

# GAZA

## PROTECTION MONITORING

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Late July 2025 - February 2026





## Highlight

Findings from the interviews indicate that civilians across Gaza continue to face significant protection risks linked to insecurity, displacement, and barriers to accessing basic assistance. Despite the ceasefire, many of the structural conditions shaping these risks remain largely unchanged. Respondents consistently described daily life as characterized by insecurity, fragile living conditions and uncertainty about the future.

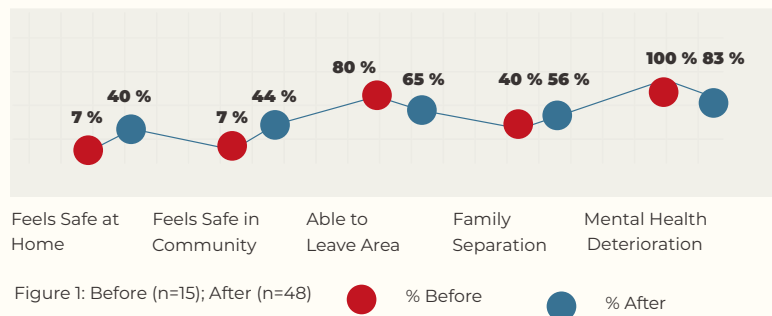
Safety and security concerns remain: a majority of respondents reported feeling unsafe both within their homes (68%) and in their surrounding communities (65%). Exposure to armed violence was described as a defining feature of daily life. Fragile shelters and damaged infrastructure further increase exposure to harm, particularly in displacement sites where tents offer limited protection from conflict-related hazards or environmental conditions. These conditions contribute to persistent fear and psychological distress, with many respondents reporting anxiety, sleep disturbances and emotional exhaustion even after the ceasefire.

Repeated displacement continues to affect a large proportion of households. Respondents reported relocating an average of eight times, often due to insecurity, damaged shelters, or limited access to essential services. Destruction of infrastructure, including roads and public services, combined with financial constraints and insecurity, frequently limits safe mobility. Displacement has also contributed to family separation, increased caregiving responsibilities, and heightened psychosocial stress, particularly among women heading households, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Access to humanitarian assistance remains constrained: respondents reported limitations in accessing essential goods. In some cases, individuals reported exposure to insecurity, harassment, or unsafe travel conditions when attempting to reach distribution points or water sources. At the same time, some respondents highlighted inequities in aid distribution and limited information regarding eligibility or beneficiary selection processes, contributing to perceptions of exclusion among displaced populations.

Overall, the findings highlight the interlinked nature of protection risks in Gaza. Insecurity, repeated displacement, unsafe living conditions and barriers to humanitarian assistance collectively contribute to heightened risks and psychological distress among affected populations. Addressing these risks requires sustained humanitarian engagement, including strengthened site management, protection-sensitive assistance delivery and improved access to humanitarian assistance, including scaled up specialised protection services, alongside continued advocacy for the protection of civilians and humanitarian access in line with international humanitarian law.

### Pre/Post Ceasefire



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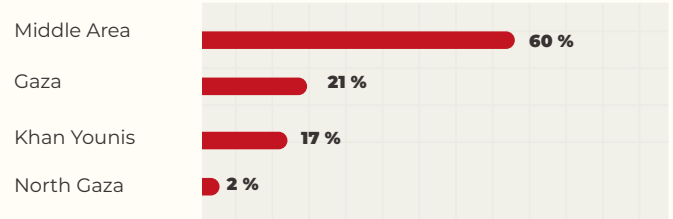


## Methodology

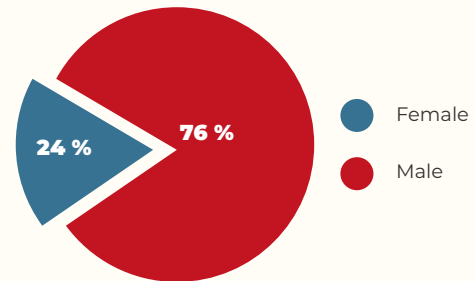
This report covers the reporting period 28 July 2025 to 28 February 2026 and presents findings from protection monitoring activities conducted in Gaza. Data was collected through in-depth individual interviews to better understand protection risks and the day-to-day experiences of affected populations. A total of 63 in-depth interviews were conducted during the reporting period. Among the respondents, 48 were women and 15 were men, providing detailed insight into the lived experiences of affected communities, particularly women who often face heightened protection risk during displacement. This is particularly relevant in Gaza context, as conflict-related deaths and family separation have significantly increased the number women-headed households.<sup>1</sup> Data was collected through a non-probability sampling approach, with participants identified through existing services offered by DRC across the broader community, as well as through a local partner specifically serving women and girls. In addition, 37% of respondents (23 individuals) reported living with a disability, which captured the perspectives of persons facing additional barriers during displacement. In terms of respondent profiles, 53 participants were displaced individuals, 5 were community leaders, 2 were original residents, 1 was a site focal point, and 2 respondents had an unknown profile (details not recorded). Interviews were conducted across several locations, including 38 respondents in the Middle Area, 13 in Gaza City, 11 in Khan Younis, and 1 in North Gaza.

