



Gaza: The Weaponisation of Food

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SYNOPSIS

Gaza faces a famine due to multiple factors: the convergence of conflict-driven hunger, the collapse of the agrifood system, soaring food prices, and the dangers faced in accessing aid. Given the already devastating humanitarian impact of war in Gaza, unless safe corridors for humanitarian aid are established, the food crisis risks spiralling into a famine and turning food into a weapon of war.

COMMENTARY

The war in Gaza has created a food crisis. According to the latest [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\) report](#), Gaza is now facing famine. This catastrophe is mainly due to the blockade that Israel imposed on the Gaza Strip from 2 March to 19 May 2025, which obstructed the delivery of humanitarian aid, including food and medical supplies, to the inhabitants.

Humanitarian Aid and Access Under Siege

Almost the entire population of Gaza requires [humanitarian aid](#), emphasising how relief efforts and food access in Gaza have become perilous and dire. [Food is especially critical](#) as deliveries fall short of the minimum tonnage required each month. The [Israeli authorities' underestimation of minimum nutritional needs](#) compounds this, as they are far below international standards. Community kitchens have also been unable to keep up with the previous production of one million meals a day before the blockade, with only 259,000 meals produced daily – [a 74 per cent](#) reduction.

Aid convoys organised by UN agencies and NGOs face [strict and slow approvals](#), besides being exposed to Israeli attacks and [looting](#) by hungry Palestinians. Humanitarian workers have not been spared either, with [514 of them killed since](#)

[October 2023](#), undermining already fragile operations. Altogether, these conditions deepen the food crisis in Gaza.

Accessing food itself has become hazardous. A UN report indicated at least 1,373 Palestinians killed while trying to obtain aid, including 859 killed near sites established by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) and 514 along convoy routes. Thousands more have been injured after being shot at these sites. Besides these, 23 have been killed and 124 wounded by airdrops of aid since the war broke out.

A Man-made Famine

Some observers have suggested that Israel's current actions may be tantamount to using starvation as a weapon of war, which flouts the [United Nations Security Council resolution 2417 \(2018\)](#) condemning the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access to civilian populations.

The food crisis in Gaza is a man-made famine worsening by the day within a broader humanitarian crisis. It will continue to escalate unless immediate measures are taken to provide for secure and unhindered corridors for food and assistance to get to the Palestinians.

Understanding Hunger and Malnutrition

The mounting malnutrition-related deaths among the Palestinians underscore the gravity of the situation. Since October 2023, [313 people](#), including 119 children, have died from malnutrition. By June 2026, an estimated 132,000 children and 55,500 pregnant and breastfeeding women are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition. Food deprivation and stress have contributed significantly to the [observed weight](#) loss in the population, as trauma and stress caused by incessant attacks can [disrupt normal eating behaviours](#).

Prolonged hunger and malnutrition have severe effects on the human body, especially for children who need nutrients for healthy growth and development. Malnutrition leads to wasting and stunting, which can impair the child's physical and cognitive development. For adults, prolonged malnutrition weakens the immune system, which increases disease susceptibility and hastens mortality among those already sick or injured.

With the health system in Gaza on the [brink of collapse](#), the absence of treatment options for the sick, coupled with the lack of clean water and sanitation, has further exacerbated the food crisis into a concurrent health crisis. The recent Israeli decision to [expand military operations in Gaza](#) risks plunging the civilian population into a "humanitarian freefall". Israeli forces [have taken steps](#) in this direction, having taken over the outskirts of Gaza City.

Collapse of Agrifood Systems and Soaring Food Prices

Beyond the issue of humanitarian access, the war has also caused extensive destruction to agricultural land and the collapse of Gaza's agrifood system. The latest

geospatial assessment conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) revealed that only [1.5 per cent of cropland area](#) in the Gaza Strip remains available for cultivation.

The incessant bombardment and ground operations by the IDF have severely crippled or destroyed agricultural and food production infrastructure, such as mills, food processing sites and bakeries. According to the FAO, the reconstruction of Gaza's food system will be highly costly and will take [years, if not decades](#).

Before the war, agriculture accounted for [roughly 10 per cent of Gaza's economy](#), with over 560,000 people relying solely or partially on farming, livestock, or fishing for their income. The current [ban on fishing](#) has therefore undermined one of Gaza's key food sources, further straining local food availability.

Food scarcity and the disruption to livelihoods have led to [soaring food prices](#). A kilogram of rice, which cost US\$3 in February, now reportedly sells for US\$10, while cucumbers are seven times more expensive. Baby formula has quadrupled in price, and the cost of a can of peas has increased by 1,000 per cent. Certain food items, like chicken and fruit, are no longer available at all. When both the physical availability of food and the economic means to secure it are eroded, the only primary lifeline remaining is humanitarian assistance.

Conclusion

When humanitarian aid cannot be safely delivered, transported, or distributed, food insecurity spikes and the risk of famine looms. The difficulty of accessing food and the lethal incidents encountered while seeking food show that the food crisis in Gaza is not just driven by the scarcity of supply but also by the systematic obstruction of safe delivery and access, which has turned starvation into a weapon of war.

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