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Starving for the Truth: Fraud, Famine and the Collapse of Rigor in IPC's Gaza Declaration



NCRI FLASH BRIEF

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Earlier this year, NCRI published [Between Data and Agenda: Questioning the IPC's Gaza Famine Projections](#), which showed how the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) had repeatedly overstated famine risks in Gaza while neglecting to reconcile its projections with subsequent improvements in nutrition and food availability. That analysis demonstrated that Gaza was the single worst over-projection in the IPC's global record, with forecasts outpacing measured reality in more than 80 percent of sub-regions. The pattern suggested not isolated error but a structural bias toward alarm.¹

On August 22, 2025, the IPC went further than ever before, declaring that famine was “currently occurring” in Gaza City.² This marked the first official famine declaration for Gaza, and it was issued in the face of contradictory data and unacknowledged caveats. Given the extraordinary weight such a classification carries - cited in the UN Security Council, invoked in international legal proceedings, and splashed across global media - the integrity of the underlying evidence is paramount.

This follow-on report examines the IPC's August declaration in detail. What we find is not a neutral assessment of food insecurity but a document riddled with forecasting reversals, selective use of surveys, questionable modeling, and reliance on partisan sources. The consequence is a narrative of famine that exceeds the evidentiary threshold. Our purpose is not to minimize the severity of Gaza's humanitarian crisis, but to insist that famine alerts meet the highest standards of rigor. When they do not, they discredit aid efforts, politicize suffering, and undermine global trust in humanitarian science.

BLUF

- **[1] The IPC engaged in data malpractice:** it declared “exponential growth” in Gaza malnutrition from only six datapoints, even though linear models fit better. Presenting fragile curve-fits as famine evidence is alarmism, not science.

¹ NCRI. “NCRI Flash Brief—Between Data and Agenda: Questioning the IPC's Gaza Famine Projections,” August 25, 2025.

² Haan, Nicholas, Peter Hailey, Daniel Maxwell, Henry J. Leir, Andrew Seal, Jose Lopez, Luca Russo. *Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, August 2025. Conclusions and Recommendations*. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, Famine Review Committee, August 23, 2025. https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Famine_Review_Committee_Report_Gaza_Aug2025.pdf

- **[2] The IPC contradicted its own forecasts with no explanation:** after reporting improvement in Gaza malnutrition this spring, it abruptly declared famine in August without reconciling the reversal. This forecasting whiplash erodes credibility.
- **[3] The IPC inexplicably suppressed evidence that severely weakened its indictment:** it elevated a phone survey showing 73 percent severe hunger while burying a field survey showing only 21 percent, violating its mandate for convergence of evidence.
- **[4] The IPC discredited proven aid:** it dismissed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation food distributions as “not humanitarian” while its own data showed recipients were better nourished and safer, excluding Rafah where aid impact was strongest.
- **[5] The IPC laundered partisan sources:** it relied on the Gaza Ministry of Health mortality data without qualifying Hamas control, while giving Gaza outsized focus over objectively worse crises elsewhere.

These flaws point to a systemic pattern. When faced with uncertainty, IPC consistently chose the most alarming interpretation. The result is not famine science but a narrative.

Forecasting Whiplash: Why did the IPC contradict its own forecasts without offering explanation?

In Spring 2025 the IPC reported that malnutrition in parts of Gaza had improved to Phase 2. Phase 2 means “stressed,” a level well below famine and consistent with populations beginning to recover. By August the IPC declared famine in Gaza Governorate and projected famine for Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis. Famine is the highest possible classification, Phase 5, reserved only for the most catastrophic cases in the world.

The report gave no explanation for this sudden escalation. The IPC’s own history shows that movements between phases usually take place gradually, often over the course of years, not a leap from Phase 2 or 3 to Phase 5 in just a few months. Forecasts of this magnitude are expected to be continuous and reconcilable. By swinging from “improving” to “catastrophic” without evidence of the path in between, the IPC undermined its own credibility and revealed a pattern of analytic malpractice.³

Selective Data Use: Why did the IPC inexplicably suppress evidence that severely weakened its indictment?

