



مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان
AL-MIZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE GAZA STRIP AMID THE ONGOING GENOCIDE

October 2026

Introduction

The international community marks World Food Day and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty this year amid the ongoing crime of genocide in the Gaza Strip. More than two million people in the Gaza Strip continue to endure catastrophic conditions, even as the United Nations system renews its commitment to sustainable development and the fundamental human right to freedom from hunger. These stark contradictions unfold against a backdrop of a severe deterioration in food security and unprecedented levels of poverty across the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) have systematically and continuously targeted the economic sectors across the governorates of the Gaza Strip. They have deliberately destroyed the industrial and commercial sectors by bombing industrial facilities and commercial establishments, while devastating the agricultural sector through the bulldozing of agricultural land and crops, the destruction of poultry farms and livestock holdings, including cattle, the prevention of fishing, and the destruction of aquaculture projects. Under fire, the IOF have taken control of approximately 67% of the Gaza Strip's area and prohibited access to and use of natural resources in the areas under their control, particularly water resources and agricultural land. They have also paralysed industrial zones and production facilities, contributing to a sharp rise in unemployment, with approximately 74% of the workforce losing their jobs.

The crisis has been further exacerbated by the disruption of financial transfers following the suspension of banking operations and the closure of bank branches, which have been limited to providing administrative services without supplying cash to the Strip. Moreover, amid the IOF's absolute control over the Gaza Strip's crossings, imports and the entry of goods have been restricted to a limited list of items.

These measures have severely distorted the economy and transformed the market from a competitive environment into one dominated by oligopolistic practices. As a result, most residents of the Gaza Strip have been forced to rely on community kitchens and charitable food kitchens (*takayas*) to obtain food, while being engulfed by extreme poverty.

This fact sheet examines the humanitarian and livelihood consequences of the IOF's deliberate use of food as a weapon, which has further deepened the poverty and extreme poverty endured by the population of the Gaza Strip. Drawing on official United Nations indicators, it seeks to analyse the humanitarian and living conditions in Gaza and demonstrate that the economic collapse, rising poverty and unemployment, and widespread food insecurity are not merely collateral consequences of the genocide. Rather, they are the inevitable outcome of a systematic plan that destroys the essential foundations of life and renders the Gaza Strip uninhabitable.

I. Food

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) observes World Food Day on 16 October. Established in 1945, the occasion aims to raise awareness and promote action to eradicate hunger and ensure food security. Official indicators issued by United Nations institutions reveal that, despite the ceasefire taking effect in the Gaza

Strip in October 2025 and its provisions requiring the entry of sufficient quantities of humanitarian aid, food security conditions have not improved.

Findings about food security in the Gaza Strip:

- The Gaza Strip has become incapable of producing goods, particularly food and agricultural products. This is compounded by restrictions on the entry of sufficient quantities of aid through international organisations. The closure of crossings has prevented the entry of more than 500,000 trucks carrying humanitarian aid and commercial goods.
- Approximately 87% of agricultural land and greenhouses have been completely destroyed or burned. Livestock holdings have also suffered a catastrophic collapse as a result of attacks on cattle and sheep farms and beehives. Meat and dairy production have ceased, and the poultry sector has likewise been devastated.
- Military operations have resulted in the destruction of 8,700 agricultural wells and 9,992 cattle, sheep, and poultry farms, as well as the killing of approximately 69,000 head of livestock.
- Approximately 128 aid convoys, 64 distribution centres, and 48 charitable food kitchens (*takayas*) have been targeted, resulting in the killing of 2,605 people seeking aid and aid workers.
- Throughout the genocidal war, residents of the Gaza Strip have resorted to every possible coping strategy to survive shortages of food and water. They have been forced to grind animal feed to make bread, drink contaminated water, and go without food for consecutive days so that their children might survive.
- **100% of the population**—2.4 million people in the Gaza Strip—were classified as facing acute food insecurity at **IPC Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)**. During periods of the genocide, hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza City and northern Gaza were pushed into **Phase 5: Catastrophe**, with food supplies completely depleted, severe water shortages documented, and deaths directly attributable to hunger recorded.
- Food security deteriorated severely and continuously between July and December 2026. Approximately 67% of the population—around 1.4 million people—is expected to face acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition. An estimated 10% of the population is expected to face a genuine risk to their lives due to their inability to meet their nutritional needs.

“My family and I are living amid the rubble of our home near the Yellow Line in the al-Qarara area, east of Khan Younis. After enduring two years of living in a tent, I managed to rehabilitate a small room. Before the war, I worked on a daily basis and had a source of income, but everything changed after the war. To get to work, I have to walk long distances and leave my family behind. At times, we are forced to leave the area because of incursions and advancing tanks. I reclaimed a small plot of land nearby and planted some vegetables, including tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, and molokhia, so that I could provide my family with daily food. Unfortunately, as tanks advanced and shelling of our area continued, all of it was destroyed. This is especially devastating because I have a daughter who suffers from anemia and needs nutritious food that I cannot afford to provide.”

- Residents of the Gaza Strip depend on food aid and parcels provided by international and local organisations to meet their nutritional needs. As a result, dietary diversity has collapsed to almost zero, with diets largely limited to carbohydrates and some canned goods, while fresh protein sources and vegetables are almost entirely absent. This has undermined collective immunity and contributed to the spread of disease.
- Malnutrition rates have risen, with health centres recording cases of severe wasting among infants and children under five. This is attributable to shortages of infant formula and acute malnutrition among mothers and breastfeeding women, resulting in dozens of documented deaths.

N.N., a displaced woman living with her husband and three children in a tent in al-Mawasi, Khan Younis, stated: “Since we were displaced from Rafah, my husband has been unemployed. He has searched extensively for work but to no avail. Sometimes he finds casual daily work for a negligible wage that is insufficient to meet our needs or those of our children. We used to rely on humanitarian assistance from organisations, but for some time now, aid has stopped arriving. We buy some canned goods or legumes to eat. Two days ago, I went to the market to buy one kilogram of tomatoes, but the price had reached 15 shekels. Everything has become so expensive. I spend the entire day thinking about how to provide food for my children. What hurts me most is when my children ask for simple things and I cannot afford to buy them.”

II. Poverty

The United Nations General Assembly established the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, observed on 17 October, through Resolution 47/196 in 1992. The occasion aims to draw attention to people living below the poverty line and promote the development of fair and equitable societies (United Nations General Assembly, 1992).

The population of the Gaza Strip is enduring dire and unprecedented levels of poverty and extreme poverty, which have intensified throughout the genocidal war.

S.D., a displaced widow living in the al-Shati area west of Gaza City, stated: “The cost of living has become more than I can bear. The money my son earns is not enough to buy everything we need. Most of the time, I have to borrow from relatives or from the grocery shop next to our home. However, our debts continue to accumulate day after day, and I cannot repay them. I try to prioritise our basic needs, but I feel under constant psychological pressure. Our obligations keep increasing, and

Findings about poverty in the Gaza Strip:

Before the genocide, approximately 4,500 industrial establishments operated across various sectors in the Gaza Strip, employing more than 53,000 workers. During the war, industrial and agricultural output declined by approximately 94%, while construction activity fell by approximately 96%, reflecting the direct impact of damage to productive capital and the inability to resume operations. Estimates by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) further reveal the extensive scale

of the destruction, with 92% of economic establishments in Gaza damaged or destroyed.

- The industrial sector, which previously contributed more than 22% of gross domestic product and employed approximately 53,000 workers across around 4,500 establishments, has been subjected to widespread destruction. Approximately 90% of industrial establishments have been partially or completely destroyed, directly resulting in the loss of around 35,000 jobs.
- The housing sector has sustained devastating losses. Between 7 October 2023 and 16 June 2026, approximately 201,290 buildings were estimated to have been damaged, representing around 82% of all buildings in the Gaza Strip. Of these, 134,422 buildings were completely destroyed, while 13,848 sustained severe damage.
- Israeli Occupying Forces have forcibly displaced and internally uprooted more than two million people, many of them repeatedly, stripping them of their property, sources of income, and private businesses. With insufficient housing available, rental prices have soared and now account for the largest share of living expenses.
- Recovery and reconstruction needs in the Gaza Strip are estimated at approximately US\$71.4 billion to restore critical infrastructure and support economic recovery, while economic and social losses are estimated at approximately US\$22.7 billion.

S.A., a mother of two children originally from Beit Lahia and currently displaced in a school in Nuseirat Camp, stated:

“While we were being displaced through the Netzarim Corridor, Israeli occupation soldiers took my husband. Since then, I have known nothing about him except that he is detained. From that moment on, I became solely responsible for supporting myself and my children. To be honest, we depend primarily on humanitarian assistance and charitable food kitchens (*takayas*), which we can barely access. Sometimes months pass without us receiving any assistance.

There are days when we suffer from hunger and my children have nothing to eat. We have come to depend on the lunch meal distributed by the charitable kitchen, which is the only meal we eat throughout the day and barely enough to sustain us.

With the beginning of the new school year, I have started worrying about how I will provide suitable clothes for my children when I can barely afford to provide them with a meal. All I wish for is to meet their basic needs. However, with their father absent and no source of income, I have become unable even to provide their most basic necessities.”

Conclusion

Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip have become increasingly unable to meet their daily food needs amid rising poverty and unemployment and the prohibition of the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides relief services to more than 70% of the population.

Under these conditions, families have been forced to adopt survival strategies, including reducing the number and size of meals to cope with acute shortages of food and water. Children have increasingly been relied upon to help secure food and other basic necessities. These circumstances have further deepened food insecurity and heightened the risks of neglect, family breakdown, and exposure to violence. They have also contributed to school dropout, as children's priorities have shifted towards queuing at charitable food kitchens and obtaining water.

The continued starvation of civilians and the use of food and water as weapons by the IOF, alongside the destruction of essential economic sectors and the obstruction of humanitarian and medical supplies, constitute a war crime and one of the manifestations of genocide. International humanitarian law requires that civilians be provided with the essentials necessary for their survival. International human rights law likewise guarantees the rights to adequate food and water, an adequate standard of living, health, a clean and healthy environment, and education.

Accordingly, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights calls on the international community to exert pressure on the occupying power to immediately halt the genocidal war and withdraw from the Gaza Strip; allow sufficient quantities of food supplies to enter through humanitarian organisations; enable UNRWA to carry out its activities and interventions without restrictions; and expedite the transition to reconstruction. Priority must be given to economic sectors, particularly industry and agriculture, to restore employment, eradicate poverty, and ensure local food production.

References

Arabic References

1. Ahmad al-Nabarees, Projects Director at the Palestinian Federation of Industries. (2025). Press statement. Link: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=4323136334573292>.
2. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and Ministry of Agriculture. (2026). Joint Report on the Assessment of Damage to the Agricultural and Environmental Sectors in the Gaza Strip. Ramallah, Palestine. Link: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/>(<https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/>.
3. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). (2021). Number of Fishermen and Fishing Boats. Link: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/Rainbow/Documents/Fish-2021-A-5.htm>.
4. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). (2026). World Habitat Day. Ramallah, Palestine. Link: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/ar/press-releases/>.
5. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). (2026). Report on Economic and Agricultural Losses in the Gaza Strip Resulting from the Ongoing Israeli Aggression. Ramallah, Palestine. Link: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps>.
6. Government Media Office in Gaza. (7 October 2026). Comprehensive Statistical Report on the Israeli Aggression against the Gaza Strip. Gaza, Palestine. Link: <https://t.me/s/mediagovps>(<https://t.me/s/mediagovps>.
7. Al Jazeera News. (2026). Factories Destroyed, Agriculture Collapsed. Link: <https://aja.ws/e4asw4>.
8. Ministry of National Economy. (2026). Estimates of Direct Losses in the Commercial and Industrial Sectors in the Gaza Strip. Ramallah, Palestine. Link: <https://www.mne.gov.ps/>(https://www.mne.gov.ps.
9. Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture. (2026). Data on Damage to the Agricultural Sector and Livestock. Ramallah, Palestine. Link: <https://www.facebook.com/Palestinian.Ministry.of.Agriculture/>.

International References

1. Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO]. (2023). World Food Day: History and Objectives. Link: <https://www.fao.org/world-food-day/about/en>(<https://www.fao.org/world-food-day/about/en> .
2. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC]. (2026). Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation. IPC Global Initiative. Link: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1159820/>.
3. International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC]. (1949). Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention). Link: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ar/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-55> .
4. International Criminal Court [ICC]. (1998). Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Link: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/documents/rs-eng.pdf> .
5. UN, European Union. (2026). World Bank. Final Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment. Link: <https://palestine.un.org/en/314166-gaza-human-development-set-back-77-years-recovery-costs-rise-71-billion> .
6. United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]. (2025). Nutrition Situation in the Gaza Strip: Malnutrition rates among children. Link: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/devastating-rate-child-malnutrition-gaza-strip-august-surpasses-july-record> .
7. United Nations General Assembly. (1992). Resolution 47/196: Observance of an International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Link: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/47/196> .
8. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA]. (2026). Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - Flash Updates. Link: <https://www.ochaopt.org/ar/content/humanitarian-situation-report-25-september-2026> .
9. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees [UNRWA]. (2026). Gaza Situation Report. Link: <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-236-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank> .
10. United Nations. (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Link: <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights> .
11. United Nations. World Food Day. (2025). Link:

<https://www-un-org.translate.goog/en/live/world-food-day-2025? x tr sl=en& x tr tl=ar& x tr hl=ar& x tr pto=tc> .

12. World Food Programme [WFP]. (2026). Gaza Emergency Response: Coping Strategies and Food Security. Link: <https://ar.wfp.org/news/food-security-and-child-nutrition-crises-persist-gaza-despite-fragile-gains-due-increased> .
13. World Health Organization [WHO]. (2026). Health and Nutrition Impacts of the Crisis in Gaza. Link: <https://www.who.int/ar/news/item/07-02-1448-un-report--global-hunger-levels-ease-for-third-consecutive-year-as-regional-disparities-persist> .