



Food and food security in the Gaza Strip – response to IPC report



A report has recently been released by the IPC presenting an image of famine in the Gaza Strip. It is COGAT's assessment that the report does not reflect the full situation in the Gaza Strip in regard to food security and availability of food. The report contains multiple factual and methodological flaws, some of them serious. After carefully reviewing the report, we would like to address a number of issues:

Current Situation

1. Israel is currently engaged in a war with Hamas and other terror organizations in the Gaza Strip, following the massacre of over 1,200 Israelis on October 7 in a brutal and sadistic manner, including torture, beheading, burning alive and rape, as well as the abduction of over 240 hostages into Gaza and continued attacks against Israeli civilians, including launching of over 12,000 rockets. Israel's war is not with the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.
2. In order to assist the civilian population in Gaza, Israel is facilitating various humanitarian aid initiatives. These include: the transfer of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip subject to Israeli security checks, the supply of water directly from Israel, facilitating the establishment of field hospitals in Gaza, assisting with evacuation of patients for medical treatment out of Gaza, and more. So far, close to 19,000 aid trucks have entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings, carrying more than 350,000 tons of humanitarian aid, including almost 250,000 tons of food.
3. The Hamas policy over the years prioritized the investment in tunnels, military equipment and terror infrastructure, rather than investing in the economic development for the benefit of its residents. Hamas preferred, and still prefers, promoting another October 7, over the well-being of Gazans.
4. Even at the height of hostilities, in a war that was forced upon it, Israel places no limits on the amount of aid that can enter Gaza, and absolutely does not limit the entrance of food. Israel also facilitates entry of complementary products such as cooking gas and diesel fuel for the operation of the aid centers, bakeries etc. additionally, 14 million liters of water are supplied by Israel.
5. The State of Israel recognizes the unfortunate impacts of the war on the civilian population of Gaza - this includes negative impacts on food security. Israel is tirelessly working to mitigate these impacts. There are many challenges, particularly in terms of the ability of the UN and other aid agencies to reach all intended residents, especially the most vulnerable which are children, pregnant and nursing mothers. We are aware that there may be certain areas where access to food is more restricted (especially in the north). Israel's request from the residents of the north to evacuate to southern Gaza was also based on the fact that orderly delivery of food, water and health services is more accessible there, while northern Gaza is still an active combat zone.
6. Israel facilitates the entry of aid into all populated area and is working with aid organizations to improve the processes.
7. We outright reject any allegations according to which Israel is purposefully starving the civilian population in Gaza.
8. In recent months between 150 and 200 trucks are admitted per day, most of which are food trucks. This is an 80% spike in comparison to the daily average food trucks that entered Gaza pre October 7.
9. Israel enables the opening and operation of additional routes for the transfer of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip: the route via Jordan, the transfer of flour coming in via the Port of Ashdod, a maritime route operated by the WCK organization, coordination of dozens of food airdrops with over 1200 packages of aid into the northern Gaza Strip by several partner countries, and opening of additional routes around and inside the Gaza Strip, which enables improvements to the accessibility to the northern Gaza Strip region. Every day Israel coordinates dozens of movements in order to ensure that the aid arrives at the shelters in which the population is staying.
10. Israel maintains ongoing contact with the UN special coordinator, UN agencies in the Gaza Strip and with other NGOs in order to improve the humanitarian response. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is constantly monitored through a monitoring mechanism, led by an expert staff that evaluates the situation. The coordination includes a joint coordination room with the international community, daily assessments, a quad meeting, J5 meetings as well as a designated task force. The information within our knowledge is also within the purview of the aid agencies. Regrettably, the reports being disseminated differ from our own understanding.

Food Distribution within the Gaza Strip

It is important to emphasize that Israel cannot and does not operate food distribution inside the Strip. As for the situation on the ground, the UN agencies and the humanitarian organizations operating in the area are so far unable to handle the capacity of supplies being brought in on trucks every day and distribute those supplies to the population all across the Gaza Strip efficiently and on a continuous basis. The fact is that at any given moment there are **hundreds of trucks** held up at the Gazan side of the Kerem Shalom crossing after having completely been processed by the authorities in Israel, awaiting reception and distribution by the aid agencies.

