

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)

PALESTINE¹

AMOUNT: EUR 187 201 166

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes² is to serve as a communication tool from DG ECHO³ to its partners and assist them in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

0. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP

First modification – 3 April 2024

This modification entails two changes:

The first change responds to the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground notably the catastrophic level of food insecurity in Gaza, as well as the dramatic health status of the population. There is a need to strengthen the multisectoral response in Gaza. Critical basic needs and protection challenges also continue increasing in the West Bank and require a strengthened humanitarian response. Additional EUR 61 500 000 have been allocated in order to respond to these needs.

The second change is a contribution of EUR 480 000 from external assigned revenue (Finland) that have been added to this HIP. Settlement activity, demolitions and settler violence continue unabated contributing to an increasingly coercive environment for Palestinian communities in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with many people having limited or no access to basic services and at constant risk of being forcibly displaced. In light of the worsening conditions and trends, Finland pledged to transfer to the European Commission's budget a contribution to support humanitarian assistance to those in need.

1. CONTEXT

The Palestinian civilian population continues to endure the effects of Israel's prolonged occupation, 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 the Palestinian territory.

The recurrent and intensified cycles of hostilities during the last years have accelerated the deterioration of what has been for decades a protracted crisis with grave humanitarian consequences. The massive escalation of hostilities as of 7 October 2023, centred in and around Gaza, have resulted in a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale and severity in Gaza, increased violence, and IHL violations across the West Bank, carrying the risk to spill over to neighbouring countries.

¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

² Technical annex and thematic policies annex

³ Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

The situation accounts for the worse record in terms of number of Palestinian fatalities, injuries, destruction of houses and properties, disruption of basic services and displacement. Israeli fatalities have exceeded any previous record.

Almost the entire population of Gaza is exposed to security and protection risks, and have insufficient access to water, food, health, and other basic services. The main water and electricity networks, fuel and food supplies are almost completely suspended. Available stocks have been exhausted and local market supplies from Egypt and Israel interrupted. Some 1.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. The still unfolding and intensifying military operations, along with the almost complete siege on Gaza, offer prospects for a catastrophic humanitarian situation.

The unprecedented nature and magnitude of the crisis in and around Gaza has also affected the very tense and fragile situation across the West Bank where Palestinians, particularly those living in Area C, East Jerusalem and H2⁴, have been subject to an increased coercive environment, generated by the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements, demolitions and forced displacements, extensive Israeli military operations and an unprecedented rise in settler violence, resulting in a wide range of humanitarian needs.

DG ECHO's needs assessment for 2023-2024 identified extreme humanitarian needs for Gaza, and high humanitarian needs for the West Bank. The vulnerability of the population affected by the crisis is assessed to be very high.

	Palestine
INFORM Risk Index (0-10)⁵	
Hazard and Exposure	2.1
Vulnerability	6.1
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.0
INFORM Severity Index (0-5)⁶	
Impact of the crisis	3.7
Condition of people affected	4.0
Complexity of the crisis	3.3
Number of People in Need	3 100 000 ⁷
Human Development Index (0-1)⁸	0.715
Total Population⁹	5 500 000

⁴ “Israel exercises direct control over 20% 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” (UNOCHA – H2 Spotlight – April 2019).

⁵ INFORM Risk is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>, published prior to 7 October 2023.

⁶ The INFORM Severity Index is a way to objectively measure and compare the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity>; published prior to 7 October 2023.

⁷ UN OCHA 2023 Flash Appeal oPt First Revision November 2023.

⁸ <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/PSE> (2021).

⁹ UN OCHA 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1. People in need of humanitarian assistance:

Out of a total population of 5.5 million, approximately 3.1 million people need humanitarian assistance, 2.2 million of which in the Gaza Strip and 0.9 million in the West Bank¹⁰.

	Palestine ¹¹
People affected by conflict, IHL violations and protection risks	3 100 000
Children with challenges in safely accessing inclusive, quality education (figure also includes teaching staff)	625 000
IDPs	Over 1 810 000

2.2. Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

2.2.1 Health

The healthcare system in Gaza is close to complete collapse. Since 7 October 2023, more than two thirds of primary health care facilities and over one third of hospitals have lost their functionality due to direct damages. The health emergency response capacity and follow up treatments are severely hampered by the depletion of medical stocks, shortages in essential drugs and equipment, massive displacement of staff and lack of specialised medical staff and lack of fuel, a chronic electricity crisis and lack of potable water. The referral of patients outside Gaza remains challenging.

The increase in violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has generated additional critical needs including in terms of mental health, psychosocial support, and life-saving services.

2.2.2 Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) and shelter

In Gaza, the impact of the October 2023 conflict on the pre-existing chronic shortage of safe water and poor access to sanitation services is catastrophic due to the extensive damages to the main networks and uncertainties regarding supply from Israel. Desalination plants have been damaged or stopped functioning due to the lack of fuel, equipment and maintenance and the few local water sources are insufficient to cater the needs.

