

Gaza medics 'struggling to cope with influx of wounded': UN agencies

Medical teams inside Gaza are running out of supplies to cope with the wounded, following the deadliest day of protests against occupation along the border with Israel so far this year, UN aid agencies warned on Tuesday.

Speaking after 58 Palestinians lost their lives and more than 1,300 were injured by Israeli security forces on Monday, the [World Health Organization's](#) Tarik Jasarevic said that life-saving drugs were "urgently needed".

These include antibiotics and adrenaline, according to the WHO spokesperson, who explained that more than 10 years of blockade had already undermined Gaza's healthcare capacity.

Two in every five essential drugs were "completely depleted" already this month, Mr Jasarevic explained, adding that essential life-saving medicines for chronic illnesses such as cancer were also "critically low".

Jens Laerke from the [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) reiterated the difficulties faced by health teams in the enclave: "Medical facilities in Gaza are struggling to deal with the number of casualties and the humanitarian coordinator there, Jamie McGoldrick, has expressed his deep concern by the tragedy unfolding in Gaza after visiting the Shifa Hospital," he said.

He added that Mr. McGoldrick – who is also UN [Deputy Special Coordinator](#) for the Middle East Peace Process – had reported that medical teams at Shifa, in Gaza City, "are overwhelmed, dealing with hundreds of cases of injured, including women and children."

"They are stretched to the limit and running out of essential medical supplies. He stressed that public hospitals in Gaza have less than a week of fuel reserves to continue their operations", Mr. Laerke told journalists in Geneva.

The situation has not been helped by the stop-start delivery of humanitarian supplies.

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Rupert Colville (OHCHR)

These usually arrive via Gaza's main supply point, Kerem Shalom, but it was closed after being damaged, although an aid convoy had been allowed in by Israelis in recent days, Mr Laerke said.

"It has been closed indefinitely following extensive damage to the Gaza side of this crossing by Palestinians on 11 May. However, Israeli authorities have indicated that this crossing will be opened for, 'select humanitarian needs' on a case-by-case basis and the day before yesterday they allowed seven trucks to enter Gaza and I understand that six of those trucks were carrying medical supplies."

Following Monday's developments in Gaza, the UN human rights office, OHCHR, called for Israel to mount an independent investigation into the deaths and injuries sustained along the border.

OHCHR spokesperson Rupert Colville told journalists in Geneva on Tuesday that six children and a health worker were among the dead and that more than 150 people were in a critical condition.

The rules on the use of force under international law "appear to have been ignored again and again", Mr Colville said, adding that "it seems anyone is liable to be shot dead or injured: women, children, press personnel, first-responders, bystanders – and at almost any point, up to 700 metres from the fence".

Ten journalists had also suffered gunshot injuries by the end of the day, Mr Colville said.

A reported 35,000 people took part in Monday's demonstrations, according to OCHA.

During the protests some Palestinian demonstrators threw stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers, according to OHCHR's Mr Colville, who added that others had flown kites laden with "petrol-soaked material" over the fence that separates the two communities.

The response from the Israeli side – with tear gas, plastic bullets and live ammunition – had caused "horrific wounds and lifelong disability", Mr Colville said, before calling for "credible investigations" by Israel.

"Latterly we only seem to be seeing investigations carried out when there's a very clear bit of video evidence becoming public through witnesses and bystanders," he said. "And the official statements simply say this is all Hamas's fault and...just ignore the fact that the children are being killed, women are being killed, unarmed protesters are being killed in large numbers."

So I think with the State of Israel it's very important for credible investigations into these very serious, very serious events and very possibly, very serious crimes as well."

Confirming that Israel had a right to defend its borders, the OHCHR spokesperson said that its soldiers should do so in accordance with international norms on the use of lethal force.

"You just have to look at the casualty figures on both sides to see that it's not being used as a last resort," he said, adding that Israel was obliged

“under international law, to handle these demonstrations in a way that preserves life, unless they own lives are very clearly directly threatened, which has not been the case.”

UN human rights experts also condemned the killings and Israel’s use of live ammunition against mostly-unarmed protesters.

“Despite Israel’s commitment to investigate the events of the past few weeks, security forces continue to use live ammunition and rubber bullets against the protesters, killing and wounding dozens of mostly unarmed protesters, women, men and children alike,” said a group of six Special Rapporteurs, in a joint statement.

