



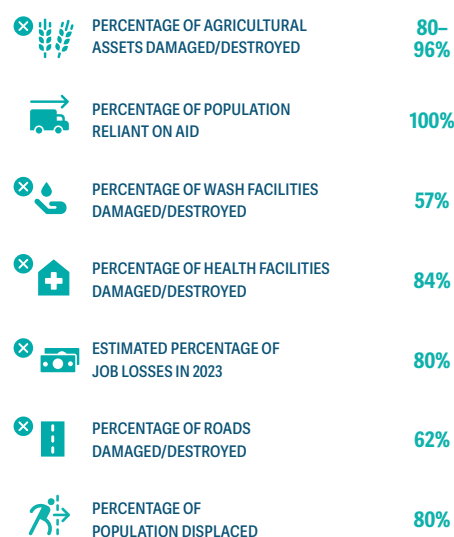
Focus | Palestine (Gaza Strip)

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By late 2023, the Gaza Strip had become the most severe food crisis in IPC and GRFC history, with 100 percent of its population (about 2.2 million people) facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

Between early December and early February, 0.6 million or 26 percent of the population were estimated to be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) and 1.2 million, or 50 percent of the population, in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). According to the IPC Famine Review Committee, the people of the Gaza Strip faced a risk of Famine through May 2024 with the risk increasing each day that hostilities continued or intensified, and restricted humanitarian access persisted or worsened (IPC Global Initiative, December 2023).

FIG. 2.57 Impacts of the conflict since October 2023



Source: WB, February 2024; UNRWA, February 2024.

An IPC analysis published on 18 March 2024, showed that the conditions necessary to prevent Famine – an immediate cessation of hostilities and sustained access to essential supplies and services for the population – had not been met.

Famine was projected to occur any time between mid-March and May 2024 in the governorates of Gaza and North Gaza, with a risk of Famine across the rest of the Gaza Strip through July 2024 (IPC Global Initiative, March 2024).

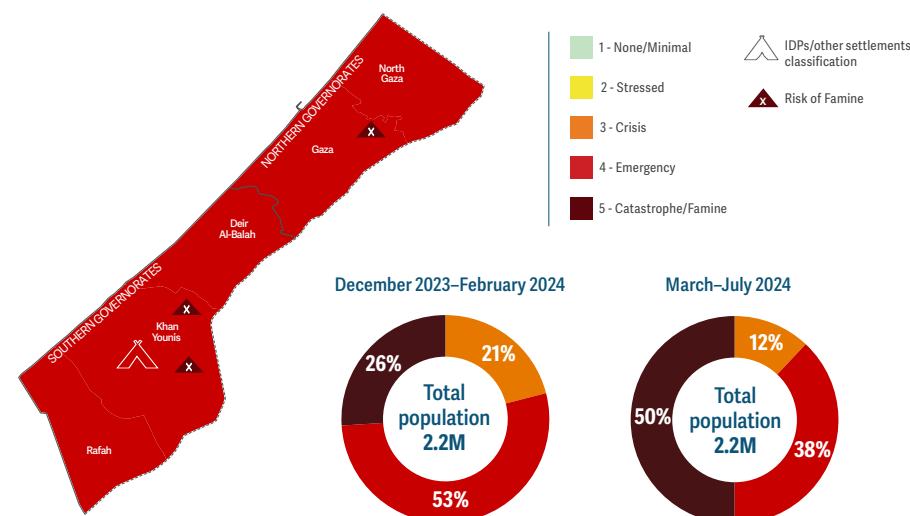
The devastation brought by relentless hostilities, besiegement, mass displacement, destruction of infrastructure indispensable to survival, and severely restricted humanitarian access drove half of the population (over 1.1 million people) into catastrophic acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5) in March–July 2024, reaching 70 percent of the population in northern governorates (IPC Global Initiative, March 2024).

As of 20 January 2024, an estimated 1.7 million people or over 80 percent of the population were internally displaced (UNRWA, February 2024) due to continued air, land and sea operations, destruction of shelter, military evacuation orders, and lack of access to food, basic services and humanitarian assistance. Many were displaced multiple times in search of safety. More than half the population of the Gaza Strip was living in displacement in Rafah governorate, raising the already extremely high population density to four times pre-conflict levels (OCHA, January 2024). The high population concentration, inadequate shelter and lack of access to basic services were major factors increasing the risk of Famine (IPC Global Initiative, December 2023).

A devastating escalation of an anthropogenic, protracted food crisis

Palestine – consisting of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank – has been identified as a major food

MAP 2.17 IPC acute food insecurity situation, December 2023–February 2024 and March–July 2024



Source: IPC Global Initiative, December 2023–March 2024.

