

# Statement from women humanitarians in Gaza

## WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY

### 19 August 2024



Over ten months into the devastating war on Gaza, women humanitarians continue to work relentlessly in conditions that defy the risk and destruction. Over 40,000 Palestinians have been killed, 70 percent of whom are women and children, and over 29,000 severely injured, with countless others still missing. Tragically, many of our courageous humanitarian colleagues have been lost, paying the ultimate price for their dedication to saving lives.

Each of us has been forcibly displaced, often multiple times, and has lost loved ones. We are all internally displaced persons or refugees, living in fear for our children and seeking strength to support others. Every day, we continue our work, deeply feeling the pain of those we help, especially women and children in Gaza.

We wake to the sound of bombs and nearly constant evacuation orders, sometimes multiple in a single day. We seek refuge for our children in the so-called 'safe zones' even though there is no safe place in Gaza. We strive to help vulnerable women and girls while being left only with our good intentions. Those of us with disabilities, pregnant women, and new mothers endure unimaginable pain and fear. Privacy is nonexistent, and our dignity is gone. Overcrowding threatens everyone's safety and wellbeing, and conditions are suffocating, exhausting our ability to support those who, like us, have lost everything.

*"I once thought cancer was the hardest battle, but war is far worse. It doesn't just threaten lives—it wipes out entire communities and erases hope. On World Humanitarian Day, let's stand with those caught in conflict, as their struggle goes beyond survival to reclaiming dignity and peace."*

– Eman Shannan, cancer survivor and aid worker in Gaza

*"The heart is fatigued, the will is broken, and the soul no more desires anything."*

– GBV Sub-Cluster member, after being displaced with her children and sick husband for the seventh time

### On this World Humanitarian Day:

- 1) We call for the recognition of the critical lack of safe operational space for women humanitarians, including those in health, protection, education, WASH, and other sectors, who are working tirelessly to protect women, girls, boys, and men from violence and to ensure dignified access to basic needs. Without a safe humanitarian space for women aid workers in Gaza, the risks of violence including gender-based violence, would become immeasurable, causing intergenerational harm.
- 2) We urge support for local NGOs and women-led and women rights' organizations, which are crucial in protecting women and girls from violence and responding to community needs in a gender responsive way.
- 3) We call for concrete action, to open all available humanitarian corridors, allowing us to meet the basic needs of Gaza's population.
- 4) We demand adherence to international humanitarian law and protection of civilians and local humanitarians in Gaza. We demand protection for our children, ensuring a healthy childhood free from diseases re-emerging due to unsafe conditions in Gaza.
- 5) We urgently advocate for an end to the war and a commitment to dialogue and peacebuilding.

On this World Humanitarian Day, we implore the global community to hear our plea, the plea of every mother, daughter, and sister to protect the lives of the most vulnerable and prevent further loss in our beloved Gaza.

Every month, women and girls in Gaza need 20 trucks of over 10 million disposable menstrual pads. The ongoing man-made challenges in delivering critical humanitarian aid, including menstrual management items and dignity kits, severely hinder our ability to meet their urgent needs. The lack of timely access to these essentials is a grave violation of their dignity and wellbeing, exposing them to risks of violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse, and preventable infections.

Opening of humanitarian corridors and protecting women humanitarian workers, including those in health and protection roles, is crucial for providing lifesaving care to women, adolescents, and children, including pregnant women, lactating mothers, and newborns. Ensuring timely access to these supplies and a safe space for delivery is essential for preserving their dignity and addressing their needs.

For more information, please feel free to contact Azra Sehic, GBV AoR Coordinator in Gaza at [sehic@unfpa.org](mailto:sehic@unfpa.org)

For more information related to the challenges women-led and women rights' organizations in Gaza are facing, please refer to the Advocacy Note available here:

[Women's rights organisations \(WRO\) and women-led organisations \(WLO\) Centrality to the GBV Response in Gaza](#)