The findings presented in this report are based on qualitative data collected through protection monitoring interviews. As the majority of respondents were women and displaced individuals, the findings provide a particular insight into the experiences, risks, and coping strategies of these groups. While the data offers important indications of protection concerns and patterns affecting affected populations, it should not be interpreted as statistically representative of the wider population in Gaza. Instead, the qualitative findings add context and nuance to existing quantitative data, helping to illustrate how protection risks are experienced in daily life.

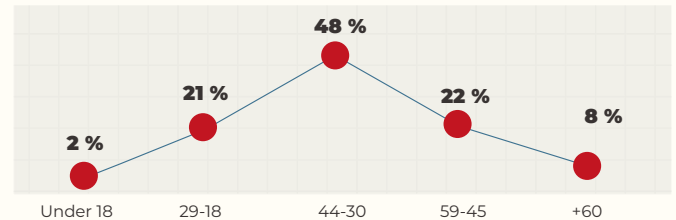
### Respondents By Governorate



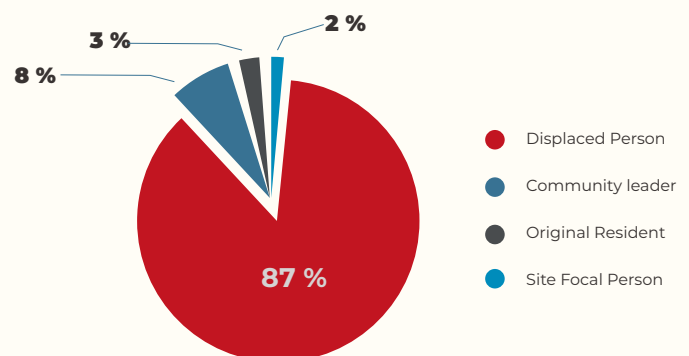
### Breakdown by Gender



### Breakdown by Age



### Respondent Profile



<sup>1</sup> UN Women, *Sustaining families alone: The experiences of crisis-affected and displaced women-headed households in Gaza*, February 2026.

# Findings

## Risk 1: Safety and Security

### Exposure to Violence

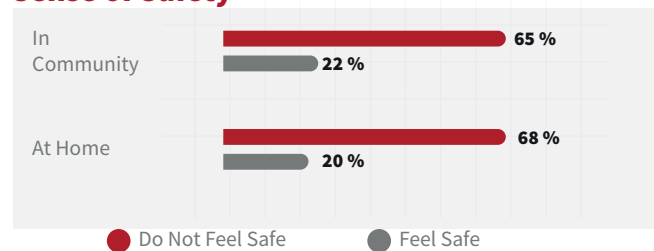
**"I feel unsafe because of the unstable war conditions and repeated displacement. I am afraid to sleep deeply for fear of random bombing or being attacked by bandits."**

[Female Respondent, Middle Area, 22 September 2025]

Findings from the interviews reinforce these perceptions of insecurity. Of the 63 respondents interviewed, 68% reported that they do not feel safe in their homes, while 65% stated that they do not feel safe within their surrounding community. Exposure to armed violence was consistently described as a defining feature of daily life during the reporting period. Respondents reported ongoing risks linked to bombardment, shelling, and proximity to active hostilities. Explosions, shrapnel, and stray bullets were reported to reach displacement sites, creating danger even in locations expected to provide safety. As one participant explained, *"as soon as there is shelling, the shrapnel reaches us"* while another respondent described how a nearby tent was bombed without warning, injuring individuals living in the area. Others emphasized that one of the most significant dangers in displacement sites was the constant presence of stray bullets.

Shelter conditions further heightened exposure to harm. Fragile tents and makeshift shelters offered little protection from blast impacts, debris, or other conflict-related hazards. As a result, displacement sites were often perceived as unsafe despite being intended as places of refuge.

