

The People of Gaza Are Being Deliberately Starved

Fakhri is the latest expert to confirm what we have been seeing for months.

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The U.N. special rapporteur on the right to food Michael Fakhri [charges](#) Israel with the deliberate starvation of the Palestinians of Gaza:

"There is no reason to intentionally block the passage of humanitarian aid or intentionally obliterate small-scale fishing vessels, greenhouses and orchards in Gaza – other than to deny people access to food," Michael Fakhri, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, told the Guardian.

"Intentionally depriving people of food is clearly a war crime. Israel has announced its intention to destroy the Palestinian people, in whole or in part, simply for being Palestinian. In my view as a UN human rights expert, this is now a situation of genocide. This means the State of Israel in its entirety is culpable and should be held accountable – not just individuals or this government, or that person."

The Israeli government has been inflicting collective punishment on the people of Gaza from the start of the war, and a major part of that punishment has been cutting them off from outside supplies of food, water, and fuel. Israeli forces have been systematically [destroying Gaza's local means of food production](#) since then. It has been clear from official statements and the actions of their government that they mean to harm the entire population. Fakhri is the latest expert to confirm what we have been seeing for months: the people of Gaza are being starved to death on purpose by the Israeli government.

The Secretary General of Doctors Without Borders, Christopher Lockyear, [spoke](#) before the U.N. Security Council last week and described the horrific conditions that have been created by the Israeli campaign and blockade:

This situation is the culmination of a war Israel is waging on the entire population of the Gaza strip – a war of collective punishment, a war without rules, a war at all costs. The laws and the principles we collectively depend on to enable humanitarian assistance are now eroded to the point of becoming meaningless.

Lockyear also detailed how MSF staff and facilities have repeatedly been attacked by Israeli forces. He said,

“Israeli forces are attacking our convoys, they are shooting at and raiding our hospitals, they are detaining our staff, and bulldozing our vehicles. For a second time, one of our staff shelters has been hit. This pattern of attacks is either intentional or indicative of reckless incompetence.”

The head of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Phillipe Lazzarini, [raised](#) the alarm last week that the agency was “on the brink” because of the decisions of U.S. and other governments to halt funding:

I fear we are on the edge of a monumental disaster with grave implications for regional peace, security and human rights.

It is important to remember that the U.S. and other Western governments that chose to halt funding for UNRWA did so on the basis of unproven Israeli claims that a handful of agency employees took part in the October 7 attack. The entire population is being made to suffer for the alleged wrongdoing of a few people. Fakhri [concludes](#) that the governments that have cut off funding to UNRWA are complicit in the deliberate starvation of Gaza’s people:

“Ending funding almost instantaneously based on unsubstantiated claims against a small number of people has no other purpose other than collective punishment of all Palestinians in multiple countries. The countries that withdrew this lifeline are undoubtedly complicit in the starvation of Palestinians,” Fakhri said.

Despite the International Court of Justice’s order that Israel must facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and enable basic services, Amnesty International [said](#) this week that “Israel has failed to take even the bare minimum steps to comply.” According to Amnesty, the small trickle of aid that has been allowed in has actually decreased in the weeks since the ICJ ruling. The Israeli government flouts international law because it assumes that it will never pay a real price for doing so, and so far the Biden administration has given them every reason to think that.

In addition to the severe hunger created by the blockade and the destruction of food production, the people of Gaza are suffering from the collapse of the health care system, the breakdown in public sanitation, and the rapid spread of disease. The New York Times [reported](#) over the weekend:

Prominent epidemiologists have estimated that an escalation of the war in Gaza could cause up to 85,000 Palestinian deaths over the next six months from injuries, disease and lack of medical care, in addition to the nearly 30,000 that local authorities have already reported since early October.

Children are obviously among the hardest hit by these disasters. The executive director of UNICEF [writes](#):

Even now, we estimate that at least 90% of Gaza's children under the age of five are affected by one or more infectious diseases, and that 70% have had diarrhea in the past two weeks — a 23-fold increase compared with the 2022 baseline [bold mine-DL].

The children of Gaza are especially vulnerable to the spread of disease because they are so badly malnourished. The spread of malnutrition in Gaza has been extraordinarily fast. Fakhri [spoke](#) about this in his comments to The Guardian:

"The speed of malnourishment of young children is also astounding. The bombing and people being killed directly is brutal, but this starvation – and the wasting and stunting of children – is torturous and vile [bold mine-DL]. It will have a long-term impact on the population physically, cognitively and morally ... All things indicate that this has been intentional," said Fakhri, a law professor at the University of Oregon.

Children are [dying of starvation](#) in Gaza right now. The youngest children are at the greatest risk, and there are reports of many young children perishing from hunger. One of the latest victims was a [two-month old infant](#), Mahmoud Fattouh. He will not be the last. UNICEF [warns](#) that there will soon be an "explosion of preventable child deaths" as a result of starvation.

This is the horrific and predictable result of the collective punishment of millions of people. Conditions will continue to deteriorate if the war is not halted and the blockade is not lifted. The U.S. is in a unique position to press for an end to both to avert an even greater man-made catastrophe, but our government refuses to do any of the things needed to prevent it from happening.

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