

Hunger and starvation intensifying in Gaza

Mike Head
6 March 2024

Despite massive global protests after last Thursday's "flour massacre," in which Israeli troops killed at least 115 people and wounded 760 more trying to get food aid, the genocide is escalating. Hunger and starvation are worsening every day in the Gaza Strip.

Among the latest reports, Gaza's Health Ministry said on Sunday that 15 children had died of malnutrition in a single hospital, the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza in recent days.

"The unofficial numbers can unfortunately be expected to be higher," World Health Organisation spokesperson Christian Lindmeier said.

Reuters reported from Al-Awda health centre in Rafah, southern Gaza: "Two Palestinian toddlers with sunken eyes and emaciated faces, one in a yellow cardigan and the other in a stripy top, were lying side by side on a bed in a Gaza clinic, their thin, bony legs protruding from diapers that looked too big for them."

Nurse Diaa Al-Shaer said children suffering from malnutrition and from a range of diseases were arriving in unprecedented numbers.

A 12-year-old boy, Yazan Al-Kafarna, died there on Monday. Filmed by Reuters on Saturday, he was pale and emaciated, with skeletal limbs.

According to United Nations estimates, at least 576,000 people in Gaza—roughly 25 percent of the Strip's population—are now experiencing true famine, and one in every six children under the age of two in Gaza City and the Strip's northern areas is severely malnourished.

This is forcing Palestinians to make shocking decisions like eating animal feed in order to survive.

Regardless of the fraudulent claims of humanitarian concern by the Biden administration and US imperialism's allies, they are continuing to help block aid supplies from reaching desperate Palestinians, while arming Israel with the weapons it is using to murder and maim.

The UN's World Food Program today said the Israeli army had returned a convoy of 14 aid trucks after the vehicles waited for three hours at a checkpoint in Wadi Gaza. The convoy was the first of its kind since deliveries to the northern Gaza Strip were suspended on February 20, the UN agency said.

Israel has blocked aid into northern Gaza for most of 2024 and frequently attacked aid seekers who attempted to receive what little aid does make it to Gaza Strip's north.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor said its initial investigations into the "flour massacre" at the Nablus roundabout west of Gaza City found that dozens of victims suffered gunshot wounds, rather than being run over or crushed, in contrast to what the Israeli army claimed.

At a media conference held at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza on Sunday, Dr. Amjad Aliwa, an emergency specialist at the hospital, said he was present with doctors and nurses and thousands of civilians, when the Israeli army opened heavy fire on everyone waiting to receive aid as soon as the trucks arrived on Thursday at 4:00 a.m.

What happened constituted a horrifying massacre, Aliwa said, adding that it was difficult to recover many of the wounded, whose fate were still unknown.

Euro-Med Monitor, a Geneva-based human rights organisation, warned that the Israeli shooting of starving Palestinian civilians receiving aid had become a regular practice. In recent weeks, Israeli forces had directly attacked and killed dozens of people in Gaza City, including on Salah al-Din Street and in the vicinity of the Kuwait roundabout.

This is part of an intensifying operation to depopulate the north and drive people into Rafah, into the already overcrowded refugee encampments in Gaza's southern tip, in preparation for a full-scale Israeli military assault there as well.

Despite the enormous and growing needs of the more than 2.3 million people living in appalling conditions, humanitarian supplies that entered the Gaza Strip in February fell by half compared to January, Euro-Med Monitor said in a statement.

February saw an average of just 98 trucks enter the Gaza Strip each day, which was roughly half the number of trucks that entered in January. That was just a fraction of the 500 trucks a day before the events of October 7, 2023.

Euro-Med Monitor explained that the needs of Gaza's people now exceeded even that previous supply because Israel had destroyed or cut off all sources of production, including fuel, electricity and raw materials. The five months of carnage and the rapid spread of disease and famine also had produced more medical needs than ever before, particularly for the sick and injured, women, children and the elderly.

Addressing the UN General Assembly on Monday, Philippe Lazzarini, the Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), warned that the agency, created by the General Assembly 75 years ago in response to the driving of more than 700,000 Palestinians out of what is now Israel, was "at a breaking point."

That was because more than 15 countries—including the US and its allies—had continued to suspend funding to the relief agency after Israel alleged, without providing evidence, that some of its employees were involved in the October 7 uprising. Lazzarini warned that UNRWA was facing "a deliberate and concerted campaign to undermine its operations and ultimately end them."

Lazzarini cited remarks by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "openly stating that that UNRWA will not be part of post-war Gaza." This plan was already underway, Lazzarini said, with "the destruction of our infrastructure across the Gaza Strip."

According to Gaza's Ministry of Health, 30,631 Palestinians have been killed, and 72,042 wounded in Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza. Moreover, at least 7,000 people are unaccounted for, presumed dead under the rubble of their homes throughout the Strip.

In the latest such incident, Euro-Med Monitor documented the Israeli army's killing of a Palestinian man who was deliberately run over in Gaza City's Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood on February 29 after he was

arrested. According to eyewitnesses, the man was subjected to harsh interrogation by members of the Israeli army, who bound his hands with plastic zip-tie handcuffs before running him over with a military vehicle from the bottom to the top of his body.

In an effort to suppress reporting of these systemic crimes, another journalist was killed in Gaza this week. "Journalist Mohamed Salama, broadcaster ... on Al-Aqsa satellite channel ... was killed in the bombing of a house in the city of Deir al-Balah," Gaza's Government Media Office said, bringing the number of journalists killed in Gaza to 133 since October 7.

So far, the Israeli aggression has resulted in the forceful displacement of nearly 2 million people from all over the Gaza Strip, with the vast majority forced into Rafah near the border with Egypt. This is the largest mass expulsion of Palestinians since the 1948 Nakba, in which the Zionist militia and later the Israeli army forced more than 700,000 residents to flee their homes.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact