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10 JANUARY 2024 - OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

GAZA: BLOCKING FOOD SUPPLIES TO GAZA WILL HAVE LIFE-LONG IMPACTS ON CHILDREN WITH MALNUTRITION RISING



RAMALLAH, 10 January 2023 – Denying children in Gaza access to food and basic supplies will have lifelong consequences for Palestinian children with rising numbers at risk of malnutrition, Save the Children warned.

Since violence escalated in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory on 7 October, an Israeli-imposed siege has left all one million children in Gaza without enough to eat, including about 335,000 children under five now at risk of severe malnutrition or starvation.

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Save the Children's staff in Gaza say they are unable to find essential food items in markets. One staff member in Rafah in the south of Gaza said her eight-year-old child often goes to bed hungry because they are unable to cook anything without gas.

A World Food Programme (WFP) report found that the prices of essential items like cooking gas had surged by about

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There is a severe shortage of food, particularly in northern Gaza, which has been almost completely cut off from aid. Organisations providing food assistance have found that families' food supplies are depleting more quickly than can be replenished through the trickle of aid allowed into Gaza. Two thirds of shops in Gaza have reported that essential goods have depleted in recent weeks, including flour, eggs, and dairy, according to WFP.

Hannah Stephenson, Global Head of Policy & Advocacy, Health and Nutrition at Save the Children, said:

"*This is an entirely man-made catastrophe that is causing devastating physical and mental harm to children, with potentially deadly and life-altering consequences. As children in Gaza experience worsening hunger, their bodies become weaker. They will become acutely malnourished. Their muscles begin to waste away, their vision blurs, their immune systems fail. Disease is inevitable, with pneumonia and diarrhea the leading killers of children in this weakened state. The children who survive the bombardment but are pushed to starvation will be stunted, experiencing irreversible impacts to their physical and cognitive abilities.*"

With restrictions on commercial goods entering Gaza and local food severely damaged, humanitarian aid remains the 2.3 million population's main lifeline. But intensified violence, recurrent communication blackouts, restrictions on items allowed in, and a cumbersome, bureaucratic process to send aid into Gaza have crippled the humanitarian response.

In recent weeks, NGO-supported shelters, hospitals and even aid convoys have come under fire. Over the last several months, the Israeli authorities have denied goods from entering Gaza that include items used for cooking and drinking such as solar-powered generators, and refrigerators, as well as water purification devices, according to humanitarian agencies. All these items are essential for an effective aid response at the scale needed to save lives in Gaza.

Elizabeth White, a Save the Children director in the occupied Palestinian territory, said:

"Israeli authorities are denying children in Gaza access to lifesaving food and services. The deprivation of sufficient food, water, and medicine is rendering child survival in Gaza nearly impossible. Families are being isolated into areas unable to sustain human life. They are forced to evacuate to so called 'safe' areas in the south of Gaza only for those areas to then be attacked. Israeli airstrikes have already killed thousands of children, the effects of starvation on children's bodies will kill even more. The children who survive will likely face lifelong physical and mental health issues, robbing a generation of any chance of a healthy life and future."

Save the Children has previously warned that deliberately depriving the civilian population of food, water and fuel and wilfully impeding relief supplies is inhumane and may amount to starvation as a method of warfare, which inevitably has a deadly impact on children, and violates international humanitarian law.

Save the Children is calling for a definitive ceasefire to save and protect lives in Gaza and the immediate end to the weaponization of aid. The aid agency calls on the government of Israel to allow the unfettered flow of aid and entry of commercial goods needed to save children's lives now and in the future.

Save the Children has been providing essential services and support to Palestinian children since 1953. Save the Children's team in the occupied Palestinian territory has been working around the clock, prepositioning vital supplies to support people in need, and working to find ways to get assistance into Gaza.

Notes to Editors

- UNICEF found that all children under five in the Gaza Strip—335,000—are at high risk of severe malnutrition and preventable death as the risk of famine conditions continues to increase.
- The UN has reported that during the last week of December 2023, on average, only 8% of the targeted population in Gaza was reached with daily assistance.
- The World Food Programme (WFP) has reported a 66% depletion of crucial goods over the past two weeks. Additionally, 29% of available goods are in short supply, lasting no more than a week, and the prices of cooking

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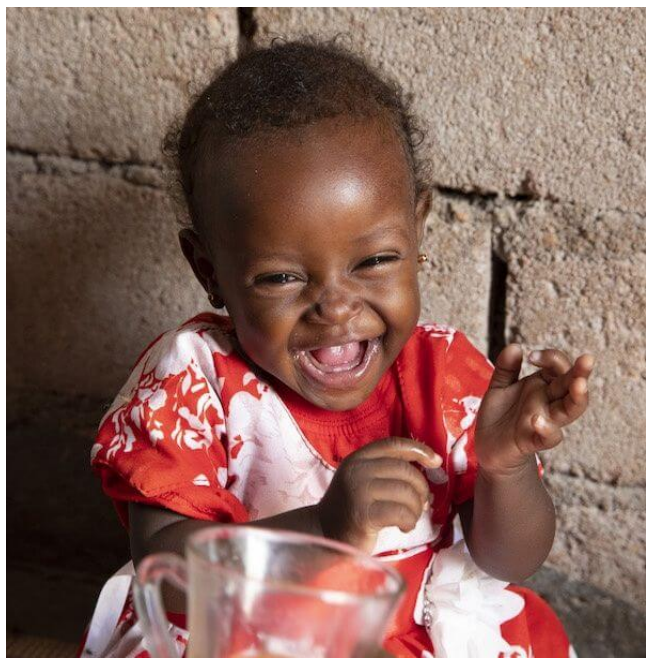
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