In July 2025 two surveys produced starkly different pictures of hunger in Gaza. One survey found that 73 percent of households registered severe or very severe Household Hunger

³ NCRI 2025.

Scores.⁴ Another survey, conducted at the same time, found only 21 percent in those categories.⁵ Both surveys were described by the IPC itself as “representative.”⁶

Yet the IPC report featured only the Household Hunger Score from the more alarming first survey,⁷ burying the second survey in Annex 3 at the back of the report.⁸ For famine classification, the standard is convergence of evidence,⁹ meaning analysts weigh all credible data together. Obscuring one survey because it contradicts the worst-case conclusion is the opposite of convergence.

The IPC also introduced confusion in how it applied these results. IPC classified Gaza Governorate, where the first survey showed 73 percent, at Phase 5 famine. IPC classified Deir al-Balah, where the numbers were only two percentage points lower,¹⁰ two whole phases down at Phase 3. There is no clear rationale for why nearly identical results led to very different conclusions.

By obscuring results that weakened its case and applying inconsistent standards to those it kept, the IPC crossed from poor analysis into biased reporting. Readers are left not with a neutral assessment, but with an indictment assembled by suppressing inconvenient evidence.

The “Exponential” Problem: Did the IPC Commit Data Fraud to Manufacture the Appearance of Exponential Malnutrition?

The centerpiece of the IPC’s famine declaration was the claim that child malnutrition in Gaza was “increasing exponentially,” doubling every four weeks.¹¹ This conclusion was drawn from only six MUAC datapoints collected between May and July. No raw time series was published in the report, so we reconstructed it by replicating their charts. What emerged is a pattern of statistical malpractice dressed up as evidence.

The exponential claim hinges almost entirely on one datapoint: a dip in early May. By including that single low point, the IPC curve rises dramatically, producing the appearance of acceleration. Remove it, and the curve fits a linear trajectory with far greater accuracy ($R^2 = 0.94$ for linear, compared to 0.76 for exponential in Deir al-Balah). In Gaza Governorate, the difference is even more revealing: both linear and exponential models fit about equally ($R^2 \approx 0.917$), which means the IPC had no statistical justification for privileging one over the other. Yet it chose to present only the exponential narrative. The IPC’s exponential model would have reached acute malnutrition in 100% of the Gaza Governorate’s children by time of publication of this analysis [See Appendix].

⁴ Haan et al., 2025, 38.

⁵ Haan et al., 2025, 39.

⁶ Haan et al., 2025, 42.

⁷ Haan et al., 2025, 15.

⁸ Haan et al., 2025, 39, Table 4.

⁹ Haan et al., 2025, 20.

¹⁰ Haan et al., 2025, 38-39, Tables 3 & 4.

¹¹ Haan et al., 2025, 21.

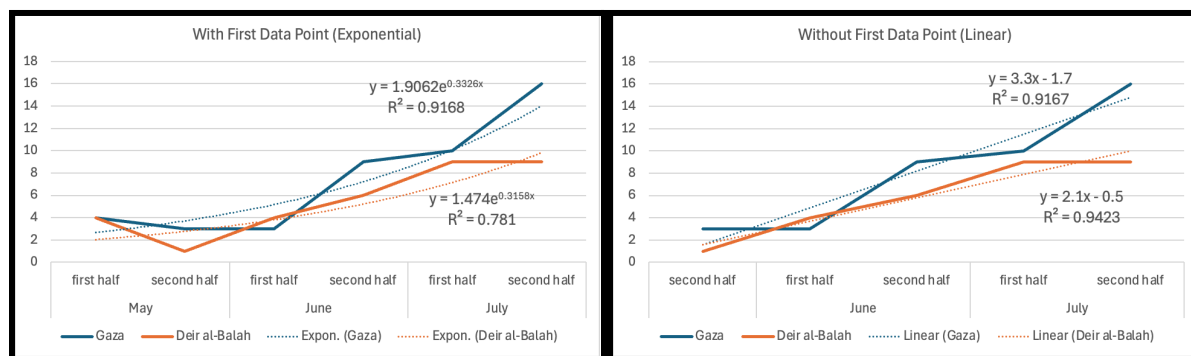
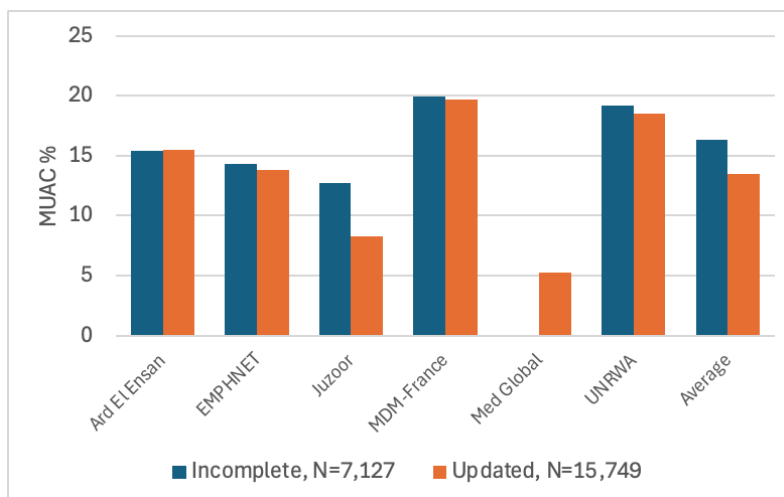


