

LEGAL LOCK JOURNAL
2583-0384

VOLUME 4 || ISSUE 1

2024

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**HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES IN THE ONGOING ISRAEL GAZA
CONFLICT**

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ABSTRACT

A serious humanitarian crisis has resulted from the ongoing confrontation between Israel and Gaza, encompassing a wide range of issues affecting the lives of civilians on both sides. The purpose of this abstract is to present a thorough summary of the intricate problems that are causing the crisis and the pressing need for international action.

Due to the conflict's historical origins and intricate geopolitical dynamics, a dire humanitarian crisis has arisen. There are serious repercussions for civilians in Gaza and Israel, such as mass evictions, fatalities, and the suspension of basic services. The damage caused by the battle to the infrastructure makes matters worse by making it more difficult for impacted communities to get healthcare, education, and basic commodities.

Families being uprooted are one of the crisis's most important aspects, increasing the vulnerability of already marginalized communities. Thousands of people have been forced to escape their homes due to the ongoing violence, placing a strain on resources and overcrowding shelters. In addition to the ongoing risks of violence, displaced people must deal with issues of housing, employment, and mental health.

Hospitals are overburdened by the flood of victims, which has a particularly concerning effect on the healthcare infrastructure. Medical facilities struggle to staff and supply gaps that prevent patients from receiving the proper care. The burden is additionally intensified by limitations on the flow of humanitarian aid, impeding the provision of vital medical support to individuals requiring it.

In order to address the immediate needs of individuals impacted by the crisis and to promote a long-term resolution to the conflict, international action is essential. While access limitations and security concerns frequently obstruct humanitarian groups' activities, these organizations play a critical role in providing relief. In order to protect people, enable the

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delivery of supplies, and advance a long-lasting truce, a coordinated diplomatic effort is required.

In conclusion, immediate attention is required to address the humanitarian situation emerging from the Israel-Gaza conflict. In addition to providing emergency humanitarian aid, a diplomatic solution that targets the underlying causes of the conflict and promotes long-term peace and stability is required.

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 201 million people live in humanitarian crises-affected areas worldwide today. Because of armed conflict, millions of these people cannot be reached by standard humanitarian relief distribution methods². Humanitarian aid that can save and improve lives is getting harder to reach impacted individuals in unsafe locations as the duration, frequency, and intensity of wars around the world rise. Less than 1% of humanitarian aid is allocated to funding the innovations required to reach vulnerable and inaccessible people, despite the fact that we require innovative solutions to address their needs.

Humanitarian challenges in conflict zones are numerous and complex. They include:

1. **Access and Security:** The entry of humanitarian workers to impacted populations is often hindered by security concerns and restrictions imposed by governments or armed organizations.
2. **Protection of Civilians:** Violence against civilians can take many forms, including as physical assaults, forced relocation, sexual assault, and recruiting by armed organizations.
3. **Humanitarian Aid Delivery:** Due to destroyed infrastructure, barricades, and logistical limitations, it can be difficult to distribute food, water, shelter, and medical care in a timely and efficient manner in conflict zones.
4. **Resource Constraints:** Since humanitarian organizations have little funding, it can be challenging to address the enormous demands of the afflicted population, particularly in long-lasting wars.
5. **Healthcare:** In conflict areas, access to healthcare is frequently hindered. Medical professionals and facilities are frequently targeted or unable to operate effectively, which raises the death and morbidity rates.

² <https://www.usaid.gov/grandchallenges/humanitarian> (accessed on 04.02.2024 at 19:40).

6. Psychosocial Support: People who have experienced conflict-related trauma, such as losing a loved one, being uprooted, or being exposed to violence, may experience significant psychological effects that make psychosocial support services necessary but may not be available or enough.
7. Protection of Humanitarian Workers: While providing relief in war areas, humanitarian workers run the risk of being kidnapped, hurt, or killed. As a result, it can be difficult to find and retain qualified employees.