The situation in the overcrowded emergency shelters, mainly schools and health care facilities, is particularly dire, while the private hosting capacity for several hundred thousand people forcibly displaced has been exhausted.

Lack of access to potable water remains a major challenge for many communities in the West Bank, compounded by increased restrictions regarding the construction of facilities in Area C, coupled with demolition of WaSH structures and barriers to accessing existing water sources.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ UN OCHA 2023 Flash Appeal oPt First Revision November 2023

2.2.3 Food, Livelihoods, and basic needs

In Gaza, livelihoods have been severely affected by the current conflict. Markets rely on pre-crisis stocks. The main entry points for commodities and trade via Israel and via Egypt have been discontinued. Fishery, agriculture, and livestock have been hit hard due to the lack of access to fishing zones, irrigation water and fodder for animals (largely imported). Off-farm livelihoods assets are no longer operating due to lack of fuel for business and shops and destructions by bombardments. Civil servants' salaries have been reduced up to 70 per cent due to the dire financial situation of the Palestinian Authority while daily work opportunities for some 18 000 Gazans in Israel and occupied West Bank prior to the current crisis, have stopped. Network and communication are suffering major disruption compounding the monitoring of market functionality and impeding financial transactions. The majority of the population of Gaza has de-facto become dependent on humanitarian aid with thousands expected to resort to negative coping strategies.

Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are also severely affected by restricted access to land, closure of communities and access roads, the rapid decline of economic opportunities, and restrictions on access to the labour market.

2.2.4 Protection

In Gaza, the October 2023 conflict coupled with the highly restricted access, have dramatically affected the lives and livelihoods of the entire population, denying them safety, food, safe drinking water, shelter, and access to essential services, such as healthcare or education. Forced displacement and severely restricted freedom of movement is exposing the most vulnerable groups and communities to heightened protection risks including abuse and violence against children, family separation, gender-based violence (GBV), and exposure to explosive remnants of war (ERW). The ongoing conflict is also increasing already pre-existing psychological distress and the mental health of affected populations.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and H2, Palestinians live in fear due to the increased risk of violence, forced displacement and dispossession of land and housing at both household and community level. The current conflict has further exacerbated the underlying factors, including the increase in settlement expansion, the destruction and demolition of property, forced evictions, surge in settler violence and military operations including in or near densely populated residential areas, revocation of residency status, and restrictions on access to essential services, including education and specialised protection services that respond to individual protection incidents such as GBV, abuse and violence against children, women, and men. The protracted conflict is also affecting the well-being and mental health of the population.

2.2.5 Education in Emergencies

Education in Gaza has been discontinued following the October 2023 events and most of the schools have been used to shelter the displaced population and/or damaged by shelling and attacks. The severe disruption of education services along with the lack of necessary protection and psycho-social support for children have a significant impact on children's wellbeing and learning outcomes.

In the West Bank, the use of force in and around education facilities, exposure to settler intimidation and settler violence, demolition, and confiscation of school structures, forced displacement remain a reality in the daily lives of Palestinian children impacting children's right to safe access to education, as well as children's wellbeing and learning outcomes.

2.2.6 Disaster Preparedness

The population is exposed and highly vulnerable to a range of hazards of natural origin (earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides) but even more importantly to human induced threats. The health system remains insufficiently prepared to ensure adequate mass casualty management in case of large-scale escalations of violence.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1. National / local response and involvement

The national and local preparedness and response capacities are lacking resources and institutional development. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Palestinian Authority continues to face limitations and restrictions in its service delivery. In the Gaza Strip, the ability of central and municipal authorities to exercise basic governance is extremely limited. While a variety of national NGOs and most notably the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) act as first-line responders, their overall capacities remain limited and their resources insufficient to effectively respond to the present emergency.

3.2. International Humanitarian Response

The EU provides assistance for humanitarian needs in close coordination with EU Member States and the wider donor community.

The updated UN Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2023 (January – October) amounts to USD 376 million and focuses mostly on protection, access to basic needs, and health. The HRP is funded at 90.1%¹².

In response to the October 2023 escalation of hostilities, the UN published, a revised flash appeal for USD 1.2 billion to respond to the needs of 2.7 million people across the OPT between 1 October and 31 December 2023. As of 3 December 2023, it is funded at 21.4%.

Under the leading role of the UN Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator (HC/RC), UNOCHA provides coordination and support services. The Humanitarian Country Team comprises representatives of UN agencies, international and local NGO networks while the Red Cross Red Crescent movement has a status of active observer. Cluster and Inter-Cluster systems operate in the West Bank and in Gaza.

