



COMMENTARY

Devastating Impact of Conflict on Health Services in Gaza

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Since October 7, Israeli forces have bombed hospitals and other medical facilities, killed and abducted medical personnel, targeted ambulances, and prevented the entry of necessary medical supplies and medications into the Strip (Elessi, 2023). The Israeli military even launched an attack and destroyed Gaza's only pediatric cancer ward (Nashwan, 2023). Additionally, the conflict in Gaza has severely impacted health services, exacerbating an already dire situation for civilians.

The scarcity of fuel and electricity since the war has left Gaza's healthcare sector in a dire situation (Beiraghdar et al., 2023). About 71% of Gaza's primary care facilities, particularly those in Gaza city and the northern region, are closed, as are 14 of the 35 hospitals with inpatient capacity (Shorrab et al., 2024). Due to acute fuel shortages, the usage of generators is restricted to necessary tasks in all operational hospitals and clinics (Pathan et al., 2024). Because replacement parts are hard to come by, backup generator maintenance and repair become more difficult. More than 116 healthcare workers had died as of October 30, 2023, according to the Ministry of Health statistics (Ahmed et al., 2024).

The healthcare infrastructures in Gaza were already on the verge of collapse before the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict in early October 2023. Only 35 hospitals were running at full capacity, and 3,412 beds were available to serve a population that surpassed two million people. Based on these figures, the greatest ratio of hospital beds per 1,000 people in the entire Gaza Strip region is 1:55. This already serious situation has been made worse by the fighting, which has resulted in

hospital closures, a halt to residents' access to supplies, physical damage to hospital infrastructure and transportation networks, and the evacuation of multiple medical facilities (Mahmoud & Abuzerr, 2023). Gaza's healthcare services were destroyed, and this impacted several aspects, including infrastructure damage, displacement, women and children, and mental and psychological concerns (Abukhadajah & Nashwan, 2024).

Additionally, significantly high deaths of fatalities and injuries pressure the already overburdened health systems (Pathan et al., 2024). This covers those who die in the fight right away as well as those who sustain chronic wounds and diseases. At the same time, the ability of the healthcare system to work well is crucial to treating injuries and meeting health demands. International assistance and support are desperately needed to address this dire situation and guarantee a consistent supply of necessary pharmaceuticals.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that airstrikes and a shortage of food, gasoline, water, and medical supplies have severely compromised the already underfunded healthcare system in Gaza. Due to the increasing number of patients and displaced people seeking shelter, hospitals have been running well over capacity (WHO, 2023).

Additionally, thousands of people have died and been injured as a result of the violence, and a large portion of the casualties have been civilians, especially women and children. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, 37,396 persons had died in the Gaza Strip by June 19, 2024, following the attack by Hamas and the

Israeli invasion in October 2023, as reported by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Khatib et al., 2024). The Israeli-announced attack, which has been extremely damaging, has blocked vital supplies since the earlier time of the attack. Along the same line, the vulnerable groups of people, including women, children, and newborns, in Gaza are disproportionately affected, both as casualties and through reduced access to health services. Maternal, newborn, and child health services have been severely disrupted due to damaged health facilities, massive displacement, and restricted access to essentials like food and medicines. An estimated 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza are facing challenges, with some having to give birth in unsafe conditions due to the closure of hospitals and primary healthcare centers (WHO, 2024).

Finally, the psychological and mental strains that the conflicts have taken have had a direct, and occasionally fatal, impact on reproductive health. Stress-related miscarriages, stillbirths, and premature births have all increased. The demand for emergency and trauma care, mental health services, and psychosocial support has

increased. In my opinion, a thorough analysis that takes into account the short- and long-term difficulties that the healthcare system faces are necessary to comprehend the catastrophic effects of the conflict on Gaza's health services. To reconstruct and support the healthcare system and meet urgent medical demands, there must be constant effort due to the ongoing fighting.

To sum up, international responses such as those of the WHO and the United Nations should take place to address the catastrophic events to respond to the most critical medical requirements by offering ambulance services and life-saving medical supplies. But things are still unstable, with hostilities continuing to pose hazards to both civilians and medical personnel.

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