

Aid operations in Gaza “on the verge of collapse” as Israel continues Rafah assault

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The death of two children in central Gaza from malnutrition within a week is fueling concern that famine has taken hold across large swathes of the enclave. Almost a month after the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) began their murderous onslaught on Rafah, aid deliveries into Gaza have plummeted by two-thirds and 20 international aid organisations warn that their operations are “on the verge of collapse.”

A joint statement released last week by Save the Children International, Doctors Without Borders, OXFAM, and other humanitarian agencies denounced the “unpredictable trickle” of aid into Gaza, creating “a mirage of improved access.”

The joint statement warned, “Aid agencies now fear an acceleration in deaths from starvation, disease and denied medical assistance, while land and sea entry points remain effectively shut to meaningful humanitarian assistance, most desperately fuel, and attacks in areas sheltering civilians intensify.”

Since the IDF began its onslaught on Rafah, the Rafah border crossing has been closed for aid deliveries, while the Karem Shalom crossing from Israel has been all but inaccessible due to military operations. As part of their full-scale ground offensive, IDF soldiers have sealed off the Egyptian border from Gaza. Dozens of Palestinians continue to die in air bombardments and shelling on a daily basis, with the official death toll reaching 36,400 on Monday.

The two children who died of malnutrition were seven-month-old Fayiz Abu Ataya and a 13-year-old, both in Deir el-Balah in central Gaza. Humanitarian experts fear that this is merely the tip of the iceberg. As Jonathan Crickx, chief of communication for UNICEF in Palestine, told the *Guardian*, “In similar crises around the world, according to UNICEF experience, usually children don’t die from malnutrition and

dehydration in hospitals, they die at home, in the street or where they have taken shelter. This means reported deaths of children from malnutrition only show part of the whole toll. There is a reasonable concern that in Gaza too, there are significant numbers of children affected by malnutrition who are not represented in reported figures.”

Underlining the horrific scale of death by starvation that is looming, he added, “If nutrition supplies, especially ready-to-use therapeutic food, used to address malnutrition among children, cannot be distributed, the treatment of more than 3,000 children with acute malnutrition will be interrupted.”

Matthew Hollingworth, the World Food Programme’s chief for Palestine, bluntly summed up the dire state of affairs in central and southern Gaza, saying, “We’ve got a week or so before people will genuinely run out of all assistance they were able to receive through April and the start of May.”

The May 28 statement from the aid organisations accused Israel of “systematic obstruction” of aid deliveries at the border, noting that MSF had not managed to deliver any new supplies to Gaza since the Rafah offensive began. Save the Children no longer has any route out of Gaza for children requiring medical care.

The statement criticised the US-sponsored floating dock and reports of border crossings from Israel opened in the north of Gaza as largely “cosmetic changes.” According to UN figures, only 1,000 truckloads of aid arrived in Gaza through all crossings, including the dock, from May 7 to May 27. Between 500 and 600 truckloads of aid every day are considered the minimum necessary to meet the basic needs of Gaza’s 2.3 million people.

Separately, aid organisations have challenged Israel’s

claim that the numbers of trucks entering Gaza has risen throughout May. They point out that Israel's figures make no distinction between fully-loaded and partially-loaded trucks, have no standard for determining the size of a vehicle considered a truck, and count trucks arriving on the Israeli side of the checkpoint rather than the actual number that make it into Gaza. On the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing, around 2,000 trucks are reportedly waiting with supplies, including food that is rotting.

Another report from the World Health Organisation based on a survey carried out during May found that four out of five children "did not eat for a whole day at least" during a three-day period. "These are children under five who are not getting food all day," commented WHO spokesperson Dr. Margaret Harris. "So, you ask, 'Are the supplies getting through?' No, children are starving."

Israel's genocidal assault has left residential buildings and all infrastructure necessary for modern civilised life in ruins. According to the latest UN estimates, 55 percent of all buildings in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged since Israel launched its attack on October 7. The satellite assessment carried out by the UN Satellite Centre found that 36,591 structures had been destroyed, 16,513 severely damaged, 47,368 moderately damaged, and 36,825 possibly damaged.

All universities in the enclave have been destroyed, together with hundreds of schools. Most hospitals have ceased to operate. The WFP reported last week that a facility for treating malnourished children at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza has stopped operating due to a lack of supplies.

The bursting of a sewage pipe in Khan Younis Monday, leading to the flooding of a tent encampment with sewage water, illustrates the barbaric conditions imposed on the Palestinians by the Zionist regime. Reports showed families scrambling to extricate their few belongings from the destroyed tents as people waded through the sewage. Workers reported not having appropriate tools to properly repair the pipe. Khan Younis has become over recent weeks one of the centres for those fleeing Rafah. The latest projections are that over 1 million have fled the enclave's southernmost city since May 6, with 1.7 million people now crowded into Khan Younis and the surrounding areas of central Gaza.

The inhuman conditions imposed on Gaza's population, which resemble those of a Nazi concentration camp, are part of a deliberate policy pursued by the Israeli regime. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government has repeatedly made clear its intention to ethnically cleanse Gaza and use starvation as a weapon of war. The regime views the Palestinians as "human animals," in the words of Defence Minister Yoav Gallant.

Retired Major General Giora Eiland, Gallant's adviser, wrote in mid-November, "The international community is warning us against a severe humanitarian disaster and severe epidemics. We must not shy away from this. After all, severe epidemics in the south of Gaza will bring victory closer and reduce casualties among IDF soldiers."

Israel's genocide against the Palestinians continues to enjoy the full backing of the imperialist powers as they have done throughout. The massive bombs used to lay waste to Gaza were supplied by the United States, which has repeatedly stated it has no "red lines" for Israel.

Washington and its European imperialist allies have focused on defending the Zionist regime against all criticism, while cracking down ruthlessly against all anti-genocide protesters. After the International Court of Justice ordered an end to the military operation in Rafah, Washington responded by simply denying that any "major" operation was taking place, even as tanks rolled into the centre of the city and the IDF massacred dozens of displaced people in two barbaric bombings of refugee camps located in supposed "safe zones."



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