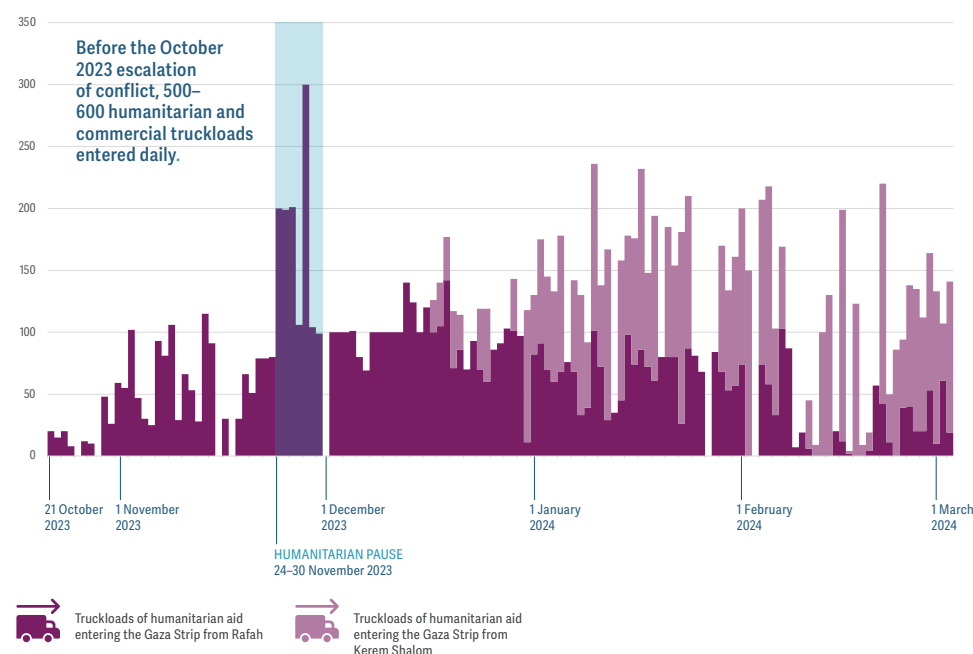
crisis in the last seven editions of the GRFC. The escalation of violence since 7 October 2023 drastically worsened the pre-existing and protracted crisis. Although the source of analysis changed, limiting data comparability, in 2022, 53 percent of the Gaza Strip's population, totalling 1.2 million people, faced high levels of acute food insecurity and required assistance (HNO 2023, January 2023).

Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, the ensuing economic blockade and restrictions imposed by Israel profoundly impacted daily living conditions, livelihoods and the local economy, resulting in high unemployment, food insecurity and dependency on aid (UNRWA, August 2023). During this 17-year-long economic blockade, Israel has also designated Access Restricted

Areas (ARAs) on both land and at sea, with up to 35 percent of the Gaza Strip's agricultural land and as much as 85 percent of its fishing waters affected at various points between 2007 and 2017 (UNSCO, July 2017). Between 2006 and 2022, real GDP per capita shrank by 37 percent, while the Gaza Strip's share in the Palestinian economy contracted from 31 percent to 17.4 percent (UNCTAD, October 2023).

High levels of debt, incurred primarily to meet basic needs, exacerbated households' financial precariousness: 79 percent of households had taken on debt in 2022 (MSNA, July 2022). During the second quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip exceeded 45 percent, soaring to over 73 percent for 19–29 year-old graduates with a diploma certificate or higher (PCBS, February 2023). In the same year, the percentage of the

FIG. 2.58 Daily truckloads of humanitarian aid entering the Gaza Strip, October 2023–March 2024



Source: UNRWA.

population living below the national poverty line stood at 53 percent (IMF, September 2023).

Even before early October 2023’s rapidly escalating hostilities, the Gaza Strip had been among the world’s top recipients of aid per capita with around 80 percent of Gazans dependent on international aid (UNCTAD, October 2023).

A multifaceted food crisis affecting all pillars of food security since October 2023

Food availability: Availability of food decreased due to the complete disruption of markets and commercial activities, extremely limited flows of humanitarian aid, and severe damage to agriculture and livestock production resulting from conflict and displacement. Between the beginning of the conflict in October 2023 and February 2024,

about 42.6 percent (6 700 hectares) of cropland in the Gaza Strip was damaged, with the Gaza governorate accounting for the most damage (1 900 hectares) (FAO, 2024). The port of Gaza City was damaged to the point of being non-operational (FAO, December 2023).

