

West Bank and Gaza – Complex Emergency

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- Clashes between Gol forces and Palestinians in the West Bank resulted in 10 deaths and injuries to more than 700 Palestinians in September.
- While Gol demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures slowed in September, the number of demolitions and individuals affected by the demolitions in 2021 remain significantly higher than in 2020.
- In September, the Gol eased Gaza–Israel border restrictions, which had obstructed relief and recovery efforts in Gaza.



| | | |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|
| TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING For the West Bank and Gaza Response in FY 2021 | USAID/BHA ¹ | \$20,500,000 |
| | State/PRM ² | \$90,000,000 |
| Total | | \$110,500,000 |

For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 5

¹USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)
²U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

West Bank Clashes Generate Civilian Casualties in September

Clashes between Government of Israel (GoI) security forces and Palestinians continued in the West Bank in September, resulting in the deaths of 10 Palestinians, including one child, the UN reports. Hostilities also resulted in injuries to more than 700 Palestinians during the month, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Further, protests against the establishment of an Israeli settlement in Nablus Governorate's Beita Village—where the majority of recorded violence-related injuries in the West Bank occurred in 2021 to date—prompted a violent GoI response that resulted in the death of one Palestinian on September 24. Overall, since protests against settlement in the village began in May, GoI responses to protestors have resulted in the deaths of eight Palestinians and injuries to more than 4,400 people, largely due to the use of rubber bullet ammunition by GoI forces. In addition, Israeli settler violence also continued into late September, with a violent attack in Hebron Governorate's Umm Fagarah village resulting in injuries to nearly 30 Palestinians, according to the UN. Relief actors continue to monitor hostilities and respond to emergency needs in the West Bank and Gaza.

GoI Demolitions of Palestinian Structures Increase Overall in 2021

GoI authorities demolished eight Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank in September, marking a significant decrease from the nearly 120 demolitions in August that represented the third-highest monthly total to date in 2021, according to the UN. Israeli authorities continued to cite a lack of proper building permits, which remain difficult for Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank's Area C to obtain, as the reason for the demolition of Palestinian structures, the UN reports. Despite September's significant decline in recorded demolitions, the number of demolitions, related displacements, and people whose livelihoods have been adversely affected by demolitions is significantly higher in 2021 compared to 2020. From January to September 2021 alone, Israeli authorities demolished, seized, or forced the demolition of at least 670 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, displacing more than 950 people and adversely affecting the livelihoods of more than 7,500 individuals, the UN reports. The 2021 figures represent a more than 20 percent increase in the number of demolitions, an approximately 30 percent increase in demolition-related displacements, and a more than 180 percent increase in the number of people adversely affected by demolitions compared to the same period in 2020. Relief actors have highlighted the cyclical and detrimental effects of demolitions on affected populations, such as heavier reliance on negative shelter-based coping strategies and mental health and psychosocial (MHPSS) impacts.

In addition, the number of international donor-funded civilian structures demolished in 2021—more than 180 structures as of September—nearly doubled compared to the approximately 90 structures demolished between January and September 2020. Moreover, GoI security forces demolished nearly 50 water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) structures in the West Bank from January to mid-September, representing a 40 percent increase from the same period in 2020 and exacerbating water vulnerability throughout the territory, the UN reports. The WASH structure demolitions, which have affected three times as many Palestinians as in 2020, come amid climate-driven changes in rainfall patterns that are disrupting local populations' ability to collect and store water in the southern West Bank, where an estimated 30,000 people lack access to piped water systems and 75 percent of households rely on rainwater harvesting for water needs, the WASH Cluster reports.³ The UN continues to advocate for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure in the West Bank and continues to urge Israeli authorities to refrain from demolishing safe drinking water structures.

³ The WASH Cluster is the coordinating body for humanitarian WASH activities, comprising UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.

