

UN says nearly 258 million people faced acute food insecurity in 2022

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Women hold their malnourished children at Hays Rural Hospital in Hodeida, Yemen
The report found that the number of people facing acute food shortages and requiring urgent food aid had increased for the fourth consecutive year [File: Hussam al-Bakry/AP Photo]

United Nations, May 4 (RHC)-- Almost 258 million people in 58 countries faced acute food shortages last year due to conflicts, climate change, effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, according to a United Nations report, a sharp rise from 193 million the previous year.

The Global Report on Food Crises, an alliance of humanitarian organisations founded by the UN and the European Union, says people faced starvation and death in seven of those countries: Somalia, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

The report found that the number of people facing acute food insecurity and requiring urgent food aid – 258 million – had increased for the fourth consecutive year, a “stinging indictment of humanity’s failure” to implement UN goals to end world hunger, according to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

“Rising poverty, deepening inequalities, rampant underdevelopment, the climate crisis and natural disasters also contribute to food insecurity,” Guterres said. While the increase last year was due in part to more populations being analysed, the report also found that the severity of the problem increased as well, “highlighting a concerning trend of a deterioration.”

Rein Paulsen, director of emergencies and resilience for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, said an interplay of causes was driving hunger. They include conflicts, climate shocks, the effect of the pandemic and the consequences of Russia’s war in Ukraine which has had an effect on the global trade in fertilisers, wheat, maize and sunflower oil. The effect has been acute in the poorest countries that are dependent on food imports.

“Prices have increased [and] those countries have been adversely affected,” Paulsen said, calling for a “paradigm shift” so that more funding is spent on agricultural interventions that anticipate food crises and aim to prevent them.

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