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High risk of famine persists across Gaza: new expert report

Nearly half a million people in the Gaza Strip continue to experience catastrophic levels of food insecurity, while “a high risk of famine persists” across the entire enclave, according to a [new analysis](#) by a group of UN-backed experts.

Overall, the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report found that 2.13 million people – 95% of Gaza’s population – are facing crisis levels of food insecurity or worse following almost nine months of near-total Israeli siege and war.

Israel’s military campaign has laid waste to basic infrastructure [needed to sustain life](#) in Gaza – including the [water system](#), [hospitals](#), and the [agricultural sector](#) – rendering the entire population dependent on humanitarian aid.

Meanwhile, the UN and aid groups say the amount of aid Israel has allowed to enter the enclave is insufficient to meet the needs of the population. Ongoing conflict, Israeli strikes that have [killed an unprecedented number of aid workers](#), access restrictions, the dissolution of public order, and other barriers make distributing aid within Gaza both dangerous and difficult.

The UN [reportedly](#) issued an ultimatum to Israel on 25 June, saying it would suspend aid operations across Gaza unless Israel takes urgent steps to protect aid workers. Israel, for its part, claims there are no aid shortages and [blames](#) the UN for issues with distribution.

A previous IPC analysis in March had [projected](#) that 1.1 million people would face catastrophic food insecurity in Gaza by July if food availability did not improve. The hunger situation was particularly acute in northern Gaza, where people were reduced to [eating grass and making bread from ground animal feed](#).

Under intense international pressure, Israel allowed bakeries to reopen in northern Gaza in mid-April and opened border crossings to allow flour and other supplies – albeit inconsistently and in still limited quantities – into an area of the enclave that had largely been cut off for months. These moves led to an improvement in the hunger situation, reflected in the new IPC report.

The report, however, notes that Israel’s ground invasion of Rafah, which began on 6 May, has forced the closure of the Rafah border crossings with Egypt in the south of Gaza, and disrupted the delivery of aid through the Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel – the two main entry points for aid. UN agencies have [said](#) that the disruptions could lead to a rapid deterioration of the hunger and malnutrition situation in the south.

On 16 June, Israel announced it would be pausing military operations in parts of southern Gaza during daylight hours to allow for the movement of aid. The UN, however, has [said](#) these pauses have done little to improve the amount of supplies coming in.

The Rafah offensive has also displaced over one million people to areas of Gaza with extremely limited water supplies and where essential infrastructure has largely been destroyed, raising the risk of disease outbreaks that prove catastrophic for an undernourished population, according to the IPC report.

Overall, the report painted a picture of what remains an incredibly dire and fragile food security situation. “Given the unpredictability of the ongoing conflict and humanitarian access challenges, any significant change may lead to a very rapid deterioration into famine,” it said.

For more on the man-made hunger crisis in Gaza, read:

