# Hunger Hotspots Report: famine looms in Gaza while risk of starvation persists in Sudan, Haiti, Mali, and South Sudan

Latest Hunger Hotspots report urges immediate action to prevent famine and warns of La Niña-linked climate extremes



Livestock-holding farmers and herders in Rafah, Gaza Strip receive animal fodder distributed by FAO to support local food production, April 2024.

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Joint FAO-WFP News Release

**Rome** – Acute food insecurity is set to increase in magnitude and severity in 18 hunger "Hotspots", a new United Nations early warning report has revealed today. The report spotlights the urgent need of assistance to prevent famine in Gaza and the Sudan, and further deterioration in the devastating hunger crises in Haiti, Mali, and

South Sudan. It also warns of the lingering impact of El Niño and the looming threat of La Niña that risks bringing further climate extremes that could upend lives and livelihoods.

The report found that many hotspots face growing hunger crises and highlights the worrying multiplier effect that simultaneous and overlapping shocks are having on acute food insecurity. Conflict, climate extremes, and economic shocks continue to drive vulnerable households into food crises. Furthermore, the report warns that 2023 is likely to mark the first year since 2010 in which humanitarian funding has declined compared to the previous year, but it still represents the second highest funding level ever for humanitarian assistance.

“The daunting prospects highlighted in this report should serve as a wake-up call to all of us. We need to spearhead the shift from responding to crises after they occur to more proactive anticipatory approaches, prevention and resilience building to help vulnerable communities cope with upcoming shocks. Acting ahead of crises can save lives, reduce food shortages and protect livelihoods at a much lower cost than a not timely humanitarian response,” FAO Director-General QU Dongyu said.

“Once a famine is declared, it is too late – many people will have already starved to death. In Somalia in 2011, half of the quarter of a million people who died of hunger perished before famine was officially declared. The world failed to heed the warnings at the time and the repercussions were catastrophic.  We must learn the lesson and act now to stop these hotspots from igniting a firestorm of hunger,” said Cindy McCain, WFP Executive Director. “We have proven solutions to stop these crises in their tracks, but we need the resources and the political will to implement them at scale before more lives are lost.”

The report - ‘Hunger Hotspots – FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity’ - issued today by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) calls for urgent humanitarian action to save lives and livelihoods and prevent starvation and death in 18 hotspots – comprising a total of 17 countries and one regional cluster of four countries  (drought-affected Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia

and Zimbabwe) - where acute hunger is at a high risk of worsening from June to October 2024.

**Hotspots at highest risk of deterioration**

The ongoing conflict in Palestine is expected to further aggravate already catastrophic levels of acute hunger, with starvation and death already taking place, alongside the unprecedented death toll, widespread destruction and displacement of nearly the total population of the Gaza Strip – the report warns. In mid-March 2024, famine was projected to occur by the end of May in the two northern governorates of the Gaza Strip, unless hostilities ended, full access was granted to humanitarian agencies, and essential services were restored. Over one million people – half the population of Gaza – are expected to face death and starvation (IPC Phase 5) by mid-July. The report also warns of broader regional ramifications of the crisis, which risk exacerbating the already high food security needs in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Conflict and displacement also continue at an alarming pace and magnitude in the Sudan, where time is running out to save lives and the lean season looms – the report warns. The outlook for food production is bleak, and there is a rapidly shrinking window to support farmers before the main planting season ends and the rains begin, limiting access to the hardest-hit communities. 18 million people are acutely food insecure, including 3.6 million children acutely malnourished, and famine is rapidly closing in on millions of people in Darfur, Kordofan, Al Jazirah and Khartoum as recently stated by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The crisis – now in its second year – is home to the largest number of internally displaced people in the world at nearly 10 million. A further two million people have fled across borders, deepening the burden on neighbouring countries hosting a steadily growing number of refugees and returnees – especially in South Sudan and Chad, where existing hunger crises are deepening by the spillover from the deadly conflict in the Sudan.