Figure: MUAC data for Gaza and Deir al-Balah with (left) and without (right) the first point.

The IPC also ignored alternative fits that clearly outperformed its alarmist choice. A simple third-order polynomial trendline, which captures the flattening of the curve after May, matched the observed data almost perfectly ($R^2 = 0.989$). That model shows increases slowing down, not spiraling out of control.

The IPC also ignored updated data from its own cited source. On August 8 the State of Palestine Nutrition Cluster released a larger sample (15,749 children) showing malnutrition at 13.5 percent,¹² below the famine threshold of 15 percent and under the 16.4 percent figure used by the IPC.¹³ When the updated figure is applied, the linear trend rises to $R^2 = 0.93$, while the exponential falls to $R^2 = 0.89$. The updated model undermines the famine claim altogether.



¹² State of Palestine Nutrition Cluster, "SoP Nutrition Cluster Meeting," August 8, 2025, Slide 9. <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1v3aZdyTDWfOHeoNDPg94qoMjUkLi9JF/edit?slide=id.p9#slide=id.p9>

¹³ Data used by IPC can be found at Haan et al., 2025, 50, Table 18.

Figure: Comparison of incomplete and updated Nutrition Cluster datasets. The chart makes clear that IPC relied on incomplete data (N=7,127) when more robust data (N=15,749) was available from the same source, and that the updated numbers fall short of famine thresholds.

What the IPC presented as “surges” and “exponential worsening” was in fact an Excel curve-fit for six points, skewed by data noise amplified by the miniscule sample size, and propped up by outdated numbers contradicted by newer, more representative data. Serious scientists know that five datapoints cannot sustain claims of exponential growth.¹⁴ Serious scientists also know that when multiple models fit the same data, the responsible choice is to report all of them, not select for the one that maximizes alarm.

Declaring a famine on the back of this modeling is indefensible because it replaces objective and careful tradecraft with theater. By privileging a worst-case Excel projection over better-fitting models and fresher data, the IPC reduced famine science to amateur statistical manipulation.

Has the IPC Committed Data Fraud?

The centerpiece of the IPC’s Gaza famine declaration was its claim of “exponential growth” in malnutrition, supported by selective use of data and omission of contradictory evidence. In professional terms, **data fraud** is defined as the deliberate manipulation, suppression, or misrepresentation of data to produce a predetermined outcome. NCRI’s forensic review shows patterns that meet the threshold for suspicion. While NCRI does not assert fraud as a settled fact, the evidence warrants a formal investigation to determine whether the IPC’s conduct crosses from analytic malpractice into intentional data fraud.

Suppressing Evidence of Improvement to Undermine the GHF: Why did the IPC Discredit Aid and Ignore Gains when they Portrayed the Success of GHF?