Gaza Access Restrictions Partially Ease in September After Impeding Relief Efforts

After more than four months of heightened Gaza–Israel border restrictions following the escalation of violence between Israel and Gaza in May, the Gol eased restrictions on the movement of people and goods in September, with some crossings reverting nearer to pre-escalation levels of movement, relief actors report. The border restrictions—which prevented the entry of construction materials and some humanitarian personnel and relief commodities into Gaza, as well as the exit of Palestinians from Gaza to seek medical treatment in Israel—have impeded relief and recovery efforts in Gaza following the May escalation, humanitarian actors report. The UN recorded more than 8,400 exits by Palestinians from Gaza at the Erez crossing with Israel in September, representing a more than 75 percent increase in exits compared to July, when only approximately 2,100 recorded exits occurred. While the September crossings at Erez reflect improvements following the steep decline in access during and after the May hostilities, the levels remain significantly lower than pre-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic levels; the September crossings represent just an estimated 30 percent of the monthly average of approximately 22,000 exits recorded in February 2020. Erez movements recorded in September 2021 were largely due to Gol-permitted exits of nearly 7,000 traders in August and September combined—the first such allowance since March 2020—according to the UN.

Meanwhile, the flows of goods at the Kerem Shalom crossing between Gaza and Israel have increased to more than 6,150 shipments per month, on average, in both August and September but remain less than 80 percent of the crossings recorded in April, before the escalation of hostilities in May, the UN reports. The Gol permitted approximately 2,600 imports of construction materials to enter Gaza in September, representing an increase from an estimated 600 in August. Similarly, entries and exits at Rafah crossing on the Egypt–Gaza border increased to nearly 19,000 in September, nearly double the May levels of approximately 10,000 entries and exits. Relief actors welcomed the easing of movement restrictions to enable materials to enter Gaza for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of civilian structures destroyed during the May escalation; however, humanitarian actors continue to advocate that the Government of Egypt and Gol lift all restrictions hindering the movement of Palestinians and goods in and out of Gaza.

COVID-19 Cases Increase Amid Ongoing Vaccination Efforts

The number of COVID-19 cases in the West Bank and Gaza continued to increase during September, with the UN World Health Organization (WHO) recording approximately 31,000 active cases on September 23, representing an increase of approximately 150 percent from the number recorded in late August. Despite the continued high overall caseload, the COVID-19 transmission rate appeared to be slowing as of late September, WHO reports. Nearly 70 percent of recorded cases in the Palestinian territories continue to occur in Gaza. In response to the recent rise in cases, health authorities in Gaza and the West Bank increased the number of COVID-19-designated hospital beds, including COVID-19-designated intensive care unit (ICU) beds. As of September 23, approximately 60 percent and 70 percent of COVID-19-designated ICU beds were full in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively, representing significant increases from figures observed in previous months, WHO reports.

Health authorities are also seeking to boost COVID-19 immunizations amid vaccine hesitancy among some Palestinians. In August, Gaza health authorities and WHO launched a campaign to dispel common myths about the COVID-19 vaccine, aiming to reach more than 20,000 people with the vaccine throughout the territory. Meanwhile, health authorities and WHO continue to operate COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in 120 sites throughout the West Bank, the UN agency reports. As of September

23, health actors had vaccinated nearly 1.35 million people against COVID-19 across the two territories, including more than 950,300 people in the West Bank and nearly 396,800 people in Gaza. The figures represent 45 percent of the target population of Palestinians ages 16 years and older, WHO reports.

KEY FIGURES



1.3 million

Intended and reached beneficiaries of USG-funded emergency food assistance in the West Bank and Gaza



7,000

People supported with USAID/BHA-funded protection assistance



27,300

People supported with UNRWA-provided MPCA

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY

Through funding to the UN World Food Program (WFP) and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the U.S. Government (USG) continues to help food-insecure Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza meet their basic food and nutrition needs. With State/PRM and other donor funding, UNRWA plans to distribute food parcels to approximately 1.2 million Palestinian refugees affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, with USAID/BHA support, WFP assisted more than 99,800 people in Gaza and 25,000 people in the West Bank with emergency food vouchers between April and September, prioritizing female-headed households, older persons, and persons with disabilities or chronic health conditions.

