

Systematic Starvation in Gaza: The Numbers Scream



In recent days, you may have come across harrowing images of Gazan children whose features have faded to the point where they resemble shadows—skin stretched thin over bone—or videos of men and women collapsing in the streets, their bodies having gone days without a single bite of food.

Perhaps you've also seen scenes of long lines outside the few remaining soup kitchens, where children push and shove for a spoonful of rice or a sip of broth—anything to keep them alive for another day. The tragic irony is that these scenes are not isolated moments of suffering; they are the daily reality of a people being systematically denied their most basic right to food—while the world watches in silence.

Behind each of these silent images are numbers that scream, revealing the scale of the crime being committed by the Israeli occupation in Gaza. What was once a densely populated coastal enclave of two million people has become the epicenter of the most extreme famine of the century.

This report aims to tell the story of Gaza's famine through hard facts and figures, highlighting international responses—or the lack thereof—and exploring whether there is still time to avert a mass-death catastrophe looming over Palestinians in the besieged Strip.

Hunger Is a Daily Threat in Gaza

Famine is no longer a looming threat—it is now a daily reality for Gaza's residents, who are powerless to stop it. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), some 470,000 people in Gaza are enduring “catastrophic” hunger—Phase 5, the most severe level. The entire population is facing acute food insecurity.

The report warns that approximately 71,000 children and over 17,000 mothers could die unless they receive immediate treatment for severe malnutrition. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that over 90% of children under five suffer from critical levels of malnutrition. Many have already died from hunger.

UNRWA, the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, has echoed these concerns, noting that one in every ten children examined in its Gaza clinics is malnourished—signaling grave, long-term consequences for an entire generation.

Even more alarming: starvation is now a leading cause of death in Gaza. Local reports document daily fatalities from malnutrition. In the past 24 hours alone, the Gaza Ministry of Health reported 15 deaths, including four children, from hunger-related causes, bringing the total famine death toll to 101—including 80 children.

As essential goods vanish from shelves, prices for the few available items have

soared due to Israel's continued closure of border crossings since March. For many families, basic items are now out of reach. Flour has increased in price by 3,000 times its pre-war cost. Cooking fuel is nearly impossible to find, and food prices have surged by 500% since the blockade began five months ago.

Samir Abu Modallala, an economist based in Gaza, notes that the price of a kilo of flour has soared to 170 shekels—a 240% increase in just one week. A kilo of rice now costs 110 shekels, up 175%. These items once cost only a few shekels before the war.

Meanwhile, more than 116,000 tons of food aid are waiting at Gaza's borders—enough to feed the entire population for two months, according to the World Food Programme.

A “Potential Death Sentence”

The effects of Israel's systematic starvation policy are not limited to hunger alone. A broader collapse in health and society is already underway. WHO reports that children, in particular, are suffering from illnesses related to malnutrition and weakened immune systems. Diseases such as diarrhea, pneumonia, and measles—easily treatable under normal conditions—are now proving fatal.

The WHO describes a vicious cycle in which hunger and disease reinforce one another: malnutrition weakens the body's defenses, making even minor infections potentially deadly, while illness worsens malnutrition by increasing nutritional needs and reducing nutrient absorption. The organization summarizes the threat of hunger for already ill patients as a “potential death sentence.”

Long-term, the consequences are even more devastating. Malnourished children face stunted growth, both physical and cognitive. WHO warns that those who survive the famine will likely suffer permanent damage, including developmental delays and reduced brain function.

Dr. Rana Zaiter, head of nutrition at Al-Awda Hospital in Gaza, says a significant number of children are now exhibiting signs of severe stunting—a condition that affects not just height but the development of vital organs like the liver and kidneys.

“Malnutrition is not just a physical issue,” Zaiter explains. “It also impairs cognitive and intellectual development. A lack of iodine, iron, and vitamin A during early childhood can lead to permanent brain damage, lower IQ, learning difficulties, and even lifelong disabilities.”

Compounding the crisis is the lack of resources to treat malnutrition. “In a perfect world, I would advise parents to give their children protein-rich meals and maintain a clean, healthy environment,” says Susan Ma'arouf, a nutritionist

at the Friends of the Patient Society Hospital in Gaza City. “But in our reality, giving advice feels like rubbing salt in the wounds of desperate parents.”

Dr. Ragheb Warshagha, a pediatrician at Al-Rantisi Children’s Hospital, describes a heartbreaking trend: “Many mothers themselves are malnourished. This leads to a shortage of breast milk and severe malnutrition in their infants—sometimes even death due to infections and weakened immunity.”

Malnutrition and anemia have become so widespread among Palestinians in Gaza that blood donation has plummeted—posing yet another disaster for an already collapsing healthcare system. The Ministry of Health has repeatedly warned of a critical shortage of blood supplies across Gaza’s hospitals.

A Wake-Up Call for Humanity

Faced with the scale of the catastrophe, international voices have begun to sound the alarm.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed horror at the accelerating humanitarian collapse in Gaza, warning that “the last lifelines keeping people alive are falling apart.” UNICEF described images of starving children too weak to stand as “a wake-up call for humanity.”

The WHO, in a joint statement with other UN partners, called the Gaza famine “one of the world’s worst hunger crises” and urged the international community not to wait for a formal famine declaration before acting to save lives.

Among human rights organizations, the language was even more direct. Amnesty International published a report documenting evidence that Israel is using starvation as a weapon of war—a tactic aimed at exterminating Gaza’s population. The organization also condemned the manipulation of aid distribution, accusing Israel of “constantly inventing new ways to destroy Palestinian life in Gaza.”

On the political front, the response from Arab governments has been disappointing. Despite hopes that Arab nations would stand firmly with Gaza, their reactions have been limited to statements of condemnation. The Gulf Cooperation Council issued a lukewarm denunciation of what it called Israel’s “unjust blockade”—labeling it a clear violation of international humanitarian law.

In a rare move, 25 Western nations—including the UK, France, and Australia—jointly demanded that Israel lift its restrictions on aid to Gaza immediately. Their statement condemned the slow pace of aid deliveries and the killings of civilians, including children.

Ultimately, the global response to Israel’s actions in Gaza remains depressingly familiar: condemnation without action. The world continues to bear witness to



this unfolding catastrophe—with no real effort to end the Palestinians’ suffering,
now entering its second year.

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