

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP) PALESTINE

The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the necessary appropriations being made available from the 2021 general budget of the European Union.

AMOUNT: EUR 33 780 000

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2021/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO²'s partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

First modification – 26 January 2021

Settlement activity and demolitions have persisted throughout the year and continue to result in a coercive environment for Palestinian communities in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with many exposed to demolitions and settler violence, limited or no access to basic services and at risk of being forcibly displaced. The latter part of 2020 has seen a spike in such activity with demolitions either threatened or actually taking place. In light of these continued and worsening conditions, Italy has pledged to transfer to the European Commission's budget a contribution³ to support humanitarian assistance and protection for those in need.

A contribution of EUR 480 000 from external assigned revenues (Italy) has been added to this HIP.

Second modification – 27 May 2021

Following weeks of unrest and tension in East Jerusalem, the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory dramatically deteriorated since 7 May 2021. As of 10 May, the situation escalated resulting in the worst and most deadly conflict between Israel and Hamas since 2014. The 11-day war in Gaza resulted in the death of 247 Palestinian civilians, of which 66 children, and 12 deaths in Israel, of which two were children. A considerable number of public and private buildings were destroyed, including medical facilities and schools. Hostilities have so far resulted in additional displacement of Palestinians, bringing the cumulative number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to over 100 000, including 77 000 seeking protection in 58 UNRWA schools across Gaza.

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

³ The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the payment of the Member State's contribution of EUR 500 000 to the EU budget as externally assigned revenue.

The humanitarian needs in Gaza have increased dramatically due to the escalation in hostilities. Gaza's healthcare system was already extremely fragile. It has struggled to cope with the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. Critical services are at breaking point and the current escalation has severely damaged the electricity, sewage and water infrastructure. In addition to the needs that this crisis has produced in Gaza, Palestinians living in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) are experiencing attacks by nationalistic groups and extensive and increased use of force by the ISF (Israeli Security Forces), which has resulted in significantly increased protection risks.

A contribution of EUR 8 000 000 from the Operational Reserve has been added to this HIP.

1 CONTEXT

The civilian population in Palestine continues to suffer from the consequences of the ongoing Israeli occupation and the intra-Palestinian divide between Fatah and Hamas. The lack of political progress on the Middle East Peace Process, the failure of Israel as the occupying power to comply with its obligations under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), combined with the physical and political fragmentation of Palestinian territory have resulted in a gradual deterioration of what has been a protracted protection crisis with serious humanitarian consequences.

Palestinians living in the **West Bank** (including Area C, East Jerusalem and H2⁴) continue to be subject to an increasingly coercive environment generated by the ongoing occupation of Palestine and continued Israeli settlement activity⁵, resulting in a wide range of humanitarian needs.

The humanitarian situation **in the Gaza Strip** is steadily deteriorating, resulting in a very fragile healthcare system which has struggled to cope with the recent COVID-19 outbreak, alongside the collapse of other critical services, degraded infrastructure, lack of electricity, crippling unemployment, movement restrictions of goods and people, and the constant possibility of further escalation of conflict. Gaza remains cut off from the outside world and the erosion of its productive economy makes it increasingly dependent on external aid.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated humanitarian needs in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, while generating socio-economic needs which must be addressed jointly with development actors.

DG ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework for 2020-2021 identified high humanitarian needs in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The vulnerability of the population affected by the crisis is assessed to be high.

⁴ "Israel exercises direct control over 20 per cent of **Hebron** City, known as **H2**, which is home to some 33,000 Palestinians and a few hundred Israeli settlers. This area has witnessed multiple cycles of violence in the context of continuing settlement activities, which are in contravention of international law." UN OCHA – H2 Spotlight – April 2019

⁵ Security Council Report – 18 June 2020: "In Resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. In the same resolution, the Council reiterated its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respects all its legal obligations in that regard". No such steps were taken since the adoption of the resolution.

	Palestine
INFORM Risk Index⁶	
Vulnerability Index	6.3
Hazard and Exposure	5.4
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.3
Global Crisis Severity Index⁷	
Projected conflict risk	3
Uprooted People Index	3
Humanitarian Conditions	3.5
Natural Disaster Index	0
HDI Ranking⁸ (Value)	0.690
Total Population⁹	4 981 422

2 HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance

Out of a total population of around 5 million, approximately 2.4 million people need humanitarian assistance, 0.9 million of which are in the West Bank and 1.5 million in the Gaza Strip.

	Palestine ¹⁰	Disaggregated data ¹¹		
		Female	Children	People with Disabilities
People facing critical problems relating to protection and forced displacement (Area C, East Jerusalem, H2 ¹²)	1.9 million	52.6%	44.5%	5.8%
People facing critical problems relating to access to essential services (Area C, East Jerusalem, Jerusalem periphery, H2, Gaza Strip)	1.8 million	49.1%	51.5%	5.8%

⁶ INFORM is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters

⁷ <http://www.inform-index.org/Global-Crisis-Severity-Index-beta>

⁸ Humanitarian Development Index (HDI) developed by UNDP - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PSE>

⁹ World Bank data, year 2018

¹⁰ UN OCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview

¹¹ UN OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 – oPt Dashboard

¹² H2 is in Hebron City

People living under the poverty line	1.14 million			
Children with challenges in accessing education	389 000	49.3%	96.9%	4%
IDPs in Gaza	8 500			

2.2 Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

2.2.1 Protection

In the West Bank (including East Jerusalem and H2) Palestinians are at risk of forcible transfer and dispossession of land and housing that is triggered by multiple factors, including the *de facto* annexation of occupied land by Israel, the destruction and demolition of property, increased settler violence, military incursions and training exercises near residential areas, revocation of residency status, and restrictions on access to basic services, including education. In Gaza, prolonged conflict and occupation are directly impacting the livelihoods of the population and denying them safety and access to essential services, such as health care, safe drinking water and education. The 14-year blockade on Gaza has limited access to basic commodities and restricted freedom of movement.

2.2.2 Health

The health care system in Gaza is structurally poor and on the verge of collapse as a result of the ongoing Israeli border closure and the lack of sufficient support by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Limited access to essential health services is compounded by shortages in essential drugs and equipment, specialised medical staff, seriously restricted medical referrals outside Gaza, and a chronic electricity crisis and lack of availability of potable water. The health care system has been further stretched with the COVID-19 pandemic. In the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, the health care system is heavily impacted by the spread of COVID-19. This comes on top of life-saving work, including on support to trauma services, which needs to continue.

2.2.3 WaSH and shelter

Lack of access to potable water remains a major challenge for many communities in the West Bank, while in Gaza, in addition to a shortage of safe water, the lack of electricity to run the sewage treatment plant results in a higher risk of water contamination (for both underground and coastal aquifers). Inadequate shelter poses both a health and protection risk.

2.2.4 Livelihoods/basic needs

In Gaza, the most vulnerable and poorest households, with no access to regular income and many of which are food insecure, must be provided with alternatives to resorting to negative coping strategies, like incurring significant debts to meet basic needs and access services. Increasing resilience to emergencies through a basic needs approach remains

essential amidst declining socio-economic indicators and reduced employment opportunities.

2.2.5 Education in Emergencies

There are highly vulnerable communities in Palestine that require safe access to education, with education facilities requiring protection from attack and psycho-social support for children and teachers. The use of force in and around education facilities, exposure to settler intimidation, demolition and confiscation of school structures remain a reality in the daily lives of Palestinian children in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, armed conflict and the resulting damage and destruction of facilities, the Israeli blockade, and the internal Palestinian divide, have severely disrupted services, including the ability to conduct regular educational activities. Combined with their negative psychosocial effects, these factors have affected student well-being, performance and completion rates. For children living with disabilities, safe access to education remains a challenge. COVID-19 has further impacted on access to education due to the imposition of safety measures to limit the spread of infection, namely closure of schools.

2.2.6 Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster preparedness in Palestine remains largely neglected due to the political situation on the ground. In the current context, a response to a large-scale natural disaster would be extremely challenging as is evident with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has prompted a shift to a broader focus on health preparedness for Palestine, with flood warning and humanitarian greening also part of the preparedness strategy.

3 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1 National/local response and involvement

In its National Policy Agenda (2017-2022), the Palestinian Authority envisages, among the different priorities, national unity with one land and one people. These priorities remain unreachable due to a variety of reasons including unilateral political decisions and restrictions imposed by Israel on the Palestinian Authority, in addition to the intra-Palestinian divide and the fiscal crises. These factors, coupled with the outbreak of COVID-19, restrain Palestinian economic and institutional development which limits the Palestinian Authority's already vulnerable fiscal autonomy and stability¹³. With Israel's threats of unilateral annexation of parts of the West Bank, the Palestinian leadership announced its disengagement from all agreements with Israel, including security and civil ties as of mid-May 2020, further impacting its capacity for local response and involvement.

¹³ According to the World Bank, the current situation in Palestine is having a negative repercussion for the Palestinian economy which will lead to substantial reduction in PA revenues in 2020. This situation will require increased expenditures on health, social assistance, and support for the private sector. As a result, the PA will face a financing gap of \$1.4 billion. The pandemic has highlighted several unsustainable aspects of the fiscal relationship, the trade regime, and the labour markets, as well as the fragile situation in Gaza.

3.2 International Humanitarian Response

The EU provides humanitarian assistance to help meet Palestinians' basic needs, working through UNRWA and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It also works with many active partners in Palestine, including United Nations agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and international non-governmental organisations. The EU coordinates closely with Member States and with the donor community.

The standard UN Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020 amounts to USD 390 million and focuses mostly on protection, food security and health. As of September 2020, the HRP is funded at 47%. UNRWA continues to face financial difficulties following the US decision to withdraw funding since 2018¹⁴.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several appeals were launched: The Inter-Agency COVID-19 Response Plan was increased to USD 72.2 million in August 2020, and the UNRWA regional COVID-19 appeal to USD 94.6 million in view of the increased response needs.

3.3 Operational constraints

3.3.1 Access/humanitarian space

The closure of the **Gaza Strip** continues to be enforced by Israel and Egypt through increased restrictions on access and movement of people and goods, in and out of Gaza. The operating environment is also impacted by restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities affecting, in various ways, the ability to deliver assistance in a timely and efficient manner. In Area C of **the West Bank**, heavy administrative, legal and physical obstacles hinder the provision of assistance by humanitarian organisations. Moreover, the operational space for humanitarian and development actors alike continues to shrink. This could be further impacted by continued creeping annexation of parts of the West Bank and the COVID-19 outbreak.

3.3.2 Partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground

Partners, both international and local, have the experience and coverage needed to operate in the challenging contexts and the shrinking humanitarian space that characterises both the West Bank and Gaza. The absorption capacity and efficiency of operations of partners is satisfactory. However, partners operate in two entirely different operational contexts: operations in the West Bank are considered more efficient¹⁵ than in Gaza where the closure leads to import, access and movement restrictions, as well as limited investments. To maintain absorption capacity in Gaza, it is essential that the operational humanitarian space is protected and that partners ensure sufficient and adequate human resources.

¹⁴ The change in US foreign policy concerning financial support to Palestine, including budget support and funding for UN agencies and INGOs, has accelerated the decline in humanitarian and development aid, thus severely constraining the international response and the capacity of humanitarians to reduce shocks affecting the Palestinian population.

¹⁵ The situation is bound to change pending the possible annexation of parts of the West Bank where access to annexed areas could be hindered by restrictions imposed by Israeli Authorities.

4 HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

In line with the Council Conclusions on the operationalisation of the humanitarian – development nexus¹⁶, close collaboration with other Commission services and Member States will continue to be sought in order to promote linkages and synergies between respective interventions and where feasible the transfer of some DG ECHO-funded interventions to more structural and sustainable funding mechanisms. In addition to ongoing cooperation with the UN family, INGOs and ICRC, synergies will be sought with key actors such as the World Bank, other development banks and the ILO. The peace dimension constitutes an integrated element of the EU nexus approach. This joined-up approach refers to the coherent and complementary coordination, programming and financing of humanitarian, development and peace actions that are based on shared risk-informed and gender-sensitive analysis; while ensuring that humanitarian action always remains needs-based and principled¹⁷.

There are a number of opportunities for engagement in nexus processes in Palestine. Cash transfers, health and WaSH, and their interlinkages with energy, have been identified as a priority for operationalising the nexus. In this context, DG ECHO intends focussing on preparedness and response to health emergencies and emergency access to safe water. DG ECHO also aims at further exploring opportunities to align short-term cash transfer projects to social protection programs, and to gradually exit from the delivery of cash to address basic needs (social safety net) that should be taken over by more development oriented donors in the medium-term. DG NEAR or other development actors could focus on the water infrastructure and sector reform in health and WaSH, on a contribution to the financing of the existing social safety net, as well as on income generation opportunities. The preparation of a joint humanitarian-development framework, compatible with the European Joint Strategy in support of Palestine 2017-2020, will allow synergies to be further explored, refined and implemented.

5 ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS

General considerations for all interventions

The humanitarian response shall be compliant with EU thematic policies and guidelines that are described in detail in the HIP Policy Annex. For instance, mainstreaming of protection, gender (including mitigation of risks of SGBV), age, and disability inclusion should be duly reflected in all proposals.