PROTECTION

The USG supports a range of humanitarian protection programs for at-risk populations in the West Bank and Gaza, with a focus on the needs of women and children. Through international non-governmental organization (INGO) partner International Medical Corps (IMC), USAID/BHA funding helps increase access to protection-related health care services and expand MHPSS support for conflict-affected Palestinians in Gaza, with a focus on psychological first aid and in-person counseling services. To date in 2021, IMC has reached more than 7,000 individuals with protection assistance. State/PRM partner UNRWA also supports children and families with MHPSS services in schools and health care centers, with an emphasis on the prevention of gender-based violence.

MULTIPURPOSE CASH ASSISTANCE

With funding to Mercy Corps and UNRWA, the USG supports the distribution of multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) to help households meet their basic needs in times of crisis. With State/PRM and other donor support, UNRWA reached nearly 27,300 refugees in the West Bank with MPCA as part of its Emergency Appeal programming from January to June, while USAID/BHA partner Mercy Corps aims to support approximately 12,000 Gazans affected by the May escalation with three months' worth of MPCA.



\$8.6 Million

In dedicated USG funding for life-saving health care activities

HEALTH

The USG supports health programming throughout the West Bank and Gaza in an effort to reduce the transmission of disease and bolster health care capacity. INGO partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS) utilizes USAID/BHA funding to train health care staff and improve infection prevention and control (IPC) measures at health care centers, with a specific focus on preventing COVID-19 transmission. The INGO also disseminates COVID-19 risk mitigation messages and provides electronic vouchers for critical IPC supplies to vulnerable Palestinians. USAID/BHA partner IMC also provides training to health care staff and provides trauma referral services at six health care centers in Gaza, helping ensure continuity of health care amid the recent escalation of conflict. To date in 2021, IMC reached more than 9,000 individuals with health assistance.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Protracted conflict, restricted access to basic services, and the adverse health and socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have generated significant humanitarian needs in the West Bank and Gaza. Nearly 2.5 million Palestinians—approximately 50 percent of the combined population of the West Bank and Gaza—were in need of humanitarian assistance as of December 2020, according to the UN. The figure includes approximately 1.4 million people with severe humanitarian needs, nearly 80 percent of whom reside in Gaza.
- On March 19, 2021, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Jonathan Shrier declared a disaster due to the urgent humanitarian needs resulting from the complex emergency in the West Bank and Gaza.
- In mid-May, active conflict between Gol forces and Palestinians exacerbated humanitarian needs and resulted in civilian casualties and population displacement in Gaza, as well as violence and unrest throughout Israel and the West Bank. Approximately 1.3 million people required humanitarian assistance due to the escalation of violence, some of whom were already relying on humanitarian assistance prior to the recent hostilities, the UN reports. On May 21, parties to the conflict implemented a ceasefire agreement, ending the 11-day period of active conflict.

USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA RESPONSE IN FY 2021¹

| IMPLEMENTING PARTNER | ACTIVITY | LOCATION | AMOUNT |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| USAID/BHA | | | |
| CRS | Health | West Bank and Gaza | \$6,000,000 |
| IMC | Health, Protection | Gaza | \$3,100,000 |
| Mercy Corps | MPCA | Gaza | \$2,400,000 |
| WFP | Food Assistance - Vouchers | West Bank and Gaza | \$9,000,000 |
| TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING | | | \$20,500,000 |
| STATE/PRM | | | |

| | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------|--------------|
| UNRWA | Economic Recovery and Market Systems, Education, Food Assistance, Health, Logistics Support, MPCA, Protection, Shelter and Settlements, WASH | West Bank and Gaza | \$90,000,000 |
|-------|--|--------------------|--------------|

TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING² **\$90,000,000**

TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA RESPONSE IN FY 2021 **\$110,500,000**

¹ Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of September 30, 2021.

² State/PRM provided an additional \$161,200,000 to UNRWA for its program budget, a portion of which may have been used in the West Bank and Gaza.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)