Middle East and North Africa

2024 GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISES

JOINT ANALYSIS FOR BETTER DECISIONS

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In Palestine (Gaza Strip), acute food insecurity reached catastrophic levels in late 2023. The risk of Famine increased each day that the situation of intense conflict and restricted humanitarian access persisted.

Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, were still the largest food crises in the region in terms of numbers of people facing high acute food insecurity.

Thirteen years since the start of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic acute food insecurity among more than 12 million Syrians displaced internally and across borders is persisting or worsening amid deteriorating economic conditions and humanitarian funding shortfalls.

Conflict and financing shortfalls are undermining the delivery of WASH and health services, exacerbating diseases and contributing to high levels of acute malnutrition.

The outlook for 2024 is extremely concerning because of the intense conflict and restricted humanitarian access in the Gaza Strip, and risk of intensifying macroeconomic crises in the region, especially in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

Middle East and North Africa

More than half of the total analysed population across nine countries/territories in the MENA region faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023 as the region grappled with increasing insecurity and instability, growing poverty, high unemployment, soaring food prices, widespread forced displacement and emerging crises – notably the devastating escalation of hostilities in Palestine (Gaza Strip) from early October 2023.

36.7M

people or 54% of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023 in nine countries/territories.

22.2M

people forcibly displaced in nine countries/territories by 2023 – consisting of 12.3 million IDPs and 9.9 million refugees and asylum-seekers.

0.8M

acutely malnourished children under 5 years old in two countries, with 0.2 million of them suffering the most severe form of acute malnutrition.

Algeria (refugees) | Egypt (refugees) | Iraq (refugees) | Jordan (refugees) | Lebanon | Palestine (Gaza Strip and West Bank) | Syrian Arab Republic | Türkiye (refugees) | Yemen

MAP 2.15 **Numbers of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in nine countries/territories, 2023**

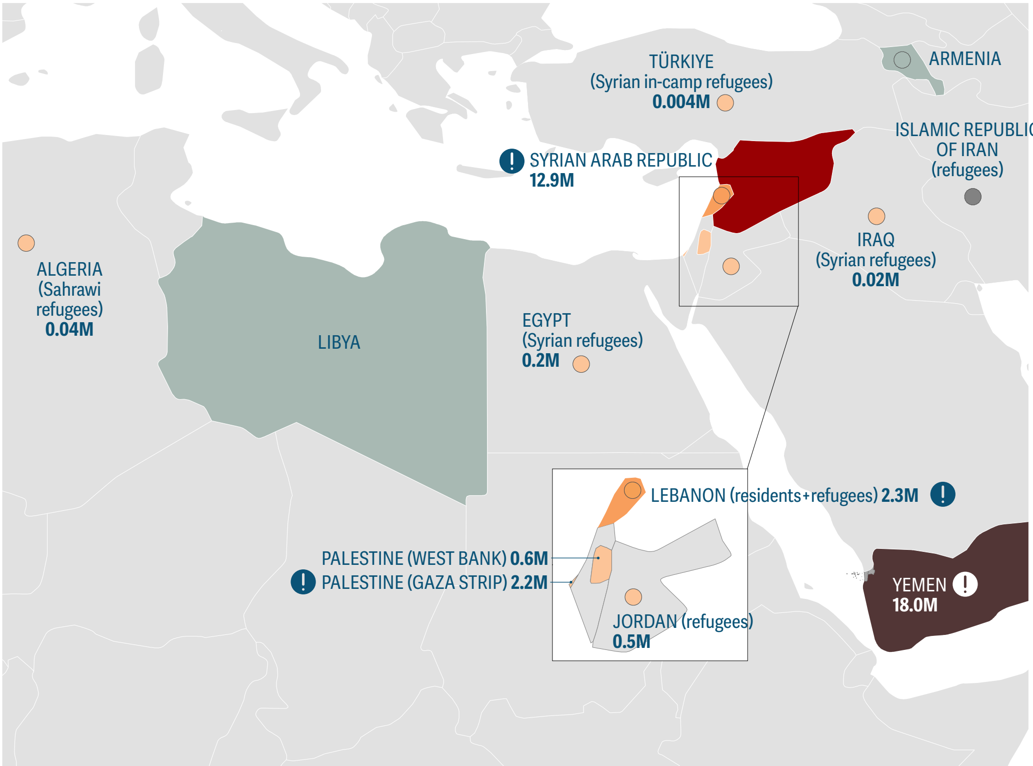
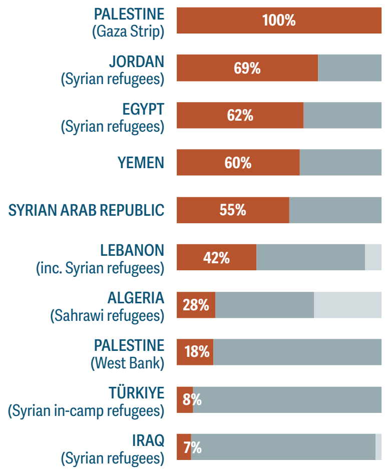


FIG. 2.49 **Share of analysed populations facing high levels of acute food insecurity, 2023**



In all countries/migrant and refugee populations, the total population was analysed, except Algeria's Sahrawi refugee population (67%), Lebanon's resident and refugee population (92%) and Iraq's refugee population (97%).

Share of analysed population in IPC Phase 3 + above or equivalent | Population analysed | Population not analysed

<1.0 million | 1–2.99 million | 3–4.99 million | 5–9.99 million | 10–14.99 million | ≥15 million | Not selected for analysis

Data not meeting GRFC technical requirements/population not analysed | Data gap | Major food crisis | Refugee populations (colour coding as legend)

Source: IPC TWGs; IPC Global Initiative; WFP CARI.

How have the food crises in this region changed since 2022?

