

UN experts confirm famine throughout Gaza, condemn Israel's starvation policy

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A group of highly qualified, independent UN experts declared in a statement Tuesday that there is no doubt that famine has spread throughout the entire Gaza strip as a consequence of a deliberate policy of mass starvation against Palestinians by the Israeli government.

The experts pointed to three children in particular who died of malnutrition and lack of access to adequate healthcare: “Fayez Ataya, who was barely six months old, died on 30 May 2024 and 13-year-old Abdulqader Al-Serhi died on 1 June 2024 at the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah. Nine-year-old Ahmad Abu Reida died on 3 June 2024 in the tent sheltering his displaced family in Al-Mawasi, Khan Younis.”

Their statement explained that the death of a child from malnutrition and dehydration indicates that health and social structures have been attacked and are critically weakened. “When the first child dies from malnutrition and dehydration, it becomes irrefutable that famine has taken hold,” they said.

The experts explicitly condemned Israel's genocide. “We declare that Israel's intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza. We call upon the international community to prioritise the delivery of humanitarian aid by land by any means necessary, end Israel's siege, and establish a ceasefire,” they stated.

After pointing to earlier infant deaths confirming famine in northern Gaza, the group indirectly censured all the imperialist powers, above all the United States, that have backed to the hilt Israel's barbaric onslaught in Gaza which has reduced its buildings to rubble and its people to refugees constantly facing death by starvation, disease and bombardment.

“The whole world should have intervened earlier to

stop Israel's genocidal starvation campaign and prevented these deaths,” the experts declared. “Thirty-four Palestinians have died from malnutrition since 7 October, the majority being children. Inaction is complicity.”

The group of 10 are special rapporteurs and independent experts appointed under the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council.

Their statement follows the publication this month in the prestigious British medical journal *The Lancet* of a study demonstrating that the likely death toll in Gaza since October 7 is vastly higher than the official number of deaths recorded by Gaza Ministry of Health—currently more than 38,000.

The study noted that the official death toll did not include the many thousands that remain buried under the rubble that is now Gaza nor those that have died from the lack of food, healthcare and sanitation. Its conservative estimate is that 186,000 people have died as a consequence of Israel's genocidal war, or 8 percent of the total population, but the figure could be much higher.

The Lancet study has been barely reported in the US and Western mainstream media, another sign of their support—despite occasional hypocritical hand wringing—for the imperialist-backed Israeli slaughter taking place in Gaza.

Israel has responded to the statement issued by UN experts with slander and lies. Its mission to the UN in Geneva, declared: “Mr. Fakhri [UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food], and many so-called ‘experts’ who joined his statement, are as much accustomed to spreading misinformation, as they are to supporting Hamas propaganda and shielding the terrorist organization from scrutiny.”

The Israeli mission claimed that the latest assessment

by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) partnership showed that famine had not developed since aid access had improved somewhat in Gaza.

In reality, the latest IPC assessment, published on June 25 based on data up to June 1, while not formally declaring famine in Gaza, provides a horrific snapshot of life in Gaza and the extreme shortages of food and other essentials facing the population. It concluded that “a high risk of famine persists across the whole Gaza Strip as long as conflict continues and humanitarian access is restricted.”

Referring to northern Gaza, the IPC noted that food deliveries in March and April had eased the crisis enough to “indicate that famine was not currently occurring.” It noted, however, that “ground operations continued with high intensity attacks in Jabaliya City and camp, Zaytoun area and Beit Hanoun and displaced around 100,000 people, over a third of the remaining population in the northern governorates.”

In the south, however, where two million people are concentrated, the situation had deteriorated markedly with Israel’s offensive in Rafah and the closure of the Rafah crossing with humanitarian access “notably reduced.”

“The latest data show that, to be able to buy food, more than half of the households had to exchange their clothes for money and one third resorted to picking up trash to sell. More than half also reported that, often, they do not have any food to eat in the house, and over 20 percent go entire days and nights without eating,” the IPC stated.

“By the end of May, around 60 percent of all buildings, including dwellings, shops and infrastructure, such as hospitals and schools; and nearly 70 percent of WASH [water, sanitation, hygiene] facilities across the Gaza Strip were damaged or destroyed. Assets and infrastructure necessary for food production and distribution have also been severely affected by the conflict. By the end of May, 57 percent of agricultural land had been destroyed or severely damaged.”

Based on figures to the end of May, the IPC classified that the whole of Gaza was in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), the second highest category of its five-phase classification of food shortage. It further declared that over 495,000 people or 22 percent of the population in

the highest category (IPC Phase 5) were facing catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity. “In this phase, households experience an extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaustion of coping capacities,” it stated.

The IPC forecast that about 96 percent of the population of Gaza or 2.15 million people will face high levels of acute food insecurity through September 2024. Far from negating Tuesday’s statement by UN experts, the IPC provides further evidence of the genocidal character of the war being waged by Israel in Gaza with the total support of the United States and all the imperialist powers.

Israel’s genocide must be stopped, along with the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the aggressive US-led confrontation with China that is rapidly sliding towards war in Asia. This requires the building of a unified, international anti-war movement of the working class based on a socialist program to abolish the profit system and its bankrupt division of the world into rival nation states that constitutes the root cause of war.

On July 24, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will travel to Washington D.C. where this war criminal will meet with his imperialist paymasters. The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on workers and young people to join the demonstration and meeting in the US capital called for that day by the Socialist Equality Party as a critical step in building the anti-war movement.



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