

GAZA: ONE YEAR OF ATROCITIES





A year of relentless violence and suffering

Gaza has now endured a year of massacre and misery, with still no end in sight for Israel's nightmare campaign against Palestinian families. As the world watches, Israel has repeatedly violated international humanitarian law with complete impunity. It continues to relentlessly attack civilians, health facilities, homes and shelters, and block humanitarian aid from reaching starving families.

A staggering 41,000 people* have been killed, and thousands more remain missing. At least a third of those killed are children – including over 118 children and young people cared for by Islamic Relief's Orphan Sponsorship Program. Even more have been orphaned. Prior to October, Islamic Relief supported 8,750 orphans in Gaza and since the crisis began rapidly expanded our program, which now provides 16,309 orphaned children and young people with a monthly stipend in addition to food parcels and Eid gifts.

Entire families have been scattered as they flee repeatedly in search of safety, which cannot be found as bombs continue to rain down on Gaza. The Israeli military has ordered people to leave one area, only to attack them in the schools, mosques and camps where they were told to shelter. Few hospitals remain functional due to shortages of electricity, fuel and medicine. Around 90 per cent of people are now displaced and trapped in one of the most densely populated areas on Earth. Diseases are spreading fast, people are starving to death, and famine looms.

Islamic Relief's long-term development programs in Gaza have largely been suspended. Instead, we have scaled up our emergency response, doing daily distributions of essentials such as ready-to-eat meals, clean water, and soap to displaced people. Our staff and local partners in Gaza are enduring many of the same challenges as the communities they support, including displacement. Despite this, they remain committed to providing aid to vulnerable communities.

All of this work is made possible by the generosity of our donors and the tireless work of staff in our six local partner organisations in Gaza. However, it covers only a tiny portion of the huge humanitarian need. Much more support is needed, and it cannot be provided by humanitarian organisations alone.

There is no excuse for the entirely man-made disaster unfolding in Gaza before the eyes of the world. Many international governments and world leaders are complicit in the suffering by repeatedly failing – or refusing – to act to stop it.

Islamic Relief continues to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. International law must be upheld, and violations must be held to account. We are calling for Israel to end its attacks and forced displacement of civilians, and end the siege so that humanitarian aid, commercial goods, and critical supplies such as fuel can enter Gaza in sufficient quantity to alleviate the suffering of its

Timeline of events

OCTOBER 2023 - DECEMBER 2023

Attacks intensify throughout Gaza, targeting homes, hospitals, schools and other civilian infrastructure. Israel carries out multiple massacres, and attacks on aid convoys and aid workers also increase. Palestinians across Gaza are issued with so-called 'evacuation orders' and forced into ever-shrinking areas further south.

Islamic Relief scales up the emergency response, initially in Khan Younis, Rafah and Deir al-Balah, and later in northern Gaza. We work with our local partners on the ground distributing life-saving medical items, hot meals and other essential items.



DECEMBER 2023 - APRIL 2024

The Israeli blockade continues to severely restrict aid entering Gaza, as Israel uses starvation as a weapon of war. Hunger and diseases spread across the territory, with hundreds of thousands of people at imminent risk of famine. Islamic Relief begins a new partnership with the UN World Food Program (WFP) to deliver millions of hot meals and nutritional support.



7 MAY 2024

Israel forces people out of Rafah in the south and closes the Rafah border with Egypt and the Erez crossing in the north, cutting off the supply route for many International non-governmental organisations (INGOs). Islamic Relief's work becomes even more vital as we distribute supplies via the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Israeli border, together with established partners and United Nations agencies, including the WFP.



19 JULY 2024

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivers a historic ruling, concluding that Israel should end its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, desist from creating new settlements, and evacuate those already established. In both Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel continues to violate international law on a daily basis.



2 AUGUST 2024

Islamic Relief successfully delivers qurbani donations to families in need through the Kerem Shalom crossing, despite delays caused by the Israeli blockade.



15 AUGUST 2024

Gaza health officials report that the death toll surpasses a horrific 40,000 people in Gaza after more than 10 months of attacks. Civilians have been killed and wounded at a faster rate than any conflict this century.



SEPTEMBER 2024

Islamic Relief continues to deliver humanitarian aid across Gaza, reaching vulnerable people every day with hot meals, vegetable packs, survival items, psychosocial support sessions, clean water, healthcare services and hygiene supplies such as sanitary pads and soap.



Hot meals and food packs

Israel is using starvation as a weapon of war against the people of Gaza. By destroying food production in the Strip and cutting off aid access, Israel has forced over 1 million people to suffer catastrophic levels of hunger and face the prospect of widespread famine.