The IPC dismissed the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation’s food distributions as failing to “meet the criteria to be classified as humanitarian assistance.”¹⁵ Yet its own data show that GHF recipients averaged 1,700 kilocalories per day, compared to less than 1,400 for those relying on other sources.¹⁶ In other words, the population with access to GHF aid was better nourished.

¹⁴ Central limit theorem holds that a higher n brings more robust results and predictive capacity. See Islam, Mohammad Rafiqul. “Sample size and its role in Central Limit Theorem (CLT).” *Computational and Applied Mathematics Journal* 4, no. 1 (2018): 6. There is some reason to suggest a bare minimum of $n=8$, although 30 remains the “magic number.” See Jenkins, David G., and Pedro F. Quintana-Ascencio. “A solution to minimum sample size for regressions.” *PloS one* 15, no. 2 (2020): e0229345.

¹⁵ Haan et al., 2025, 2.

¹⁶ Haan et al., 2025, 14.

The IPC also described “deadly incidents near GHF sites”¹⁷ as commonplace, but ACLED data show the opposite.¹⁸ Violence around distribution sites dropped by more than 25 percent from June to July, and by mid-August was already another 8 percent lower. This decline was ignored.

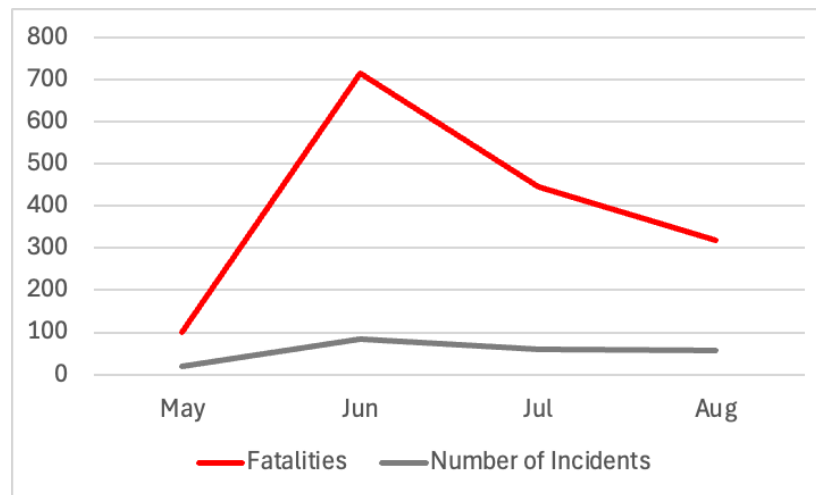


Figure 1: Decrease of incidents and fatalities since June (ACLED)

Despite acknowledging that food security improves closer to GHF sites, the IPC discounted these results by arguing that GHF served “less than half the population.”¹⁹ The logic is contradictory: where GHF operates, conditions are better, yet the IPC minimized that fact to sustain its negative framing.

The committee moved the goalposts further. In May it established that 62,000 metric tons of food were needed per month to meet caloric requirements. By August it admitted that incoming aid was on track to meet that threshold, but then insisted that even meeting their own bar was now “unclear” or insufficient.²⁰ Instead of crediting increased aid, they redefined adequacy so that improvement could not count as success.

The IPC then excluded Rafah from analysis, citing “depopulation.”²¹ Yet Rafah is where much of GHF distribution occurs, and in the last report IPC had no issue analyzing it.²² Since Rafah is both a key aid hub and a location where nutrition is better,²³ omitting it removed one of the clearest indicators of aid effectiveness.

¹⁷ Haan et al., 2025, 14.

¹⁸ Raleigh, Clionadh, Rew Linke, Håvard Hegre, and Joakim Karlsen. “Introducing ACLED: An armed conflict location and event dataset.” *Journal of peace research* 47, no. 5 (2010): 651-660.

¹⁹ Haan et al., 2025, 14.

²⁰ Haan et al., 2025, 10.

²¹ Haan et al., 2025, 4.

²² IPC, Gaza Strip: “Acute Malnutrition Situation for September - October 2024 and Projection for November 2024 - April 2025,” *n.d.*, <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1157986/?iso3=PSE>

²³ Haan et al., 2025, 13.