Furthermore, the increasingly negative consequences of environmental degradation and climate-related challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact humanitarian crises and the provision of humanitarian assistance for the foreseeable future. For these reasons, in their proposals partners are requested to follow an all-risks assessment approach, to contemplate measures to reduce the environmental footprint of operations and to factor in as appropriate the COVID-19 dimension.

DG ECHO will release an operational guidance on its renewed approach to preparedness in January 2021, for the consideration of its partners as well. This document will be the

¹⁶ EU Council Conclusions on operationalising the humanitarian – development Nexus – May 19, 2017.

¹⁷ OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, adopted on 22 February 2019

result of an extensive consultation with partners on the key policy elements and operational modalities of the approach.

5.1 Envisaged DG ECHO response

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DG ECHO's strategy in Palestine will continue to focus on the protection of the most vulnerable population groups. It will seek to provide life-saving assistance, reduce vulnerabilities and uphold human dignity by focusing on integrated, multi-sectoral interventions, in the below-described priority sectors where the overall aim of all operations is a protection outcome. DG ECHO will continue to highlight and advocate against recurrent violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Complementarity and alignment with other programmes that support transition strategies and sustainable programming would be favourably considered.

In the Gaza Strip, DG ECHO will mainly focus its assistance on the most vulnerable households with a predicted *per capita* consumption below the national 'deep poverty line' using a Proxy Means Test Formula¹⁸ or commonly identified needs-based vulnerability criteria; households with difficult or no access to basic services and demonstrated severe negative coping strategies; individuals with health needs as a result of escalation in violence, disease outbreaks or possible natural disasters. In the West Bank, targeting will prioritise Palestinians living in communities at risk of annexation or forcible displacement, including Bedouin communities in the Jerusalem periphery, the E1 block, and residents in and around Hebron; Palestinians residing in areas designated as closed military zones for training or living in the seam zone; vulnerable communities with little or no access to basic services; households affected by demolition and confiscation of private property and whose livelihoods are at risk.

5.1.1 Protection

In the West Bank DG ECHO's strategy will focus on reinforcing the response to demolitions, setting up preventive measures against the destruction of Palestinian assets and increasing resilience to IHL violations. It will do so by providing targeted legal and material assistance to those communities who are the most vulnerable to protection violations such as settler violence and forcible transfers. Strengthening socio-economic resilience will also be sought to improve living conditions and allow communities to remain in their current residence. In Gaza, the focus should be on preparedness to shocks,

¹⁸ The concept of proxy means testing is usually understood as using observable characteristics of the household or its members to estimate their incomes or consumption, when other income data (salary slips, tax returns) are unavailable or unreliable.

a basic protection package (such as medical, legal and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to respond to violations, and mitigating the use of dangerous coping strategies.

5.1.2 Health

DG ECHO will prioritise interventions aimed at providing lifesaving healthcare assistance to victims of violence, including emergency, post-operative and rehabilitation care. With the increased demand generated by the COVID-19 outbreak in Gaza and the West Bank, DG ECHO will focus on the delivery of essential medical equipment to support emergency health care systems, including trauma services in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This approach will also guide work on the nexus where DG ECHO will focus on emergency response and preparedness.

5.1.3 WaSH

Interventions should aim to maintain a minimum level of WaSH and Shelter emergency response capacity that also includes protection mainstreaming. The ability to maintain capacity to respond as needed to uphold minimum standards need to be ensured. Safe access to water is an area with potential for a nexus approach.

5.1.4 Basic Needs Approach

DG ECHO will continue with the prioritisation of cash transfers over vouchers and in-kind assistance as the default modality and with appropriate safeguards to help the most vulnerable groups meet their most pressing needs. DG ECHO will support interventions in the area of multi-purpose cash assistance to cover basic needs and education in emergencies. Support to common, integrated and targeted approaches and to interoperable beneficiaries' platforms through multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) will be a priority and highly relevant for the nexus, with DG ECHO promoting a social protection angle.

5.1.5 Education in emergencies

Education in emergencies will remain a priority for response. The focus remains on safe access to protected learning environments, including the protection of education from attacks, ensuring learning continuity in crises, and addressing the psychosocial support needs of children in highly vulnerable communities in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

5.1.6 Disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction

Projects considered for funding should, where appropriate, focus on emergency preparedness with protection mainstreamed across all operations. Particular attention will be given to the reinforcement of capacities to prevent and mitigate the impact of shocks. In case of growing needs, partners are expected to scale up their emergency response across critical sectors of operation with added emphasis on humanitarian advocacy, as has been the case with the response to the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2 Other DG ECHO interventions

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options.