IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions
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IPC FAMINE REVIEW COMMITTEE ALERT
GAZA STRIP

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Key Messages

- The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is extremely grave and rapidly deteriorating.
- There is a strong likelihood that famine is imminent in areas within the northern Gaza Strip.
- Immediate action, within days not weeks, is required from all actors who are directly taking part in the conflict, or have influence on its conduct, to avert and alleviate this catastrophic situation.

Introduction

This Famine Review Committee (FRC) alert is issued to express concern about an imminent and substantial likelihood of famine occurring, due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip. While an IPC update will be conducted, this Alert serves to draw immediate attention on the need to take urgent action to alleviate this humanitarian catastrophe in areas of the northern Gaza Strip.

Justification

The IPC analysis team published their latest Snapshot Report on the situation in the Gaza Strip on 17 October 2024.[1] The report classified the entire Gaza Strip in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) acute food insecurity, with IPC Phase 3 (Serious) level of acute malnutrition in September – October 2024. One hundred and thirty-three thousand people were classified as facing catastrophic food insecurity. The analysis team also conducted a risk of Famine analysis and concluded that, under a reasonable worst-case scenario, a risk of Famine existed for the whole of the Gaza Strip between November 2024 and April 2025. The reasonable worst-case scenario developed for the northern area of the Gaza Strip (Gaza and North Gaza governorates) is shown in the excerpt below.

> *An escalation and intensification of the hostilities would occur, with higher frequency and duration, resulting in expanded ground operations and increasing levels of destruction and lethality. Evacuation orders would be issued for all civilians in the governorates, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people to the middle governorates. This would also include a complete halt of commercial trucks, following the downward trend already observed recently. Similarly, humanitarian assistance would significantly decrease, to a near halt. Social safety nets would collapse, and civil unrest would likely increase.*

Since the conclusion of the last IPC analysis, a number of significant developments have taken place, including:

Conflict and displacement

On 6 October 2024, Israel designated all of the northern Gaza Strip as a combat zone and ordered the entire civilian population to evacuate.[2] On 7 October 2024, a UN Spokesperson stated that many people in northern Gaza were "trapped" in their homes and were unable to flee the combat area.[3] Médecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) also reported that staff members were trapped in Jabalia, stating, "Nobody is allowed to get in or out; anyone who tries is getting shot".[4] Repeated evacuation orders for the northern Gaza Strip have been issued since the start of October 2024.[5]

Food availability

Food availability in the Gaza strip needs to be considered in a context where food systems have collapsed. According to OCHA data, the number of aid shipments being let into the Gaza Strip (data up to 27 October 2024) is lower now than at any time since October 2023.[6] Data made available by the Israeli COGAT (Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories) on humanitarian and 'commercial' shipments also agrees that shipments are at the lowest level since the start of the war.[7] The WFP market monitoring report for the second half of October indicates that the average number of trucks entering the Gaza Strip fell to just 58 per day, the lowest level since November 2023.[8] It is worth noting that the level of

supplies entering the Gaza Strip in October 2024 is lower than the amounts that were permitted in early 2024, a period during which acute food security and acute malnutrition rapidly deteriorated and famine was projected in the northern governorates. The available data from different sources show that the food supply across the entire Gaza Strip has sharply deteriorated. The FRC is particularly concerned about availability of food in areas affected by high intensity conflict.

Food access

Food access is also at critical levels and rapidly deteriorating. Between August and September 2024, the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 11 percent, while the Food CPI surged by 77 percent. When comparing the CPI since before the crisis to now, there has been an overall increase of 283 percent, with the Food CPI increasing by 312 percent. The black market price of cooking gas increased by 2,612 percent, diesel by 1,315 percent, wood by 250 percent, and diapers by 620 percent. Concurrent with the extremely high and increasing prices of essential items has been the total collapse of livelihoods to be able to purchase or barter for food and other basic needs. Labor and income opportunities have plummeted.

Health and Nutrition

Attacks on health and nutrition care facilities and other civilian infrastructure have also continued and accelerated in recent weeks, including the arrest of medical staff by the IDF. [9,10] There has been further destruction of civilian infrastructure, and the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) situation is also considered critical, with further threats associated with the onset of winter and expected flooding.[11]

UNRWA

A further development of relevance to the future trajectory has been Israel's legislation concerning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). A law banning UNRWA from operating on Israeli territory was passed in the Israeli parliament on 28 October. The UN agency was officially informed by Israel that it was cutting ties on 4 November. [12,13] It is not currently clear how this may impact the operations of UNRWA in the immediate future. However, there is widespread consensus that UNRWA remains the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza, and no organization can replace or substitute UNRWA's capacity.[14] If further action is taken to enforce these laws, it will have extremely serious consequences for humanitarian operations. Regardless of when and how these acts of parliament are implemented, the crisis is already accelerating.

The developments outlined above indicate the need for a new IPC analysis. However, it is already abundantly clear that the worst-case scenario developed by the analysis team is now playing out in areas of the northern Gaza Strip. **It can therefore be assumed that starvation, malnutrition, and excess mortality due to malnutrition and disease, are rapidly increasing in these areas. Famine thresholds may have already been crossed or else will be in the near future.**

Our previous analysis and report from June 2024, shows that food security and malnutrition can deteriorate, and also recover, swiftly in response to the amount of food supplies that are permitted to enter the Gaza Strip and can also be distributed. There is a pre-existing, and increasing vulnerability of the population after more than a year of war, with population displaced multiple times as a result of conflict or evacuation orders, and large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure.

The unprecedented speed of deterioration and deviation from the most-likely scenario requires an extremely urgent response - in days not weeks.

Recommendations for immediate action

The FRC reiterates the findings of the latest IPC analysis that only by ensuring widespread access to adequate food, medical supplies, water, and basic services across the Gaza Strip can the risk of a rapid descent into famine be contained.[1] Given the extreme nature of the situation, this FRC alert calls for immediate action by all stakeholders with potential influence to reverse this humanitarian catastrophe.

In particular, the FRC calls on all parties who are directly taking part in the conflict, or have influence on its conduct, to immediately:

- Allow unimpeded humanitarian supplies of food, water, medical and nutrition supplies, and other essential items to enter the Gaza Strip and for these to be distributed to all populations in need.
- End the siege in the northern areas of the Gaza Strip.
- Cease attacks on health facilities and other essential civilian infrastructure.
- Permit the restitution of health and nutrition care by allowing the re-supply and repair of health facilities and releasing health staff from detention so they can perform their medical functions.
- Facilitate the recovery of the WASH system by allowing required supplies to enter the Gaza Strip and necessary repairs to take place.
- Permit shipment of supplies into the Gaza Strip to allow for winterization of available accommodation and reduce the risks of excess morbidity and mortality due to environmental stress and disease outbreaks in the coming months.

Failure to respond to these calls within the next few days will result in a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation and additional, avoidable, civilian deaths. If no effective action is taken by stakeholders with influence, the scale of this looming catastrophe is likely to dwarf anything we have seen so far in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023.

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Endnotes

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