### Sense of Safety



These experiences contributed to a continuous sense of insecurity. Even following the ceasefire, respondents reported persistent fear of renewed attacks, shaped by damaged infrastructure, fragile shelters, and uncertainty regarding the potential resumption of hostilities. Fear for children and dependents was particularly prominent. Caregivers, especially women-heading households alone, described carrying full responsibility for the safety and survival of family members in overcrowded displacement environments. One respondent explained:

**"What worries me most is my fear for my young children, as I am both their mother and father. My children were conceived through IVF, and I am very afraid for them because of the indiscriminate bombing and scattered shrapnel. I always stay close to them and never stray far from them."**

[Female Respondent, Middle Area, 23 September 2025]



Older persons and persons with disabilities were also identified as facing heightened risks during security incidents because mobility limitations reduced their ability to evacuate quickly or protect themselves independently. Secondary data further documents the disproportionate pressures on women-headed households. According to the UN Women report *Sustaining Families Alone: The Experiences of Crisis-Affected*

and Displaced Women-Headed Households in Gaza, an estimated 16,000 women have lost their husbands during the conflict, resulting in more than 1 in 7 households (57,200 families) now being headed by women. The report also indicates that women-headed households are more likely than male-headed households to report healthcare needs, particularly related to consultations and medications for chronic illnesses, reflecting the intersecting demands on women heading households in displacement.<sup>2</sup>

## Psychological Distress

***“My mental health has deteriorated. I feel anxious about my son and I suffer from stress and nervousness.”***

[Female respondent, Khan Younis, 26 February 2026]

Findings from the interviews indicate prevalent psychological distress among respondents. Among those interviewed before the ceasefire all 15 respondents reported a deterioration in their mental health. After the ceasefire, 40 respondents continued to report deteriorating mental health, suggesting that psychological distress remains prevalent despite changes in the security context. Psychological distress emerged as a consistent concern linked to prolonged exposure to violence, displacement and uncertainty. During periods of active hostilities, respondents frequently described fear, anxiety and constant alertness. Some participants explained that they avoided sleeping deeply due to the risk of shelling or sudden evacuation. These patterns indicate that insecurity was experienced not only as a physical threat but also as an ongoing emotional burden.

### Mental Health Deterioration

Pre/post ceasefire

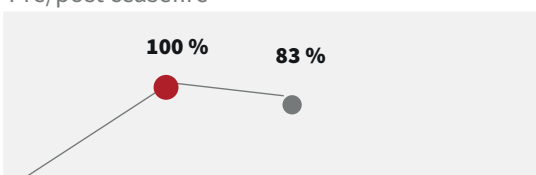


Figure 1: Before (n=15); After (n=48) ● % Before ● % After

Following the ceasefire, psychological distress remained widespread. Respondents continued to report fatigue, anxiety, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion and persistent fear. These impacts were frequently associated with unstable living conditions, ongoing displacement and uncertainty about the future. Women-heading households described feeling overwhelmed by the combined pressures of caregiving responsibilities, insecurity, and limited access to resources. Respondents with disabilities also reported additional strain, explaining that managing daily household responsibilities while coping with physical limitations increased both emotional and physical stress. Awareness of available mental health and psychosocial support services appeared limited. Protection Cluster monitoring data indicates that approximately 62% of respondents since October 2025 were unaware of available mental health and psychosocial support services, suggesting potential gaps in access to or awareness of support mechanisms.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, *Sustaining families alone: The experiences of crisis-affected and displaced women-headed households in Gaza*, February 2026.

<sup>3</sup> oPt Protection Cluster, *Protection Monitoring Gaza*, February 2026.



## Gender-Based Violence and Social Tensions

***“I was subjected to severe violence from my husband. It's enough that he left me in the most difficult circumstances, supporting six young children, which is a huge burden on my shoulders.”***

[Female respondents, Middle Area, 22 September 2025]

Respondents described incidents of domestic violence and harassment within displacement settings alongside the broader pressures of displacement, economic hardship and trauma. Several women reported physical violence or threats from intimate partners. Others described harassment linked to shelter arrangements or to individuals exercising control over land or shelter spaces. One participant reported that her children were not safe from their father, while another respondent described harassment from the person controlling the location where the family was staying. These experiences illustrate how dependence on others for shelter and insecure tenure arrangements can heighten protection risks for women and children.

These risks also intersect with broader structural barriers related to housing, land, and property rights. According to the 2026 Guidance Note on Housing, Land and Property and Mine Action in Gaza, women face gender-specific risks including denial of inheritance and property ownership due to legal barriers and entrenched social norms.

These challenges are further exacerbated by unresolved missing persons cases, which can block property transfers, as well as movement restrictions between northern and southern Gaza that limit access to documentation, legal services, and property claims.<sup>4</sup>

Displacement into unfamiliar environments has also strained social cohesion within sites. Overcrowding, competition over limited resources and the proximity of families from different areas created conditions in which trust was difficult to establish. The social effects were visible in daily interactions. Respondents described an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, with individuals withdrawing from communal life as a protective response. One respondent explained:

***“I don't socialize with people because I don't trust those around me. I don't know them well and I'm afraid of dealing with them, so I avoid them completely.”***

[Female respondent, Middle Area, 23 September 2025]

These tensions played out in concrete ways. The arrival of new displaced families intensified pressure on shared spaces, shelters and communal areas generating disputes linked to resource scarcity and a growing sense that available assistance was insufficient for the number of people present.