“We express our outrage over these shootings that may have resulted in unlawful killings and the incomprehensibly high number of injuries sustained,” the statement added.

‘Enough is enough; stop attacks on children’ underscores UNICEF

With children increasingly targeted in conflicts as well as having to suffer the worst impacts of hostilities, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has called on all parties to conflicts around the globe to ensure that they are kept safe from harm.

In the first four months of 2018 alone, hundreds of children lost their lives and many more wounded in countries ranging from the Central African Republic to South Sudan, and from Syria to Afghanistan.

“With little remorse and even less accountability, parties to conflict continue to blatantly disregard one of [the most basic rules in war: the protection of children](#),” said Henrietta H. Fore, the Executive Director of UNICEF in a statement on Tuesday.

“The rules of war prohibit the unlawful targeting of civilians, attacks on schools or hospitals, the use, recruitment and unlawful detention of children, and the denial of humanitarian assistance. When conflicts break out, these rules need to be respected and those who break them need to be held to account,” she stressed.

Humanitarian aid alone is not enough. Children need peace and protection at all times – *Henrietta H. Fore, UNICEF Executive Director*

In addition to the children caught in fighting, [millions more](#) are at the risk of starvation, abduction, child recruitment, abuse and displacement. Many are also losing their lives to deadly diseases that could have been prevented.

In Yemen, for instance, almost 4.3 million children are severely food insecure. In Syria, over 5.3 million children are internally displaced or refugees outside its borders, and nearly 850,000 children continue to live in besieged or hard-to-reach areas.

The situation is equally worrying in South Sudan, where in addition to displaced and acutely malnourished children, some 19,000 children continue to be used as fighters, messengers, porters, cooks and even sex slaves by warring parties.



UNICEF/Nybo

A group of Rohingya refugee children gather at sunset on a bamboo bridge in Kutupalong refugee camp in southern Bangladesh. In all, over 400,000 Rohingya refugee children fled atrocities in Myanmar depend on humanitarian assistance; with the approaching monsoons, the risk of cholera and other waterborne diseases is higher than ever.

In the statement, Ms. Fore said that in these crises and many more, UNICEF and partners are “doing all they can” to alleviate the suffering of children and their families.

“Despite funding shortfalls we are resolutely committed to serving the most vulnerable. We are vaccinating children, treating them for malnutrition, sending them to school, providing them with protection services, and trying to meet their basic needs,” she said.

Only 16 per cent of UNICEF’s funding needs for 2018 has been received.

Brutal attack claims 11 children in Burundi

In a separate statement, UNICEF denounced an attack in north-west Burundi, which according to several reports, [deliberately targeted children](#).

The attack that took place in the Cibitoke province on 11 May, claimed the lives of 25 people, including 11 children and came ahead of polls this week in a referendum.

Leila Pakkala, the Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa at UNICEF, reiterated the need to protect children.

“Children need peace and protection, always [...] UNICEF calls on all parties to immediately ensure full respect of children’s right to safety, and their protection from violence,” she said.

[Key UN forum in Asia-Pacific sets its sights on combatting inequality](#)

With concern growing that the divide between rich and poor is continuing to widen – especially in the Asia-Pacific region – top United Nations officials are calling for greater emphasis on growth that leads to fairer societies and a healthier planet.

In a video message to the opening of the 74th session of the [Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific](#) (ESCAP), UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) highlighted the potential offered by the region.

“The [Asia-Pacific region is an engine of global growth](#), trade and investment and the creation of jobs all over the world,” he said, “but profound transformation is underway, driven by technological innovation and the challenge is to ensure that this transformation is for the better and takes everyone in the Asia-Pacific region with it,” he added.

“The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is our blueprint for success and the Asia-Pacific region can lead from the front.”

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– Secretary-General António Guterres

Also speaking at the opening, Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the UN General Assembly underscored that [addressing inequalities](#) is the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“Not only does inequality have a whole goal dedicated to it, but it is also a driving force behind the entire 2030 Agenda,” he said.

Convened under the overarching theme of “Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” the Commission meets against the backdrop of increased global uncertainty over the benefits of globalization and rising economic protectionism – coupled with concern over climate change.

An opportunity to be seized together

According to ESCAP, the UN development arm in the Asia-Pacific region, in spite of progress across the region in improving access to basic services – inequality remains a major impediment.

Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, said that overcoming the challenges would have a profound impact.

“[Collectively we have an opportunity](#) to shape policies to reduce inequality, exploit frontier technologies and strengthen multilateralism for the benefit of all citizens across Asia and the Pacific,” she said.

“That is an opportunity, which together, we should seize.”

On its part, ESCAP has been working with Member States to promote balanced growth; strengthen social protection; reduce vulnerability to environmental shocks, and close the so called “digital divide” she added.



ESCAP Photo

Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, speaks at the 74th session of the Commission, held in Bangkok in May 2018.

Cooperation vital for ambitious 2030 Agenda

President of the Marshall Islands, Hilda C. Heine, who was elected

chairperson of the 74th session of the Commission, underscored the [importance of multilateral cooperation](#) to translate the 2030 Agenda into success on the ground.

“As small island developing States we rely on our closest development partners, including ESCAP to support our efforts to translate the ambitious 2030 Agenda into tangible outcomes and actions, recognizing our unique challenges and vulnerabilities,” she said.

ESCAP is the largest of the UN regional commissions. Spanning a geographic area stretching from Russia to New Zealand and from Turkey to the tiny Pacific island of Kiribati, the region is home to almost two-thirds of the world’s population.

[Step up humanitarian support to 7.1 million people and invest in Sudan’s development: UN relief chief](#)

The United Nations humanitarian chief urged the international community to step up life-saving humanitarian support to 7.1 million vulnerable Sudanese on Monday, and invest more in the country’s social-economic development.

“Millions of people face serious and [growing humanitarian needs](#),” said UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock, at the end of a three-day visit to Sudan, stressing the importance of unimpeded, sustained humanitarian access.

“Many have suffered for the past 15 years, but we cannot let them slide back into a situation where they become completely dependent on humanitarian assistance,” he added, underlining the need to scale up longer-term development aid to help the country make itself more resilient.

During his mission, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs met Government officials, welcoming their efforts to improve humanitarian access to remote areas, including those controlled by non-State armed groups.

Mr. Lowcock also spoke with humanitarian partners and visited settlements for those internally-displaced in Murta and Kulba, in South Kordofan.

While unilateral ceasefires have improved security across Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile, recent skirmishes between armed groups in pockets of Darfur’s Jebel Marra region have caused a wave of internal displacement, said the relief chief.

“It is critical to strengthen social protection mechanisms for the most

vulnerable, including returnees, internally displaced people and host communities,” he said, highlighting his particular concern for the protection of women and children who are vulnerable to sexual violence.

Mr. Lowcock commended the Sudanese Government and people in hosting some 1.2 million refugees this year, including over 770,000 from war-torn South Sudan. Price increases mean that many cannot afford to buy food, while recent fuel shortages have impacted the ability of aid convoys to reach many in need.

He urged the international community to provide more support to the 2018 UN-coordinated Humanitarian Response Plan, which is appealing for \$1.4 billion. So far this year, donors have provided some \$229 million.

‘Much work to do and no time to waste’ in cybercrime fight, says UN chief

The UN body focussing on crime prevention and criminal justice, opened its annual session in Vienna on Monday, calling for a more integrated global response to continuing and emerging challenges, including cybercrime.

Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlighted the importance of cooperation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and countering the rising threat of crime online:

An international effort “to improve law enforcement capacities in all countries, to prevent and [counter cybercrime](#), are vitally necessary,” he said.

“I am proud to say that the Commission and UNODC have pursued effective and pragmatic partnerships to strengthen practical efforts in these areas,” he added, highlighting training for police officers, prosecutors and judges to “educate communities and protect people, most of all children,” he added.

United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), on his first official visit to Vienna leading the organization, also addressed the Commission.

“Cybercrime is an area in which there is much work to do and [no time to waste](#),” Mr. Guterres said.

“New technologies, including big data and analytics, artificial intelligence and automation, are ushering in a transformative era, sometimes called the fourth industrial revolution,” he added, explaining that despite the benefits such progress brings, it also enables new forms of crime.

“Cybercrime is estimated to generate some \$1.5 trillion in revenue per year. And as with most crime, it targets the most vulnerable,” he said, stressing

the need for a major collective effort to ensure that these technologies are used for everyone's benefit.

Over the coming days, the session will discuss resolutions addressing crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#); preventing and countering human trafficking; access to legal aid and restorative justice, among other challenges.