3.3. Operational constraints in terms of:

- 1) Access/humanitarian space:

Following the escalation of hostilities in October 2023, humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip as well as access within Gaza has been severely restricted. Only a limited number of trucks carrying humanitarian aid were allowed to enter, and the movement of humanitarian staff in and out of Gaza remains severely restricted. The entire 2.2 million people, including all humanitarian workers and third country nationals, have been exposed to the direct impact of the ongoing armed confrontations and the military operation, which is accompanied by accusations of severe IHL violations.

The operating environment is also impacted by restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities affecting, in several ways, the ability to deliver assistance in a timely and efficient manner.

¹² UNOCHA Financial Tracking System, 3 December 2023.

In the West Bank, heavy administrative, legal, and physical obstacles hinder access and the provision of assistance by humanitarian organisations. The intensified settlement activities as well as the expanded settler-related violence, and the threat thereof, against humanitarian field personnel further restrict the humanitarian space, including access for humanitarian staff.

- 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 and civic space that characterises the entire oPt. Partners, operate in two entirely different operational contexts. In Gaza, the direct impact of the conflict along with the extremely constrained access, interruption of supply pipelines and market disruptions is restricting the delivery capacity of humanitarian organisations and has imposed a significant reorganisation of the *modus operandi*. This includes the establishment of a logistic hub in Egypt to coordinate and support all aid pipelines transiting via Egypt before entering Gaza. In the West Bank, increased access restrictions and security threats, pose additional challenges. To maintain absorption capacity in both the West Bank and Gaza, it is essential that the operational humanitarian space is restored and protected, and that partners ensure the deployment of adequate human resources.

4. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

Given the scale and severity of the humanitarian needs generated by the current hostilities and foreseeable prospects, DG ECHO's response will prioritize lifesaving and first line response. Development actors are also reviewing their interventions, in Gaza in particular. Nexus strategic priorities previously identified however remain relevant and nexus opportunities will be actively sought whenever possible.

The Commission announced on 9 October 2023 that it would review its financial assistance for Palestine. This review does not affect humanitarian assistance.

In line with the Council Conclusions on the implementation of the humanitarian–development nexus¹³, close collaboration with other Commission services and EU Member States will continue to be sought to promote linkages and complementarities between respective interventions and to plan for longer-term structural and sustainable funding mechanisms. DG ECHO partners will continue to be encouraged to work through local partners and, where needed, to strengthen their operational and administrative capacity.

DG ECHO's HIP 2024 and the European Joint Strategy 2021-2024 represent the key strategic and programmatic frameworks to guide the implementation of the nexus. Implementation of these strategies will be pursued from 2024 onwards, considering the rapidly evolving context.

Prior to the October 2023 events, cash assistance/social protection, health, and WaSH had been agreed by relevant EU services, EU Member States, and like-minded partners, as priority sectors for the implementation of the nexus. Depending on the development of the situation, DG ECHO intends to continue focusing on preparedness and response to health emergencies, and on access to safe water through emergency rehabilitation and purification systems while other services and partners address structural/long term issues such as improving the availability, quality, and reliability of water supply services in Gaza.

When circumstances allow for it, DG ECHO will also further explore opportunities to align short-term humanitarian cash transfer projects to the Palestine-wide social protection programme supported through the European Union's PEGASE programme. DG ECHO will

¹³ EU Council Conclusions on operationalising the humanitarian – development nexus – May 19, 2017.

also encourage development actors to focus on the water infrastructure and sector reform in health and WaSH, on financing essential social services, as well as on livelihoods and income generation opportunities to promote the graduation approach, from aid dependency to self-reliance, which is central to longer-term development goals. Increased self-reliance of the population in these and other areas helps to support the achievement of the triple nexus.

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

5.1. Envisaged DG ECHO response

5.1.1. Priorities

The strategy in Palestine will focus on lifesaving and emergency response to the population affected by the October 2023 hostilities in Gaza and the West Bank, and the protection of the most vulnerable population groups by focusing, i.a., on integrated, multi-sectoral interventions in Health, Food, WaSH, Shelter, and Non-Food Items (NFI), protection and Education in emergencies. Protection and MHPSS will be mainstreamed across all sectors.

DG ECHO will also continue to highlight and advocate against violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), drawing on evidence-based information.

In the Gaza Strip, DG ECHO will focus its assistance on the people affected by recent hostilities, on lifesaving services, disease outbreaks and/or possible natural disasters. In the West Bank, targeting will prioritize Palestinians living in communities vulnerable to annexation or forced displacement, including in East Jerusalem, households and communities affected by settler violence, demolition and confiscation of private property and whose livelihoods are at risk.