Between 8 December 2023 and 7 February 2024, the entire population of Palestine (Gaza Strip) (about 2.2 million people) faced high levels of acute food insecurity – the highest share in IPC history (IPC, December 2023). The situation is projected to continue through July 2024. Palestine (West Bank) experienced a dramatic deterioration in acute food insecurity since 2022 linked to heightened violence, economic shocks and rising unemployment (HNO 2024, December 2023).

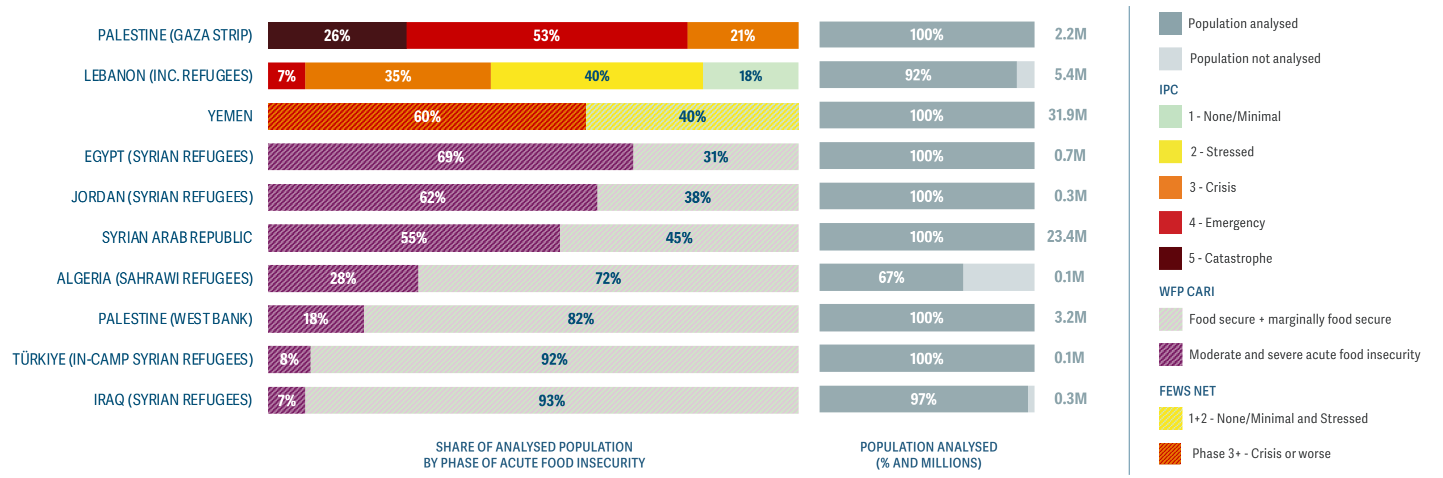
Yemen remained the largest food crisis in the region with 18 million people or 56 percent of its population facing high levels of acute food insecurity (FEWS NET, June 2023).

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the food crisis remained as critical as 2022, particularly for the country's 6.6 million IDPs as the economic situation continued to deteriorate amid a surge in conflict that led to more displacement (HNO 2024, December 2023).

In early 2023, Lebanon faced a worsening food crisis compared with 2022, with 42 percent of its analysed population facing high levels of acute food insecurity in January–April, up from 37 percent in September–December 2022 due to the worsening financial crisis and food inflation (IPC, December 2023).

Funding shortfalls for aid organizations limited the aid available for refugee populations. According to analyses of Syrian refugee populations, 69 percent in Egypt, 62 percent in Jordan and 53 percent in Lebanon faced high levels of acute food insecurity amid worsening socioeconomic crises in these host countries (WFP, 2023; IPC, December 2022). Around 28 percent of Sahrawi refugees in Algeria faced high levels of acute food insecurity. The acute food insecurity situation was less severe for Syrian refugees in Türkiye and Iraq.

FIG. 2.50 **Share of analysed populations by phase of acute food insecurity, 2023 peak**



Source: IPC Global Initiative (Palestine Gaza Strip); IPC TWG (Lebanon); FEWS NET (Yemen); HNO (Syrian Arab Republic and Palestine West Bank); WFP CARI (refugees).

Severity of acute food insecurity

Palestine (Gaza Strip) and Lebanon were the only territories/countries in the region that had countrywide IPC analyses with data disaggregated by phase. Around 4.5 million people were in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) in these two territories/countries with 2.2 million in Palestine (Gaza Strip) and 2.3 million in Lebanon.

Palestine (Gaza Strip) faced a risk of Famine with 0.6 million people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), representing 26 percent of its population, the highest number and share recorded in this phase for any country in IPC history

These people were experiencing an extreme lack of food, starvation and exhaustion of coping capacities from December 2023–February 2024. The Famine Review Committee concluded that the actual numbers were likely to be even higher than these estimates. The risk of Famine was expected to increase each day that the situation of intense hostilities and restricted humanitarian access persisted or worsened.

1.5 million people were in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) across two countries/territories

In Palestine (Gaza Strip), around half the population or 1.2 million people were in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) from December 2023 to February 2024, the highest share ever recorded for any country in IPC history. In Lebanon, 0.4 million people (7 percent) were in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Of them 0.1 million were Syrian refugees. In Akkar and Marjaayoun, around 20 percent and 15 percent of the Syrian refugee population respectively were in Emergency.

2.4 million people were in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) across two countries/territories

This consisted of 0.5 million people in Palestine (Gaza Strip) and 1.9 million in Lebanon. These populations are either facing large food consumption gaps and rising acute malnutrition levels or depleting essential livelihood assets and resorting to crisis-coping strategies to continue accessing food.

2.1 million people were in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) in one country

In Palestine (Gaza Strip), only 2 500 people were in this phase in December 2023–February 2024, representing less than 1 percent of the population. In Lebanon, 2.1 million people were in this phase, requiring support to reduce risks related to shocks and to protect their livelihoods.