1. In the past two months, when it identified that accessibility to food in the north is becoming more difficult. Israel coordinated the entry of hundreds of trucks into the northern part of the Strip - over 500 trucks - not taking into consideration the food airdropped into the northern Gaza Strip by various countries in coordination with Israel, as well as the entry of the WCK ship.

The number of trucks per capita in the north exceeded the number of trucks distributed in the south.

2. There are reports and testimonies of theft, looting, and commandeering of the aid trucks by armed players, some of them Hamas, others directed by Hamas, hijacking humanitarian aid and keeping it for its own interests, in a way that diminishes the amount of food that reaches the civilian population. Moreover, Hamas uses its control over the aid to further its governance in the Gaza Strip. This phenomenon also impairs the ongoing work of the aid agencies.

IPC methodology and notable research limitations

Besides all these efforts done by Israel, it is important to note that the IPC report contains inaccuracies:

1. **Amount of water produced:** The report alleges that the amount of water is less than 1 liter per day per person. A team of professionals analyze the humanitarian situation on the ground including the availability and sources of water throughout the Gaza Strip. Based on our assessment, the amount of water produced in the Gaza Strip through 2 local water desalination plants, an Emirati water desalination plant located in Egypt, water lines from Israel, and the entry of diesel fuel to refuel the local water pumping system - the daily average quantity of water to over 20 liters of drinking and cooking water per person per day. As for accessibility, Israel facilitates the coordination of repairs and refuel of the water infrastructures so that it will facilitate greater accessibility for the population.
2. **Clear information gaps** - the report itself emphasizes the information gaps and the need to fill these in through various means. Given the difficulty in conducting surveys and samplings, the remotely-conducted surveys, or third-party surveys within the Gaza Strip, diminish the reliability of the data.
3. **Reliance on data provided by local bodies** - such as the Hamas run Gaza Ministry of Health - which has a strategic interest in presenting a fundamentally misleading information (see appendix).
4. **Evidence on food quantities** - every day, there are numerous reports on the Palestinian media in Rafah, in the central Gaza Strip refugee camps, and in the northern Gaza Strip of food markets filled with food of all types and kinds.

IPC Report recommendations

The IPC report calls for the restore of humanitarian access to the entire Gaza Strip. In fact, Israel facilitated into and across of the entire Gaza Strip. For example, since the beginning of March, Israel facilitated over 350 trucks to northern Gaza as well as coordinations to refuel and resupply hospitals and health centers. Additionally, since the beginning of the War, IDF has coordinated **over 3,350 humanitarian movement** within the Gaza strip (83 percent of the coordination were approved)

Israel facilitates the entry of tankers of cooking gas and fuel on a regular basis, designated for the operation of vital infrastructure. UN aid agencies are responsible for the fuel distribution within the Gaza Strip.

As per the IPC's recommendation for the entry of complimentary foods and micronutrient supplements for young children, as well as pregnant and lactating women, the chronically ill, and the elderly: Israel places no limits or restriction on the type or amount of foods that can enter the Gaza Strip and we are ready to facilitate such foods as they are coordinated.

Another recommendation was to restore the functioning of market infrastructures and bakeries combined with cash-based interventions where feasible. In fact, Israel facilitated the reopening of 21 bakeries in the Gaza Strip.

Conclusion

We do not take lightly the assertions of international organizations such as the IPC. As detailed above, we note there are inaccuracies in the

report as well as failing to mention Israel's considerable efforts to improve the humanitarian situation.

Israel is attentive to the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and is working proactively with partners to provide relevant aid to the population and calls on the international community and the aid organizations to continue to work together for this purpose.

Appendix

quote	footnote	Description of inaccuracy
In January 2024, only nine humanitarian missions to the northern governorates were facilitated, dropping to six missions in February.	OCHA, Humanitarian Access Snapshot - Gaza Strip End-February 2024 6 March 2024 [link] .	The OCHA source refers only to missions by "the UN and its humanitarian partners", while the IPC report falsely suggests that this figure amounts to all humanitarian missions . In reality, most aid convoys to the north were carried out by private sector providers (54% since the beginning of 2024). Furthermore, this sentence is also misleading by implying a decline in the approval rate of UN aid missions by Israel. As the OCHA source explains, the approval rate in February was actually higher (25%) than in January (16%), because the number of missions requested by the UN dropped by more than half in February (from 61 to 25).
Additional restrictions imposed on populations affect livelihoods and food access, such as a de facto prohibition on fishing and movement within one kilometer of the border fence, which covers a significant proportion of farmland .	OCHA, Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel Flash Update #6, 12 October 2023 [link] .	The source says nothing about the proportion of farmland, but rather that "access within 1,000 meters from Israel's perimeter fence remained prohibited impacting Palestinian famers' access to large areas of farming lands".
The largest scale destruction is in Gaza Governorate where more than 73 percent of buildings are estimated to be destroyed , followed by North Gaza (70 percent), Deir al-Balah (44 percent), Khan Younis (52 percent) and Rafah (28 percent).	Van den Hoek, J. and Scher, C., Gaza Strip Damage Maps, Decentralized Damage Mapping Group, 2023-2024 [link] .	The cited study counts structures that were "likely damaged or destroyed", yet the figures are misrepresented to refer to buildings that were "destroyed". Questionable source: The same authors estimated in early January that the share of buildings likely damaged or destroyed in Gaza was "45%-56%". That is higher than the 35% calculated by the UN's Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for the same period (see: https://unitar.org/about/news-stories/press/35-buildings-affected-gaza-strip). Van Den Hoek has previously participated in
According to the UNOSAT, the percent of damaged agriculture land has increased from 25 percent to 60 percent, between November 2023 and January 2024 .	UNOSAT, Agricultural damage assessments, 17 November 2023, 13 December 2023, 31 January 2024 [link] .	According to a UNOSAT study from January 2024 (the latest on its website), "Crop analysis shows that 21% of the arable land has been damaged, " far below the 60% falsely cited by the IPC report. See: https://unosat.org/products/3792 . The 60% figure is also inflated if looking only at land used for agriculture, not all arable land. The following page in the report cites a FAO report according to which "more than 40 percent (6,694 ha) of all croplands has been damaged since 7 October." The contradiction with the 60% figure is not explained.
Between January and September 2023, a daily average of 150 food trucks entered the Gaza Strip. Between 8 October 2023 and 9 March 2024, this number decreased to an average of 65 trucks per day and the availability of	UNRWA, Gaza Supply and Dispatch tracking, March 2024	It is unclear where the pre-war figure of 150 food trucks per day originates. According to OCHA's dashboard, between January and September 2023, a total 27,434 trucks carrying food entered Gaza through all crossings, which is a daily average of 100 trucks per day (273 days). Furthermore, according to the UNRWA source cited (which presents partial data), the average rate of food trucks entering

