



# The crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions and the health system has collapsed

Tuesday 12th December, 2023

"The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) echoes and amplifies the distressing reports from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), a highly respected NGO operating in Gaza, which has firsthand knowledge of the crisis," stated Dr. Rateb Jneid, President of AFIC.

"The crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions. The siege imposed by the Israeli government, including the withholding of food, water, fuel and electricity is outrageous and inhuman. It is a collective punishment, prohibited under international humanitarian law, and may constitute a war crime."

- Medecins Sans Frontiers

*"MSF The crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions and the health system has collapsed." Sydney, 11 December, 2023*

The Full MSF press release is attached.

### Authorised:

Dr Rateb Jneid  
*President of AFIC*





## **MSF The crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions and the health system has collapsed.**

*Sydney, 11 December, 2023* – The crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic proportions. The siege imposed by the Israeli government, including the withholding of food, water, fuel and electricity is outrageous and inhuman. It is a collective punishment, prohibited under international humanitarian law, and may constitute a war crime.

Repeated assurances from both the United States and Israel that this war is being waged on combatants alone, runs counter to what Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) teams are seeing on the ground. On the contrary, this is a total war that doesn't spare civilians.

MSF's medical teams are working in hospitals and clinics in Gaza: they are observing the collapse of the health system. Hospitals and ambulances are under attack, patients and medical staff are being injured and killed. Most of Gaza's hospitals are out of service as the electrical power and water have been cut off due to lack of fuel and due to the damage healthcare facilities sustained in multiple attacks. While some hospitals are closed, the others function with very limited resources, often unable to admit new patients due to lack or absence of medical supplies and medication, fuel, food and water. Medical staff working in Gaza are utterly exhausted and do what they can in impossible conditions.

Ten days since MSF was forced to stop its support to Martyrs and Beni Shueila clinics after Israeli forces ordered people to evacuate the areas, we are seeing the complete collapse of healthcare services in the area, along with the rest of the healthcare system in the Strip.

“Nearly half of the consultations our teams were doing in the clinics were for children under the age of five. Our wound dressing team was caring for patients who are now left with infected wounds, some of which had worms inside upon arrival,” said MSF head of programs Simon Eccleshall.

In Rafah, the southernmost area of the strip and where people from Khan Yunis and Middle Area have been pushed to, health services are extremely limited. On 9 December, the MSF team in Rafah started to support Al-Shaboura clinic where they treated over 130 patients on the first day.

“Every other patient in the clinic has a respiratory tract infection due to prolonged exposure to cold and rain,” said Nicholas Papachrysostomou, MSF emergency coordinator in Gaza.

With dwindling supplies of safe food, clean water, and health services, and without adequate shelter, children and adults, including the elderly, people with disabilities, are living in deplorable conditions and are at heightened risk of disease.

The humanitarian situation is dire everywhere in Gaza. Nearly 85 per cent of the entire population, 1.9 million people, have had to flee their homes, with most of the displaced people being pushed to the south of the Strip. The entire population is living in extremely rough conditions, with many people sleeping in the streets or in open areas, access to food and drinking water is dangerously scarce. Due to the overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions at shelters in the south, there have been significant increases

in some communicable diseases and conditions such as diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, skin infections and hygiene-related conditions like lice.

“In shelters where displaced people are staying, overcrowding is a major concern. In some of them, the space per person is less than two square metres, while each toilet is shared by at least 600 people. Over the last month, 5,500 babies were born in Gaza. Our staff report seeing mothers starving and unable to feed their newborns, and families spending days without a proper meal.

“Today the supply of aid is performative – it’s nothing compared with the needs. Temporary truces, humanitarian pauses, and the trickle of aid that has so far been allowed in, have been insultingly insufficient,” said Eccleshall.

#### **Note to editors**

***MSF reiterates its call for an immediate and sustained ceasefire to prevent more deaths in Gaza and to restore and scale up the flow of humanitarian aid on which the survival of the population of Gaza depends.***

*Between 7 October and 9 December, 286 healthcare workers were killed in the Gaza Strip. 57 ambulances were hit and damaged.*

*A team of 15 staff entered Gaza on 14 November with a focus on supporting surgical care, burns treatment and the flow of essential supplies like food, water, fuel, medicine, medical equipment. The teams started off supporting Nasser hospital, the Martyrs Clinic and Beni Suhaila clinic in the south. On 24 November, two members of international staff were sent to Al Aqsa hospital in the middle area, where some of our Palestinian colleagues have been working since early October. All of these hospitals have been pushed to breaking point, with hundreds of patients seeking treatment and sanctuary. Following new Israeli evacuation orders in the south, we were forced to suspend our medical support to Martyrs and Beni Suhaila clinics on 1 December, as they are in areas under the evacuation order. As of 10 December, the support to Martyrs and Beni Suhaila clinics remains suspended. The security situation in and around Nasser hospital has also deteriorated, with constant bombing near the hospital.*

*On 7 December, MSF began providing small support to European Hospital in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza. On 9 December, MSF began supporting Al-Shaboura clinic, in Rafah, southern Gaza.*

**ENDS**

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