Following the ceasefire, respondents continued to report tensions between households within displacement sites. Participants stated that disputes and mistrust persisted, particularly where they perceived inequities in distribution of humanitarian assistance.

<sup>4</sup> oPt HLP AoR, *Guidance Note on Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) and Mine Action in Gaza*, March 2026.



## Unsafe and Undignified Living Conditions

***“Major problems include the lack of private toilets in the shelter, especially for women, and the absence of a gate for the camp which allows stray animals to enter and pose risks to children. Roads and toilets are also unsuitable, especially for persons with disabilities.”***

[Female respondent, Gaza, 25 February 2026]

Displacement sites and shelter environments were widely described as unsafe and insecure. Respondents reported that tents were often damaged, poorly secured, or constructed from worn materials that offered little protection from environmental hazards or intrusion. Hazards surrounding shelters were also frequently noted, including open sewage pits, insects, rodents, stray animals, and other unsecured surroundings that increased safety risks, particularly for children.

Following the ceasefire, shelter conditions remained fragile. Many respondents described tents as unable to withstand rain, wind, or storms, and some reported losing shelters multiple times due to environmental damage. Living conditions were further characterized by a lack of sanitation, privacy, and physical safety. Improvised sanitation arrangements, including open pits, were reported. The absence of private and secure shelter spaces heightened protection concerns for women and girls. Shelters without lockable spaces, combined with densely packed tents, were described as increasing exposure to harassment and unwanted attention. Persons with disabilities also faced additional challenges, particularly where roads, toilets, and shelter layouts were physically inaccessible.

Secondary data reinforces these findings. According to Protection Cluster monitoring, approximately 70% of respondents currently reside in tents, while 14% live in partially damaged houses, highlighting the continued reliance on temporary shelter arrangements.<sup>5</sup> The March 2026 Guidance Note on Housing, Land and Property and Mine Action in Gaza further highlights widespread loss of property documentation, land disputes, and disruptions to civil registration and land administration systems, all of which complicate recovery and durable housing solutions.<sup>6</sup>

### Risk 1: Coping Mechanisms

Respondents described a range of coping strategies adopted to manage insecurity and daily risks within displacement settings. Many explained that they adjusted daily routines in response to security threats and remained vigilant to changes in the surrounding environment, particularly during nighttime. In response to unsafe shelter conditions, respondents described reinforcing tents using available materials such as plastic sheeting, cloth, or salvaged items. Some participants reported limiting social interaction to relatives or trusted individuals as a way to reduce exposure to conflict or theft within displacement sites. Others described restricting the movement of children or adolescent daughters due to concerns about insecurity or harassment in overcrowded environments. While these strategies were intended to reduce exposure to harm, they also can contribute to increased social isolation for some households and individuals.

<sup>5</sup> oPt Protection Cluster, [Protection Monitoring Gaza](#), February 2026.

<sup>6</sup> oPt HLP AoR, [Guidance Note on Housing, Land, and Property \(HLP\) and Mine Action in Gaza](#), March 2026.



## Risk 2: Forced Displacement and Barriers to Freedom of Movement

### Patterns and Drivers of Repeated Displacement

*“Two months ago, we returned from Deir al-Balah to Gaza City, where I now live next to my destroyed home.”*

[Female respondent, Gaza, 25 February 2026]

Displacement remains widespread across Gaza, with many households experiencing multiple movements during and after the conflict. Based on the interviews conducted, respondents reported being displaced an average of eight times; and described repeated displacement as a common experience, with families often relocating several times in response to insecurity, damage to shelters, or lack of access to basic services.

Environmental conditions also contributed to continued displacement pressures. Respondents reported that storms and heavy rainfall frequently damaged makeshift shelters, forcing some households to relocate when tents collapsed or became uninhabitable. At the same time, new arrivals of displaced households increased pressure on already overcrowded displacement sites. Participants described displacement environments as characterized by fatigue, overcrowding and uncertainty regarding future movements.

Population movement data confirms the scale of ongoing displacement. According to Population Movement Monitoring conducted by the Site Management Cluster, more than 826,892 displacement movements were recorded between October 2025 and January 2026 across Gaza, with an additional 13,369 displacement movements recorded in January alone.<sup>7</sup> These figures reflect continued localized mobility as households reassess safety conditions and access to services.

Secondary data underscores the scale of structural conditions driving continued displacement. According to OCHA February 2026 report, approximately 81% of structures across Gaza have been destroyed or damaged, while 89% of WASH infrastructure and 77% of the road network have been affected, significantly restricting access to services, mobility, and basic infrastructure. In addition, widespread damage to commercial establishments has disrupted livelihoods, and further complicating recovery for displaced households.<sup>8</sup> Together, these figures point to an environment in which displacement is sustained by destruction as much as by ongoing insecurity.

<sup>7</sup> oPt Site Management Cluster, *Population Monitoring Monthly Update*, January 2026.