<p>food commodities has dramatically declined.</p>		<p>Gaza in March was 112, the highest since the start of the war (October – 20, November – 55, December – 70, January – 97, February – 64).</p>
<p>Based on data from UNRWA, the maximum number of trucks entering daily from both the Kerem Shalom and the Rafah crossings was 300 (compared to an average of 500 daily pre-escalation), approximately 70 percent of these trucks carried food or a mixture of food and non-food items.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>The figure of 500 trucks per day has no reference. According to OCHA's online dashboard [link], during the three preceding months of the war (Jul-Sep), 337 trucks entered Gaza through all crossings by average per day. During the period January-September, the rate was 321 (87,707 in total over 273 days).</p>
<p>Based on truck entries into the Gaza Strip from 21 October 2023 to 3 March 2024, the proportion of average kilocalories per day (using a 7-day rolling average) has been consistently below the daily kilocalorie requirements (calculated using demographic data considering variations by age and gender), with the exception of a short period of time around mid-January.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>This assumes complete lack of local food production since the start of the war and does not take into account pre-existing stockpiles, which Hamas prepared for in the months leading to the attack.</p> <p>It should be noted that " As of October 29, WFP estimates that the current market stocks of basic food commodities in the Gaza Strip may last between 1 to 23 days." (see: https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/wfp-palestine-gaza-market-monitoring-flash-update-3-30-october-2023).</p>
<p>A survey conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP) highlights that interviewed shop owners are faced with a significant shortage of basic food items, with 81 percent indicating depletion. Furthermore, 19 percent highlighted that the available food items are in short supply, and not expected to last more than a week.</p>	<p>WFP, Gaza Market Monitoring Flash Update #6, 2 February 2024 [link].</p>	<p>The footnote explains the survey's shortcomings: " From 19 December 2023 to 21 January 2024, WFP sought to contact 72 shops but received a response from only 11 shops, of which 7 were operational... The primary focus was on Rafah, where 6 shops participated in the WFP survey on January 21, and one in Khan Younis".</p> <p>The highly limited sample, as well as its focus on one date (during a low point in the entrance of trucks) and one place is not reflected in the report and render the survey's findings quite worthless.</p>
<p>As of 14 March 2024, the ongoing hostilities have reportedly caused nearly 105,000 casualties within the Gaza Strip –nearly 5% of the total population. This includes over 73,000 people injured, about half of them women and children, and over 31,000 deaths.</p>	<p>Health Cluster Dashboard, Occupied Palestinian Territory, March 2024, Microsoft Power BI.</p>	<p>In the dashboard referred to, the figures are said to originate from the "Palestinian Ministry of Health" which is run by Hamas and its figures have been deemed highly unreliable.</p> <p>Omission: It is not mentioned that <u>even according to Hamas' figures</u>, the rate of fatalities and injuries has declined by over 70% from October '23 to March '24.</p>
<p>From a pre-escalation average of 500 trucks a day of which 150 carrying food, in the period between 7 October 2023 to 24 February 2024, only 90 trucks per day, of which only 60 carrying food, entered the Gaza Strip.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>The 500 truck a day figure refers to the amount of trucks imported and exported into and from the Gaza Strip.</p> <p>Pre war, Only an average of 70 daily trucks carried food. The rest carried industrial materials, building supplies and agricultural supplies.</p> <p>Presenting a daily average since the start of the war precludes the increase in the volume of goods entering during this period, which in March reached an average of 140 trucks carrying food per day.</p>
<p>... among a population that included</p>	<p>OCHA, Humanitarian Needs</p>	<p>The vast majority of so-called "Palestine refugees" are not</p>

nearly 70 percent of refugees .	Overview Occupied Palestinian Territories, January 2023 [link] .	refugees according to the international legal definition.
Severe limitations and attacks on humanitarian staff and assets forced major providers of humanitarian food and other assistance to the northern governorates to suspend convoys to these areas, including the World Food Programme, on 20 February.	WFP, UN Food Agency pauses deliveries to the North of Gaza, 20 February 2024 [link] .	There is no mention that the halt by WFP was temporary and that it resumed convoy coordination to the north on March 5. There is no mention of the amount of aid that was coordinated to the north by the private sector – 551 food aid trucks were coordinated by UN agencies and the private sector since the beginning of January.
The escalation of hostilities within the Gaza Strip began with heavy bombardment on 7 October 2023	OCHA, Escalation in the Gaza Strip and Israel Flash Update #1 as of 18:00, 7 October 2023 [link]	Complete denial of Hamas' 7 October massacre, the taking of hostages, launching of thousands of rockets, etc.

How much food and water has entered the Gaza Strip? How much medical supplies? What are Israel's medical humanitarian efforts?

Check out COGAT's website for the latest figures:

bit.ly/3Ri64DJ.

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