Israel's tightened blockade on the Gaza Strip and the ongoing bombing has presented extreme challenges to organisations trying to get critical aid in. Since the onset of the crisis, our team and local partners in Gaza have been working tirelessly to deliver food every single day. We have worked with commercial suppliers and the WFP to get much needed supplies into Gaza and provide over 40 million hot meals. We have been able to deliver food parcels, fresh vegetables and lipid-based nutrient supplements to help prevent malnutrition.



Since the crisis began our team in Gaza has distributed:



Over 40 million hot meals



Over 250,000 fresh vegetable packs



Food vouchers to 25,470 people



Nutritional supplements to over 35,000 people

How is Islamic Relief still getting food into Gaza?



We are working with commercial suppliers and UN agencies such as the WFP, that are bringing some food supplies into Gaza, which our team and local partners then distribute. However, not enough is getting through and much more is urgently needed.

Currently, our team is providing hot meals for approximately 175,000 people each day. Hundreds of thousands of others are unable to access desperately needed food aid, as Israel's so-called evacuation orders force families to flee and cut certain areas off from aid.

Delivering vital medical care

Israel's destruction of the medical system in Gaza has had catastrophic consequences. One year on from the beginning of this escalation, a staggering 41,000 people have been killed and more than 95,000 have been wounded due to relentless aerial and ground bombardment. With many still unaccounted for, we fear the actual figures could be far higher.

Almost nothing remains of Gaza's medical infrastructure.

The crisis has seen an increase in the spread of disease among displaced communities, with the most common health issues reported being skin diseases and intestinal problems. Poor nutrition, unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation and the crowded conditions of camps are all contributing factors. In August polio re-emerged in Gaza for the first time in 25 years due to the desperate conditions.

Islamic Relief has been able to deliver vital medicines and medical supplies, including disposables, to help facilities and health workers who are steadfastly caring for those facing life-threatening injuries and diseases. At the start of the crisis, we delivered nearly 2.3 million medical items across the region, and we currently support a healthcare facility serving nearly 10,000 people.



Campaigning to save lives

Aid is saving lives, but ultimately this crisis needs political action. As well as delivering aid, Islamic Relief has been advocating and campaigning around the world for an end to the massacre. We have lobbied governments, spoken at events, organised petitions and carried out public stunts to call for an immediate ceasefire, the protection of civilians and an end to Israel's blockade. We continue to call on world leaders and international governments to use all their political, economic and diplomatic leverage to step up pressure on Israel, such as by ending arms sales and reviewing trade agreements.

Ultimately there must be an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine, and we will keep campaigning until that is a reality. Islamic Relief wants to see a lasting peace where all Palestinians and Israelis can live in safety and dignity and have their same fundamental rights upheld. We believe this will not be possible until there is an end to the occupation.

Caring for Gaza's children

As some of the most vulnerable among the population, Gaza's children have suffered deeply under the brute force of this violent escalation. Over 20,000 children are estimated to have been newly orphaned. Gaza is now also home to the highest number of child amputees in history. Islamic Relief is also heartbroken that at the time of publishing this report, 118 children and young people cared for by our Orphan Sponsorship Program in Gaza are known to have been killed.

With the support of generous and compassionate donors, Islamic Relief is still able to support orphans and their families through our Orphan Sponsorship Program, which has been operating in Gaza for over 22 years. As a result of the ongoing violence in the Gaza Strip, we have supported thousands of newly-sponsored orphans, and today we are sponsoring over 16,300 orphans in the Gaza Strip with your help.

The program allows sponsored orphans and their families to access urgent funds from Islamic Relief, using an SMS code with which they can withdraw money from supermarkets as many banks are closed. They use these cash grants to purchase what they need most.



Psychosocial support for Gaza's children

The trauma of conflict imposed on the children of Gaza cannot be underestimated. As well as the violence, at least 625,000 children have been out of school for a year. At Islamic Relief, we recognise that psychosocial support is and will be desperately needed as they grow up due to the horrors they are experiencing. Our dedicated team has been by the side of thousands of children since October 2023, providing psychosocial first-aid support sessions involving recreational activities and games at shelter sites to more than 90,000 children.



“I am a child living a nightmare in Gaza”

My name is Yomna. I am 8 years old, and I love my dad, mum, and brother – and our cat.

I live in the Gaza Strip in Palestine. We used to live in a flat, it was so pretty. There was a living room and a room for me and my brother, Kareem. The thing I loved the most about our home is that it was a place where we could stay together as a family.

