

# WHO'S RESPONSE TO THE GAZA-PALESTINE CONFLICT

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the World Health Organization's response to health emergencies in countries experiencing crisis. In particular, it seeks to examine how the WHO operates during crisis situations such as conflict or natural disasters, using the example of the conflict in Gaza. The paper will analyze the organization's actions, including its behavior, measures, and intervention plans, as well as its capacity for action. The WHO has documented incidents of violence against healthcare professionals in the Gaza Strip, which have resulted in fatalities and injuries, and have had a negative impact on the ability of hospitals to provide critical medical care. The importance of establishing a humanitarian corridor to facilitate the movement of essential health supplies and personnel is emphasized in the paper. The ongoing conflict in the Palestinian territories has been further exacerbated by the prolonged 16-year blockade, leading to a severe shortage of resources in the healthcare system of the Gaza Strip. The lack of electricity, inadequate supply of medicines and medical equipment, and frequent attacks on healthcare facilities have made it challenging for hospitals to provide proper medical care.

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## THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a United Nations agency that was established in 1948 with the aim of promoting health and well-being on a global scale, safeguarding the world against health threats, and supporting vulnerable populations. WHO's primary objectives are to broaden universal health coverage, coordinate global responses to health crises, and foster healthy living throughout life. WHO operates in over 150 locations across six regions and collaborates with 194 Member States to promote global health and well-being for all. The organization is committed to working in partnership with various entities, such as governments, civil society organizations, international organizations, foundations, advocates, researchers, and healthcare providers, can play a critical role in promoting health and well-being for every individual. The World Health Assembly, which represents WHO and makes decisions on its behalf, comprises delegations from all Member States, based on an essential norm, accountability.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Andy Craggs, About WHO, The Official site of The World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/about>.

## GLOBAL HEALTH ACHIEVEMENTS

The year 2023 was a challenging one for the World Health Organization, as it grappled with numerous public health crises across the globe. In the early part of the year, the organization played a pivotal role in responding to the aftermath of a devastating earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. As the year drew to a close, the ongoing conflict in Gaza also emerged as a pressing concern, resulting in significant suffering and hardship. Throughout the year, the WHO team at headquarters monitored approximately 750 incidents in-depth, leading to the need for additional information from countries and the deployment of resources to address the situations. It addressed an impressive 65 emergencies, including 22 new ones. A significant portion of these emergencies were related to conflict. The organization has taken steps to detect, prevent, and respond to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Ensuring access to crucial healthcare services, such as expanding hospital capacity for childbirth and treating battle injuries, providing adequate training for healthcare workers, securing essential medications and medical equipment, and improving diagnostic capabilities in laboratories, is of paramount importance. In

certain situations, healthcare professionals from the World Health Organization have put their lives on the line to deliver healthcare services in collaboration with humanitarian partners. Several countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine, have witnessed heightened conflict and insecurity, necessitating a WHO response. Moreover, the organization has demonstrated its dedication to protecting and improving the health of people worldwide by 2023.<sup>2</sup>

The World Health Organization routinely partners with local Ministries of Health and community health workers to investigate health outbreaks that often originate and are first controlled in these areas. It has seen a remarkable upsurge in the number of infectious diseases, necessitating a coordinated response from both regional and global organizations. In particular, Nigeria experienced an outbreak of Lassa Fever, while Uganda grappled with Ebola disease.

Additionally, Equatorial Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania were hit by virus disease outbreaks. Fortunately, the WHO played a crucial role in mitigating the situation by facilitating the transportation of samples, conducting laboratory tests in both central and local countries, and setting up national genomic sequencing capabilities. Additionally, the organization assisted governments in investigating cases, tracing patients' contacts, setting up field hospitals, and other containment measures to save lives and curb the spread of diseases. According to the WHO, there were more than 1200 incidents that affected healthcare facilities, personnel, and vehicles in 19 different countries and territories. These incidents had a significant impact on hospitals, clinics, and ambulances, as well as the patients who rely on them. These incidents resulted in over 700 fatalities and almost 1200 injuries. Despite these challenges, there were some positive developments this year. The World Health Organization's Director-General declared the end of two significant Public Health Emergencies of International Concern, COVID-19 and monkeypox. This announcement followed the meetings of the respective Emergency Committees. Despite this positive development, the Director-General emphasized that the risks associated with both diseases have not been completely eliminated.<sup>3</sup>

