

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS – GAZA

Juzoor for Health and Social Development

On October 1st, the world marks the International Day of Older Persons. In Gaza, however, growing old has become a struggle for survival. Juzoor for Health and Social Development stands with the elderly who continue to endure unimaginable hardship amidst war and displacement.

“Gaza is home to approximately 107,000 people aged 60 and above – about 5% of the population. Nearly all live with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease, and more than 86% experience disabilities that limit daily life. For them, access to healthcare and medication is not a luxury – it is a lifeline.”



Installation of assistive devices by the Juzoor team



Provision of psychological support for older adults



Provision of one-on-one psychological support for older adults

The war has compounded their suffering in ways that are difficult to measure. Hospitals and clinics have been destroyed or rendered inoperable, leaving thousands of older persons without access to essential treatment or even basic medicines. Mobility aids and medical equipment are scarce, while the long journeys required to reach functioning facilities are often impossible for those with limited physical capacity. At the same time, food insecurity has reached critical levels, and reports indicate that more than 1,200 older people have died in recent months from starvation, dehydration, or untreated health complications.

Displacement has further deepened their vulnerability. Many elderly people have been uprooted from their homes, forced into overcrowded shelters or fragile tents. For those who cannot move easily, displacement is not an option, leaving them trapped in unsafe neighborhoods under bombardment. Beyond the physical hardships, the psychological toll is profound: repeated uprooting, loss of loved ones, and destruction of lifelong homes have left many older persons in despair, struggling with isolation and a deep sense of abandonment.

Through the voices of Gaza's elderly, their suffering becomes unmistakably real.

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Abu Ahmed Said (Displaced from Shati Camp to Khan Younis)

A man living with chronic illnesses struggles to survive without medication or clean water.

Shelter and Living Conditions

We live in a single tent shared by my family. The ground is uneven and floods when it rains or when wastewater flows nearby. We have very limited privacy. The tent does not protect us from heat or cold, we have few blankets, no proper mattresses, and bombings at night make it hard to sleep.

Water and Hygiene

Safe drinking water is our biggest daily struggle. Sometimes we collect small amounts from distribution points or neighbors, but it is not enough, and we worry it is unsafe. Fuel or electricity is not always available to boil water. To save water, we reduce tea, washing, and hand-washing, increasing the risk of illness. Bathing is difficult, and latrines are far and hard to reach, especially for someone with limited mobility.

Health Needs

I have chronic health conditions requiring daily medicines. Since displacement, I have not had a regular supply. Clinics are crowded, supplies are limited, and traveling is difficult. My wheelchair was damaged and no longer functions well, severely limiting my movement. I also have hearing loss and need hearing aids, but I have not been able to access them or get a proper assessment. This makes communication during distributions or clinic visits very difficult.

Food and Nutrition

Food is scarce and expensive in Khan Younis. We sometimes skip meals or eat less so children can have more. Bread distributions are difficult to access due to long lines and my limited mobility.

I urgently need:

- Safe drinking water
- Regular medicines for my chronic conditions
- Repair or replacement of my wheelchair
- Hearing aids and an assessment of my hearing
- Food assistance
- Bedding and basic hygiene items

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Abdul Aziz Abu al-Qurayya

At eighty years old, Abdul Aziz relives the pain of displacement he first experienced as a child during the Nakba, now forced once again to flee his home under bombardment.

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Repeated Displacement

Over the decades, Abdul Aziz endured repeated displacements. Yet nothing compared to the cruelty of the last exodus in 2025, when he was already eighty years old.

The 2025 Exodus

At dawn on September 10, 2025, as Israeli tanks closed in on the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood of Gaza, his family realized they could no longer stay. They gathered what they could, only to find that all buses and trucks had been seized or were charging impossible prices. With shelling growing louder, the family abandoned everything—furniture, clothing, memories—and set out on foot, carrying nothing but fear and exhaustion.