Before this war, we lived a very good life where we used to go to school, go out and there was no bombing. Then one day I woke up and heard bombing and rockets coming from everywhere. I did not know what to do – I could not even scream. My brother had been playing video games on his tablet, but when he heard the noise he ran crying to my dad and mum. He just ran. My mum tried to calm him down, telling him that we are safe while warning that the loud sounds could happen again.

On the sixth day of the war, we went to my grandparents’ house. At first, we could not find water, we could not find enough food, and there was no privacy – the house was full of people who had run away from the bombing.

I used to go to basketball training and choir practice. I used to train with my cousins, and our coach helped us to dribble the ball and score points. Sometimes, the coach made us into teams and we played. I remember we won once and it was very good. We have a WhatsApp group for the girls in the team. After the war, they shared photos showing that the playground where we trained was destroyed, and the basketballs burned. Now we can’t train anymore.

I enjoyed singing in the choir – our instructor said I have a good voice, and I should not be shy, and to be brave onstage. We have not been to school since the start of the war - I am afraid I will forget what I learned. I liked the technology class very much: Our teacher taught us how to code, and me and my dad won a prize in a parent and student coding contest. I do not know what happened to my school and my teachers. I also miss Salma, my friend. I really miss them very much.



I miss going to restaurants with my parents. My favorite restaurant was Mazaj. They made good food. Sometimes, I feel hungry, but I can’t find anything to eat.

Our life now is like a nightmare. Sometimes when they bomb nearby, I am afraid if someone gets hurt, they will not get help because there are too many people in the hospital.

I have changed during these months. I used to think the future would be bright but now I do not think so: our future is very dark.

I want the world to know what it is like to be a child in Gaza now: Children in Gaza could die in their sleep. If they survive, they could have to live their lives without their parents or anyone to care for them. If they survive, they may end up living in tents in the mud and sand, and getting soaked when it rains. I wish one day we can meet children in the UK. I always told my father I want to visit a country that speaks English, to practice my language skills.

If they stopped the war, I would run to my room to rescue some of my toys. I would like to get my school certificate, my books and school bags – I hope they are not burned into ash. I dream of meeting my friend Salma in school and seeing my teachers. I wish that everyone could meet their loved ones again, and for peace and no more war. I hope we can live a normal life without any more killing.

Editor’s note: This account was provided amid a fast-changing and deepening crisis. The information was correct as of Thursday 20 May 2024.

A Ramadan unlike any other

The bombardment of Gaza continued throughout the holy month, as millions of people carried out the sacred act of fasting during Ramadan amid unbearable conditions.

Due to the crisis, we adjusted our standard food pack distribution in favour of providing hot meals to help families break their fast with a little more ease.

We distributed the meals throughout the Gaza Strip, reaching more than 396,400 individuals. Displaced persons, orphaned children and people with disabilities were included in the distributions.



Bringing a moment of happiness to the children of Gaza

During the blessed days of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, Islamic Relief provided a rare moment of joy to the children of Gaza who are enduring the destruction of their childhood, and homes and, for many, the loss of their loved ones.

We were able to provide Eid gifts to 3,895 children across the region, helping provide some moments of normality for children who so desperately need it.





Providing qurbani in Gaza

At a time when millions of Muslims from around the world are travelling to the sacred house in Mecca to perform Hajj, Palestinians in Gaza were confined to makeshift tents and forced to sit through stifling, intense heat due to the destruction of their homes.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Islamic Relief was able to provide 24,018 qurbani meat parcels to help feed 127,295 people in Gaza, helping them access a vital source of nutrition amid widespread food shortages.

Despite the challenges posed, Islamic Relief teams worked tirelessly to distribute the generous qurbani donations as soon as possible to the people of Gaza.



Battling disease and dehydration

Before the escalation began, the people of Gaza were already very exposed to unsafe drinking water. Now, hundreds of thousands of people across the Gaza Strip are suffering the effects of contaminated water sources in the form of dehydration and diseases such as hepatitis – a suspected 40,000 people have now contracted the virus. At least 577,000 cases of acute watery diarrhoea have been recorded, many in young infants.





What little water infrastructure that existed prior to the escalation has now been almost decimated by Israel's targeted aerial and ground bombardment.

Islamic Relief has provided clean drinking water to more than 378,700 people in Gaza over the past 12 months. We have also distributed hygiene and dignity kits to 381,742 people, and provided portable toilets meeting the needs of 70,000 people to help families maintain clean surroundings and prevent the spread of disease.

Up to 1.9 million people – that's nine in 10 people – have been displaced multiple times from their homes since October 2023. A crucial element of our support has been delivering essential items such as clothing, blankets and mattresses to 45,849 displaced families to help them cope with this nightmarish reality.