To ensure the protection and aid of affected persons in conflict-affected areas, addressing these difficulties requires a coordinated and multifaceted approach involving governments, humanitarian organizations, local communities, and international players.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ISRAEL-GAZA CONFLICT

The Ottoman Empire ruled over most of West Asia, including the area that is now Israel, from 1517 until 1917. Around 87% of the people in the Israel/Palestine region were Muslims, 10% were Christians, and 3% were Jews in the 19th century. By all accounts, there was harmony between the communities. The three communities in Jerusalem had about the same number of residents. Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist, promoted the notion of a Jewish state in Palestine for the Jews during the 1800s. Zionism is the name given to this philosophy, which gained a lot of traction among Jews in Europe at a time when they were subject to prejudice and even pogroms. The Balfour Declaration, which guaranteed "the establishment in Palestine a national home for the Jewish People," was announced by the British government in 1917 in an effort to win Jewish support for the World War I effort. This presented a difficulty as, in 1916, the British had surreptitiously agreed with the French that, following the war, the Arab territories would be separated and Palestine would come under British rule. Furthermore, the British had promised Sharief Hussain, the king of Mecca, in 1915 that if he led an Arab uprising against the Ottomans, he would govern over the entire region, including Palestine³.

Following World War I, the British established a colony in Palestine with the understanding that they would stay in charge of the region until the Palestinians were prepared to assume self-government. Because it was in accordance with the League of Nations mandate, this area was known as Mandatory Palestine. Prior to this, a great number of Jews from Europe moved

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/27/palestine-and-israel-brief-history-maps-and-charts> (accessed on 04.02.2024 at 20:20).

to Palestine in the hopes of establishing their homeland after being driven out for generations. In the meantime, hundreds of thousands more Jews moved to Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s thanks to assistance from the British, who were upholding the Balfour Declaration. Tensions between the Arabs and the expanding Jewish groups were rising during this period. The Palestinian Arabs began to see themselves more and more as a nation, which led to their 1936 uprising against the British. The British put an end to this uprising with the aid of Jewish militias.

However, the British released a white paper following the uprising that restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine and demanded the creation of a combined Jewish-Arab state there in ten years. Jewish organizations moved many Jews who were fleeing the Holocaust in Europe during World War II into Palestine illegally due to immigration restrictions. As hostilities increased, the British assigned the issue to the recently formed United Nations. The UN decided to divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Palestinian governments in 1947. The Arabs rejected this plan.

Israel was proclaimed an independent nation in May 1948, and David Ben Gurion became prime minister. Following this proclamation, Israel was invaded by five Arab states (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt) in 1948, sparking the start of the Arab-Israeli War. 1949 saw the announcement of a cease-fire, which included the transfer of the West Bank to Jordan and the incorporation of the Gaza Strip into Egypt. However, Israel gained more territory after winning the war than they would have under the UN plan. Jordan was in charge of East Jerusalem. More than 700,000 Palestinians left the area and took up asylum in neighboring Arab nations. Since they lost their nationality, the Palestinians refer to this war as the Nakba, or tragedy. When Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, tensions flared up once more. Suez Crisis resulted from this. With help from the British and French, Israel attacked the Sinai Peninsula and reclaimed the canal⁴.

Israel seized control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula during the Six-Day War that broke out in 1967. East Jerusalem was also taken by Israel. In 1973, bombings against Israel by Syria and Egypt precipitated the Yom Kippur War. A UN decision brought an end to the conflict after two weeks. Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 and drove the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) out of the country. The PLO was established in 1964 with the goal of using armed force to achieve the "liberation of

⁴ <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/israel-palestine-conflict/> (accessed on 05.02.2024 at 14:20).

Palestine." Israel was establishing Jewish communities in what was recognized as Palestinian territory at this time, notably East Jerusalem.