<sup>8</sup> OCHA, *Reported Impact Snapshot Gaza Strip*, February 2026.



## Barriers to Safe Movement

***"Yes, we were greatly affected and humiliated. I didn't know how to leave because I had no money, so we walked, and we didn't take any of our belongings because of the heavy bombing. My mother is elderly and wheelchair bound. We pushed her in her wheelchair and walked for six hours. I returned to the area three times to retrieve some of our belongings, and I spent three days bedridden due to pain in my legs."***

[Female respondent, Middle Area, 07 October 2025]

Relocation itself was a source of protection risk, with people moving under dangerous conditions. Findings from the DRC interviews collected during the reporting period highlight the variation in mobility over time. Among respondents interviewed before the ceasefire, 12 individuals reported that they were able to leave the area despite difficult conditions, including ongoing insecurity, high transportation costs and limited infrastructure to support movement particularly for individuals with reduced mobility. Following the ceasefire, 31 respondents reported being able to move from their location. Differences in the underlying drivers of displacement across the two periods limit the direct comparability of these figures. This variation together with the larger sample size after the ceasefire may partly explain the observed difference in proportions, as well as the impacts of widespread destruction and infrastructure damage that continue to constrain mobility. At the same time, some respondents suggested that improved security conditions after the ceasefire made movement more feasible for certain households.

Displacement journeys were described as particularly difficult for persons with disabilities, older persons, and individuals with health conditions.

Respondents explained that many individuals were unable to move independently and relied heavily on family members for assistance. In several cases, families described pushing wheelchairs over long distances or physically supporting relatives during evacuation. One respondent explained that relocating while managing both her own physical disability and caring for an elderly parent was extremely exhausting. She described how family members frequently had to stop so she could rest, and how in some locations carts or vehicles were available, while in other locations the family was forced to continue on foot. Another respondent explained:

***"We faced many dangers. Transportation was difficult and very expensive. The good people helped us. I was transported in a wheelchair on a cart from Gaza to Tabah al-Nuwairi."***

[Female respondent, Middle Area, 10 October 2025]

Where such support networks were absent, relocation became significantly more difficult. One case described the challenges of moving a child with cerebral palsy due to lack of transport, with relocation only becoming possible after camp administration assisted the family in reaching a location capable of accommodating persons with disabilities.



Beyond physical difficulty, displacement journeys exposed people to direct harm. Respondents described nearby bombings while attempting to relocate, reinforcing perceptions that no location was safe. Others reported exploitation when attempting to secure transportation, including extremely high prices for taxis or animal-drawn carts. Families frequently reported paying transportation costs themselves while facing overcrowding, insecurity, and physical exhaustion during relocation.

Secondary data further indicates that mobility across Gaza remains constrained. Population movement monitoring suggests that more than 50% of Gaza is currently beyond accessible residential areas due to military presence and access restrictions along the Yellow Line.

Site Management monitoring also indicates that 54% of Khan Younis, 21% of Deir al-Balah, and 89% of Rafah remain under military presence, further limiting safe movement for displaced households.<sup>9</sup> In addition to access restrictions, constraints on fuel availability continue to significantly restrict transportation options.<sup>10</sup> These factors further exacerbate barriers to safe and timely movement, particularly for individuals with specific needs. Movement observation data also suggests demographic differences in mobility patterns. Approximately 44% of recorded movements involve men, 28% women, and 28% children <sup>11</sup>, which may reflect gendered mobility constraints or caregiving responsibilities affecting women's ability to move during displacement.

### Family Separation and Social Isolation

**“I was separated from my mother and brother, who were killed in the bombing, and I fled without them.”**

[Female respondent, Gaza, 13 November 2025]

Family separation emerged as a consequence of displacement and insecurity. In several cases, family members became dispersed across different locations during evacuations due to rapid and often unplanned evacuations increasing the risk of family separation. DRC interview findings indicate that family separation remained a common experience among displaced households. Among respondents interviewed before the ceasefire, 6 individuals reported experiencing family separation.

Following the ceasefire, 27 respondents reported being separated from family members, suggesting that displacement and movement across locations continued to disrupt family unity even after active hostilities decreased. Secondary data further highlights the scale of the issue. According to Protection Cluster monitoring data, 4,915 cases of separated children and 464 unaccompanied children were recorded during the reporting period<sup>12</sup>, underscoring the widespread impact of displacement on family unity.

<sup>9</sup> oPt Site Management Cluster, *Population Monitoring Monthly Update*, January 2026.

<sup>10</sup> OCHA, *Gaza Humanitarian Response Situation Report No. 59*, January 2026.

<sup>11</sup> oPt Site Management Cluster, *Population Monitoring Monthly Update*, January 2026.

<sup>12</sup> oPt Protection Cluster, *Protection Monitoring Gaza*, February 2026.



**“Living in a tent itself summarizes everything, I lost my home, my work, and my stable life.”**

[Female respondents, Middle Area, 22 January 2026]

Participants also described experiences of social isolation within displacement environments. Limited interaction with surrounding communities was sometimes linked to insecurity or unfamiliarity between displaced households. Concerns regarding insecure tenure were also raised, particularly where families were residing on land that did not belong to them and feared being asked to leave. Displacement was frequently associated with broader losses beyond physical shelter. Respondents repeatedly referenced the loss of homes, livelihoods and stability as shaping daily life in displacement settings.

## Risk 2: Coping Mechanisms

Despite the significant challenges associated with displacement, respondents described several coping strategies used to manage movement and daily life in displacement settings. Community support and mutual assistance were highlighted as essential for navigating displacement. Respondents explained that neighbours and relatives often helped individuals with limited mobility relocate or navigate displacement routes. Family members were also described as playing a central role in assisting persons with disabilities, older relatives or children during displacement. One respondent explained that her son pushed her wheelchair while they relocated, while another described how relatives carried her or supported her during long displacement journeys due to her physical disability. While these coping mechanisms helped households navigate displacement, respondents also noted that reliance on informal support networks placed additional strain on already vulnerable households. Prolonged displacement and repeated movements were described as gradually eroding community resources and coping capacities over time.

### Family Separation

Pre/post ceasefire

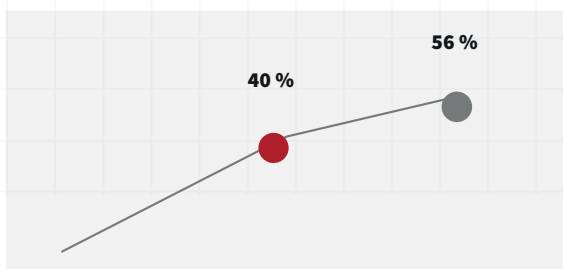


Figure 1: Before (n=15); After (n=48) ● % Before ● % After



## Risk 3: Barriers to Access Humanitarian Assistance

### Access to Basic Necessities

**“I always feel dizzy, but I don't feel hungry because I am always tired. My weight has dropped from 75 kg to 52 kg, and I am unable to perform my daily tasks (cleaning and washing) because my body is so tired.”**

[Female respondents, Middle Area, 20 September 2025]

Respondents consistently described severe constraints in accessing food, water, and other essential goods throughout the reporting period. During periods of active hostilities, food insecurity was widespread, with many households reporting that they ate only once per day. In some cases, individuals reported going extended periods without consuming a full meal. Dietary diversity also declined significantly compared with the period before the conflict, with foods previously considered common including rice, chicken, fish, vegetables, and other staples largely disappearing from household diets.

Participants also described the physical consequences associated with prolonged food shortages. Severe weight loss, dizziness, fainting, headaches, fatigue, and extreme weakness were frequently mentioned. Some respondents reported hair loss, stomach problems, and persistent exhaustion linked to malnutrition. In several cases, these conditions limited individuals' ability to carry out routine household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, or washing clothes. Respondents also reported constraints in accessing safe drinking water. In some locations, water could only be obtained every few days, and households sometimes sent children to collect water from distant locations when adults were unable to travel.

Following the ceasefire, respondents indicated that food access remained constrained despite some improvements in humanitarian aid availability. Participants reported relying primarily on community kitchens, humanitarian organizations, or informal support networks to obtain food. Diets remained largely limited to basic staple foods, with little access to vegetables, fruit, or protein. Respondents with chronic health conditions described additional challenges related to limited dietary diversity. One participant with diabetes explained that consuming rice daily worsened their health condition because alternative food options were unavailable. Financial constraints were also reported as limiting the ability to purchase food in markets, even when items were available, as prices remained high relative to household resources.



Secondary data reinforces these findings. According to the World Food Programme Emergency Situation Report for February 2026, food rations in Gaza were halved in February due to supply constraints and access restrictions, raising concerns that disruptions to humanitarian supply routes could reverse limited improvements in food access. The same report indicates that unemployment in Gaza exceeds 80%, significantly limiting household purchasing power and further constraining access to food even where markets remain partially functional.<sup>13</sup> Analysis by OCHA February 2026 report further indicates that 77% of the population approximately 1.6 million people are facing crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). At the same time, widespread damage to agricultural infrastructure continues to limit local food production, with 87% of cropland damaged and only 4% of cropland currently undamaged and accessible.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> WFP, [Palestine Emergency Response External Situation Report](#), March 2026.

<sup>14</sup> OCHA, [Reported Impact Snapshot Gaza Strip](#), February 2026.



