

PROMEDHE Country Profile: Civil Protection and Cultural Heritage Safeguard in Emergency

PALESTINE



Civil Protection in Palestine

The Higher Council of Civil Defence (HCCD) is the main Palestinian decision making body on disaster risk management. It gathers representatives of governmental institutions, of civil society organizations and of private sector bodies, as well as local organizations working in the field of protecting lives and providing humanitarian services to the community, in particular the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS). HCCD was established in 1998, based on Civil Defence Law No.3 and following a decision by the Board of Ministers. HCCD is chaired by the Minister of Interior and the Director General of Palestinian Civil Defence. The Minister of Interior has the power to decide any necessary measures and actions benefiting civil defence and it is the higher authority and responsible body for coordinating all the other ministries involved, including security forces, transport, water, electricity, oil and food.

The duties and responsibilities of HCCD are laid out by the Civil Defence Law and include the following:

- Developing emergency plans specifying roles and responsibilities of private and public parties involved in disaster management.
- Establishing standard operational procedures for managing operation rooms and implementing disaster management tasks at national, local and provincial level.
- Training civilians in methods of first aid, evacuation and civil defence matters.
- Taking responsibility for the disaster management cycle. The HCCD is in charge of taking decisions on: disaster prevention; disaster preparedness; coordination of emergency response; organization of mass evacuation in case of major events at both municipal and national level. Its decisions are mostly implemented by Palestinian Civil Defence.
- Coordinating tourist assistance in case of mass evacuation (collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism, the Police and Palestinian Civil Defence).

The General Directorate of Palestinian Civil Defence acts as Technical Secretariat of HCCD and is in charge of implementing disaster management decisions, namely:

- Protection of human life and public and private property.
- Early-warning measures against any possible disaster.
- Supervising the cooperation between different governmental and non-governmental organizations in all areas of the country. Establishing civilian volunteer groups for CD staff support in remote areas where they provide the first response until the arrival of PCD resources.
- Establishing the main operations room for civil defence.
- Storage of all equipment and tools required for civil defence including shelters.
- Providing all human resources and equipment for emergency rescue and assisting victims; evacuating casualties to safe areas; fire-fighting; and removing damaged vehicles and opening closed roads.
- Utilizing all available tools, vehicles and other equipment.

Cultural Heritage

Over 7000 cultural heritage sites exist in Palestine, however available information and documentation on such sites is scarce. Among the actors involved in cultural heritage safeguarding are: Palestinian Civil Defence (PCD), Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Civil Protection Volunteers and other bodies of the Ministry of Interiors.

No contingency plans exist for protecting cultural heritage sites and artworks during emergencies. The Antiquities law n.51/1966 is a national legislation that regulates cultural heritage safeguarding and protection through the different phases of the disaster management cycle.

HCCD is the responsible institution for cultural heritage protection and safeguard during disaster events. In case of disaster, cultural heritage safeguarding activities are undertaken by PCD staff in coordination with specialized engineers and scientists from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and other Ministries. Related shared interinstitutional procedures for safeguarding cultural heritage (e.g. SOPs) are also defined under HCCD by PCD and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

In the prevention phase the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities *identifies* the sites at risk of damage in case of disastrous event, through a pool of technical experts, who come from the Restoration General Department, the Exploration Department, as well as engineers specialized in restoration, construction and design.

In the preparedness phase, PCD and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities prepare emergency plans for protecting cultural heritage through data collection.

Palestinian Civil Defence currently counts on nearly 4000 trained volunteers involved in its operations and in future national interventions regarding cultural heritage protection.

Palestinian Civil Defence currently counts on nearly 4000 trained volunteers involved in its operations and in future national interventions regarding cultural heritage protection.