Palestinians revolted against Israel's control of Gaza and the West Bank in 1987. This event, known as the First Palestinian Intifada (an Arabic term meaning "shaking off"), resulted in hundreds of deaths. The Oslo Peace Accords, which were signed in 1993 and again in 1995 by PLO leader Yasser Arafat and then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, put an end to the Intifada. Following this, the Palestinian Authority was established and began to rule over a number of Israeli territories.

In 1997, the Israeli army withdrew from portions of the West Bank. Nevertheless, the Second Palestinian Intifada began in 2000 because the Accords were unable to bring about long-term peace in the area. Israeli politician Ariel Sharon's visit to Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque served as the catalyst for the bloodshed. This led to years of widespread unrest and violence. Israel agreed to remove all of its troops and Jewish colonies from the Gaza Strip by the end of 2005 after which a ceasefire was eventually declared⁵.

In 2006, the elections in Palestine were won by the militant Sunni Islamist group Hamas. After hostilities that began in 2006, Hamas emerged victorious in 2007 over Fatah, the political organization that ruled the PLO. There have been major confrontations between Israel and Hamas (which many regard as a terrorist organization) in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2023 (the present scenario). Though Israel does not recognise Palestine as a state, over 135 UN member countries do. In 1988, India became one of the first countries to recognize the Palestinian State.

OCTOBER 7, 2023, ATTACK

On October 7, 2023, Shemini Atzeret, a Jewish holiday that concludes the fall thanksgiving festival of Sukkot, saw Hamas lead a breathtakingly orchestrated attack⁶. The IDF had been concentrating on Israel's northern border rather than the Gaza Strip in the south, and many of its soldiers were on leave.

At around 6:30 am, the attack started with a flurry of at least 2,200 rockets fired into Israel in less than 20 minutes. The Iron Dome system, an extremely effective antimissile defense system installed throughout Israel, was apparently overpowered by the onslaught, though the

⁵ <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/israel-palestine-conflict/> (accessed on 05.02.2024 at 15:25).

⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Israel-Hamas-War-of-2023> (accessed on 05.02.2024 at 17:40).

IDF could not say how many missiles managed to get past the system. The border was extensively secured with sophisticated technology, fencing, and concrete, yet at least 1,500 militants from Hamas and the PIJ managed to sneak into Israel at dozens of sites using explosives and bulldozers as rockets descended into the country. They took down the communication systems for a number of the Israeli military bases in the area, which gave them the opportunity to attack those establishments and sneak into residential areas. In the vicinity of Zikim, a coastal town, militants simultaneously crossed the maritime boundary by motorboat. Some others used powered paragliders to enter Israel. Approximately 1,200 people were killed in the incident, which included concertgoers and kibbutzim families who were attacked in their homes. There were foreigners within that number as well as Israeli citizens. The fact that it was the bloodiest day for Jews since the Holocaust only served to exacerbate the anguish. Over 240 more people were kidnapped and transported as hostages into the Gaza Strip. Some were removed from the music festival, while many others were abducted from their houses. More than half of those taken hostage, including dual-citizen Israelis, had passports from over twenty different nations combined, so enlisting the aid of other nations in the struggle to free their individuals⁷.

On October 7, at 8:23 AM, the IDF declared a state of war and started to mobilize its army reserves; approximately 350,000 reservists were eventually called up over the course of the following several days. IDF fighter jets started dropping bombs on the Gaza Strip two hours later. Israel proclaimed war on October 8, and Netanyahu ordered the people living in the blockaded area to "leave now, we'll be present everywhere and fully committed." Israel imposed a "complete siege" on the Gaza Strip on October 9th, shutting off supplies of food, gasoline, water, and electricity. International attempts were undertaken to secure the hostages' release while Israel carried out airstrikes. As the main mediator in the early stages of the conflict, Qatar—which had previously worked with Israel to arrange the delivery of humanitarian supplies to the Gaza Strip—was only able to secure the release of four of the prisoners detained by Hamas. The complex network of underground passageways that stretches hundreds of miles through Gaza made it more difficult to find the hostages and target militants and their weapon caches. Destroying the tunnels without incurring significant civilian casualties proved to be challenging, and engaging in military operations inside the tunnels posed a significant risk to everyone within, particularly the Israeli Defence Forces and any hostages who might be detained there. In just three weeks following Hamas's attack

