



Fact Sheet:

The Reality of People with Cerebral Palsy in the Gaza Strip Amid Genocidal War and Famine. Urgent Needs and Grave Challenges

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Introduction:

Since October 7, 2023, the Gaza Strip has been under continuous Israeli hostility, the most intense and devastating in its history. This assault has involved the systematic destruction of all aspects of life in the Strip, including hospitals and health clinics, institutions serving persons with disabilities, and schools. As of July 27, 2025, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reports 59,733 martyrs and over 144,477 injured.

Prior to October 2023, the number of persons with disabilities in the State of Palestine was estimated at approximately 115,000, with around 58,000 individuals (2.6% of the population) residing in the Gaza Strip. However, this percentage has significantly increased due to the ongoing aggression. Preliminary statistics indicate that around 25% of the total injuries have resulted in disabilities requiring rehabilitation services. This means that the Gaza Strip is now home to more than 90,000 persons with disabilities.

People with cerebral palsy in the Gaza Strip represent one of the most vulnerable groups, requiring continuous care, especially amid the worsening humanitarian conditions resulting from the ongoing Israeli aggression since October 2023.

Cerebral palsy is defined as a group of permanent neurological disorders caused by damage to the developing brain, most often before birth. This damage leads to difficulties in movement, posture, and coordination. Symptoms can range from barely noticeable motor impairments to severe physical disabilities, such as joint stiffness or complete paralysis of one or more limbs.

Cerebral palsy is often accompanied by additional challenges, including cognitive impairment, difficulties with vision, hearing, or swallowing, behavioural problems, and seizure disorders. Affected individuals may also exhibit abnormal body postures, involuntary movements, unsteady walking patterns, or a combination of these symptoms.

Although cerebral palsy is a non-progressive condition, it is chronic and lifelong. It requires continuous medical and rehabilitative interventions, physical therapy programs, and sustained social support to ensure that individuals with the condition maintain stable health, dignity, and quality of life.

This fact sheet aims to shed light on the reality of people with cerebral palsy in the Gaza Strip and to highlight the grave challenges they face under the ongoing Israeli aggression.

The Situation of Persons with Cerebral Palsy in Gaza:

1- Statistics on Cerebral Palsy in the Gaza Strip:

There are no precise official statistics on the number of people with cerebral palsy in the Gaza Strip. According to the 2017 population census, individuals with cerebral palsy made up approximately 17.8% of those with motor disabilities, which in turn account for 43% of all types of disabilities in Gaza. Medical studies have confirmed that the incidence rate of cerebral palsy is around 2 per 1,000 live births. Based on this, the number of individuals with cerebral palsy was estimated at approximately 6,500 before the current aggression. Given the severity of injuries caused by the ongoing conflict, it is likely that this number has risen significantly.

2- Essential Services Required by People with Cerebral Palsy in the Gaza Strip:

People with cerebral palsy require a comprehensive range of health, educational, and social services, including but not limited to:

- Special therapeutic foods that are easy to swallow, including medical milk and designated nutritional supplements.
- Medications to manage muscle spasticity and seizures, in addition to essential vitamins and strengthening supplements.
- Special education based on individualized plans that consider each person's cognitive and motor abilities, with the goal of eventual integration into mainstream schools.
- Physical therapy to improve motor abilities and maintain joint and muscle function.
- Occupational therapy to help develop cognitive, sensory, and motor skills that promote independence and participation.
- Speech and language therapy, as studies indicate that around 70% of people with cerebral palsy suffer from communication and language difficulties.
- Vocational rehabilitation for those over 14 years of age who have the functional capacity to acquire vocational skills.
- Psychosocial support to alleviate trauma and improve the quality of life for individuals and their families.
- Regular medical and nursing care.

- Basic supplies, such as diapers and assistive devices.

3- Escalating Challenges Amid the Genocidal War

With the ongoing Israeli hostility and the tightened siege on the Gaza Strip, the suffering of individuals with cerebral palsy has intensified, and the following challenges have emerged:

- **Deprivation of Healthcare and Rehabilitation:**

The near-total collapse of the healthcare sector has led to the suspension of physical and occupational therapy sessions and the unavailability of essential medications. This has resulted in serious health regressions that pose a direct threat to the lives of people with cerebral palsy in Gaza. Notably, this situation has caused several unrecorded deaths due to lack of access to food and medicine, especially amid repeated displacement and prolonged power outages.

- **Forcible displacement Difficulties:**

People with cerebral palsy have physical disabilities, and most also suffer from intellectual impairments. They require specialized wheelchairs and assistive mobility devices. These needs significantly exacerbate their hardship, especially when forcible displacement orders are issued suddenly and without warning. Many cannot leave their locations in time due to a lack of accessible transportation or because no prior alerts are communicated in formats suitable for their cognitive capacities. Additionally, they face considerable challenges in understanding rapidly evolving situations, making them more vulnerable to injury and direct targeting. Even when evacuation is possible, many end up in shelters or displacement centers that are unsuitable for their health and mobility needs, further compounding their suffering and exposing them to additional risks.

- **People with Cerebral Palsy Amid Famine**

Since early March 2025, the Israeli occupation has imposed a total blockade on the Gaza Strip, closing all border crossings and preventing the entry of humanitarian aid, including food and medicine, as part of a systematic starvation policy that amounts to collective punishment.

This blockade has led to widespread famine, according to the latest analysis by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in May 2025. The IPC classified Gaza at Phase 4 (Emergency) of food insecurity, with approximately 22% of the population, around 470,000 people, facing IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe/Famine), the highest internationally recognized level of food insecurity.

As of July 20, 2025, The Palestinian Ministry of Health has reported 620 hunger-related deaths since the beginning of the war, including 80 children. An additional 70 famine-related deaths were recorded since June alone, reflecting an alarming acceleration in the use of famine as a deadly weapon against civilians, particularly those with severe disabilities.

The suffering of people with cerebral palsy in Gaza is further exacerbated by the escalating famine and the complete collapse of food and medical supply chains. People with cerebral palsy, especially children, depends on a specialized diet that includes high-calorie, easy-to-swallow

therapeutic products such as medical milk, nutritional supplements, and medically prepared pureed foods, all of which are now completely unavailable in both markets and health facilities due to the blockade.

The disruption of **enteral feeding** due to the lack of essential supplies, including sterile solutions, feeding tubes, and medical-grade nutrients, has exposed patients to life-threatening complications, most notably: severe dehydration, extreme wasting, choking during swallowing, and gastrointestinal bleeding.

In addition to the direct threat of starvation, individuals with cerebral palsy are suffering from a combination of critical challenges, including:

- **Lack of essential medications** such as antispastic and anticonvulsant drugs, vitamins, and nutritional supplements. Interruptions in treatment lead to rapid physical and health deterioration, exposing them to serious setbacks.
- **Deprivation of appropriate nutrition**, as most individuals require specialized therapeutic milk or soft, pureed foods tailored to their condition. The lack of such foods has forced caregivers to rely, when available, on canned foods, which contribute to malnutrition and weakened immunity, posing a serious threat to their lives.
- **The ban on importing diapers**, which are essential for individuals with incontinence. The complete unavailability of diapers in the market has forced caregivers to use unsuitable alternatives, resulting in skin diseases and additional suffering.
- **Psychological and Social Challenges:**

The severity of the bombings, intense explosions, and frequent scenes of casualties and loss of loved ones have exacerbated the psychological suffering of people with cerebral palsy, which also impacts their families and caregivers. They live in a constant state of tension, fear, and anxiety, worsening their health condition and making their ability to cope with displacement more difficult. In this context, there is an urgent need for psychological support services, which they largely lack, to ensure their mental well-being and preserve their dignity amid this humanitarian catastrophe.

Additionally, individuals with cerebral palsy face increasing social isolation due to the interruption of educational and rehabilitative services and the loss of daily routines essential for their psychological and behavioural stability. This situation not only affects them but also impacts their families and caregivers, who feel further marginalized and receive little community support during crises.

- **Severe Economic Crises:**
Many families of people with cerebral palsy have lost their sources of income due to the war and are no longer able to provide basic necessities such as food, medicine, diapers, and clothing.

Recommendations

The current situation, with its severe health, social, and economic crises, poses a grave threat to the lives and human dignity of people with cerebral palsy. The widespread deprivation of their basic needs under the ongoing aggression necessitates comprehensive humanitarian interventions to ensure their protection and care. Accordingly, we call for the following:

1. **Take all necessary measures to protect persons with disabilities, including those with cerebral palsy**, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including holding the occupying forces accountable for war crimes such as genocide and collective punishment through starvation and obstruction of aid.
2. **Ensure the urgent and regular provision of medicines, medical supplies, appropriate food, including diapers, assistive devices and other essentials**, through support for international organizations.
3. **Provide sanitary pads for girls with cerebral palsy.**
4. **Provide sexual and reproductive health services for girls with cerebral palsy**, especially given the severe shortages of water and hygiene supplies.
5. **Assign trained medical teams to monitor cerebral palsy cases during conflicts and provide uninterrupted physical therapy and rehabilitation services.**
6. **Enhance psychosocial support for people with cerebral palsy and their families** through specialized centers capable of addressing the war's impact and trauma.
7. **Establish an accurate database to locate persons with cerebral palsy and assess their needs**, enabling faster and more effective responses.
8. **Develop emergency plans that consider the needs of this group**, and establish suitable shelters that accommodate the requirements of persons with disabilities in general and those with cerebral palsy in particular.
9. **Raise community awareness about the importance of supporting people with cerebral palsy and their families during crises**, and provide appropriate assistance.
10. **Ensure that their specific needs are considered when distributing food and health aid**, guaranteeing access to packages adapted to their conditions.
11. **Provide emergency cash assistance to families caring for persons with cerebral palsy who have lost their income due to the conflict.**
12. **Support service providers from local associations and institutions caring for people with cerebral palsy**, enabling them to continue their services and provide alternative facilities when needed.

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