The World Health Organization's Health Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Resilience (HEPR) Framework is a comprehensive guide that aims to strengthen the capacity of Member States and their partners to handle health emergencies. This framework includes crucial elements like governance, financing, systems, tools, and workforce requirements that are necessary for effectively addressing health emergencies. By adopting a holistic approach, HEPR focuses on developing essential competencies across the entire emergency cycle, using a One Health perspective. The setting encompasses essential features like collective monitoring, community defense, dependable and expandable clinical care, access to remedies, and crisis coordination, all of which are supported by a skilled and ready workforce. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of efficiently managed, coordinated, and inclusive critical research and innovation. WHO has updated its Emergency Response Framework, incorporating insights gained from recent health crises.<sup>4</sup>

#### HEALTH EMERGENCIES – COUNTRIES IN CRISES (YEMEN, SYRIA, IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, SUDAN, LEBANON, SOMALIA, PAKISTAN, LIBYA, PALESTINE, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, JORDAN, EGYPT)

The Eastern Mediterranean is currently grappling with an exceptional level of emergencies, primarily brought on by political unrest in several of the region's countries. As a result, over 62 million people in the area require immediate medical assistance. The displacement of almost 30 million individuals primarily affects this region. Furthermore, an alarming number of malnourished children have emerged due to the crisis. The already overburdened healthcare systems in the area are facing a shortage of medical personnel, vaccines, medications, and medical supplies, exacerbating the situation. Furthermore, the scarcity of fuel, electricity, and clean water is worsening the deterioration of health services. The ongoing conflicts in several of the region's countries have led to an increase in trauma injuries and a heightened risk of infectious disease outbreaks.<sup>5</sup>

The Official site of The World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/global-health-achievements-2023>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> The World Health Organization – The Eastern Mediterranean Region, WHO Health Emergencies, <https://www.emro.who.int/>

<sup>2</sup> Department of Communications, Global health achievements 2023, The Official site of The World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/global-health-achievements-2023>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Communications, Global health achievements 2023,

## WHO'S GRADING PROCESS

The organization has developed a classification system for emergencies that evaluates the level of organizational and external support required based on the extent, complexity, and duration of the emergency. When an emergency is categorized, it activates WHO's emergency response and policy, and all WHO offices at every level are instructed to supply resources for support. This internal process ensures that the organization applies the appropriate level of urgency and allocates the necessary resources to assist the affected Member State, partners, and the WHO country office in their response. The system consists of three levels: Grade 1 refers to a single-country or multi-country event with minimal public health consequences, necessitating only a reduced WHO country office response or a small international WHO response. Grade 2 events are characterized by their moderate impact on public health, which may necessitate a corresponding response from the country office and/or the World Health Organization at the international level. The country office typically requires moderate levels of organizational and/or external support to manage the situation effectively. In such cases, an emergency support team operating from the regional office provides coordination and assistance. However, if multiple regions are affected, the team may need to operate from headquarters. Grade 3 events usually involve significant public health implications that require a major response from the country office and/or a significant international response from WHO. These situations demand considerable organizational and/or external support from the country office. An emergency support team based at the Regional Office coordinates the necessary support and assistance.<sup>6</sup>

## CASE STUDY

The ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories, which began in October 2023, has resulted in numerous civilian casualties and injuries. The current state of affairs in the Gaza Strip is particularly disconcerting, with the constant bombardment of airstrikes and the scarcity of essential resources, including medical care, food, water, and fuel, putting an already financially strained healthcare system under even more pressure. Local hospitals are

overwhelmed by the influx of patients and fleeing civilians seeking shelter. The lack of basic medical care, including maternal and neonatal care and the treatment of chronic illnesses, is severely compromised. Hundreds of Israeli civilians, including the old people and children, have been taken captive. The ongoing conflict in Israel and the Palestinian territories has led to attacks on health facilities and personnel, resulting in fatalities and injuries, as well as damage to medical equipment and vehicles. In an effort to address this crisis, the World Health Organization is collaborating with its partners to provide essential medical supplies and to address the most pressing health needs. WHO is urging all parties to prioritize the safety of medical personnel and patients, and to ensure unobstructed access to healthcare for all affected populations.<sup>7</sup>

## SHORTAGE OF FUEL SUPPLY

Due to the absence of security assurances, the inability to transport fuel and vital medical supplies to hospitals in the northern Gaza Strip becomes apparent on October 24, 2023. To ensure the safe distribution of these supplies, the WHO is urgently calling for a humanitarian ceasefire. As a result of this, several hospitals in the area are facing difficulties, including Al-Shifa Hospital, which is currently operating at 150% capacity. The shortage of fuel has caused the Indonesian hospital to suspend some critical services and now operates partially. Furthermore, the Turkish Friendship Hospital, which is the sole facility for cancer treatment in the Gaza Strip, has been negatively impacted by the fuel shortage, resulting in approximately 2000 cancer patients being in danger. The closure of six hospitals in the Gaza Strip has been caused by a shortage of fuel, which has put the lives of thousands of patients at risk. If immediate action is not taken to deliver vital supplies and additional medical equipment, many vulnerable patients may face serious medical complications or even death due to the lack of electricity. The following individuals are dependent on an uninterrupted and reliable power supply for their survival: patients receiving dialysis, premature infants in need of care, as well as individuals in intensive care or undergoing surgery.<sup>8</sup>

cha/countries-in-crisis/index.html.

<sup>6</sup> The World Health Organization – The Eastern Mediterranean Region, WHO Health Emergencies, <https://www.emro.who.int/cha/countries-in-crisis/index.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The World Health Organization, Conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, The Official site of The World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/conflict-in-Israel-and-oPt>.

<sup>8</sup> The World Health Organization – The Eastern Mediterranean



The Palestinian Red Crescent Society and four major hospitals in the southern Gaza Strip have received more than 30,000 liters of fuel from the World Health Organization to support their emergency medical services, with the backing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Although this immediate aid is enough to maintain the hospitals' essential functions and keep the ambulances running temporarily, it is not a long-term solution. The organization has provided some of its medicines and medical supplies to four hospitals that are in critical condition, two of which are affiliated with the Palestine Red Crescent Society. These supplies will also be distributed to ambulance crews who are part of this society. The distribution of these supplies will help support the provision of high-quality healthcare to those in need. This will help improve the quality of healthcare and medical services in the region. Healthcare professionals were elated to receive the supplies and promptly transported boxes of them to the operating rooms. In these rooms, doctors are currently performing surgeries without basic surgical equipment, including anesthesia.<sup>9</sup>

### PROTECTING THE HEALTH SYSTEM

The World Health Organization has requested that Israel reconsider its plan to relocate more than a million individuals residing in the northern region of Wadi Gaza. The WHO cautions that such a large-scale evacuation could have severe consequences for patients, medical staff, and other civilians who would remain or be impacted by the evacuation. The WHO emphasizes that the civilian population is nowhere safe, given the persistent air strikes and closed borders, and that nearly half of the population in Gaza is under the age of 18. Also, it emphasizes the fragile state of the diminishing availability of secure food, pure water, medical care, and insufficient housing, which exposes both young and adult individuals, including the elderly, to increased vulnerability to illness. The Palestinian Ministry of Health has reportedly

informed the organization (WHO) that it is not feasible to safely evacuate hospitalized patients who are particularly vulnerable, including those receiving life support or who are critically injured. It is believed that transporting such individuals while hostilities continue could potentially put their lives at risk. The two functioning hospitals operated by the Ministry of Health in the north of the Gaza Strip have already surpassed their maximum capacity of 760 beds and are currently experiencing severe overcrowding. Among the thousands of patients treated in hospitals for injuries and various health issues, a significant number are severely injured and require critical care. Moreover, there are many thousands more who have wounds or other health needs but do not have access to any form of care.<sup>10</sup>

The challenging time constraints, intricate transportation logistics, and damaged roads, coupled with the absence of appropriate care during transportation, all contribute to making transportation even more difficult. The four Ministry of Health hospitals in the southern region of Gaza are currently struggling to cope with the overwhelming number of patients, as they lack the essential critical care facilities and supplies required to provide adequate treatment. The scarcity of medical supplies poses a potential threat to patients and obstructs the endeavors of medical professionals. The supplies provided by the World Health Organization in Gaza have largely been depleted. These resources will be sufficient to treat more than 300,000 patients with various injuries and illnesses. The WHO is urgently calling for the prompt establishment of a humanitarian corridor to ensure the safe and timely delivery of essential supplies to health facilities in Gaza, including through the Rafah crossing. The organization is reiterating its call for unrestricted humanitarian access to deliver life-saving supplies, such as fuel, water, and food, as well as protection for civilians, medical personnel, and health infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian law. Ultimately, is advocating for an end to hostilities and violence in the region.<sup>11</sup>

Region, WHO Health Emergencies – As Gaza's health system disintegrates, WHO calls for safe passage of fuel, supplies for health facilities, <https://www.emro.who.int/opt/news/as-gazas-health-system-disintegrates-who-calls-for-safe-passage-of-fuel-supplies-for-health-facilities.html>.

<sup>9</sup> The World Health Organization – The Eastern Mediterranean Region, WHO Health Emergencies – As Gaza's health system disintegrates, WHO calls for safe passage of fuel, supplies for health facilities, <https://www.emro.who.int/opt/news/as-gazas-health-system-disintegrates-who-calls-for-safe-passage-of-fuel-supplies-for-health-facilities.html>.

<sup>10</sup> WHO Media Team, WHO pleads for immediate reversal of Gaza evacuation order to protect health and reduce suffering, The Official site of The World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2023-who-pleads-for-immediate-reversal-of-gaza-evacuation-order-to-protect-health-and-reduce-suffering>.

<sup>11</sup> WHO Media Team, WHO pleads for immediate reversal of Gaza evacuation order to protect health and reduce suffering, The Official site of The World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2023-who-pleads-for-immediate-reversal-of-gaza-evacuation-order-to-protect-health-and-reduce-suffering>.

## ATTACKS ON HOSPITALS

WHO has strongly criticized the recent assault on Al Ahli Arab Hospital, located in the northern sector of the Gaza Strip. This hospital provided medical care to patients and staff, as well as serving as a shelter for internally displaced individuals. According to initial reports, there were numerous casualties in the assault. The hospital was among the twenty health facilities in the northern Gaza Strip that were instructed by the Israeli military to evacuate. However, the current precarious situation, which includes the critical condition of numerous patients, a shortage of ambulances, staff, and suitable accommodation for displaced individuals, rendered it impossible to comply with these orders. As a result, the World Health Organization is advocating for prompt measures to protect the civilian population and healthcare facilities, specifically by urging the cancellation of evacuation orders and emphasizing the importance of adhering to international humanitarian law, which guarantees the safety of healthcare facilities.<sup>12</sup>

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

According to the Ministry of Health, a total of 9770 Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip between October 7 and November 5, 2023. Of these, approximately 41% were children (4008), 45% were women (3610), and 55% were men (4395). The Israeli authorities reported that approximately 1400 Israelis and foreigners were killed, and over 5431 were injured during the same period. Additionally, more than 200 were taken hostage. The situation in the Gaza Strip is dire, with ongoing airstrikes and sieges making it difficult to access essential supplies such as water, food, fuel, medicine, and medical products. The influx of 1.5 million individuals, comprising 600.000 from the northern region of the Gaza Strip and 710.000 who have sought refuge in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilities, has caused a significant humanitarian crisis in the area. The UNRWA facilities, which were designed to accommodate a specific number of people, are now home to three times as many internally displaced individuals, further exacerbating the situation in the region. The few relief workers who have managed to enter or leave the shelters have reported that the sick and

injured are not being evacuated in significant numbers. The World Health Organization has labeled the situation a level 3 emergency, due to the large number of deaths and injuries caused by ongoing conflict. The incessant airstrikes and sieges are preventing the delivery of crucial supplies, such as food, fuel, and medical products, resulting in 1.5 million people being displaced, including 600.000 who have fled from the northern part of the Gaza Strip to the south, and 710.000 who are currently taking refuge in UNRWA facilities.<sup>13</sup>

The current state of affairs in the West Bank, especially East Jerusalem, has become increasingly dangerous due to the recent intensification of settler and military violence. The current situation in these areas is critical due to the implementation of measures such as the use of live munitions and airstrikes, as well as the blockade of checkpoints and the closure of several communities. Consequently, patients, medical staff, and ambulances are unable to enter or leave these locations. Furthermore, since October, 1000 Palestinians, including at least 98 households, have been moved from their homes and 121 Palestinians have been displaced after their homes were demolished by the Israeli authorities due to a lack of building permits or as a repressive measure.<sup>14</sup>

The bombardment has led to a multitude of injuries and fatalities, posing a significant health risk. It is estimated that 350.000 patients with non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, require care. Furthermore, there are 1.000 patients in need of hemodialysis, with 80% of the dialysis machines located in the northern region. This situation is further compounded by the presence of 50.000 pregnant women and 183 births/day. Additionally, there are 130 premature births that depend on incubators, with 61% of them located in the north. The psychological toll on those affected by the bombardments and sieges is severe and affects everyone in the region. According to UNRWA, a health crisis is unfolding as a result of the thousands of cases of acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, chicken pox, and other illnesses being reported. The current crisis is intensified by the likelihood of widespread displacement, leading to overcrowding in shelters and the destruction of water and sanitation systems. In addition, the scarcity of essential medical supplies, trauma

<sup>12</sup> The World Health Organization – The Eastern Mediterranean Region, WHO statement on attack on Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, <https://www.emro.who.int/opt/news/who-statement-on-attack-on-al-ahli-arab-hospital-in-gaza.html>.

<sup>13</sup> The World Health Organization, WHO Operational Response Plan – occupied Palestinian territory, October 2023 – January 2024, p. 2-11.

<sup>14</sup> The World Health Organization, WHO Operational Response Plan – occupied Palestinian territory, October 2023 – January 2024, p. 2-11.

equipment, life-saving medications, fuel, and electrical power is hindering the operation of critical hospital services and the capacity of ambulances to respond. The non-functionality of health services and medical equipment is hindering diagnostic and treatment capacities, leading to a catastrophic situation that demands immediate assistance to prevent further loss of life and suffering.<sup>15</sup>

## HEALTHCARE SERVICES

A considerable number of primary healthcare facilities are currently not operational. Specifically, 64% of the 72 facilities are out of order. In Gaza City, this percentage rises to 74%, while in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, it reaches 92%. Moreover, many hospitals are also not functioning, with 34% of the 36 hospitals not operational. The average occupancy rate of hospitals is 126%, and all hospitals have activated emergency protocols, which negatively impacts operations and access to healthcare. There have been multiple calls for evacuation in several hospitals and the assaults on healthcare facilities have led to a total of 491 fatalities and 372 injuries, among which 16 medical staff members have lost their lives and 37 have been injured. Out of the 39 affected health facilities, 22 hospitals were damaged, and 24 ambulances were damaged. The main goal of this plan is to swiftly provide emergency healthcare services to minimize fatalities and illnesses during the current upsurge in hostilities. The World Health Organization's operational response strategy aligns with the 90-day flash appeal, particularly the health cluster aspect. The organization's response includes attending to victims, upholding essential healthcare services, reestablishing referral pathways, promoting community education, providing early warnings, managing disease prevention and control, offering supply and logistical support, and coordinating efforts.<sup>16</sup>

## CONCEPT OF OPERATION

To guarantee the successful and secure delivery of humanitarian services, it is essential to promptly disentangle the transportation of medical supplies, medical personnel, and patients. To achieve this objective, it is crucial to establish a formal agreement on conflict resolution that is recognized and overseen by the

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure continuous access to humanitarian supplies, including water, sanitation, food, fuel, medicines, medical equipment, and means of communication, as well as the freedom of movement for people entering and leaving Gaza. Moreover, Gaza must possess dependable and secure road infrastructure to facilitate access and transportation of ambulances and logistics. Lastly, implementing measures to minimize risks to personnel, such as importing and utilizing equipment like armored vehicles and ballistic personal protective equipment, is crucial.<sup>17</sup>

The delivery of healthcare services is greatly influenced by the operational areas and requires adaptability to address shifting conflict conditions, given the high degree of uncertainty and instability: Zone 1 – limited or no access: In regions with restricted access, it is essential to offer maximum assistance to existing facilities and ambulances. The provision of medical supplies such as medications, equipment, and consumables, along with remote support, is critical; Zone 2 – restricted access: In areas with limited access, it is important to support operational hospitals, primary healthcare facilities, and ambulance services. The provision of medical supplies such as medicines, equipment, and fuel are necessary. The deployment of specialized care teams to support existing human resources is also important. Paramedics and temporary facilities, including field hospitals, should be deployed as needed to complement existing facilities. The establishment and support of referral pathways and evacuation routing are critical; Zone 3 – In zones with restricted access, entry, and exit points, it is crucial to ensure that operational facilities and ambulance services are supported. This includes providing essential medical supplies such as medicines, consumables, equipment, and fuel. Additionally, deploying specialized care teams to support existing human resources is important. It is essential to deploy medics and temporary facilities, such as field hospitals, as needed to provide additional support for existing facilities. Establishing and supporting medevac pathways and the necessary triage, response, and transportation capacity is critical; Zone 4 – In areas outside of Gaza, medical evacuation to Egypt, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Jordan is necessary.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> The World Health Organization, WHO Operational Response Plan – occupied Palestinian territory, October 2023 – January 2024, p. 2-11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> The World Health Organization, WHO Operational Response Plan – occupied Palestinian territory, October 2023 – January 2024, p. 2-11.



## CURRENT SITUATION

The response to the ongoing conflict from a public health perspective has been quite challenging. According to the latest data available, 1431 fatalities and 4594 injuries have been reported since December 7th. Of the 36 hospitals in Gaza, only 8 are currently operational, with three of these hospitals in the northern region of Gaza operating at minimal capacity. According to Israeli authorities, the number of fatalities stands at over 1200, comprising both Israelis and foreign nationals, while the count of injured individuals has reached 9038. Furthermore, 251 people have been taken hostage, and 114 of them have been released since the conflict began. As a result, the bed occupancy in the operational hospitals is currently at an average of 222%, while ICU occupancy is at 245%. Transporting medical supplies to areas frequently targeted by artillery fire and shelling is a significant challenge. The monitoring of infectious diseases has shown an increase in diseases such as respiratory infections, diarrhea, bloody diarrhea. The worsening of current circumstances is expected as a result of the overcrowding in shelters, the damage sustained by water and sanitation systems, and the decreasing accessibility of healthcare services. Currently, Al Ahli Hospital is facing an emergency situation due to a severe scarcity of oxygen, crucial medical supplies, water, food, and fuel, as well as the need for additional medical personnel. The Kamal Adwan Hospital has been under siege since December 8th and was already facing significant shortages of these resources before the siege.<sup>19</sup>

## HEALTH RESPONSE AND BUDGET

On December 8, the World Health Organization provided crucial supplies to the European Gaza Hospital to fulfill the health requirements of 4500 patients. The WHO and its associates in Gaza delivered vital trauma and surgical resources to Al-Ahli Hospital to cater to the requirements of 1500 individuals, and transported 19 critically ill patients, accompanied by 14 escorts, to the Nasser Medical Complex in southern Gaza for additional treatment. On December 9, a WHO team visited the Hospital in the administrative capital of Cairo to inquire about the advancement of infants evacuated from Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza on November

19 as part of a WHO-led mission. On December 14, the organization distributed 4200 body bags with the assistance of the Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE), and emphasized that the protection of the civilian population and health care must be prioritized in the face of the crisis.<sup>20</sup>

The World Health Organization has unveiled its Operational Response Plan for the period between October 2023 and January 2024, which has a total budget of 110 million dollars. This plan concentrates on four key areas: deploying emergency medical teams and additional hospitals to deliver healthcare services; employing observation and early warning systems to monitor public health and implement disease prevention and control measures; providing supply and logistical support and coordination. At present, the organization has secured approximately 43.4 million dollars, while its partners have engaged an additional 35 million dollars. Additionally, the funding requirement for humanitarian healthcare is now set at 204.2 million dollars, aimed at assisting 2.5 million people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, although the action plans, strategies, and efforts of the organization, teams, specialists, and collaborators have since the beginning helped the people in the struggle areas, the continuous escalation of the conflict and external or internal factors that do not depend on them have made the work difficult. In such conflict zones, the need for help is permanent, which is limited from many perspectives. The WHO is just one of the many points of support that is responsible for people's health and tries to achieve its goals by many means. In the case of the conflict in Gaza, the WHO has proven itself and is still fighting to keep the people safe and alive, and to provide them with the necessary medical help every day.

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<sup>19</sup> The World Health Organization, WHO Operational Response Plan – occupied Palestinian territory, oPt Emergency Situation Update, Issue 17, 2023, p. 1-5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

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