

UNICEF says Gaza children face high risk of starvation

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United Nations, December 25 (RHC)-- The United Nations Children's Agency has warned that acute food insecurity puts children in the Gaza Strip at high risk of starvation amid the Israeli regime's months-long attacks on the besieged Palestinian land.

UNICEF warns that 335,000 Palestinian children under five are in danger of starvation, media reports said on Saturday, as the regime has blocked food and fuel supplies to the besieged enclave.

"Yesterday, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) warned the world of the very high risk of famine in the Gaza Strip, increasing every day if the situation persists. Specifically, the IPC report said at least 1 in 4 households in the Gaza Strip, or more than half a million people, are facing catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity, the highest level of warning," UNICEF said in a statement.

The UN children's agency also noted that Palestinian children are facing violence from the air, and deprivation from the ground, highlighting that "children continue to pay the highest price of violence." "These entirely manmade, foreseeable, and preventable catastrophic conditions mean that children and families in the Gaza Strip are now facing violence from the air, and deprivation from the ground—with potentially the worst yet to come," it said.

"The report also said that almost 1.2 million people are experiencing emergency levels of acute food insecurity and acknowledged that famine thresholds for acute food insecurity have already been exceeded. In short, this means for many families in Gaza, the threat of dying from hunger is already real," it added.

"These findings imply that all children under five in the Gaza Strip—335,000—are at high risk of severe malnutrition and preventable death as the risk of famine conditions continues to increase," the UN agency said, warning that the situation is set to get worse for Palestinian children in the coming weeks.

"UNICEF estimates that in the coming weeks, at least 10,000 children under five years will suffer the most life-threatening form of malnutrition, known as severe wasting, and will need therapeutic foods," the UN children's organization noted.

Slamming the Israeli attacks, which have incurred "catastrophic damage" to the medical and food supplies in Gaza, the children's agency depicted the situation as "unacceptable." "This unacceptable risk comes at a time when the Gaza Strip's food and health systems are facing complete collapse. More than 80 percent of young children are experiencing severe food poverty, and more than two-thirds of hospitals are no longer functioning because of the lack of fuel, water, and vital medical supplies or because they sustained catastrophic damage in attacks," it said.

Earlier this week, UNICEF spokesperson James Elder called for an immediate humanitarian truce in Gaza, warning once more that without a truce disease deaths could outnumber bombing deaths in the besieged Palestinian territory.

In a posting on the X platform, Elder announced, "Without sufficient safe water, food, and sanitation that only a humanitarian ceasefire can bring - child deaths due to disease could surpass those killed in bombardments."

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