Considering the restrictions and the impossibility for the private sector to restart commercial activities, only minimal quantities of food items, primarily rice and vegetable oil, were available and household food stocks were limited/non-existent, particularly in central and northern governorates. In November 2023, no bakeries were operational in the northern governorates, and the supply of wheat flour had stopped (WFP Gaza Food Security Assessment, December 2023). Before the escalation, an average of 150–180 food trucks

entered the Gaza Strip daily. After the end of the humanitarian pause on 30 November 2023, an average of 30 food trucks entered daily with almost none reaching the northern governorates (IPC Famine Review Committee, December 2023) (see figure 2.58). Between 1 and 25 January 2024, eight of the 51 planned deliveries of food, medicines, water and other life-saving items reached northern governorates and 25 percent of humanitarian missions to Deir al-Balah governorate were denied access (OCHA, January 2024).

Agriculture was an important contributor to food availability before the conflict and the Gaza Strip’s food production allowed self-sufficiency in most fruits and vegetables (FAO-CIRAD-EU, 2023). Agricultural production will likely collapse in the northern governorates by May 2024, due to the displacement of farmers and breeders and the destruction of fields and other assets (IPC Famine Review Committee, December 2023).

Access to food: The few supplies of food that do exist are largely inaccessible. Prevailing insecurity and unclear safe zones (MSF, December 2023) limit physical access to food, whether from markets, solidarity networks or food distribution points. The economic repercussions of the conflict have left most residents without income, with the unemployment rate reaching 79 percent in December 2023 (UNCTAD, January 2023).

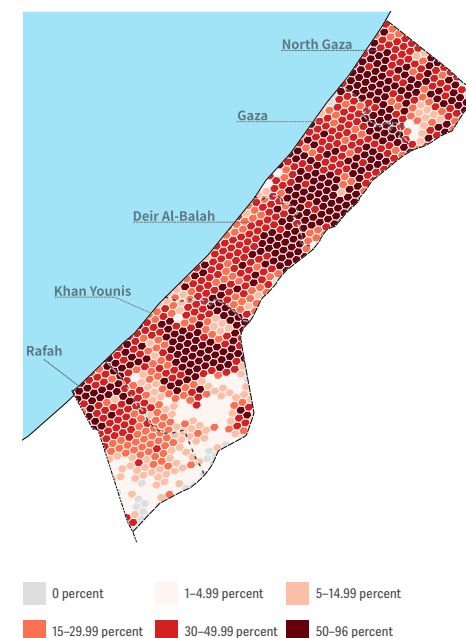
Finally, the scarcity of food commodities in markets led to soaring prices, with wheat flour prices increasing by approximately 50 percent between September and December 2023, vegetables by 200 percent, rice by 45 percent, and fuel by over 500 percent (WFP, December 2023).

Food utilization: Household capacity to prepare food that is available or accessible and individual capacity to absorb its nutrients are severely limited. Shortages of water and gas for cooking, as well as safety concerns, impair household ability to prepare meals, and poor quality of food, illness and disease limit individual capacity to derive nutrients. IDPs in the southern governorates reported an average access of less than 2 litres of

water per person per day, well below the 15 litres recommended minimum amount of water needed in an emergency (WFP, December 2023). The absence of cooking gas has resulted in a reliance on firewood, wood residues and waste burning as a primary source of cooking fuel for three out of four households, although few can access it (WHO, December 2023).

Stability: The situation at the end of 2023 and through early 2024 was extremely volatile, with active conflict and a lack of humanitarian assistance, particularly in the northern governorates. Households are unlikely to achieve stability in their access to food and basic services in the near future, with war remnants likely to have long-term impacts on livelihoods, basic services and shelter.

MAP 2.18 Conflict-related damage to agricultural land and infrastructure as of 15 February 2024



Source: FAO, 2024.

Fast-growing nutrition crisis threatening the lives of children and women in the Gaza Strip

Prior to the conflict, wasting levels among children under 5 years old were considered Very Low by WHO thresholds at 1 percent (Global Nutrition Cluster, February 2024). However, since October 2023, the intensifying and rapidly changing conflict dynamics placed all children aged under 5 years in the Gaza Strip at elevated risk of acute malnutrition and death. Areas with limited humanitarian aid are expected to see a more rapid malnutrition deterioration, while areas with better aid access may experience a slower yet ongoing decline, resulting in continued child wasting, maternal undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

Between January and March 2024, acute malnutrition deteriorated among children aged 6–23 months, particularly in North Gaza and Gaza governorates where limited aid access led to acute malnutrition rates doubling to 31 percent. Although aid mitigated acute malnutrition in Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah governorates, the overall prevalence increased from 1 percent pre-conflict to 6 percent (Global Nutrition Cluster, March 2024).