## Exposure to Harm While Accessing Assistance

*“I went to the point because I have no one to go to and I have no food for my children, so I had to go myself, but I saw death with my own eyes and the good people gave me rice, milk, flour, and sugar, and then I didn't go back again because I was afraid something would happen to me.”*

[Female respondent, Gaza, 15 November 2025]

Accessing Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) sites were frequently described as dangerous, particularly during periods of active hostilities. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation operated during the reporting period and was dismantled following the ceasefire. Respondents explained that reaching aid distribution points often required travelling through insecure areas and navigating chaotic distribution environments. Violence and disorder during aid distributions were repeatedly mentioned. One respondent explained that her brother regularly travelled to collect assistance while the family closely followed news reports about injuries and deaths occurring at distribution sites. Another participant described how her son faced repeated risks of violence while attempting to collect aid, and in several cases the food he obtained was stolen before he could bring it home.

These accounts are consistent with findings from UN human rights monitoring. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported on deadly violence at and around GHF distribution sites exposing civilians to serious harm while attempting to access assistance. As of 13 August 2025, OHCHR reported that at least 1,760 Palestinians had been killed while attempting to access aid, 994 in the vicinity of GHF sites and 766 along supply convoy routes.

OHCHR further highlighted that attacks on individuals contributed to breakdowns in order at distribution points, exacerbating risks for civilians.<sup>15</sup> Following the ceasefire, barriers to accessing assistance persisted. Respondents reported travelling long distances to reach community kitchens, water sources, or aid distribution points. Some participants described carrying heavy water containers daily despite illness or physical exhaustion. Others reported searching for firewood in unsafe areas due to the lack of cooking fuel. In some cases, individuals also described experiencing harassment while attempting to access assistance or basic resources. Participants further explained that the burden of accessing food and water often fell on individuals with limited capacity to travel safely, including children.

Secondary data highlights structural barriers affecting humanitarian access. Analysis of border crossing restrictions indicates that only 43% of planned humanitarian aid deliveries entered Gaza between October 2025 and February 2026<sup>16</sup>, while widespread damage to infrastructure continues to limit access to services and humanitarian assistance.

<sup>15</sup> OHCHR, [Local statement on attacks on security personnel in Gaza](#), 15 August 2025.

<sup>16</sup> ACAPS, [Palestine Potential implications of the indefinite partial closure of border crossings in Gaza](#), March 2026.



## Inequities in Access to Assistance

**“Aid was only distributed to people living in their homes, but we displaced people didn't receive any aid.”**

[Female respondent, Middle Area, 23 September 2025]

Exclusion from humanitarian assistance was also described in relation to distribution practices. Respondents explained that assistance was sometimes allocated to only one registered household per tent or shelter, leaving other families sharing the same space without support. Participants further raised concerns about gaps in access to assistance, particularly for widowed women and noted that displaced individuals often lacked a clear understanding of why they did not receive assistance or were not included in beneficiary lists contributing to perceptions of unfairness in the distribution process.

Environmental and contextual barriers also affected access. Damaged roads, destroyed infrastructure, poor lighting, and insecurity after dark limited the ability to reach distribution points safely. Findings from the Sweep Assessment conducted by the Site Management Cluster in February 2026 confirm that 89% of sites lacked communal lighting. Polluted water sources, including contamination linked to nearby sewage and inadequate sanitation infrastructure and damaged surroundings further complicated travel to locations where assistance was available.

Psychological distress was also described as a barrier to seeking assistance. Some respondents explained that anxiety or fear discouraged them from attending crowded distribution points or interacting with unfamiliar individuals when seeking support.

### Risk 3: Coping Mechanisms

Respondents described several coping strategies used to manage limited access to food and basic necessities. Participants explained that households frequently relied on extended family members, neighbours, or informal community networks to obtain occasional food or water.

Some respondents reported borrowing money or selling personal belongings in order to purchase food. Others described receiving support from relatives who shared meals or provided small amounts of assistance when possible. In some cases, respondents also mentioned receiving limited support from local volunteers or informal community groups distributing small quantities of aid. While some of these coping strategies demonstrated strong community solidarity, they also carried risks. Respondents noted that selling personal belongings reduced long-term financial resilience, while borrowing money created debts that could become difficult to repay over time.



## Recommendations

### Risk 1: Safety and Security

#### Humanitarian Actors

- Expand mental health and psychosocial support and GBV services within or near displacement sites and increase outreach to improve awareness of available services.
- Integrate GBV risk mitigation measures across site management, WASH, and assistance delivery, including safe sanitation facilities.
- Continue Explosive Ordnance Risk Education activities for displaced populations to reduce exposure to explosive remnants in and around displacement sites and areas of return.
- Continue protection monitoring of safety and protection risks affecting civilians in displacement settings, including exposure to insecurity and unsafe living conditions, to inform programming and advocacy.
- Strengthen site planning and site management in displacement settings to reduce exposure to harm, including improved site layout, drainage, lighting, and community-based protection and monitoring.
- Prioritize shelter and site upgrades for fragile tents and makeshift shelters with particular attention to women-headed households and persons with disabilities.
- Coordinate with actors to assess tenure arrangements and protection risks linked to shelter conditions, ensuring that HLP concerns are integrated into site planning and shelter allocation.