In Haiti, in the midst of a protracted economic crisis, violence linked to non-state armed groups have disrupted food supplies and forced over 362,000 people to flee their homes and abandon their livelihoods – including farmland - amid continued uncertainties about the timing of the deployment of a Multinational Security

Support Mission. The report warns that critical levels of food insecurity and malnutrition risk worsening further, with the threat of catastrophic conditions reemerging, especially in areas where humanitarian access is limited by gang violence.

In Mali, already critical and catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity are likely to further increase, driven primarily by an intensification of conflict and compounded by the full withdrawal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

In South Sudan, the number of people facing starvation and death is projected to almost double between April and July 2024, compared to the same period in 2023. Tight domestic food supplies and sharp currency depreciation are driving food prices to soar, compounded by likely floods and recurrent waves of subnational conflict. A projected further rise of returnees and refugees from the Sudan is likely to increase acute food insecurity among both new arrivals and host communities.

**Climate threats persist**

The previous Hunger Hotspots report from 2023 warned of the threat posed by El Niño and associated extreme climatic events that put millions of people at risk of hunger and malnutrition. As the El Niño episode comes to an end, it is evident that its impact was severe and widespread – including devastating drought in Southern Africa and extensive floods in East Africa.

This edition of the report warns that La Niña conditions are expected to prevail between August 2024 and February 2025, significantly influencing rainfall distribution and temperatures. The shift in climate could have major implications for several hotspots, including risk of floods in parts of South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Chad, Mali and Nigeria, as well as the Sudan. Meanwhile, the Caribbean is bracing for an extremely active Atlantic hurricane season. The report warns that due to the uncertainty of current forecasts, continuous monitoring will be vital.

**Key Findings**

According to the report, **Mali, Palestine, South Sudan** and the **Sudan** remain at the highest alert level and require the most urgent attention. **Haiti** was added to the list due to escalating violence and

threats to food security. Conflict is the primary driver of hunger in all these areas. All hotspots of the highest concern have communities facing or projected to face starvation, or are at risk of sliding towards catastrophic conditions, given they have already emergency levels of food insecurity and are facing severe aggravating factors.

**Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, the Syrian Arab Republic** and **Yemen** are hotspots of very high concern, with a large number of people facing critical acute food insecurity, coupled with worsening drivers that are expected to further intensify life-threatening conditions in the coming months.

Since the previous edition of the Hunger Hotspots report (October 2023), **the Central African Republic, Lebanon, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone** and **Zambia** have joined **Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, Somalia** and **Zimbabwe** in the list of hunger hotspots, where acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate further during the outlook period.

**Scaling up anticipatory action and humanitarian action to prevent worsening food insecurity**

The report provides concrete country-specific recommendations on priorities for anticipatory action and immediate emergency response to address existing and emerging needs to save lives and ensure predictable hazards do not become full-blown humanitarian disasters.

Immediate humanitarian action delivered at scale will be critical to prevent further starvation and death – particularly in Mali, Palestine, South Sudan, the Sudan and Haiti. But the report warns that to effectively address and prevent famine, emergency agriculture - in addition to emergency food and cash assistance - must be provided in a balanced manner. Additionally, more investments are needed in integrated solutions across multiple organizations that can help to meaningfully tackle food insecurity and reduce reliance on emergency food assistance.

***Note to Editors***

*The Hunger Hotspots report identifies areas where acute food insecurity is likely increase during the outlook period. The hotspots are determined through forward-looking analysis and selected*

*through a consensus-based process involving FAO and WFP field and technical teams, alongside analysts specialized in conflict, economic risks and natural hazards.*

*The report is part of a US and EU funded suite of analytical products produced under the Global Network Against Food Crises, to enhance and coordinate the generation and sharing of evidence-based information and analysis for preventing and addressing food crises.*

*This series also includes the recently published 2024 Global Report on Food Crises, which retroactively looks at the levels of acute food insecurity in 2023, in complement to the Hunger Hotspots which is a forward-looking early warning system that provides decision makers with information for planning and resource allocation.*

*The digital version of the report is also available at this link*

More on this topic

- Hunger Hotspots – FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity (June-October 2024)
- Global Network Against Food Crises
- 2024 Global Report on Food Crises

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