Acute food insecurity since 2016

The Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have been among the world's worst food crises each year since the inception of the GRFC, while Palestine has been a major food crisis in seven out of eight editions. In 2023,Palestine (Gaza Strip) became the world's most severe food crisis.

For eight consecutive years, Yemen has been one of the ten countries with the largest populations facing high levels of acute food insecurity, and from 2016 to 2019, it had the largest number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in the report. For nearly a decade, more than half of the population has consistently been in IPC Phase 3 or above, driven by structural instability aggravated by the protracted conflict and other human-induced factors, and weather extremes (IPC, November 2022). It had populations in, or projected to be in, Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) each year from 2018 to 2022.

The Syrian Arab Republic has also been a major food crisis in all eight editions and has always been among the ten countries with the highest number of people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity. Since 2020, more than half of the population has been highly acutely food insecure due to the continuation of hostilities and compounding effects of the pandemic, adverse weather events, regional fragility and macroeconomic instability.

This is only the second year that Lebanon is included following the first IPC analysis carried out in September 2022. Before that food security analyses had focused on the country's Syrian refugee population. The country's financial crisis since 2019 has had grave consequences for the food security of resident and refugee populations.

Palestine (Gaza Strip and West Bank) has been included as a major crisis in seven out of eight editions of the report but changes in data sources limit comparability. Across the region, a lack of systematic and consistent data limits a more thorough analysis over time.

Outlook for 2024

The 2024 outlook depends on whether geopolitical tensions in the region escalate and on the dynamic of hostilities in Palestine. At the time of publication, the humanitarian space to deliver multisectoral assistance and services had not been restored and hostilities were ongoing.

Only three countries/territories in the region had projections for 2024 – Palestine (Gaza Strip), Lebanon and Yemen – with up to 22.37 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity.

An IPC analysis for Palestine (Gaza Strip) 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.

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 the northern governorates (IPC Global Initiative, March 2024).

The IPC projection for April–September 2024 in Lebanon indicated an improvement compared with the 2023 peak in January–April for the country's Lebanese residents, and Syrian and Palestine refugees, despite the persisting economic and financial crisis characterized by soaring inflation, currency depreciation and income losses. When the IPC analysis was carried out in early October 2023, it was assumed that tensions at the southern border would not escalate into a wider conflict.

Given Lebanon's heavy dependence on imports and tourism, its already-failing infrastructures and fragile value chains, and its dependence on remittances, any further escalation of the conflict would have harsh consequences (IPC, December 2023).

In Yemen, up to 19 million people or 60 percent of the population were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity through June 2024. WFP's pause in General Food Assistance (GFA) from December 2023 in areas under Sana'a-based Authorities (SBA) was likely to increase severe deprivation among nearly 9.5 million beneficiaries in the north.

If geopolitical tensions continue to escalate in the region, shipping and insurance rates along the Red Sea route could continue to rise and fuel and food imports via Red Sea ports could continue falling. These developments could manifest in increasing prices of basic goods, including food and medicines, for consumers already facing high poverty levels and depleted capacities to cope. Some key traders anticipated shortages in food supply if tensions escalate further in the region

Although no projection data were available, the alarming food crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and among so many of its 6.7 million refugees dispersed in five neighbouring countries shows no sign of abating. The HNO 2024 for the Syrian Arab Republic reported that erosion of basic service capacity was set to continue, with water and sanitation systems and public health services under immense strain, in a context of barely any development investment.

High inflation, the February 2023 earthquake, climate shocks and regional conflicts are increasing poverty and reliance on humanitarian assistance. Active conflict and military operations still impede humanitarian partners' ability to reach those in need and affected populations' ability to reach basic services and humanitarian assistance (HNO 2024). Reductions in assistance levels to populations that are dependent on it are likely to lead to negative coping strategies and could have implications for food security.

Drivers of the food crises, 2023–2024

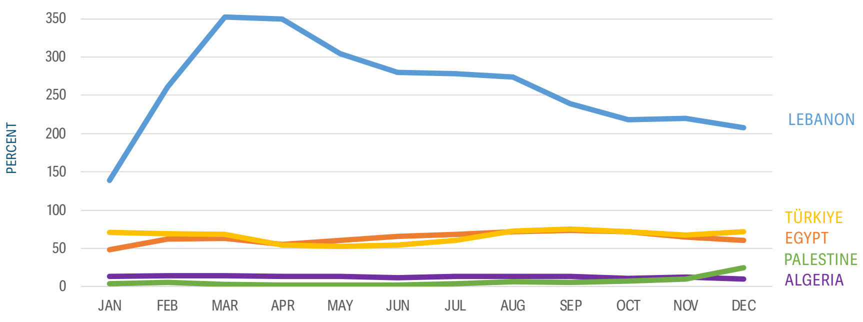
Conflict/insecurity was the primary driver in seven countries/territories where 21.5 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

Rising geopolitical tensions in the region fuelled conflicts, leading to mass displacements, strained resources and widespread acute food insecurity. Conflict/insecurity was the primary driver in Palestine and Yemen, as well as four countries hosting Syrian refugees (Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Türkiye) as a result of the 12-year conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and Algeria, which has hosted Sahrawi refugees for over 45 years since the Western Sahara conflict. Although conflict was still a significant driver of acute food insecurity in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon hosts the highest per capita share of Syrian refugees in the world, economic shocks were considered the primary driver in both countries.

The continued hostilities in the Gaza Strip and the escalating situation in the West Bank have posed immense difficulties for humanitarian responses (GHO 2024, December 2023), and threaten regional security and economic conditions (3RP, March 2024). The loss of agricultural, livestock and fishing production, widespread damage to farmland, greenhouses, bakeries and warehouses, as well as restrictions on commercial traffic have created catastrophic food shortages in the Gaza Strip (OCHA, January 2024) (*see Focus: Palestine (Gaza Strip), page 133*).