Since the crisis began our team in Gaza has distributed:

-  Clean drinking water to approximately 80,000 people daily
-  Warm clothing, blankets, mattresses and makeshift tents to 45,849 families
-  Hygiene and dignity kits to 381,742 people
-  Portable toilets accessible to over 70,000 people



UNICEF Australia and Islamic Relief Australia in Gaza

Islamic Relief Australia has partnered with UNICEF Australia in a match funding campaign to be able to supply desperately needed lifesaving supplies.

As a UN agency UNICEF Australia was able to navigate the complex border controls imposed by Israel and with Islamic Relief Australia provided water, water purification tablets, latrines, medical supplies, supplements for breastfeeding mothers, and ensure that children are safe and mentally supported.

Together with UNICEF Australia we have been able to:



Provide water to shelters, housing an estimated 1 million people, including more than 560,000 children.



Deliver medical supplies to support almost 500,000 people.



Support over 13,000 children with child protection, mental health and psychosocial support services.



Provide supplements to over 105,000 breastfeeding mothers who are struggling to feed themselves and their babies.



Distribute 18,000 water purification tablets to shelters.

Frequently asked questions

How is Islamic Relief getting aid into Gaza?

We have been distributing as much aid as we can, but this is nowhere near enough. We urgently need a permanent ceasefire and an end to the siege so that more aid can enter Gaza in sufficient quantity. The situation over the past year has continued to change and we are constantly exploring the best ways to get aid into Gaza. We are working with commercial suppliers who are able to bring limited supplies in and procure what's available on the local market. We have managed to access the Gaza Strip with some limited aid trucks and have scaled up our emergency response by working together with our established partners on the ground, such as the WFP. This is all helping some of the most vulnerable people, but much more is needed.

Is there a famine in Gaza? How likely is there to be one?

The UN has reported famine conditions in parts of Gaza, with rising malnutrition and children starving. Widespread famine in Gaza is imminent, with immediate and long-term health consequences. The current statistics paint a stark picture:

- One in three children under the age of two in northern Gaza are now acutely malnourished (World Health Organization).
- A quarter of Gaza's population (495,000 people) are now experiencing catastrophic food insecurity, classified as Phase 5 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system (IPC). This is the highest ever recorded proportion of a population in Phase 5 (Catastrophe), the most severe phase on the IPC scale.

It is almost inevitable that a widespread famine will occur unless there is a ceasefire and unless Israel allows more aid and commercial goods into the territory. Deliberately depriving civilians of food and other aid is a violation of international law.

What can people do to help?

Islamic Relief has launched a fundraising appeal for Gaza that will enable us to continue responding during this emergency phase. Once the ceasefire comes into place, we can begin to help the people of Gaza rebuild their lives. Supporting the appeal with funds is crucial but there are other actions that are just as important, including to call for vital political action. Please contact your political representative and ask them to add their voice to demands for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and end to the siege.

How is Islamic Relief delivering aid? Who are your local partners?

Our work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been ongoing since 1997 and we have a fully established local team on the ground. Our team is working in coordination with six local humanitarian partner organisations to deliver aid. Islamic Relief is also partnering with the WFP and together we are distributing on average 175,000 food items per day through this partnership. This includes hot meals, food parcels and nutritional supplements to treat and prevent malnutrition.

Are the long-term programs still running?

At present, the only ongoing program is the Orphans Sponsorship Program, which is a cash assistance program that we have expanded through the digital transfer system. All our other long-term programs are currently suspended due to extreme insecurity. Our current work is purely to respond to the emergency. We hope to resume long-term programs once there is a ceasefire.

Are Islamic Relief staff currently safe?

Gaza has become the most dangerous place in the world to deliver aid. Approximately 300 aid workers and hundreds of health workers have been killed. Nobody is truly safe in Gaza right now. But we are relieved that, so far, no Islamic Relief staff have been killed or injured – however all Islamic Relief staff have become displaced, many repeatedly, and are being affected by the crisis in the same ways as the rest of the people of Gaza. Several staff have lost family members, and we are doing all we can to support our colleagues at this time. However, when there is heavy and indiscriminate bombing in populated neighbourhoods, it is impossible to guarantee anyone's safety.

*Help one another in goodness and
righteousness, and do not
cooperate in sin and transgression.
And be mindful of
Allah.*

Quran [5:2]

Help save lives



Islamic Relief Australia
Shop 2/6-14 Park Rd,
Auburn, NSW 2144

Tel: 1300 308 554
info@islamicrelief.org.au
www.islamicrelief.org.au