli deaths.<sup>52</sup>  
On 17 May 2021, a Doctors Without Borders report underlined the ‘horrendous attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure’ in Gaza.<sup>53</sup> On 21 May 2021, the UN stated highlighted that ‘the indiscriminate or deliberate bombardment of civilians and towers housing civilians in Gaza and Israel, as well as media organizations and refugee camps in Gaza’, were war crimes.<sup>54</sup>

## Humanitarian Situation

According to UNOCHA, the estimated number of people in need of humanitarian aid in Gaza strip, was expected to grow, from approximately 1.5 million in 2020 to an estimated 1.6 million people in 2021.<sup>55</sup> The 14-year land, air and sea blockade imposed by the Israeli authorities on Gaza Strip, is still ongoing, impacting movements in and out of the Strip and the ability to trade.<sup>56</sup> The UN World Food Programme (UNWFP) has characterized the humanitarian conditions in Gaza as ‘alarming’, since ‘poverty and food insecurity affect 53 percent and 68.5 of the population respectively’.<sup>57</sup> Prolonged electricity blackouts of about 12 hours a day<sup>58</sup>, continued throughout the reference period,<sup>59</sup> and contributed, along with the longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and

<sup>48</sup> UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot - February 2021, 22 March 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>49</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021, 2 March 2021, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Response to the escalation in the oPt Situation Report No. 1: 21 -27 May 2021, 27 May 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>51</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory: Flash Update #12 - Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel (as of 12:00 21 May – 12:00 23 May), 23 May 2021, [url](#), pp. 2,3

<sup>52</sup> MSF, Trauma continues long after the bombing stops in Gaza, 28 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> MSF, Israeli airstrikes kill civilians and damage MSF clinic in Gaza, 17 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> UN, Gaza-Israel: UN experts welcome ceasefire, call for ICC probe, 21 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, 31 December 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020, 31 December 2019, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> BBC News, Israel-Palestinian conflict: Life in the Gaza Strip, 20 May 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Israel-Hamas ceasefire holds, U.N. to launch Gaza aid appeal, 23 May 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Gaza Blockade, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>57</sup> UNWFP, Palestine, n.d., [url](#); UNICEF, State of Palestine, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 January – March 2021, April 2021, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>58</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Gaza Strip Electricity Supply 2020, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot May 2020, 26 June 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot June 2020, 28 July 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot July 2020, 25 August 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot August 2020, 18 September 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot September 2020, 23 October 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot October 2020, 1 December 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot November 2020, 18 December 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot December 2020, 22 January 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot January 2021, 1 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot February 2021, 22 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Gaza Strip: Snapshot March 2021, 27 April 2021, [url](#)

goods, to the degradation of infrastructure, including in the area of health, education, water and sanitation.<sup>60</sup>

The mobility restrictions imposed since the outbreak of COVID-19 amplified the impact of pre-existing conditions on the Gazan economy,<sup>61</sup> while the unemployment reached 49% in the third quarter of 2020.<sup>62</sup> According to UNOCHA, about '9,500 families in Gaza living in rented accommodation are at risk of eviction due to their inability to pay rental costs'.<sup>63</sup>

Gaza's already overwhelmed by chronic drug shortages, inadequate equipment and electricity deficit, healthcare system was further encumbered by the outbreak of COVID-19.<sup>64</sup> As of end-September 2020, only 19 out of 51 primary healthcare centres are functioning in Gaza, as part of the efforts to contain the pandemic, while healthcare centres have been converted into COVID-19 quarantine and isolation centres.<sup>65</sup> The access of patients from the Gaza Strip to specialized healthcare in hospitals outside their area, has also deteriorated, not only due the outbreak of the pandemic, but also due to the restrictions imposed by the Palestinian Authority, between May and November 2020, in response to Israel's plan to formally annex parts of the West Bank.<sup>66</sup> Throughout 2020, there was a decline in the number of referrals issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Health.<sup>67</sup>

