



A nurse from International Medical Corps' Mobile Medical Team in Gaza measures the blood pressure of a patient complaining of dizziness and lower abdominal pain.

The conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza brought widespread devastation to an already impoverished territory. According to OHCHR, 242 Palestinians were killed in Gaza since the onset of the recent escalation, while the Gaza Ministry of Health (MoH) reported that 1,948 were injured. The latest events have also resulted in significant additional displacement of Palestinians, creating a total of almost 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). With the ceasefire that took effect on May 21 currently holding, IDPs have returned to their damaged homes and are trying to rebuild. Those whose homes have been completely destroyed have been provided with financial assistance to find alternative housing. Many hospitals and clinics were damaged during the conflict, and essential infrastructure like roads and electricity networks have been severely affected, resulting in an additional decline in public access to basic services across Gaza. More than 46 schools suffered damages to their infrastructure, rendering them unsafe to operate and leading the Ministry of Education in Gaza to declare the end of the school year. Several sectoral clusters are assessing damages prompted by the conflict with future implications.

Even with a ceasefire in place, the conflict has posed a significant threat to both the physical and mental health of vulnerable civilians in Gaza, who already were experiencing stress due to insecurity, illness, loss of family and friends, loss of homes and livelihoods, financial instability and, more recently, COVID-19.

International Medical Corps Response

International Medical Corps has observed a rising need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services throughout the Gaza Strip, as residential buildings were heavily targeted by ongoing airstrikes, often during the night, when a number of such buildings were ultimately demolished.

The current crisis has placed an additional burden on Gaza's health infrastructure, which is already overwhelmed due to COVID-19. Since May 18, International Medical Corps' MHPSS team has been able to mobilize 20 community volunteers who provided immediate psychological first aid (PFA) to 5,054 people and individual counseling to 136 people affected by the conflict in 212 consultations. The mobile medical teams (MMTs) supported by International Medical Corps restarted operations on May 22, and currently are providing an average of almost 70 primary healthcare (PHC) consultations per day. From May 22 until June 13, the MMTs served 657 people. In days following the ceasefire, International Medical Corps staff also have delivered essential personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies to seven supported facilities.

FAST FACTS

- International Medical Corps is working in Gaza to strengthen emergency preparedness for COVID-19 and increase access to primary and secondary health with integrated MHPSS support.
- With our partners, we operate mobile medical teams and support three hospitals, two primary healthcare facilities, and a maternal and child nutrition provider serving 10 marginalized communities.
- Working with local partners, International Medical Corps has deployed mobile medical teams to conflict-affected areas, providing support through a multi-sector approach that includes healthcare, MHPSS, GBV, and child-protection services.

International Medical Corps plans to build upon existing health structures and coordination mechanisms to ensure an rapid and effective interim health emergency response that addresses the physical and mental health of people in Gaza. We also are focusing on prevention and response activities for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and children experiencing protection concerns, and mitigating COVID-19 transmission.

To ensure greater access, our response includes both facility-based and community-based approaches to delivering these services. International Medical Corps is providing emergency medical supplies, capacity building, human resources, PPE, and infection prevention and control (IPC) items to three local hospitals—Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, Al-Karama Hospital and St. John Eye Hospital—and two PHC facilities (Caritas and Ard El-Insan). We also are supporting maternal and child nutrition efforts at the Ard El-Insan healthcare facility by implementing a screening program for acute malnutrition among children aged 6–59 months, and by providing psychosocial support for caretakers in need. International Medical Corps plans to scale up outpatient care for non-severe cases, and refer children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) with medical complications to appropriate health facilities. We also plan to mobilize support and procure basic essential supplies for a community-based organization called Baytouna for Community Development, to serve communities that cannot be reached by the MMUs due to road and infrastructural damages.

International Medical Corps will continue to focus on ensuring sustainability by increasing emphasis on community-based approaches to health, MHPSS, child protection, and GBV prevention and response activities. We will strengthen the linkages between existing services by strengthening and ensuring the use of existing referral pathways, coordinating with local CBOs, utilizing community spaces as appropriate and engaging community volunteers. International Medical Corps also will work to further develop community capacity to maintain quality services, with the possibility for continued expansion of services, in partnership with community-based organizations.



A doctor from the MMT treats an infant experiencing abdominal distention and diarrhea.