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Israel-Hamas-War-of-2023> (accessed on 05.02.2024 at 18.30).

on October 7, over 1.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had been internally displaced, and the conflict had become the deadliest for the Palestinian people since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, with thousands of Palestinians still dying every day. Israeli ground forces penetrated into the Gaza Strip at the end of October. When communications in the area were first cut off, militants' capacity to coordinate was hindered, but paramedics and aid agencies were also unable to respond to crises. In contrast to earlier wars, the ground assault proceeded slowly, with an incremental rise in the quantity of armoured vehicles and soldiers. Under terms negotiated by Egypt, Hamas, and Israel, the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt opened on November 1 to permit a restricted number of foreign nationals to leave the region for the first time since October 7. On November 22, Israel's security cabinet decided to hold a prisoner swap with Hamas during a brief ceasefire, arranged by Qatar and Egypt. A total of 240 Palestinian inmates were exchanged for 110 hostages during the seven-day ceasefire. Israeli forces advanced into Khan Younis, the biggest city in the southern Gaza Strip and the residence of prominent Hamas figures including Mohammed Deif and Yahya Sinwar, in the days after the start of hostilities. By year's end, Israel was under intense international criticism due to the large number of civilian deaths and extensive damage in the Gaza Strip. Midway through December, U.S. President Joe Biden stated that Israel was starting to lose support from other countries during a fundraiser for his reelection campaign. After approximately 23,000 Palestinians were reported killed in early January 2024—a figure that included both Hamas combatants and civilians—Israel declared a shift in tactics that would lead to a more focused approach. The average daily death toll at the end of January was less than one-third of what it was in October, but it was still more than three times higher than during the worst conflict in the Gaza Strip in 2014—a conflict that lasted until 2023. Through the mediation of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, a framework for a possible three-phase ceasefire during which a comprehensive solution to end the war would be negotiated developed in late January. Phased releases of Palestinian inmates detained by Israel since the beginning of the conflict as well as hostages held in the Gaza Strip would be part of the halt⁸.

More than 27k Palestinians have died in the ongoing war along with over 1400 Israelis. An end to this war is needed at the earliest to protect the lives of the innocent people. With every passing day, the death toll continues to rise.

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Israel-Hamas-War-of-2023> (accessed on 05.02.2024 at 19:25).

HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

International humanitarian law (IHL), the legislation governing armed conflict and military occupation, has been the subject of much discussion in the wake of Hamas's attack on Israel and Israel's subsequent bombardment campaign of the Gaza Strip. This discussion has involved both experts and non-experts discussing IHL's applicability to the ongoing hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups⁹.

As charges grow, it's critical to comprehend legal definitions of phrases like "war crimes" and what they entail. Although the rules of war, or IHL, have existed in one form or another for thousands of years, its current form is codified in the 1949 Geneva Conventions together with additional treaties and customary international law. Though they are not able to legally sign the treaties, it binds states, including Israel, as well as non-state armed groups engaged in combat, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. It is crucial to note that the legislation is non-reciprocal, which means that it applies regardless of what the other party has done. It is never acceptable to defend a violation—such as picking on civilians on purpose or applying collective punishment—by pointing to the actions of another party, power disparities, or other injustices. Only certain circumstances, most notably those involving an armed conflict or occupation, are covered under the rules of war. Other laws, including international human rights law, are always in effect and regulate every state's obligation to defend the rights of its citizens in areas over which it has jurisdiction or some degree of control. Separate from the law governing the choice to employ force is the international humanitarian law, which regulates the conduct of conflicts. All parties are required to abide by IHL, regardless of whether using force is justified. This corpus of law also regulates occupation, which occurs when a state exercises effective control over territory over which it lacks sovereign title without agreement. One example of this is Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. No matter how many assertions it makes regarding annexation, the occupying power does not gain sovereignty over the land it has taken over in accordance with IHL. The occupying force is required to guarantee the population's humane treatment and to meet their basic requirements, such as food and healthcare.

All parties involved in a war are required by international humanitarian law to maintain the distinction between combatants and civilians at all times. Parties are only permitted to strike combatants and military objectives; civilians and civilian property must never be the focus of

⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/27/how-does-international-humanitarian-law-apply-israel-and-gaza> (accessed on 06.02.2024 at 14:45).

an attack. International humanitarian law mandates that the parties to the conflict take all reasonable steps to minimize injury to civilians and civilian objects. It is not sufficient to just assert that civilians are not the intended target of the attack. An attack is also forbidden if it does not distinguish between combatants and civilians or if it is anticipated to inflict disproportionate damage on the civilian population relative to the military advantage. IHL mandates that everyone placed in detention, including POWs, receive humane treatment. It is forbidden to take hostages or use individuals as "human shields." Unless the circumstances prohibit it, the parties must provide "effective advance warning" in the event of an attack that could have an impact on the civilian population in accordance with the rules of war. The effectiveness of a warning relies on the situation; if people are unable to flee to a safer location, it will be ineffective. Giving notice does not, however, relieve parties of their obligation to safeguard civilians. People who choose not to leave after being warned are still safe. Attackers must still refrain from targeting them and take all reasonable precautions to keep them safe. It is forbidden to make statements that aren't true warnings but rather try to instill fear in the public by threatening to use force to force them to leave.

Since 1967, Israel has been in control of the West Bank, which includes East Jerusalem, and Gaza. Together, these areas make up the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Israel did not finish occupying Gaza when its ground forces left the region in 2005, despite what the Israeli government says. This is due to Israel's continued effective control over Gaza's airspace and territorial waters, the flow of people and products within the Strip—aside from its border with Egypt—and the infrastructure that the Strip depends on, turning it into an open-air jail. As the occupying power, Israel is obligated by international humanitarian law to ensure that the people of Gaza have access to basic necessities like food and water. The legal obligations of the Israeli authorities towards the people residing in the OPT are also governed by international human rights legislation, particularly considering the duration of the occupation. Furthermore, it is the duty of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, who de facto rule over a large number of Palestinians, to uphold the human rights of the people they control. Their roles do not take away from Israel's obligations as the occupying force.

War crimes are grave transgressions of the laws of war, carried out willfully or carelessly by those with criminal intent. Taking hostages, harming civilians on purpose, and imposing collective punishment are examples of war crimes. Israel, Hamas, and other armed groups are in violation of the rules of war when they launch indiscriminate rocket attacks and airstrikes against civilians. These actions also constitute war crimes when they are carried out with

malicious intent. Criminal penalties apply to both the commission of war crimes and those who direct, support, or enable such crimes. According to the concept of command responsibility, commanders and civilian leaders may be held criminally accountable if they had knowledge of or should have known about crimes committed by their subordinates and did not take sufficient action to stop the crime or punish the perpetrators.

