

UN Agencies Warn ‘Acute Food Insecurity’ Likely to Worsen in 18 Hunger Hot Spots

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As El Niño [looms](#) and fighting in Sudan [rages on](#), a pair of United Nations agencies on Monday warned that “acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate further in 18 hunger hot spots” across 22 countries from June to November.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP) delivered that warning in a joint [report](#).

“Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen remain at the highest concern level,” the report states. “Haiti, the Sahel (Burkina Faso and Mali), and the Sudan have been elevated to the highest concern levels; this is due to severe movement restrictions of people and goods in Haiti, as well as in Burkina Faso and Mali, and the recent eruption of conflict in the Sudan.”

“Pakistan, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Syrian Arab Republic are hot spots with very high concern, and the warning is also extended to Myanmar,” the publication continues. “Lebanon, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have been added to the list of hunger hot spot countries, since the September 2022 edition. Malawi, Guatemala, and Honduras remain hunger hot spot countries.”

□ Acute food insecurity set to worsen in 18 [#HungerHotspots](#) across 22 countries – □ [@FAO](#) [@WFP](#) report warns.

Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, the Sudan have been elevated to the highest alert level to join Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan & Yemen.

□ <https://t.co/0BDI7Eg8aT> pic.twitter.com/S0hmPFisCl

— FAO Newsroom (@FAOnews) [May 29, 2023](#)

The document stresses that worsening conditions in the hot spots occur in the context of a “global food crisis,” so “the countries and situations covered in this report highlight the most significant deteriorations of hunger expected in the outlook period” but do not represent all nations facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

“Conflict will disrupt livelihoods—including agricultural activities and commercial trade—as people are either directly attacked or flee the prospect of attacks, or face movement restrictions and administrative impediments,” the report states. “New emerging conflicts, in particular the eruption of conflict in the Sudan, will likely drive global conflict trends and impact several neighboring countries.”

“The use of explosive ordnance and siege tactics in several hunger hot spots continues to push people into catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity,” the document adds, “highlighting the critical role of humanitarian access in preventing the worst outcomes of hunger.”

The new report notably came as the WFP [announced](#) that on Saturday, six weeks since the fighting broke out in Sudan—[displacing](#) nearly 1.4 million people—the U.N. program was able to begin distributing food assistance to the thousands affected by the conflict in and around the capital Khartoum.

“This is a major breakthrough. We have finally been able to help families who are stuck in Khartoum and struggling to make it through each day as food and basic supplies dwindle,” said Eddie Rowe, WFP’s country director in Sudan, in a statement.

“We have been working round-the-clock to reach people in Khartoum since the fighting began,” Rowe added. “A window opened late last week which allowed us to start food distributions. WFP must do more, but that depends on the parties to the conflict and the security and access they realistically guarantee on the ground.”

□BREAKTHROUGH: The first distributions of WFP food assistance took place in [#Khartoum](#), Sudan for thousands of people trapped since fighting broke out six weeks ago.

The distributions come in the last days of a ceasefire set to expire Monday.

— World Food Programme (@WFP) [May 29, 2023](#)

Along with armed conflict, drivers of the deterioration in the report’s focal regions include economic issues and the climate emergency. The publication points out that last year, “economic risks were driving hunger in more countries than conflict was,” and “the global economy is expected to slow down in 2023—amid monetary tightening in advanced economies—increasing the cost of credit.”

“Weather extremes, such as heavy rains, tropical storms, cyclones, flooding, drought, and increased climate variability, remain significant drivers in some countries and regions,” the document explains, noting that experts [anticipate](#) El Niño conditions—or the [warming](#) of sea surface temperatures across the tropical Pacific Ocean—in the months ahead, “with significant implications for several hunger hot spots.”

The report emphasizes that “urgent and scaled-up assistance” in all hot spots “is essential to avert a further deterioration of acute food insecurity and malnutrition,” and in some cases, “humanitarian actions are critical in preventing further starvation and death.”

HUNGER HOTSPOTS:

□ A new report warns urgent assistance is required to protect lives and livelihoods and increase access to food.

□ The report identifies 18 regions where people are at the most risk of extreme hunger and malnutrition.

□ <https://t.co/HOFGtpjJ5i> pic.twitter.com/QbTFX0yyDf

— World Food Programme (@WFP) [May 29, 2023](#)

Agency leaders echoed the publication’s call to action. Cindy McCain, WFP’s executive director, [said](#) in a statement that “not only are more people in more places around the world going hungry, but the severity of the hunger they face is worse than ever.”

“This report makes it clear: We must act now to save lives, help people adapt to a changing climate, and ultimately prevent famine,” McCain declared. “If we don’t, the results will be catastrophic.”

FAO’s director-general, Qu Dongyu, stressed that “business-as-usual pathways are no longer an option in today’s risk landscape if we want to achieve global food security for all, ensuring that no one is left behind.”

“We need to provide immediate time-sensitive agricultural interventions to pull people from the brink of hunger, help them rebuild their lives, and provide long-term solutions to address the root causes of food insecurity,” he said. “Investing in disaster risk reduction in the agriculture sector can unlock significant resilience dividends and must be scaled up.”

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Featured image: Food is distributed to people displaced by Cyclone Freddy in Malawi on March 29, 2023. (Photo: Badre Bahaji/World Food Program)

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