



The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question: Latest facts and figures

20 November 2023

The Security Council's Informal Expert Group on WPS met to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question only once, in June 2022 ([S/2022/577](#)). No Palestinian woman from civil society has briefed the Security Council since January 2022 and the last Israeli woman did so in May 2023. None of the twelve Security Council resolutions on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, adopted since October 2000 make any reference to women or gender-related issues.

The below are some facts and figures about the current escalation:

- Since 7 October, the acts of terror committed by **Hamas in Israel** reportedly resulted in an estimated 1,200 deaths, 4,629 injuries, and over 230 people taken **hostage**, both Israelis and foreign nationals. Many women and children are among the victims and the hostages. Currently, there is no access to the hostages and their condition is unknown. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry will investigate all human rights violations, including allegations of sexual violence, and all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of international human rights law leading up and since 13 April 2021. Only four hostages have been released so far (all women).
- As on November 12th, Israel's military operations in the Gaza strip since this attack have resulted in reportedly more than 11,078 people killed, including 3,027 women and 4,506 children (68 percent). This includes to date 102 UNRWA staff. UN Women estimates **2,056 new female-headed households** in Gaza since 7 October.
- Since 7 October, at least 169 Palestinians in the **West Bank**, including one woman, have been killed by settlers and Israeli security forces and 2,560 have been injured. More than 2,000 Palestinians have been arrested and detained, including well-known women activists (for example, Ahed Tamimi). There have also been female fatalities reported in **Southern Lebanon**.
- An estimated 1.1 million women and girls in the Gaza Strip are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, and over 1.5 million people are **internally displaced**, including 788,800 women and girls.
- To make room for women and children to be inside the shelters, a considerable portion of the displaced population, mostly male, have opted to sleep in the open air. Simultaneously, women and children are more likely to be trapped by collapsed buildings. More than 2,650 people are reported missing, presumably **under the rubble**, and half of them are believed to be children.
- Without food, water, medicine, and fuel, service providers are unable to address the specific needs of the population and its most vulnerable groups. This includes **female-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent girls**. Gaps in access to basic services affect women disproportionately as they are more likely to be the primary caregiver, taking the responsibility for the functioning and maintenance of the household, and looking after of the children, sick and elderly.
- The declining availability of **water and hygiene supplies** in local markets in the Gaza Strip coupled with inadequate access to toilets and private sanitation facilities within **shelters** exposes women and girls to the risk of diseases and infections, while also compromising their safety and dignity.
- An estimated 575,000 women and adolescent girls of reproductive age in the Gaza Strip are facing critical gaps in their access to health services, including gender-based violence (GBV) response services and comprehensive **sexual and reproductive health services**. This is particularly problematic for the estimated 155,000 pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls in the Gaza Strip and the 5,522 women and girls due to give birth in the next month. **180 women a day are giving birth without adequate care**, including undergoing caesareans without anesthesia. 130 premature infants are dependent on incubators of which 61 percent are in the north, and require electricity to keep them alive. Several of them reportedly died in Al-Shifa hospital on November 11th.

- Prior to the recent escalation, depression levels among women and men alike were extremely high, and 54 per cent of men in the Gaza Strip showed signs of **anxiety and depression**, the highest numbers across the region. **Suicide** rates in the Gaza Strip have been rising over the past 10 years, particularly affecting young men who constitute 75 per cent of all suicide deaths. UNRWA has counsellors and social workers in the shelters to provide psychosocial first aid and other specialized protection services. Since the beginning of the recent escalation, UNRWA's counsellors and social workers have provided psychosocial support to 27,717 people (10,381 males, 17,336 females).
- On 19 October, the **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund** launched an appeal for up to USD 10 million to support local women's organizations' leadership in responding to the escalation of violence in the OPT. UN Women is ensuring that women-led organizations are provided with the flexible support necessary to sustain their operations and deliver emergency assistance.
- At present, there are several **international justice mechanisms** investigating or monitoring the situation in Gaza and the rest of the OPT, as well as in Israel: the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the OPT, including East Jerusalem; the ICC; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.
- The Palestinian Authority has adopted two **National Action Plans on women, peace and security** (2017-2019 and 2020-2024), and Israel has incorporated resolution 1325 into its national legislation, but **few women have participated in formal peace talks**. Women have been largely excluded from official reconciliation talks and dialogues to end Palestinian political division. There is no information about women's participation in talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials earlier this year (for example, in Sharm-el Sheikh in March 2023).