Relative stability between the internationally recognized government (IRG) and Sana'a-based authorities (SBA) in Yemen continued throughout 2023 after a truce formally ended in October 2022, but active fighting continued in the frontline districts, leading to displacement and disruption to provision and access to basic services. In November and December 2023, SBA forces' activities in the Red Sea threatened to destabilize the uncertain truce and induce reprisal attacks on Yemen by international coalition forces (FEWS NET, December 2023).

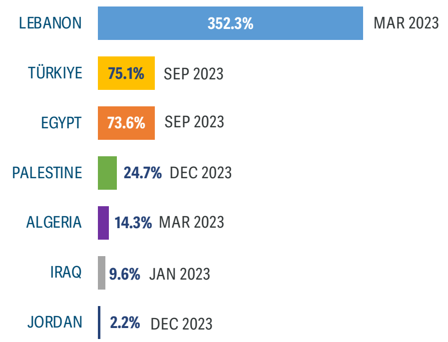
FIG. 2.51 **Annual food inflation exceeded 50 percent each month in Lebanon, Türkiye and Egypt throughout 2023**



This graph only includes countries/territories where food inflation peaked at over 10 percent in 2023.

Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

FIG. 2.52 **Highest annual food inflation rate by country/territory, 2023**



Source: Trading Economics, 2024.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, following the non-renewal of UN Security Council Resolution 2672 (2023), humanitarian access to northwestern areas remained highly constrained. The March 2020 ceasefire continued to be violated on an almost daily basis (ECHO, January 2024). In October 2023, northern Syria and Deir-ez-Zor Governorate witnessed the most significant escalation of hostilities since 2019, resulting in the displacement of over 120 000 people (OCHA, December 2023).

As hostilities escalated from early October in Palestine (Gaza Strip), violent cross-border incidents along Lebanon's southern border increased in number and intensity, causing displacement and shutting down economic activity. This was expected to have a significant impact on key economic sectors in Lebanon, particularly tourism and services (UNDP, December 2023).

Economic shocks were the primary driver in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic where 15.1 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

Widespread unemployment, high inflation and economic instability have left vulnerable populations across all countries in the region struggling to meet basic needs, including food.

Lebanon remained mired in a deep financial crisis, mitigated to a small extent by increased tourism and remittances. Record high depreciation of the local currency in early 2023 continued to lead to soaring inflation – due to Lebanon's high import dependency – and especially impacted households with limited access to US dollars.

Food inflation reached 352 percent in March 2023 with the greatest impact on vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugee households dependent on local currency incomes (IPC, December 2023).

Battered by years of conflict and the spillover effects from the financial crisis in Lebanon that, until 2019, used to act as a financial intermediary, the national economy in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to weaken. Accelerating currency depreciation throughout 2023, coupled with fuel scarcity, fuel price increases and rising transportation and freight charges, contributed to rising prices of both imported and domestically produced food (FAO-GIEWS, January 2023; WB, Summer 2023).

By October 2023, the cost of the food basket in the Syrian Arab Republic had doubled compared with January and had quadrupled in two years (HNO 2024, December 2023). The government's almost complete removal of fuel and agricultural production input subsidies, especially for fertilizers, was expected to add to the cost-of-living crisis, especially during the winter (FAO & WFP, October 2023). The rising costs of agricultural inputs have significantly reduced their use and the yield of the area planted (FAO, 2023).

In southern IRG-controlled areas of Yemen, the SBA's ongoing blockade of oil exports significantly exacerbated pre-existing shortages of government revenue and foreign exchange. By December, fuel and food prices in these areas remained high, primarily due to continuous currency depreciation. But in northern areas under the SBA, fuel and food prices were more stable mainly due to currency appreciation (WFP, January 2024). Several rounds of reductions to humanitarian food assistance since 2022 have stretched households' resources (FEWS NET, January 2024; WFP, January 2024).

Natural disaster was not a primary driver but a significant one in Northwest Syrian Arab Republic and for Syrian refugees in Türkiye.

In February 2023, the earthquakes in southeastern Türkiye and Northwest Syrian Arab Republic uprooted hundreds of thousands of families, and severely damaged infrastructure. Many families lost their main breadwinner due to death or injury, at a time when the economic situation was already dire, increasing the vulnerability of millions of people previously unable to meet their basic needs. The five most severely affected governorates – Aleppo, Hama, Idleb, Lattakia and Tartous – account for roughly 42 percent of the country's total population (HNO 2024, December 2023).

The earthquake displaced an estimated 0.7 million people, more than 98 percent of them in Aleppo, Idleb and Lattakia governorates, the same area where more than half of all IDPs in the country are living (IDMC, August 2023). It caused temporary but widespread economic and trade disruptions, and delays in delivering humanitarian assistance. The pre-existing vulnerability of Syrian households has left many ill-equipped to cope with its lingering economic impact (WB, Summer 2023).

Structural vulnerabilities underlie the region's food insecurity crises

Poverty and inequality, including gender and power dynamics, high population growth, high exposure to natural hazards, and low levels of education magnify the negative effects of conflict, weather extremes and economic shocks on food security.

Several countries of the region are also dealing with crippling budget deficits and high levels of public debt, meaning that governments are unable to provide the much-needed development investments or social safety nets (Middle East Council on Global Affairs, February 2023). Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen received Very High or High INFORM risk scores, which is a

TABLE 2.6 **Structural vulnerabilities indicators**

	Annual population growth: UNDESA for population (%)	Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance (%)	Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment (%)	Crop growing period affected by drought condition (%)	INFORM Risk Index (0–10)	HDI global ranking (1–192)
ALGERIA	2.8	70.8	10.3	25.06	3.6	91th
EGYPT	2.1	47.4	19.8	7.1	4.9	97th
IRAQ	2.1	50.0	19.8	14.87	6.7	121st
JORDAN	6.8	100.0	3.2	15.62	3.8	102nd
LEBANON	2.8	97	3.8	23.15	4.1	112th
PALESTINE	0.9	N/A	N/A	14.51*	3.7	106th
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	2.1	29.2	12.5	13.52	7.2	150th
TÜRKIYE	2.5	11.3	17.1	N/A	4.8	48th
YEMEN	1.4	9.8	28.1	14.75	7.5	183rd

* West Bank

Source: UNDESA (Annual population growth); FAO (Cereal import dependency weighted by caloric relevance); FAO (Share of agricultural, forestry and fishery employment); EC-JRC (Crop growing period affected by drought condition); EC-JRC (INFORM Risk Index); UNDP (HDI Global Index).

composite indicator of a country's ability to respond to disasters based on hazard exposure, socioeconomic vulnerability and institutional coping capacity. Yemen and Syrian Arab Republic are in the lowest 40 of the 191 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI), a reflection of their poor health resources, limited education opportunities and low incomes.

The region is characterized by arid climates and limited freshwater resources, making agriculture heavily reliant on irrigation. Poor water management practices, coupled with the impacts of climate change, lead to dwindling water supplies for agriculture, reducing crop yields and jeopardizing food production. Eleven MENA countries are among the 17 most water-stressed countries in the world. The ASAP index shows that for all countries in the region, both crop and rangelands growing seasons are significantly affected by drought conditions affecting more than 25 percent of their total area. For Egypt, this is less problematic than for the other countries in the region due to its high share of irrigated crop land.

Despite the difficulties of producing food in the region, 20 percent of total employment in Egypt and Iraq, and 28 percent in Yemen, is in agriculture (FAO 2023).

The region also has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, meaning demand for food will keep growing while resources are being depleted. The rates are highest in Jordan at 6.8 percent (UNDESA).

With modest local food production and high population growth, the region heavily relies on other parts of the world to meet its food needs. An overreliance on food imports rather than domestic production, combined with weak, distorted and non-resilient supply chains, make the region more vulnerable to rising global prices and external shocks (Middle East Council on Global Affairs, February 2023).

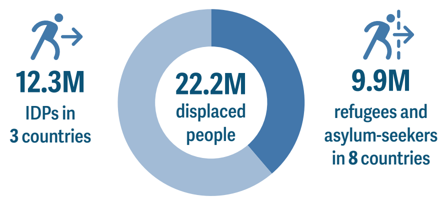
DISPLACEMENT | Across the ten food-crisis countries/territories, 22.2 million people were displaced within their own countries or as refugees across borders, many of them for years and/or repeated times, leading to overcrowded camps and strained host communities.

For IDPs and refugees, the consequences of protracted displacement were aggravated by worsening socioeconomic conditions in host countries, pushing these already-vulnerable populations further into poverty. In the past year, new conflicts as well as natural disasters have shaken the region, generating yet more challenges.

Alarming levels of acute food insecurity among IDPs in Palestine (Gaza Strip), the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen

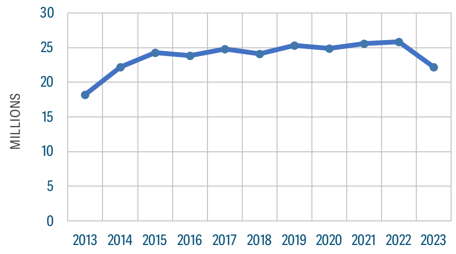
By the end of 2023, most of the Gaza Strip's population were internally displaced. In the southern governorates, almost all IDPs (91 percent) reported having no food to eat because of lack of resources to get food in the four weeks before the assessment and a similar proportion reported going to sleep at night hungry for lack of food. Half were going entire days and nights without

FIG. 2.53 **Numbers of IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers in the region (in millions), 2023**



Source: UNHCR, IOM, December 2023.

FIG. 2.54 **Numbers of forcibly displaced people in the region, 2013–2023**



The decrease between 2022 and 2023 could be explained by a change in methodology.

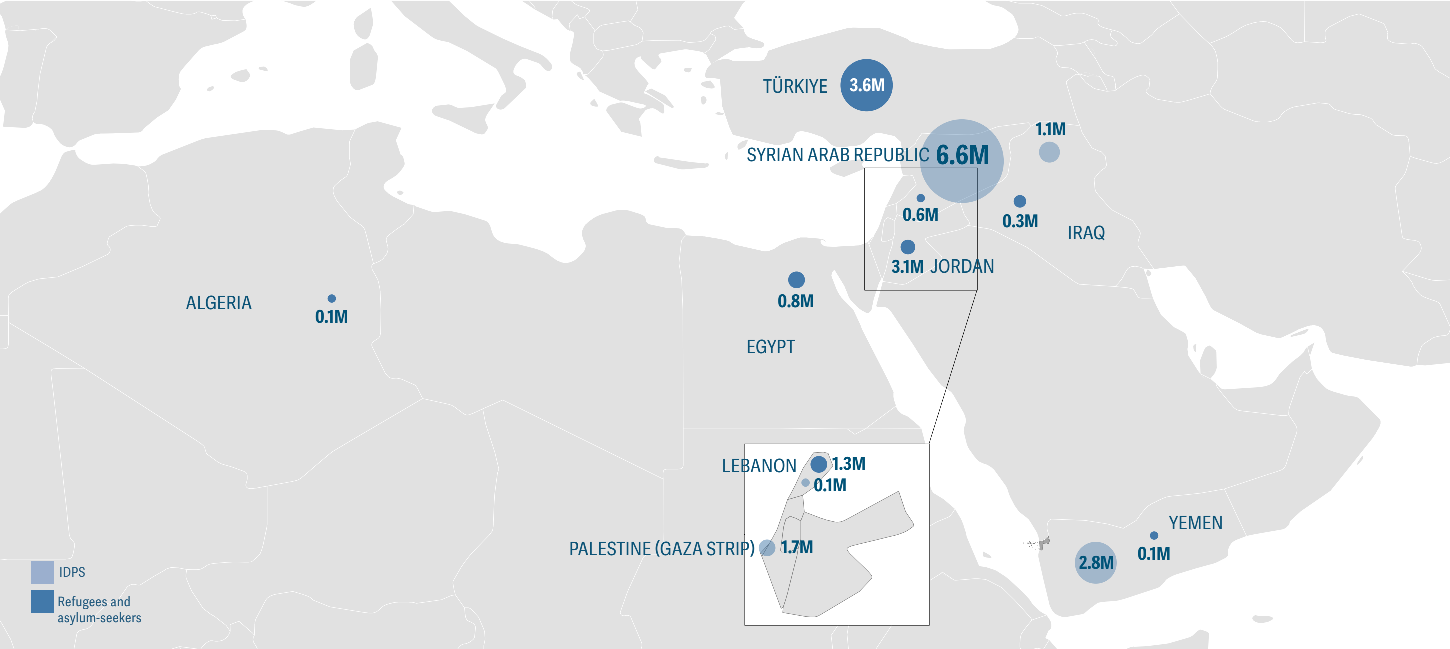
Sources: 2013-2022, UNHCR, IDMC, UNRWA; 2023, UNHCR nowcasted estimates, December 2023, IOM, UNRWA.

eating. With limited access to safe water, health, sanitation and other basic services, the risk of a large infectious disease outbreak was growing (IPC, December 2023) (*see Focus: Palestine (Gaza Strip), page 133*).

The Syrian Arab Republic has one of the largest populations of IDPs globally, with around 6.6 million mainly displaced by conflict and violence. Around two-thirds of them are in the Northwest, most since the intensifying violence of 2013 and 2014 (IDMC, 2024). Some 2.1 million live in 1 500 often-overcrowded IDP sites with insufficient shelter, infrastructure and basic services. All IDPs living in camps and half of those living out of camps faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2023 (HNO 2024, December 2023).

In February 2023, the earthquakes that struck the region severely compounded their hardship. Of the reported 0.7 million people displaced by the earthquakes in Northwest Syrian Arab Republic – mainly in Aleppo, Idleb and Lattakia governorates – 90 percent had already been forced to flee their homes due to conflict in previous years. Many could not access emergency/humanitarian aid, and even after six months, this remained a challenge with more than 114 000 people still displaced, most in camps. Limited data collection hampered comprehensive situation assessments, which also hindered response efforts (IDMC, August 2023).

MAP 2.16 **Numbers of IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers by country/territory, 2023**



Source: IOM, UNHCR and UNRWA, 2023.

Yemen remained among the ten countries with the highest number of IDPs in the world. Following nine years of conflict, sustained economic deterioration and diminished public services, IDPs face high levels of vulnerability. Most have been displaced for years, many more than once. About 1.6 million live in 2 400 camp-like hosting sites where competition over access to and use of land and water resources results in disputes with host communities, hampering the provision of shelter, health and WASH services, as well as humanitarian assistance. The remaining 2.9 million live in rental accommodation or hosting arrangements, most without rental agreements, exposing them to arbitrary price increases (HNO 2023, December 2022). Levels of wasting are higher among IDP children (12.3 percent) than among host community children (9.8 percent) (SMART 2022).

Acute food insecurity among refugee populations

The lives of refugees and those in host communities have become more challenging, exacerbated by high inflation rates and limited access to social services and economic opportunities.

Thirteen years since the start of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, 6.7 million Syrian refugees are still hosted by neighbouring countries – in Egypt, which has also received an influx of refugees from the Sudan since April 2023, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye.

The socioeconomic crises in host countries and rising poverty among host communities, coupled with declines in funding for the Syrian crisis, pose a significant risk of exacerbating tensions in several countries, potentially undermining socioeconomic stability. The February 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic exacerbated this already-dire situation (3RP, January 2024). The prevalence of high acute food insecurity reached particularly high levels among Syrian refugee populations in Jordan at 62 percent (WFP, July 2023) and Lebanon (53 percent) (IPC, September 2022), and among all refugees in Egypt (69 percent) *(see pages 136–141 for country-level overviews).*

Lebanon hosts 1.3 million registered refugees and asylum-seekers, consisting of 0.8 million (mainly from Syrian Arab Republic), as nowcasted by UNHCR in December 2023, and 0.5 million Palestine refugees (UNRWA, September 2023). The number of Syrian refugees is as high as 1.5 million when including unregistered refugees (IPC, December 2023). Structural marginalization (including employment and property ownership restrictions) compounded by 74 years of forced displacement, coupled with the deepening socioeconomic crisis in Lebanon, have pushed many Palestine refugees deeper into poverty (3RP, January 2024).

From October 2023 to March 2024, 26 percent of Palestine refugees in Lebanon and 35 percent of the Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic living in Lebanon were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC, December 2023).

The majority of the population of the Gaza Strip have been refugees since the 1967 war. Even before the escalation of conflict in October 2023, poverty rates among refugees residing inside and outside the eight refugee camps in the Gaza Strip had reached 82 percent (UNRWA & PCBS, November 2021). As of the second quarter of 2022, 47 percent of Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip were unemployed (HNO 2023, January 2023).

Algeria has hosted Sahrawi refugees for over 45 years. In 2023, 173 600 lived in isolated camps near Tindouf in the Sahara Desert where they face limited livelihood opportunities and harsh environmental conditions. Due to the critical shortage of funding, minimum humanitarian standards cannot be met in most sectors, and most refugees are believed to live below the poverty line (UNHCR, 2023). Around 28 percent of the analysed population of 133 700 people faced high levels of acute food insecurity in June 2023, according to CARI methodology (WFP, June 2023).

Nearly 100 000 refugees in Yemen, mainly from Somalia, endure overcrowded spaces without access to water or sanitation, particularly in urban areas. The collapse of the economy and public services, and legal barriers to formal employment, have severely affected their capacity to be self-reliant. They often suffer high levels of stigma, discrimination and exclusion from local systems of support and community-based protection mechanisms and frequently lack access to health care, shelter or cash (HNO 2023, December 2022).

ACUTE MALNUTRITION | Only two of the nine food-crisis countries/territories had data on the burden of acute malnutrition among children under 5 years old in 2023 – the Syrian Arab Republic and a partial analysis for Yemen.

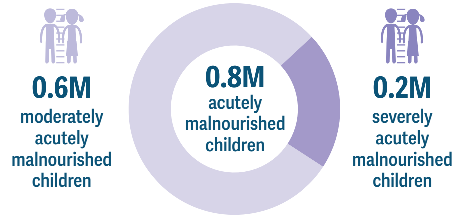
Reports from Palestine (Gaza Strip) confirm an escalating acute malnutrition crisis (*see Focus: Palestine (Gaza Strip), page 133*).

In Yemen, in June–September 2023, all 16 analysed zones in IRG-controlled areas were classified in Serious or worse (IPC AMN Phase 3 or above). Of them, seven were in Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) in the lowlands of Abyan, Shabwah, Hodeidah Southern Lowlands, Ta'iz Lowland, Ta'iz City, Ad Dhali' and Lahj Lowland (IPC AMN, June 2023). Around 14 percent of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) were acutely malnourished. Prevalence was even higher among PWB (25 percent) and among IDP women (16 percent) (SMART 2021-2022).

In the Syrian Arab Republic, according to a 2022 SMART survey conducted in nine northwestern districts in Aleppo and Idleb governorates near the Turkish border, the prevalence of GAM increased from 2.5 percent in 2021 to 3.3 percent in 2022, and the prevalence of SAM from 0.4 percent to 0.9 percent. This GAM prevalence is considered Low by WHO thresholds in spite of very high levels of acute food insecurity. Acute malnutrition appears to be far more concerning among pregnant and breastfeeding women than children. Nationally around 13 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women were acutely malnourished due to poor diets and suboptimal treatment programmes (SMART 2022).

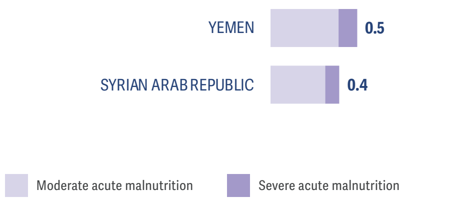
Among Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf camp in Algeria, 11 percent of children under 5 years old were acutely malnourished, which is considered a High prevalence (UNHCR, September 2022).

FIG. 2.55 **Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition in two food crises, 2023**



Source: Syrian Arab Republic HNO/HRP 2023; Yemen IPC TWG, June 2023.

FIG. 2.56 **Number of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition by country, 2023 (millions)**



Source: Syrian Arab Republic HNO/HRP 2023; Yemen IPC TWG, June 2023.

Drivers of acute malnutrition

Lack of food In Palestine (Gaza Strip), the latest data show that virtually all households are skipping meals every day. In four out of five households in the northern governorates and half the displaced households in the southern governorates, people go entire days and nights without eating. Many adults go hungry so children can eat (IPC, December 2023). Women and girls are expected to be hit the hardest by the unprecedented levels of acute food insecurity levels as women tend to vastly deprioritize their food intake when access to food is restricted. This puts pregnant and breastfeeding women at even higher health and malnutrition risks, not only to themselves but to their babies (UN Women, January 2024).

In Lebanon, more than one in every four children under the age of 5 (among Lebanese and refugee population) – or 85 000 children – live in and suffer from extreme food poverty, being fed extremely poor diets consisting of at most two food groups, often cereal and possibly some milk (UNICEF, 2023).

Inadequate practices Across the conflict-affected countries in the region, high levels of displacement diminish the capacity of mothers to care for their children. In Yemen, around 20 percent of children under 6 months old are exclusively breastfed in the first six months of life in two-thirds of analysed areas, which is classified as Critical by UNICEF. About 11.5 percent of children aged 6–23 months receive a Minimum Acceptable Diet with prevalence below 6 percent in Shabwa, Al-Jawf and Al-Baidha (IPC, June 2023). In Syrian Arab Republic, only 4.6 percent of children aged 6–23 months receive an MAD, down from 11 percent in 2021 (SMART 2022). Child-feeding practices are extremely concerning in Lebanon with an Extremely Critical 6 percent of children aged 6–23 months receiving an MAD (SMART 2022).

Inadequate services Conflict and severe government and humanitarian financing shortfalls are devastating the provision of WASH and health services, exacerbating communicable diseases.

The availability of water in the Gaza Strip stands at a fraction of pre-crisis levels. Lack of hygiene is leading to escalating numbers of communicable diseases – acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea and hepatitis A – while the conflict's devastating impact on health care is severely limiting the capacity to respond (OCHA, January 2024).

In Yemen, eight years of conflict and economic collapse have devastated health, nutrition, WASH and other child and maternal health support services. These factors, coupled with low immunization coverage, have led to the high prevalence of diseases and elevated acute malnutrition levels (IPC, June 2023). Between July and December 2023, Yemen had the highest number of reported measles cases in the world (18 500) (CDC, February 2024).

Water shortages in many regions of the Syrian Arab Republic due to reduced flow of the Euphrates River and lower rainfall have led to dangerously low water levels in dams, forcing people to rely more on well water, which is also in short supply and becoming more saline and polluted, posing a health risk. In the northeast, where small communities and informal sites are cut off from water networks, populations often rely on untreated water sources and inadequate sewage systems, increasing the risk of waterborne disease, especially cholera (REACH, November 2023).

When the earthquakes hit Northwest Syrian Arab Republic in February 2023, communities were already experiencing a cholera outbreak, overwhelmed health facilities and harsh winter weather (Nutrition Cluster, Save the Children, UNICEF, February 2023).

In Lebanon, the exodus of doctors and nurses is severely undermining service delivery. The increasing cost of medicines following the removal of subsidies has pushed them out of the reach of vulnerable families. Many wastewater treatment facilities are not functional or ceased operations due to electricity cuts and budget shortages, leading to increasingly severe sanitation issues (OCHA, 2023).

Focus | Palestine (Gaza Strip)

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**

PERCENTAGE OF AGRICULTURAL ASSETS DAMAGED/DESTROYED	80–96%
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION RELIANT ON AID	100%
PERCENTAGE OF WASH FACILITIES DAMAGED/DESTROYED	57%
PERCENTAGE OF HEALTH FACILITIES DAMAGED/DESTROYED	84%
ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF JOB LOSSES IN 2023	80%
PERCENTAGE OF ROADS DAMAGED/DESTROYED	62%
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION DISPLACED	80%

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).

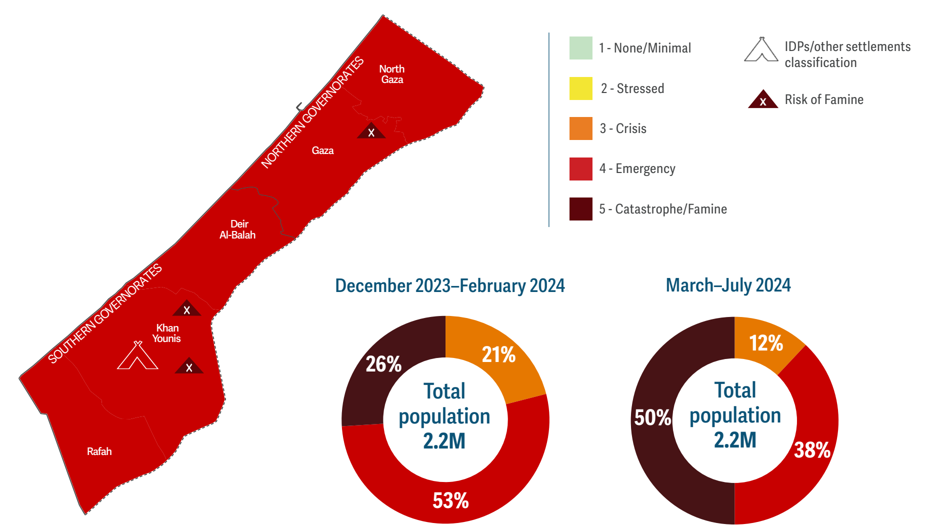
A devastating escalation of an anthropogenic, protracted food crisis

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

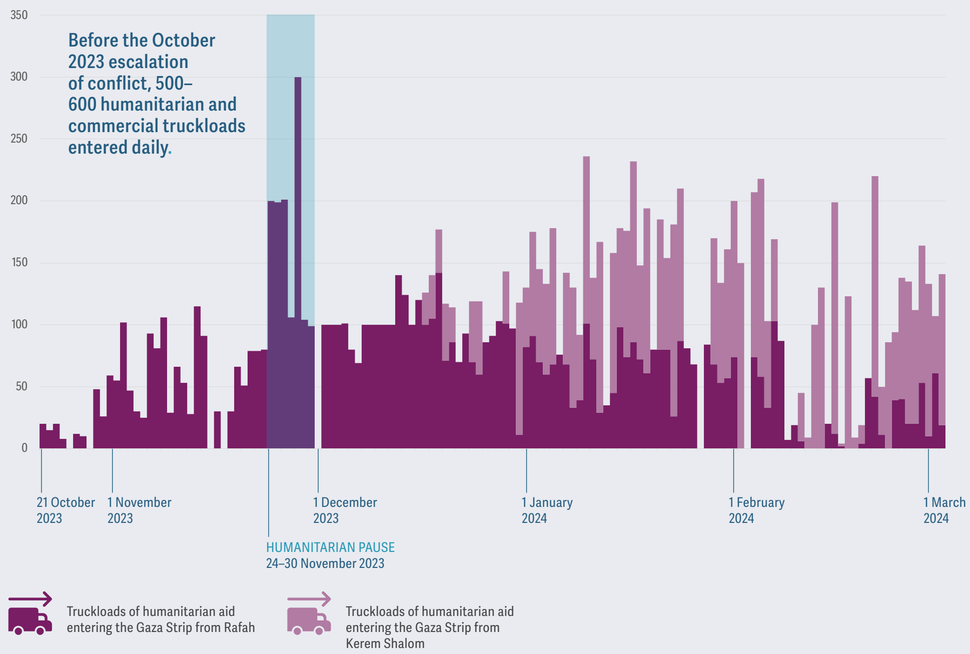
High levels of debt, incurred primarily to meet basic needs, exacerbated households' financial precariousness: 79 percent of households had taken on debt in 2022 (MSNA, July 2022). During the second quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip exceeded 45 percent, soaring to over 73 percent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

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



Source: IPC Global Initiative, December 2023 March 2024.

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 deficiences.

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).

Global Network Against Food Crises
INTEGRATED ACTIONS FOR LASTING SOLUTIONS

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.

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FSIN Food Security Information Network
Joint analysis for better decisions

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*.

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