#### Donors

- Provide flexible funding for site safety improvements, including small-scale infrastructure, lighting, drainage and rehabilitation that improve dignity in displacement sites.
- Support integrated responses combining protection, MHPSS, site management, and WASH, services to address overlapping safety risks, including programming that addresses tenure insecurity as a protection risk.
- Advocate for and facilitate the entry of essential dual-use items required for humanitarian response.
- Fund sustained GBV prevention and response services in displacement contexts and support legal aid services targeting women and vulnerable households, including assistance with inheritance claims and property disputes.
- Support humanitarian partners and coordination bodies in advocacy including the protection of civilians, displacement sites, and civilian infrastructure.



## Risk 2: Forced Displacement and Barriers to Freedom of Movement

### Humanitarian Actors

- Strengthen site management and coordination in areas receiving displaced populations to reduce overcrowding and establish a safe pathway to identify households at heightened protection risk.
- Expand multi-purpose cash assistance and sector-specific cash or voucher assistance to support displacement-related costs such as transportation, temporary shelter, and urgent household needs, reducing reliance on harmful coping strategies.
- Provide mobility support for persons with disabilities, older persons and caregivers, including transport assistance and accessible relocation support where possible.
- Improve WASH services in displacement sites, including installation of water points and sanitation facilities for displaced households.
- Strengthen case management and referral pathways for households affected by family separation and provide targeted psychosocial support.
- Document barriers to movement and displacement risks through protection monitoring to inform advocacy aimed at ensuring safe civilian movement and protection during displacement.

### Donors

- Take concrete steps to prevent as well as refrain from funding approaches that confine or isolate civilians or restrict their freedom of movement in Gaza.
- Support coordination bodies and humanitarian partners in advocating for respect for civilians' rights during displacement, including protection from forced or unsafe displacement.
- Use leverage to prevent forcible transfer, besiegement, and the practices that contribute to food deprivation, in line with international law.
- Provide flexible funding to respond to repeated displacement and population movements.
- Support multi-purpose cash assistance and sector-specific cash or voucher assistance enabling households to cover transportation and relocation costs.
- Invest in rehabilitation of essential infrastructure to improve safe access to services and reduce displacement pressures.
- Advocate for and facilitate the entry of essential dual-use items required for humanitarian response.
- Support evidence documentation initiatives to prepare for future restitution and reconstruction processes.
- Support humanitarian actors in strengthening case management and referral pathways for households affected by family separation, including the provision of targeted psychosocial support.



## Risk 3: Barriers to Access Humanitarian Assistance

### Humanitarian Actors

- Expand decentralized delivery mechanisms, including mobile distributions and community-based approaches to reduce the need for long-distance or unsafe travel to distribution points.
- Strengthen inclusive and accessible registration processes to ensure that all affected households, including persons with disabilities, older persons, and female-headed households are able to register for assistance and are not excluded due to documentation barriers, mobility constraints, or lack of information.
- Strengthen site management support to identify excluded households and facilitate equitable access to assistance within displacement sites.
- Ensure aid distributions are protection-sensitive, including accessible distribution points and prioritization of individuals unable to safely reach distribution sites.
- Strengthen community engagement and information-sharing so displaced households clearly understand eligibility criteria, assistance processes and available services.
- Strengthen accountability and feedback mechanisms to identify households excluded from assistance and address concerns related to inequities in aid delivery.

### Donors

- Ensure humanitarian assistance remains independent, impartial, and not under the control of parties to the conflict.
- Support investments in accountability mechanisms and monitoring systems to identify gaps in assistance coverage and reduce inequities in aid distribution.
- Support humanitarian partners and coordination platforms in advocating for safe, sustained, and unimpeded humanitarian access, including protection of humanitarian personnel, aid delivery systems, and critical civilian infrastructure.



Founded in 1956, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is Denmark's largest international NGO, with a specific expertise in forced displacement. DRC is present in close to 40 countries and employs 9,000 staff globally.

DRC advocates for the rights of and solutions for displacement-affected communities, and provides assistance during all stages of displacement: In acute crisis, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. DRC supports displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies. DRC works with civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and inclusion.

Our 7,500 volunteers in Denmark make an invaluable difference in integration activities throughout the country.

DRC's code of conduct sits at the core of our organizational mission, and DRC aims at the highest ethical and professional standards. DRC has been certified as meeting the highest quality standards according to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

HRH Crown Princess Mary is DRC's patron.

To read more about what we do, see:  
[www.drc.ngo](http://www.drc.ngo)

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