

## Hostile environment awareness training for emergency aid in Gaza, november 8-11, 2024

CADUS e.V. has been working in the field of emergency medical aid and emergency care since 2014, with a focus on war and crisis areas. The organization has been on site in the Gaza Strip since February 6, 2024 to provide emergency medical aid to the civilian population affected by the conflict as an Emergency Medical Team (EMT) under the coordination of the WHO. To prepare the teams for the challenging and dangerous environment in which they will work, they take part in Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT). The last one was realized in Berlin between November 8th and 11th, 2024 with the support of the Care for Future Foundation.



For six months now, our medical teams in Gaza have been working daily under the most difficult conditions in hospital emergency rooms, trauma stabilization points and medical evacuations from the north to the south of the Gaza Strip. The environment in which the teams work involves various risks, some of which can be reduced if people are well prepared for operations in war zones. Drawing on 10 years of operational experience and a wide range of professional resources, CADUS has developed training courses that are specifically designed for our operational personnel.

A total of 14 participants took part from November 8th to 11th, 2024. From the moment the participants enter the CADUS office, after a short theoretical introduction, they are engaged in a four-day, 24-hour scenario training. This means that the participants are in a simulated operation in a fictional setting and, over time, encounter various scenarios that could also occur to them when

deployed in war zones. These are repeatedly replaced by theoretical inputs and exercises before the simulation continues.

It is primarily about learning routines and instruments in order to be able to work in operations and to be able to assess situations as precisely as possible. The content of the training ranged between the implementation and organization of security routines and analyzes in highly volatile areas, the use of medical and non-medical equipment, and dealing with different team constellations and dynamics. Accordingly, there were, for example, exercises for setting up an operations center and accommodation in a war zone, passing checkpoints, rescuing injured people, mine and weapons knowledge, safety and security assessments as well as IFAK training sessions (IFAK: Individual First Aid Kit ).

After the four days, the training ended with detailed feedback and a reflection session, which enabled the participants to reflect on their own behavior and reactions in stressful and threatening situations, as well as within the group about team dynamics and the group's behavior under tension speak. Finally, there was of course also space to give feedback to the seven trainers who implemented the training and the 15 volunteers who brought the scenarios to life.



Feedback from participants

*"I really liked the approach of showing strengths and especially room for improvement instead of focussing on mistakes solely. There was really good eye to eye interaction between the crew and the trainers and lots of knowledge about the various topics, thank you!"*

*"I was surprised by how "real" the simulation felt. I thought the trainers were very good at explaining things without pretending to have all the answers and without giving us the illusion that this training would actually prepare us to everything. Particularly Ruben was really good at acting out various people in the scenario, you could see he was having fun with it!"*