

Community kitchens shut down in Gaza, as food runs out

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Dozens of community kitchens in Gaza were forced to shut down on Thursday due to lack of food, amidst Israel's ongoing blockade aimed at starving the Palestinian population and annexing their land.

Amjad al-Shawa, director of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network, told Reuters on Thursday that most of Gaza's 170 community kitchens had shut down. Al-Shawa said:

Everyone in Gaza today is hungry. ... The remaining kitchens will be closing soon. The hunger catastrophe is beyond words. People are losing their only source of food.

He continued:

I am afraid that we may begin to witness deaths among the elderly, vulnerable children, pregnant women and the ill.

Also on Thursday, the World Central Kitchen (WCK) charity announced that it had run out of food and was forced to shut down its community kitchens in Gaza. WCK founder José Andrés said:

Our trucks—loaded with food and supplies—are waiting in Egypt, Jordan and Israel, ready to enter Gaza. ... But they cannot move without permission. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to flow.

Huda Abu Diyya, sheltering in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, told Reuters:

If it weren't for the community kitchen, we would

have died. For the sake of our children, what shall we do? ... What should I feed them tomorrow? ... Nothing is available here. The situation is below zero. A bit more like this, and we will die of hunger.

Israel began the total blockade of food, water and electricity in the Gaza Strip on March 2, when it unilaterally abrogated a ceasefire with Hamas. According to the UN, over 2 million people are facing severe food shortages. The price of flour has risen 100-fold since the start of the blockade.

One-third of UN-run community kitchens in Gaza have closed within the past 10 days due to lack of food and fuel, with the UN warning that more closures are imminent. "The hot meals provided by these kitchens constitute one of the last remaining lifelines" for Palestinians, the UN's humanitarian office stated.

According to the Palestinian Water Authority, most people in Gaza are surviving on just 3 to 5 liters of water per day, only one-third to one-fifth of the minimum daily amount that humanitarian experts say is necessary for survival.

More than 10,000 children in Gaza have been diagnosed with acute malnutrition, according to the World Health Organization. The number of new cases surged to 3,600 in March, up from 2,000 the previous month.

In a statement this week, the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor wrote:

These outcomes are not incidental. They reflect a deliberate policy aimed at disrupting the natural development of individuals and society, and dismantling the biological and social foundations of the Palestinian community. This reveals a clear intent to destroy—one of the defining hallmarks of the crime of genocide under international law, especially when executed through slow, cumulative tools such as siege and systematic, sustained starvation.

Lima Bastami, director of the Legal Department at the Euro-

Med Human Rights Monitor, stated that Israel's use of starvation as a weapon in Gaza is "committed in broad daylight," citing the total closure of border crossings and the open acknowledgment by Israeli officials. Gaza, she said, is filled with "irrefutable evidence of the crime's horror: the emaciated bodies of people and children, tens of thousands lining up daily at charity kitchens, and the escalating death toll from hunger, malnutrition, and associated diseases."

The deepening starvation in Gaza is unfolding alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to fully occupy the territory and place the distribution of all remaining humanitarian aid under the exclusive control of the Israeli military.

On Thursday, US and international newspapers reported a proposal to have a group of American security contractors and ex-military officers, called the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, take over the provision of food. The plan would bring the US more directly into the occupation of Gaza, following the declaration by US President Donald Trump earlier this year that the US would "own" Gaza.

The *Washington Post* reported that under the plan, the remaining population would be transferred to what are effectively concentration camps under armed guard. The *Post* wrote:

Once inside the enclave, they would travel to Israel-designated distribution hubs in the south under the protection of U.S. security contractors. The contractors would also provide security in and around the hubs. ... Facial recognition technology is to be used to identify visitors to the hubs.

On Thursday, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz called for the displacement of Palestinians into camps to protect Israeli forces "against all types of threats." He added:

The entire Gazan population will be evacuated to areas in southern Gaza, while creating a distinction between them and Hamas terrorists. ... Unlike in the past, the IDF will remain in any territory that is conquered, to prevent the return of terrorism and to purge and thwart any threat.

The Trump administration has embraced the Netanyahu government's plan, with State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce declaring of a campaign of genocide: "This is a new approach with one focus: Get help to people. Right now."

The plan has been condemned by the United Nations, which said it would "weaponize aid" by only providing food to

certain civilians.

Tamara Alrifai, communications director for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, told the *Washington Post* that it would set a "a very dangerous precedent" for using "full siege as a tactic of war" to compel "existing aid structures and the entire international system that exists and is recognized and start creating a new system."

Earlier this week, the Humanitarian Country Team, an umbrella group for humanitarian organizations in Gaza, condemned the proposal, saying:

The design of the plan presented to us will mean large parts of Gaza, including the less mobile and most vulnerable people, will continue to go without supplies.

It would have the effect of "driving civilians into militarized zones to collect rations, threatening lives, including those of humanitarian workers, while further entrenching forced displacement," the group said.

The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor added:

This move reintroduces starvation, only under a humanitarian façade this time, legitimizing its continued use as a weapon within the context of an ongoing genocide that has lasted more than 19 months.

Israeli bombardments continued across the Gaza Strip on Thursday. One airstrike on a group of young people using the internet killed 33, while another strike on a home in Beit Lahiya killed nine. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, 106 people were killed and 367 wounded by Israeli attacks in the past 24 hours alone.

Since the start of the genocide on October 7, 2023, tens of thousands have been killed or injured in Gaza, with the humanitarian crisis deepening under the ongoing blockade and military assault.



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