The period between 10-21 May 2021 has seen an escalation in hostilities between Palestinian armed factions and Israel.<sup>68</sup> On 12 May 2021, EU ECHO reported that in the past two days, Israel rockets had destroyed 'civilian and public buildings'.<sup>69</sup> The same day, NGO Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor reported that Israeli forces had targeted 'dozens of civilian objects' and 'densely populated gatherings'.<sup>70</sup> On 13 May 2021, it was reported that the Israeli had destroyed 'a 13-story residential building' in Gaza.<sup>71</sup> The same day, Amnesty International highlighted that Israeli forced had 'damaged or destroyed at least two residential buildings housing tens of Palestinian families and one office building in Gaza, in targeted attacks amounting to collective punishment of the Palestinian population'.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Reporters Without Borders highlighted the destruction of two buildings in Gaza city, housing several media outlets.<sup>73</sup> On 16 May 2021, a Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) clinic, was damaged by Israeli airstrikes.<sup>74</sup> On 20 May 2021, Palestine's Minister of public works and housing stated that 'the number of housing units completely destroyed

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<sup>60</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, 31 December 2020, [url](#), p. 15; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan OPT, December 2020, [url](#), p. 4, OXFAM International, Still Treading Water, 22 March 2021, [url](#), p. 3; B'TSELEM, Water in Gaza: Scarce, polluted and mostly unfit for use, 17 August 2020, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> EU ECHO, Palestine, 25 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> UNRWA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Emergency appeal 2021, 2 March 2021, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, 31 December 2020, [url](#), p. 39

<sup>64</sup> Save the Children, Denial of healthcare outside Gaza is a death sentence for children, 29 July 2020, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, 31 December 2020, [url](#), p. 29

<sup>66</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan OPT, December 2020, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>67</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, 31 December 2020, [url](#), p. 30; WHO, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Monthly Report, January 2021, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>68</sup> UNOCHA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel | Flash Update #11 covering 12:00 20 May – 12:00 21 May, 21 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> EU ECHO, Israel - Palestine – Severe escalation in Gaza (DG ECHO, EUDEL, media) (ECHO Daily Flash), 12 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>70</sup> Euro-Med Monitor, Israel collectively punishes the population in Gaza by targeting homes and civilians, 12 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Atrocity Alert No. 252: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, 13 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> AI, Israel/ OPT: Cycle of impunity leaves civilians once again paying the price amid escalation of hostilities, 13 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> RSF, Palestinian reporters injured in Jerusalem, 21 media outlets destroyed in Gaza, 13 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> MSF, Israeli airstrikes kill civilians and damage MSF clinic in Gaza, 17 May 2021, [url](#)



has reached 1,800, while some 16,800 more housing units have been partially damaged'.<sup>75</sup> In a May 20 statement the municipality said the Israeli strikes on two water pipelines in the Gaza district of al-Saftawi halted water supply to 20% of the city's population.<sup>76</sup>

UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that, as of 24 May 2021, a total of 57 education facilities and 29 health facilities in the Gaza Strip have been damaged.<sup>77</sup> According to the same source, 600 000 children are affected by schools' closure in Gaza Strip, while an estimated 800 000 people do not have regular access to piped water, due to the damages to feeder lines and networks.<sup>78</sup>

## Humanitarian access

Between May 2020 and May 2021, there were 165 attacks recorded in Gaza Strip and the West Bank WHO's Surveillance System for Attacks on Healthcare.<sup>79</sup> Throughout 2020, the UN WFP has assisted 282,058 people in Gaza Strip<sup>80</sup>, while UNICEF provided hygiene kits through e-vouchers for 18 000 households in the Gaza Strip and facilitated the access to safe sanitation facilities for 70 000 people.<sup>81</sup>