Health

DG ECHO will prioritise interventions aimed at providing lifesaving healthcare assistance to people affected by the recent hostilities in Gaza and to victims of any other form of violence, including emergency, post-operative, and rehabilitation care. With the massive demand generated by the hostilities in Gaza and the increased needs in the West Bank, DG ECHO will focus on the delivery of medical supplies, rapid rehabilitation of key medical facilities and essential MHPSS services with referral pathways established across sectors and protection actors in particular. In addition, proposed interventions could focus on the provision of medical equipment to support emergency health care systems, including trauma services in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This approach will also continue to guide the work on the nexus where DG ECHO will focus on emergency response and preparedness.

WaSH, Shelter, and NFI

Interventions should aim at providing a minimum level of WaSH services with a focus on emergency shelters and health facilities, and emergency response capacity that also includes protection mainstreaming. Safe access to water is an area with potential for a nexus approach and should be done with a sensitivity to water scarcity in the region.

Displaced population and those directly affected by the hostilities will receive Non-Food-Items (NFI) as a matter of priority.

Food assistance and basic needs

DG ECHO will prioritize food assistance to the conflict affected population of Gaza Strip, including displaced people in emergency shelters and with host families. Partners need to adapt the modality of assistance delivery to markets, to beneficiaries' access to energy sources and means for meal preparation. While in-kind aid delivery may be used as an immediate transfer modality in view of the present dysfunctionality of local markets, emergency cash transfers should gradually be reintroduced along with the resumption of markets through well established and accountable mechanisms. Monitoring of availability of basic food commodities, including perishable fresh foods shall guide the modality of intervention.

The medium-term priority of DG ECHO remains to support multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to cover basic needs. Support to relevant common, integrated, and targeted approaches and to inter-operable beneficiary platforms will be a priority and highly relevant for the nexus, with DG ECHO promoting the enhancement of the Palestinian Authority-led social protection system. DG ECHO's strong focus on cash transfer modalities and delivery of specific services contributes to aid efficiency and effectiveness while minimising supply chain risks and obstacles.

Support to the recovery of the business and livelihood halted by the conflict will need to be considered as soon as market and security situation stabilize.

Protection

In Gaza, DG ECHO will focus on ensuring access to adequate protection services for conflict affected populations including individual case management, MHPSS, and legal aid to persons at heightened protection risks. Prevention and protection risk mitigation across sectors are encouraged including through integrated programming with education and health. Promotion of IHL and documentation of IHL violations will be considered.

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. This will be achieved by providing targeted legal aid, material assistance and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to those communities who are the most vulnerable to IHL violations and protection risks such as large-scale military operations, settler violence and forced displacement.

These actions will be coupled with sustained assessments by DG ECHO partners for continued evidence-based advocacy to prevent and contain IHL violations and protection risks and preserve humanitarian space. Facilitation of access, referrals, and support to specialised protection services to respond to child protection issues, and gender-based violence might be considered. Given the sustained risks and protracted needs under this sector of intervention, DG ECHO will consider some actions for multiannual planning.

Education in emergencies

The focus will remain on safe access to protected learning environments, including the protection of education from attacks, in line with the Safe Schools Declaration, ensuring learning continuity in crises, and addressing the psychosocial support needs of children, teachers and other educational staff, in highly vulnerable communities in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Gaza, a coordinated response to facilitate the reentry into education for children impacted by the escalation of 7 October 2023, ensuring that all learners have access to a secure and safeguarded learning environment could be considered.

Assistance will be provided in complementarity with the support provided by other donors and EU services, including to UNRWA. This sector of intervention will continue to benefit from a multi-annual strategic perspective.

Disaster Preparedness

Strengthening health-system emergency preparedness and trauma management will remain a priority area of support in 2024. Particular attention will be given to the reinforcement of health capacities to prevent and mitigate the impact of recurrent escalations of conflict, working especially at community level and including a strong focus on International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Overall, the volatility of the situation requires that multi-risk contingency planning and flexible responses continue to be supported.

DG ECHO will also continue mainstreaming disaster preparedness in areas most at risk. Appropriate preparedness actions should be in place to ensure swift responses when relevant. Integrated disaster preparedness actions in very vulnerable communities of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem will continue to be addressed based on risk-informed programming.

5.1.2 Programmatic Partnerships

The ongoing Programmatic Partnerships with OCHA and IFRC are intended to continue in 2024. No other opportunities for Programmatic Partnerships have been identified. Partners are welcome to submit relevant proposals demonstrating i.e., the longer-term logic of intervention and its added value. Refer to HIPTA section 3.e for technical and administrative details.

5.1.3 Multi-Year Funding

Education in emergency as well as disaster preparedness interventions may benefit from multi-year funding. Please see HIPTA sections 3.g and 4.d for technical and administrative details.

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.

Activities under this HIP will continue to be complemented by the activation of the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). The EHRC is a DG ECHO led global initiative, aiming at supporting humanitarian partners for the delivery of humanitarian assistance with a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC the Commission has at its disposal several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disasters, e.g., a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), a stockpile of emergency items, and deployment of humanitarian expertise.