CIVILIAN IMPACT AND CASUALTIES

There have been numerous war crimes perpetrated in Israel and Palestine over the past 4 months, and there are serious worries that armed Palestinian organizations and Israeli troops are attacking civilians in an illegal and indiscriminate manner. War crimes include the intentional slaughter of Israeli civilians, the indiscriminate firing of rockets at Israeli communities, and the kidnapping of hundreds of people by Hamas and other armed groups. The Israeli government claims that since October 7th, almost 1,400 Israelis have died. Israel has been bombarding the 2.3 million-person densely populated Gaza Strip nonstop. At least 27,840 people have been killed and 67,317 wounded in Israeli attacks on Gaza since October 7¹⁰. Bombs have occasionally reduced whole blocks or even entire neighbourhoods to ruin. In densely populated neighbourhoods, Israeli forces have employed white phosphorous, a chemical that ignites when it comes into contact with oxygen, resulting in horrifying and severe burns. Burns to more than 10% of the human body can be lethal, and white phosphorus can burn all the way down to the bone. Israel has also been denying gasoline, electricity, water, and food to the people of Gaza as a kind of collective punishment. Wilfully preventing humanitarian aid from reaching needy civilians is also a war crime. Concerns have also been raised concerning Israel's orders to uproot a large portion of Gaza's civilian population, which is only allowed when necessary for the safety of the civilian population or for pressing military objectives. Since it is illegal to permanently evict people, the civilian population must be allowed to return as soon as practicable. Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations have also discovered that millions of Palestinians are being persecuted by Israeli authorities and that apartheid is a crime against humanity. Among these ongoing crimes is the systemic persecution of the Gaza populace. International crimes should lead to accountability.

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<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-114-enarhg> (accessed on 07.02.2024 at 14:25).

INFRASTRUCTURE DAMAGE AND DISPLACEMENT

Since Israel began its reprisal for the Hamas attacks on October 7, more than half of Gaza's buildings have suffered damage or have been completely demolished. In-depth before-and-after photos further demonstrate how, since the beginning of December, Israel's military assault on Gaza has escalated, primarily affecting the city of Khan Younis. Gazans should migrate south for their own protection, Israel has warned them repeatedly. In Gaza, residential neighborhoods have been left in ruins, once bustling commerce lanes have been reduced to rubble, universities have been wrecked, farmlands have been churned up, and tent camps have sprung up on the southern border to house the thousands of homeless. The UN estimates that 1.7 million people, i.e., more than 80% of Gaza's population, are internally displaced, with almost half of them residing in the area's farthest southernmost point. When questioned about the extent of the damage, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) declared that it was aiming at "terror infrastructure" as well as Hamas fighters. According to the data, between 144,000 and 175,000 buildings have either been damaged or completely destroyed throughout the Gaza Strip. That makes up 51–61 percent of Gaza's total building area. According to the analysis, Khan Younis, a city in southern Iraq, has been especially severely affected in recent weeks, with over 38,000 (or over 46%) of its structures now either demolished or damaged¹¹. There have been more than 1,500 buildings damaged or destroyed in the last two weeks. The tallest structure in the vicinity, Al-Farra Tower, a 16-story apartment tower in the city center, was demolished on January 9. Israel has been attacking the neighborhood where it is located on a large scale since late December. The abundance of tents and other temporary buildings to shelter displaced persons in the south is the last noticeable change in Gaza that is visible from the air. Near the Egyptian border, new tent settlements appeared between early December and mid-January. These areas spanned around 3.5 sq km, or almost 500 Premier League football fields. The satellite photos, which were taken on December 3 and January 14, depict a significant shift: almost all of the accessible, undeveloped land in a region of northwest Rafah has now been converted into a shelter for displaced people. Israel ordered Palestinians residing in north and central Gaza to relocate south for their own protection when it began its operation against Hamas. Numerous people have arrived in Rafah and now face an uncertain future.

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68006607> (accessed on 07.02.2024 at 17:22).