Between 7 and 20 May 2021, the World Health Organization reported 28 attacks on healthcare in Gaza Strip.<sup>82</sup> During the escalation of the violence in Gaza, several humanitarian organisations called for the creation of humanitarian corridors to provide support to the affected population, as their personnel could not have access to the area.<sup>83</sup> RSF reported that, on 12 May 2021, the Israeli defence ministry's Crossing Points Authority imposed a ban on foreign reporters entering the Gaza Strip from Israeli territory.<sup>84</sup> MSF reported that 2 doctors were killed during the airstrikes near MSF's clinic on 16 May 2021 and that access to healthcare for people with injuries was 'severely restricted as Israeli airstrikes have damaged many roads'.<sup>85</sup> UNRWA reported on 20 May 2021, that two of their staff were severely injured with one was still in a critical condition.<sup>86</sup>

## 3. Displacement

The Gaza Strip is home to a population of approximately 1 400 000 Palestine refugees and almost 600 000 of them live in the eight recognized Palestine refugee camps.<sup>87</sup> Between 10 and 20 May 2021, thousands of people were forcibly displaced due to airstrikes and sought shelter in schools run

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<sup>75</sup> AA, 1,800 housing units destroyed in Israel's attacks on Gaza: Minister, 20 May 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel | Flash Update #12 covering 12:00 21 May – 12:00, 23 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> Municipality of Gaza, The Bombing Of The Occupation Last Night Cut Off 20% Of The City's Population, 20 May 2021, [url](#); Al Monitor, Israeli campaign in Gaza worsens water crisis, 28 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> UNICEF, State of Palestine, Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel-Report No. 3, 24 May 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>78</sup> UNICEF, State of Palestine, Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel-Report No. 3, 24 May 2021, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>79</sup> WHO, Surveillance System For Attacks On Health Care, Data from 1 May 2020- 31 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> UNWFP, Palestine 2020 Achievements, 15 April 2021, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> UNICEF, State of Palestine, Humanitarian Situation Report-End of Year 2020, 21 January 2021, [url](#)

<sup>82</sup> WHO, Escalation in occupied Palestinian territory Issue 3, 7-20 May 2021 (Data collated as of 12:00 pm), 21 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> Reuters, WHO appeals for humanitarian pause to gain access to Gaza, 20 May 2021, [url](#); UNICEF, Immediate humanitarian access needed to stave off disaster for Gaza's children, 18 May 2021, [url](#); UNRWA, UNRWA Urgently Calls On Israel To Enable Access To Gaza, 18 May 2021, [url](#); ICRC, Israel/Gaza: Civilians are paying a heavy price in the escalation in Israel and Gaza, 15 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>84</sup> RFS, Israel's arguments for denying foreign reporters access to Gaza are spurious, 19 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>85</sup> MSF, Israeli airstrikes kill civilians and damage MSF clinic in Gaza, 17 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> UNRWA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Situation Update #10, 21 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> UNRWA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Emergency Appeal 2021, [url](#), pp. 4, 10



by UNRWA or in relatives' houses.<sup>88</sup> As of 21 May 2021, 71 000 people were forcibly displaced in 48 UNRWA schools in Gaza, while 35 000 were estimated to live with host families. Following the ceasefire, the majority have returned home, with 8 265 internally displaced people remaining with host families and 235 in two UNRWA schools.<sup>89</sup>

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[Palestine – Gaza: The Great March of Return, 11 December 2019](#)

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<sup>88</sup> UNRWA, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Situation Update #10, 21 May 2021, [url](#); Vox, The fighting in Gaza is over. The humanitarian crisis isn't, 20 May 2021, [url](#); UN News, WFP moves to support families affected by Gaza violence, 17 May 2021, [url](#); DW, Humanitarian crisis in Gaza intensifies under Israeli attack, 15 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> UNOCHA, Response to the escalation in the oPt | Situation Report No. 2 (28 May - 3 June 2021), 6 June 2021, [url](#)

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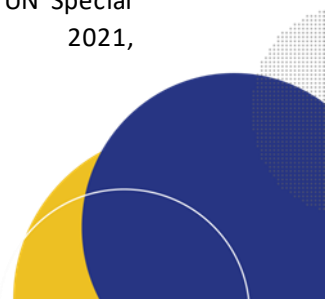
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