



PALESTINE COUNTRY REPORT

THE STATE OF THE
HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM 2026

A photograph showing a man in a black t-shirt and a brown cap pouring a thick, red soup from a large metal ladle into a large, shallow metal pot. Another man is partially visible on the left, also wearing a cap. The background is a simple, light-colored wall with some graffiti. The scene is set in a makeshift kitchen or food distribution center.

A distributing centre of hot meals to residents amidst the rubble of destroyed homes in the Al-Amal neighborhood of Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip.
[Anas-Mohammed/Shutterstock](#)

6. CONCLUSIONS AND LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 System-level findings

Gaza shows how humanitarian systems perform under extreme access constraints and politicisation, where neutrality is fundamentally challenged and local systems compensate for systemic collapse. These conditions are increasingly mirrored across protracted and highly politicised crises globally.

Access constraints and politicisation of aid

Humanitarian access is the primary determinant of system performance in Gaza, with administrative and military restrictions overriding needs-based delivery and directly shaping humanitarian outcomes, including famine conditions. Aid delivery is constrained and politicised, and assistance is instrumentalised at times to serve military and geopolitical objectives. This undermines neutrality. Collective resistance by humanitarian actors and communities has partially moderated this, preventing the normalisation of harmful or non-principled aid models.

System capacity, funding and structural constraints

Chronic underfunding structurally limits response coverage, forcing organisations to reduce caseloads, scale down assistance and delay interventions. This sustains the gap between planned and actual reach. Uneven delivery capacity across sectors and a systematic narrowing of the response towards immediate survival needs compound this, leaving critical protection and resilience services underprovided. As a result, the system operates through continuous rationing, embedding trade-offs and limiting its ability to meet the scale and diversity of needs.



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Coordination, power and system architecture

Operational-level coordination, particularly through clusters, is the most functional component of the system, enabling information-sharing, alignment and engagement with local actors. However, inconsistent participation and divergent targeting approaches cause duplication and exclusion. The functional division of roles increases interdependence across actors, so effective coordination is essential to address cross-sectoral needs.



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Localisation and the role of national actors

Local actors sustain delivery under access constraints and maintain a presence when international actors cannot. However, decision-making remains centralised, despite the indispensable role of local actors and their increased participation in coordination spaces. This reflects persistent power asymmetries in priority-setting and resource allocation. Funding structures and compliance requirements further constrain local leadership, positioning national actors primarily as implementers not decision-makers.

Adaptation through informal and private systems

Reliance on private-sector actors has emerged as a key system adaptation to bypass access restrictions and sustain supply chains. But this shifts aspects of the response outside formal humanitarian accountability frameworks, increasing risks of diversion, weak oversight and inconsistent adherence to protection and delivery standards.

Protection as a system failure

Protection has shifted from a delivered outcome to a systemic gap. Civilians navigate life-threatening conditions without reliable safeguards, and a humanitarian presence no longer guarantees safety. Displacement reproduces risk rather than mitigates it, exposing populations to continuous harm across the displacement cycle and reflecting the limits of the system under extreme conditions.

Structural exclusion

Targeting approaches systematically favour accessible populations and those physically able to reach aid. Women, older people, persons living with disability, children, host communities, those residing outside formal shelters and even aid workers are disadvantaged. Administrative barriers, including loss of documentation and fragmented



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beneficiary systems, contribute to gaps in coverage and perceptions of inequity.

Quality, appropriateness and dignity of assistance

The quality of assistance is constrained by supply limitations and weak contextual adaptation, resulting in repetitive and often unsuitable aid. Programmes have also failed to adjust to prolonged and repeated displacement, reducing their relevance over time. Dignity is consistently undermined across delivery processes and living conditions, while overcrowding, unsafe environments and chaotic distributions shape how aid is accessed.

Social outcomes and system legitimacy

Scarcity and uneven distribution of aid have eroded social cohesion by increasing competition and tensions between communities. Simultaneously, weak transparency in targeting and perceived inequities have undermined trust in humanitarian actors. This sentiment has been reinforced by reports of diversion and favouritism.

Community systems core to humanitarian function

Community self-organisation functions as a de facto extension of the humanitarian system, sustaining delivery and governance under extreme constraints. This means local coordination capacity directly shapes aid effectiveness and distribution patterns. Assistance flows are influenced not only by need, therefore, but also by operational feasibility, favouring more organised and accessible communities. Marginalised or less organised groups thus face exclusion.

6.2 Learning considerations

The findings of this research highlight particular learning considerations around structural constraints, coordination and localisation dynamics, and the safeguarding of dignity and protection.

Addressing access constraints

For the international community and humanitarian advocacy actors

- Recognise the importance of advocacy for civilian protection, compliance with international humanitarian law, humanitarian principles and safe humanitarian access.
- Support efforts to secure predictable and sustained access for humanitarian goods and personnel.
- Advocate for narrowing restrictions and clarity on so-called 'dual-use' items (Gisha, n.d.; Gisha, 2026) to allow the entry of materials essential for shelter, WASH and health interventions.

For humanitarian response actors

- Design assistance modalities that are durable, culturally appropriate and adaptable to repeated displacement and fluctuating access conditions.

STRENGTHENING COORDINATION AND SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS**For humanitarian coordination structures**

- Strengthen coordination mechanisms to improve information-sharing and harmonisation across actors.
- Invest in unified and secure beneficiary databases and strengthen deduplication systems to reduce overlap and improve equitable targeting.
- Ensure targeting frameworks are flexible and responsive to evolving vulnerabilities and displacement patterns.

For humanitarian response actors

- Strengthen outreach approaches to reach populations in informal or unstructured displacement sites.
- Improve frontline monitoring and feedback mechanisms to identify coverage gaps and exclusion risks.

ADVANCING LOCALISATION**For donors**

- Increase direct and flexible funding to Palestinian and national humanitarian actors.
- Support longer-term partnership models that strengthen institutional sustainability and local leadership.

For international humanitarian organisations

- Expand the role of Palestinian actors within coordination and decision-making structures.
- Invest in equitable partnerships that recognise the operational leadership and contextual expertise of national actors.
- Strengthen capacity-sharing approaches beyond short-term subcontracting arrangements.

For humanitarian coordination structures

- Ensure local actors are meaningfully represented in coordination forums and strategic planning processes.

SAFEGUARDING PROTECTION, DIGNITY AND HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

For humanitarian response actors

- Reject militarised aid delivery modalities that expose civilians to harm or undermine humanitarian trust and neutrality.
- Systematically embed dignity and protection considerations into programme design and delivery.
- Ensure shelter and assistance interventions align with cultural norms around privacy, safety and living conditions.
- Scale staggered distributions, gender-sensitive services and direct support to vulnerable households.
- Strengthen frontline monitoring and standardise referral pathways for protection concerns.
- Improve documentation and follow-up systems related to protection risks and vulnerable cases.

For humanitarian response actors engaging private-sector actors

- Ensure private-sector partners adhere to humanitarian protection and accountability standards through appropriate training, monitoring and oversight mechanisms.