Finally, the report faulted Israel for requiring humanitarian convoys to be escorted by security forces.²⁴ But in another section the IPC acknowledged looting, unrest, and fatalities at aid sites as routine problems.²⁵ Security escorts address precisely these issues. The IPC criticized Israel for adding protection while simultaneously admitting that the absence of protection put civilians at risk.

The effect of these choices is consistent. Aid that improved conditions was minimized or erased. Violence that was decreasing was described as worsening. Standards for sufficiency were redefined once they were met. A key distribution hub was excluded from analysis. Security that protected convoys was portrayed as a hindrance. Each step tilted the narrative against aid efforts and against Israel, not in favor of accuracy.

Bias: Why does the IPC Fail to Disclose Severe Source Bias and Engage in Political Tilt?

The IPC leaned heavily on mortality data from the Gaza Ministry of Health without flagging the obvious reliability risks.²⁶ The MoH is controlled by Hamas, yet its figures were presented as neutral evidence of famine. Using partisan data without qualification not only misleads the international community but also compounds an already evident bias.

That bias is further reflected in the way the IPC framed Gaza as uniquely dire, declaring it had “never before” revisited a crisis so many times.²⁷ This framing implied Gaza was the worst food security emergency in the world. Yet IPC’s own records show that countries such as South Sudan, Yemen, and Madagascar have far larger populations in Phase 4 and 5 classifications, with numbers of children in need in South Sudan alone exceeding the entire population of Gaza.²⁸ The choice to elevate Gaza above these objectively worse cases reveals selective emphasis rather than neutral prioritization.

Together, reliance on compromised sources and disproportionate focus undermines the credibility of the IPC’s August declaration and reinforces the appearance of politicized analysis.

Conclusion

The speed of today’s media environment ensures that a famine declaration, once issued, is treated as fact. Journalists are not going to check Excel spreadsheets, replicate models, or reconcile contradictory surveys. The fact that these claims come from international human rights bodies staffed by professors and experts is taken as sufficient warrant. That presumption of integrity is precisely what makes the IPC’s malpractice so damaging.

²⁴ Haan et al., 2025, 8.

²⁵ Haan et al., 2025, 11.

²⁶ Fox, Andrew. *Questionable Counting: Analysing the Death Toll from the Hamas-Run Ministry of Health in Gaza*. Henry Jackson Society, Centre for a New Middle East, December 2024.

²⁷ Haan et al., 2025, 2.

²⁸ See IPC, “South Sudan: Acute Malnutrition Situation Projection Update for April - June 2025,” *n.d.* <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1159641/?iso3=SSD>

When a body like the IPC elevates alarmist models, suppresses contradictory evidence, and relies on partisan sources, the media is primed to broadcast those distortions without scrutiny. Headlines follow instantly, and the mere existence of the declaration becomes the story. In effect, the IPC hands the press a live grenade, and the press throws it without ever pulling the pin to see if it was real.

The problem is not just academic. It creates a destructive feedback loop. International organizations issue alarmist declarations because they know the press will carry them without question. The press, hungry for urgency, rewards those declarations with attention and coverage. Donors and audiences respond to the spectacle. The incentives all run in one direction: toward exaggeration, alarm, and politicization, and away from the careful, dispassionate work that humanitarian science demands.

For the media, this means famine alerts from IPC and similar bodies should no longer be treated as authoritative without independent verification. At a minimum, editors must demand transparency in data, model choice, and sourcing before reporting declarations as fact. For international organizations, it means reforming data standards and instituting independent review processes that prevent ideological agendas from driving technical assessments.

At stake is more than a single report. When famine alerts are manipulated, the credibility of the entire humanitarian system is degraded. What should be an instrument of truth and urgent relief instead becomes a weapon in political theater. The result is not only distorted public debate, but diminished capacity to respond to real suffering when it arises.

The IPC's famine declaration should no longer be accepted at face value. It must be investigated, and the structural incentives that reward alarmism in international human rights reporting must be confronted. Without reform, famine alerts will remain vulnerable to exploitation, and the public will continue to be starved not only of food, but of truth.