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Following the initial unrest on October 7, 2023, and the shelling of Gaza that followed, a lot of civilian infrastructure—especially healthcare facilities—has been targeted for attack. As a result, there is a critical lack of medical supplies, many staff members suffer fatalities or serious injuries, and these hospitals are dealing with structural damage. It is a violation of UN agreements meant to protect healthcare professionals and facilities as well as fundamental human rights. Insecurity Insight, which is supported by the US Agency for International Development and the UK Government (FCDO), reports that since October 7, there have been 622 reported incidents of violence against the healthcare sector in both the West Bank and Gaza, with 462 of those incidents occurring in Gaza. A total of 123 medical facilities sustained damage, and 200 medical personnel were placed under arrest and 162 of them died. In addition to severe malnourishment and a scarcity of potable water, the attacks have created new difficulties for Gaza's medical personnel and infrastructure. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is an increase in infectious diseases and crisis-level hunger, affecting 93% of Gaza's population. Cases of diarrhea have multiplied 25 times, especially in young infants. In addition, there are many other illnesses like meningitis, skin rashes, and chickenpox, and over 150,000 occurrences of upper respiratory infections¹². The risk of death is significantly increased by malnutrition, particularly when proper medical care is lacking. Healthcare workers in Gaza struggle to treat patients without enough resources or a secure location because they constantly face threats to their safety.

"Almost every single person in Gaza is hungry, a quarter of the population is starving and struggling to find food and drinkable water, and famine is imminent," as said this week in the House of Lords. There is emergency food insecurity in 80% of the nation. There are just seven hospitals remaining open in Northern Gaza out of a total of 24, and medical supplies are in short supply due to the extensive destruction or unusability of the medical infrastructure in the strip. In Gaza, rates of infectious infections are already skyrocketing, and doctors are operating without the use of anesthesia. Water supplies were 17% of pre-siege levels as of November. There have been 1.9 million internal displacements; over 80% of the population lives in subfreezing temperatures and struggles to find warm clothing and shelter.

¹²

<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-crisis-unveiled-healthcare-under-attack-gaza-joint-statement-syrian-american-medical-society-sams-and-palestinian-american-medical-society-pama#:~:text=337%20healthcare%20workers%20have%20been,hospitals%20in%20Gaza%20are%20damaged>. (accessed on 07.02.2024 at 20:15).

27,478 people have died and 66,835 people had been injured since the siege started, according to the health ministry in Gaza, which is run by the Hamas government. It is vitally important that humanitarian aid go to Gaza's civilian population. However, it is quite challenging to get goods to the people who need them the most.

UNRWA is by far the largest humanitarian aid provider to Gaza and the Middle East. They employ 13,000 people in Gaza, where they support relief efforts around the region and offer refuge to displaced people. Nonetheless, Israel has charged UNRWA employees of aiding in the October 7 assaults in Israel, a charge that resulted in the dismissal of 12 staff members by UNRWA. Nine nations withdrew support from the organization as a result, including the USA and the UK. These nations contributed \$667 million in total in 2022, so a significant portion of future funding is now in peril.

BLOCKADES AND RESTRICTIONS

Right now, the Rafah crossing into Egypt is the only land route for humanitarian aid into Gaza. Much of the aid must pass through the Nitzana crossing on the border between Egypt and Israel for inspection before it can be entered. Aid trucks trying to pass the Nitzana border into Gaza have been stopped by a group of demonstrators affiliated with the Tzav 9 movement. This has resulted in an enormous truck backlog. Important aid is very slowly entering Gaza because of the severe bottleneck caused by the Rafah crossing, which is the sole entry point to Gaza that is not inside Israel. IDF authorities also want to scrutinize each truck that enters Gaza. The Mediterranean Sea offers the only other possible entry point for aid into the Gaza Strip. Cyprus has laid out plans to move goods via a sea corridor, but they acknowledge that logistical challenges would be too great given that the US and Israeli soldiers control the seas. A humanitarian supply shipment has arrived by sea thanks to an arrangement mediated by France and Qatar between Israel and Hamas; nevertheless, a deal to conduct regular humanitarian assistance drops over the Mediterranean has not yet been reached. It is also evident that there is a risk involved in delivering aid into such a violent conflict zone, given the numerous reports of Israeli military firing striking aid trucks¹³.

¹³ <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2024/02/humanitarian-assistance-in-gaza-the-difficulties-of-distribution/> (accessed on 08.02.2024 at 12:22).

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AND MENTAL HEALTH

Gaza's children have experienced death, fear, violence, and the loss of loved ones. They suffer severe psychological scars as a result of seeing their homes, schools, and communities destroyed. It is critical to attend to their needs and make sure they receive specialized care and assistance. There is an increased danger for vulnerable groups, such as women, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Palestine had one of the highest rates of psychiatric diseases and mental health problems in the eastern Mediterranean region even before the present crisis. Roughly 543,000 kids already need mental health services, and indicators of psychological distress were present in two thirds of the population. It is anticipated that those numbers would increase dramatically as the conflict rages on, necessitating the need for mental health services for every youngster. This is not just a catastrophe affecting Gazan society directly; it also affects mental health providers, who are carers.

An extraordinary level of mental health crises has resulted from the ongoing conflict in Gaza. A comprehensive humanitarian response is necessary, including evidence-based psychiatric interventions, to prevent trauma that lasts a lifetime. An essential component of responding to humanitarian emergencies is mental health care. Enough mental health care must be accessible if people are to be resilient as individuals and as communities.

ICJ RULING

South Africa lodged a complaint alleging that conduct during the Israeli military campaign could be considered genocide, as well as the encouragement to commit genocide and the lack of consequences for those involved. "At least some of the rights claimed by South Africa and for which it is seeking protection are plausible," the International Court of Justice declared. The conclusion of plausibility based on the Palestinian civilian population's "extreme vulnerability" suggests that the ICJ's case law will continue to develop the humanitarian stasis concept, which is the willingness to provide temporary relief based on human weakness. The ICJ declared that "there is a real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice will be caused to the rights found by the Court to be plausible" in paragraph 74 of the Order. Some of the rights asserted by South Africa are predicated on "plausibility," according to the

Order, while the risk of irreversible harm to these rights is predicated on "real and imminent" (the risk is real and impending)¹⁴.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the humanitarian issues arising from the continuing conflict between Israel and Gaza constitute a complicated and pressing crisis that necessitates prompt attention and coordinated response from the international community. The tragedy of the situation and the desperate needs of the impacted areas are highlighted by the deaths of civilians, extensive infrastructure devastation, population relocation, and restricted access to basic services. A multidimensional strategy that puts the safety of people first, guarantees unimpeded humanitarian access, and supports a long-term peace deal and sustainable ceasefire is needed to address these issues. The upholding of international humanitarian law, holding offenders accountable, and reducing the effects of the violence on vulnerable groups—women, children, and the elderly in particular—must all be priorities. Achieving long-lasting peace and security in the area also requires resolving the core reasons of the conflict, which include political grievances, socioeconomic inequalities, and historical injustices. This calls for a dedication to communication, peacemaking, and the advancement of everyone's human rights and dignity. Additionally, it is essential to repair trust, promote social cohesion, and create the foundation for sustainable development by aiding affected communities' resilience and recovery through psychosocial support, livelihood assistance, and reconstruction activities.

The humanitarian catastrophe in the Israel-Gaza war must ultimately be resolved by a concerted effort led by values of compassion, solidarity, and respect for human dignity. We cannot hope to lessen the suffering of people impacted by the war and create a future based on justice, peace, and understanding unless we engage in real engagement, communication, and cooperation.

¹⁴[https://www.ejiltalk.org/implications-of-the-icj-order-south-africa-v-israel-for-third-states/#:~:text=South%20Africa%20complained%20that%20acts.%E2%80%9D%20\(para.%2054\).](https://www.ejiltalk.org/implications-of-the-icj-order-south-africa-v-israel-for-third-states/#:~:text=South%20Africa%20complained%20that%20acts.%E2%80%9D%20(para.%2054).) (accessed on 08.02.2024 at 16:20).