

# *Israel turns to facial recognition to restrict Palestinian access to aid*

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Displaced Palestinians receive food cooked by volunteers at a charity kitchen in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, on December 9, 2023. (Photo by dpa/Getty Images)

Tel Aviv, May 16 (RHC)-- The Israeli regime has approved a scheme allowing the use of advanced facial recognition technology to "screen" the Palestinians in need of humanitarian aid.

Media reports said Israeli cabinet members had agreed to slap new restrictions on the distribution of humanitarian aid and food supplies to Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip, including mandatory facial recognition.

"Palestinians would be coming to these places, registered and screened through facial recognition technology. They'd pick up parcels for their family," news outlets NPR reported, citing an Israeli official.

"It's actually part of a bigger strategy to get Palestinian civilians to move en masse to a smaller, more consolidated area of Gaza so that the military can expand the territory that it's taking over in Gaza," added the report.

Meanwhile, a Sweden-based human rights group strongly slammed the plan, noting that it is a "dangerous shift from traditional humanitarian organizations to for-profit companies controlling aid distribution."

"It is not merely a change in how aid is delivered, but rather an oppressive transaction, forcing Palestinians to surrender their biometric data—such as facial and iris scans—in exchange for essential aid like food, water, and medical care," the Skyline International for Human Rights (SIHR) said in a Thursday report.

"What's being presented as humanitarian relief is, in reality, a system of mass surveillance," it said, adding, "Gaza's civilian population—already subjected to years of surveillance—now faces a new phase of techno-dystopian experimentation, one that seeks to divide the territory into digitally enforced zones of control and entrench surveillance deeper into the ongoing blockade."

The New York Times had reported earlier this year that the Israeli regime was already using facial recognition technology purchased from private Israeli company Corsight, as well as Google Photos.

However, the Israeli-made technology failed to do its job, the NYT report added.

The United Nations has condemned the latest Israeli move, criticizing the added restrictions against the Palestinians. UNICEF spokesman James Elder said it "contravenes basic humanitarian principles" and is designed to "reinforce control over life-sustaining items as a pressure tactic."

The world body has repeatedly warned of a man-made famine across the entirety of Gaza if the Israeli regime forces continue to block aid to the Palestinian land.

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