

United Nations warns Gaza is the “hungriest place on earth,” as Israel orders new mass expulsions

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Mass hunger continues to stalk Gaza as the United Nations warned on Friday that the besieged enclave is the “hungriest place on earth.”

Jens Laerke, a spokesperson for the UN’s humanitarian office, told reporters in a briefing that “One hundred percent of the population is at risk of famine.”

Gaza was already facing widespread hunger when Israel imposed a total blockade on food, water and electricity on March 2. Over the past week, Israel has allowed a trickle of food into the area, mostly distributed through the US/Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) distribution centers. The project’s aim is to concentrate the population in southern Gaza in preparation for their forcible displacement to other countries.

The so-called “humanitarian zones” have turned into killing fields, as Israeli troops repeatedly attacked aid seekers this week.

On Friday, Israeli troops opened fire on aid seekers at a GHF distribution center, injuring 20.

Across Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday a total of 10 people were killed while attempting to access food at GHF distribution centers after Israeli troops repeatedly opened fire on aid seekers. Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud reported, “People are telling us that the sites managed and operated by the GHF are meters away from where the Israeli military is stationed. They can see the tanks, they can see the armored vehicles.”

Mahmoud added that families are reporting that their members sent to collect food at the “humanitarian” centers have disappeared. “There are also reports of enforced disappearances. Many families reported that their children, or other family members, who went to

the sites ... have gone missing as they were trying to get food,” he said.

In order to collect food parcels, aid seekers at the “humanitarian” facilities are placed in metal pens resembling cages and are forced to submit to biometric scans.

Laerke, the UN humanitarian spokesman, added that Israel’s ongoing blockade of humanitarian aid into Gaza has made the UN’s efforts to feed the population “one of the most obstructed aid operations, not only in the world today, but in recent history.”

He condemned the insufficient amount of food entering Gaza, saying, “It is drip-feeding food into an area on the verge of catastrophic hunger.”

The UN reaffirmed on Friday its condemnation of the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. The UN’s Bureau of the General Assembly’s Palestinian Rights Committee said in a statement, “The GHF fails the test of humanitarian principles.” The organization stressed that the UN and its partners are fully equipped to deliver life-saving assistance, but political obstruction—not capacity—is the primary barrier to addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Michael Fakhri, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, said it is “safe to say there is famine” in Gaza.

He accused Israel of using food “as bait to corral people” in order to push them into holding areas in southern Gaza. “It’s about humiliating people, and it’s about controlling the population. This has nothing to do with stopping starvation,” he said.

At least 30 people were killed on Friday in Israeli attacks throughout Gaza, including in Deir el-Balah, Jabalia and Khan Younis.

Israel announced new forced displacement orders on Friday in much of northern Gaza, bringing the number of people displaced over the past two weeks to nearly 200,000.

On Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the GHF is part of a plan to create “a sterile zone in the South of Gaza, where the entire population can move for its own protection.”

In a tweet on Wednesday, Avigdor Lieberman, Israel’s former minister of finance, made it clear that the GHF is financed by the Israeli intelligence forces and the military. “The money for humanitarian aid comes from the Mossad and the Ministry of Defense. Hundreds of millions of dollars at the expense of Israeli citizens,” Lieberman said.

On Sunday, the Israeli military announced a plan to occupy three-quarters of the Gaza Strip. The entire remaining Palestinian population, estimated at around 2 million people, would be forced into an area of just 35 square miles.

The plan is the practical implementation of “Operation Gideon’s Chariots,” which Netanyahu has described as the “concluding moves” of the onslaught in Gaza.

Last week the Israeli prime minister publicly stated for the first time that the displacement of the Palestinian population from Gaza is an official objective of Israel’s war effort.

Israel, Netanyahu declared in a press conference, “is ready to end the war, under clear conditions that ... we carry out the Trump plan. A plan that is so correct and so revolutionary.”

Earlier this month, NBC News reported that the United States is in negotiations with Syria and Libya, whose governments it helped to overthrow in Islamist insurgencies, to accept the Palestinian people who are being displaced from Gaza.

On May 6, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich spelled out the government’s plan: “Within a year... Gaza will be entirely destroyed, civilians will be sent to... the south to a humanitarian zone... and from there they will start to leave in great numbers to third countries.”

To date, at least 53,900 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israeli attacks since October 7, 2023, with hundreds of thousands wounded.



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