Some 90 percent of children under 2 years old and 95 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women face severe food poverty, consuming only two or fewer food groups per day. Around 64 percent of households only have one meal daily. More than 80 percent of households lack safe water and at least 90 percent of children aged under 5 years are affected by infectious diseases, with 70 percent experiencing diarrhoea (Global Nutrition Cluster, February 2024).

Regional repercussions of the conflict

The spillover effects of the conflict on immediately neighbouring countries – already experiencing domestic socioeconomic crises – could be significant. Potential impacts include higher and more volatile oil and gas prices and energy supply disruptions; public debt and fiscal pressures; inflationary pressures and protracted monetary



People, including children, wait in a long line to receive a small amount of food in the city of Rafah. Half of households are facing catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity in the Gaza Strip in March–July 2024.

tightening; currency depreciation/devaluation; trade diversion; increased transport/logistics costs; sectoral effects, including on tourism and agriculture; higher numbers of displacement; labour market disruptions; higher security provisions; and an overall decline in GDP, lower aggregate demand (including investment and consumer spending) and increases in poverty (UNDP, December 2023).

The impact of the conflict could also have longer-term implications stemming from the higher-risk environment it creates, affecting domestic and foreign direct investment, as well as political and social stability (UNDP, December 2023). The targeting of commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden is disrupting critical global trade routes, increasing shipping costs and transit times, creating uncertainty about the availability of commodities such as oil and grain, and applying upward pressure on global prices. This will

have a serious impact on food prices in a region where countries depend on imports (FEWS NET, December 2023).

In the **West Bank**, the conflict is having a grave impact on the economy due to the increased Israeli military presence, violence, road closures and restricted movement. An estimated 86.5 percent of industries indicate a decline in production capacity (WB, February 2024). Trade relationships with Israel, constituting one-third of the West Bank's GDP, have been severed (OCHA, November 2023). The Israeli government's suspension of work permits for West Bank Palestinians led to an estimated 208 000 job losses, approximately 24 percent of total employment in the West Bank (ILO, November 2023). Palestinian farmers in the West Bank had their land access permits revoked by the Israeli authorities after 7 October. Settler violence worsened the situation, leading to significant losses, including over 1 200 tonnes of

olive oil in 2023, amounting to a direct monetary loss of USD 10 million (OCHA, February 2024).

In **Egypt**, tourism has declined, persistently high inflation has eroded household purchasing power, the currency is depreciating, and investor confidence has significantly declined. Egypt is already facing an influx of refugees from the conflict in the Sudan (UNDP, December 2023).

Jordan, due to its geographical proximity to the conflict and economic ties with Israel, is facing socioeconomic, diplomatic and security challenges. Tourism, a major component of GDP, has already been affected, with uncertain prospects for revival. Unemployment remains high, and although energy and food price increases have been contained, vulnerable households are seeing their purchasing power eroded (UNDP, December 2023).

In **Lebanon**, the conflict in the Gaza Strip has resulted in more than 89 000 people displaced due to increased tensions on its southern border, with Israeli airstrikes and rockets towards Israel fired from southern Lebanon (OCHA, February 2024). Damaged public infrastructure and reduced tourism are exacerbating the already dire socioeconomic conditions characterized by soaring inflation and high rates of unemployment and poverty (UNDP, December 2023).

In **Yemen**, the ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region increased shipping costs due to rising freight and insurance rates along the Red Sea route, in addition to high fuel costs. These could affect markets and the provision of humanitarian assistance. In December 2023, the volume of imported food items registered a month-on-month decline of 17 percent via Red Sea ports and 62 percent via Aden and Mukalla ports. While staple food items remained accessible in markets throughout 2023, shortages in food supply during the first quarter of 2024 are expected if tensions escalate further in the region (WFP, January 2024).



Founded by the European Union, FAO and WFP in 2016, the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors committed to addressing the root causes of food crises and finding lasting solutions to them, through shared analysis and knowledge, strengthened coordination in evidence-based responses and collective efforts across the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus.



The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) is a technical global platform for the exchange of expertise, knowledge and best practices on food security and nutrition analysis. Its purpose is to promote timely, independent and consensus-based information about food crises, while also highlighting and addressing critical data gaps. As a key partner of the GNAFC, FSIN coordinates the publication of the *Global Report on Food Crises*.