For Abdul Aziz, frail with chronic illness and nearly blind, the escape was unbearable. He stumbled forward under the merciless September sun, walking over twelve hours without enough food or water. Each step tormented his weakened body, and the shame of feeling like a burden to his family weighed heavily, even as they struggled with hunger and fatigue themselves.

Conditions in Khan Younis

When they reached the Mawasi area of Khan Younis, they found only a torn tent, already sheltering three other families. The ground was damp and rough, the air thick with insects and rats. There was no clean drinking water, only salty, contaminated supplies. His medicines for blood pressure and diabetes were gone, impossible to replace. No mobility aids, no medical care—just an old man forced to sleep on bare earth, his body aching and dignity stripped away.

Abdul Aziz's Words

With a trembling voice, he said:

"I lived the first displacement as a child too young to understand why we left. But today, I know all too well what it means for an old man to be torn from his home, to search for water he cannot find, to long for medicine that will never come, to sleep on the ground and wish only to die in dignity."

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Hajj Mansour Abu 'Ouda and Hajja Safiya

An elderly couple with no children to care for them, Hajj Mansour and Hajja Safiya embody the resilience and heartbreak of Gaza's older generation, enduring war, illness, and repeated displacement together.

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First Displacement

When bombardment intensified, they fled their destroyed home and took shelter in Al-Tabeen School in Gaza City. The school, already overcrowded with displaced families, had been hit by airstrikes multiple times. Conditions were unbearable: no privacy, no clean water, no steady food, and no medicines.

Health Crisis

Under these suffocating conditions, Mansour watched helplessly as his wife collapsed from a stroke inside the classroom-turned-shelter. She became unable to walk and required a toilet chair and an air mattress to manage the pain. Juzoor, through its projects, provided these essential items, alleviating only a fraction of their suffering.

Second Displacement

Continuous bombardment forced the couple to flee again, this time to the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood. They stayed barely a week before tanks entered the area. Mansour, frail himself, faced an impossible dilemma: how to carry his paralyzed wife through fire, smoke, and bullets.

Community Support and Current Situation

In that moment of despair, neighbors reached out and helped lift the couple, beginning another journey of flight. After hours of chaos, Mansour and Safiya reached an informal camp in Al-Zawaida, where a small prayer room inside the camp was opened to them as a temporary shelter. That cramped, improvised space — not meant for living — became their home.

Life Today

Today, Mansour sits beside Safiya on the cold floor of the prayer room. Around them, other elderly people in Gaza struggle to find safe drinking water, wait for medicines that never arrive, and live without mobility aids or proper care. These are people who should be spending their last years in dignity, yet they sleep on concrete, praying for survival.

Mansour's Words

With a hoarse voice, Mansour whispers, looking at his wife:

"We have no house and no child. Only she and I remain. All I wish is not to die a stranger to my home, and that she may find the comfort she has been denied."

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The stories of Abdul Aziz Abu al-Qurayya, Hajj Mansour Abu 'Ouda and Hajja Safiya, and Abu Ahmed Said are not their own alone. They reflect the reality of thousands of elderly people in Gaza today—men and women forced to flee repeatedly, living in tents or makeshift shelters without clean water, essential medicines, mobility aids, or basic dignity. Once dreaming of spending their final years in peace, they now face hunger, thirst, illness, and humiliation, paying the heaviest price in a war that has stolen even their right to grow old safely.

The situation of Gaza's elderly is a stark reminder that humanitarian crises do not affect all populations equally. While the world's attention is often drawn to children and young families, older persons in Gaza continue to pay a heavy, silent price. On this International Day of Older Persons, Juzoor calls upon the international community to ensure that the rights and dignity of older people are protected. Unhindered access to food, medicine, and health services must be guaranteed, safe corridors must be established, and mobile health teams must be deployed to reach those who cannot reach care.



Provision of psychological support for older adults

Older persons in Gaza embody resilience and wisdom, but today they live under unbearable conditions. Their voices must not be silenced, and their needs must not be forgotten. Juzoor reaffirms its commitment to advocate for their wellbeing and calls for urgent international action to save lives and restore hope.