Press release

Risk of famine for children across Gaza, new report says

UNICEF and WFP warn of looming catastrophe as 71,000 children and more than 17,000 mothers are threatened by acute malnutrition.

12 May 2025



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ROME/NEW YORK, 12 May 2025 – Populations across the Gaza Strip are at risk of famine as fighting has surged again, border crossings are still closed, and food is dangerously scarce. Hunger and malnutrition have intensified sharply since all aid was blocked from entering on 2 March, reversing the clear humanitarian gains seen during the ceasefire earlier this year.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) snapshot released today, 470,000 people in Gaza are facing catastrophic hunger (IPC Phase 5), and the entire population is experiencing acute food insecurity. The report also projects an alarming 71,000 children and more than 17,000 mothers will need urgent treatment for acute malnutrition. At the beginning of 2025, agencies estimated 60,000 children would need treatment.

“Families in Gaza are starving while the food they need is sitting at the border. We can’t get it to them because of the renewed conflict and the total ban on humanitarian aid imposed in early March,” said the UN World Food Programme’s Executive Director Cindy McCain. “It’s imperative that the international community acts urgently to get aid flowing into Gaza again. If we wait until after a famine is confirmed, it will already be too late for many people.”

The IPC snapshot for Gaza projects that renewed military operations, the ongoing complete blockade, and the critical lack of supplies needed for survival could push food insecurity, acute malnutrition and mortality levels past the famine thresholds in the coming months.

The vast majority of children in Gaza are facing extreme food deprivation as confirmed by 17 UN agencies and NGOs in the IPC report. Coupled with the severely limited access to health services and critical shortages of clean water and sanitation, rapid increases in acute malnutrition are expected in North Gaza, Gaza and Rafah governorates.

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reality for children across the Gaza Strip," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. "We have repeatedly warned of this trajectory and call again on all parties to prevent a catastrophe."

Border crossings into Gaza have been closed for over two months - the longest the population has ever faced – causing food prices in markets to spike to astronomical levels, putting what little food is available out of reach for most families.

At the same time, more than 116,000 metric tons of food assistance – enough to feed one million people for up to four months - is already positioned in aid corridors, ready to be brought in. Hundreds of pallets of lifesaving nutrition treatments are also prepositioned for entry. United Nations agencies stand ready to work with all stakeholders and food security partners to bring in these food and nutrition supplies and distribute it as soon as borders reopen for principled aid delivery.

The UN World Food Programme and UNICEF remain on the ground in Gaza ready to deliver lifesaving aid according to required humanitarian principles.

WFP depleted its last food stocks to support hot meals kitchens for families on 25 April. Almost a month earlier, all 25 WFP-supported bakeries closed as wheat flour and cooking fuel ran out. The same week, WFP food parcels for families – with two weeks of food rations - were exhausted. UNICEF continues to deliver water and critical nutrition services but its stocks for preventing malnutrition have run out and supplies for the therapeutic treatment of acute malnutrition are critically low.

UNICEF and WFP urge all parties to prioritize the needs of civilians and allow aid to enter Gaza immediately and uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Media contacts

Ricardo Pires

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Email: rpires@unicef.org

Tess Ingram
UNICEF Middle East and North Africa

Tel: +962 7 9385 7212

Email: tingram@unicef.org

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