

# GAZA HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

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## Summary

On August 22, 2025, the Famine Review Committee [officially declared](#) famine in Gaza Governorate. Independent experts confirmed that conditions have now crossed famine thresholds, with projections showing famine spreading further in the coming weeks. The most recent [IPC analysis](#) estimates that by the end of September, [more than 640,000 people](#)—nearly one-third of Gaza’s population—will face famine-level hunger. Refugees International and others have warned that this declaration must serve as a wake-up call to the international community.

The international response was swift, with at least [twenty-eight countries](#) condemning the worsening crisis. Their statements largely drew on the IPC conclusion that the catastrophe was “man-made” and directly linked to Israeli restrictions on humanitarian aid. The [UN Secretary-General](#) underscored this point, stating that famine is not about food, but rather about “the deliberate collapse of the systems needed for human survival.”

Reactions from Israel and the United States highlighted deep divisions. Israel rejected the IPC findings, denied that famine exists, and shifted blame toward Hamas. In the United States, the response was inconsistent. President Trump [acknowledged](#) “real starvation” in Gaza but the [State Department dismissed](#) the famine assessment and accused Hamas of obstructing aid. These conflicting signals have hindered prospects for a coherent international response.

Experts agree that an effective famine response will require a ceasefire and a surge of humanitarian assistance across all sectors: food, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and shelter. It will also depend on ensuring that the UN and NGOs can operate safely and effectively. Yet violence, direct attacks on civilians, and continued bureaucratic and physical restrictions are severely undermining relief efforts. Promised “humanitarian pauses” by the Israeli military have not materialized, nor have there been meaningful easings of restrictions. Instead, militarized aid distribution mechanisms remain in place and have themselves endangered civilians seeking relief.

At the same time, the violence has escalated. Following the declaration of famine, Israeli bombardments intensified ahead of a ground invasion, making humanitarian access even more difficult. One of the most alarming incidents took place at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, where twenty people, including five journalists, were killed. BBC-verified footage showed that emergency workers attending the scene were struck by a second round of fire. These attacks underline the increasingly perilous environment in which aid delivery must take place and the immense barriers standing in the way of an adequate famine response.

As the Famine Review Committee warned, without a ceasefire allowing a surge of aid services to access Gaza, “avoidable deaths will increase exponentially.”

# 1) Food Security

As the Famine Review Committee found, with growing famine, food insecurity is rapidly deteriorating. The response is restricted and woefully inadequate. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), a U.S. and Israel-backed militarized organization, [reported](#) that it has delivered more than two million boxes containing nearly 125 million meals to Gaza. But these figures remain unverified and ultimately grossly insufficient to the needs. This militarized model, which does not target end users, has been [denounced](#) by the UN, independent experts, and NGOs. On August 19, the UN human rights office [reported](#) that between May 27 and August 17, 2025, a total of 1,857 Palestinians had been killed while seeking food, including 1,021 killed in the vicinity of the GHF sites, and 836 killed on the routes of supply trucks.

The [FSS](#) estimates that more than 62,000 metric tons (MT) of food is required every month to only cover basic humanitarian food assistance needs. Yet, between 19 May and 18 August 2025, available [data](#) through the UN2720 mechanism, which monitors and reports relief consignments processed through the mechanism, notes humanitarian organizations were able to collect about 54,000 MT of food supplies (of the nearly 500,000 MT required).

Border entries alone do not result in people fed. [Reuters](#), citing UN and aid officials, reported some 1,334 trucks entered Gaza via two of six available crossing sites since July 27—far below the 600-per-day benchmark. The UN and NGOs continue to appeal to the Israeli Government to use Fence Road, as GHF is allowed. As it is, the rate of looting shows why food availability at crossings has not translated into household food consumption.

[Airdrops](#)—widely recognized as the least effective means of aid delivery with a single aircraft cargo hold equivalent to roughly one overland truck—continue, most recently on August 15. More than ten governments have reportedly conducted airdrops, with limited impact, aside from a troubling record of casualties caused by falling objects and violence from armed groups.

## 2) Fuel

Fuel supplies remain critically limited and unpredictable. On August 5, the UN managed to [collect](#) about 200,000 liters at Kerem Shalom—sufficient for roughly one day, but far short of the constant demand across hospitals, water systems, bakeries, and cold chains. This scarcity has forced severe triage: WASH partners report receiving only about [41 percent](#) of the 2.1 million liters required each month just to sustain emergency water and sanitation services. When fuel runs low, water production, trucking, generators, and cold storage all contract simultaneously. Only five fuel trucks were permitted into Gaza since August 5, covering less than 10% of needs.

## 3) Health and Nutrition

As indicated by the Famine Review Committee and in the latest IPC analysis, the health and nutrition situation in Gaza is rapidly deteriorating. On August 20, the Palestinian Ministry of Health [stated](#) that 28 children are now dying each day in the Gaza Strip as a result of malnutrition and inadequate medical care. While Refugees International cannot independently verify this statistic, when combined with other, verified data sets, this points to an increasingly calamitous situation that requires urgent international intervention.

In July, more than 12,000 children were identified as acutely malnourished. As WHO [reports](#), this is the highest monthly figure ever recorded and a six-fold increase since the start of the year. Of these, nearly a quarter were classified as severe acute malnutrition, or SAM, the most dangerous form of malnutrition in which the body wastes away and faces an immediate risk of death without intervention. Preventive measures have largely collapsed: only about three percent of

children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding women received nutrient supplements in July, compared to roughly a quarter earlier in the year.

WHO [reports](#) that less than half of hospitals and under 38 percent of primary care centers are partly or minimally functional. Procedures to bring in medical supplies remain “cumbersome,” preventing pre-positioning for expected surges. Patients with acute malnutrition, infections, and chronic disease often arrive at facilities without the staff, power, or medicines to help them.

Gaza has only five stabilization centers with a total of 43 beds—shockingly short of what is needed to treat the sickest children. On August 18, [MSF](#) reported its Gaza City clinic saw a 21 percent increase in the number of babies aged 6 to 23 months old suffering from severe acute malnutrition compared to the prior week. MSF screening teams report a 20 percent rate of global acute malnutrition over the past two weeks. WHO and Nutrition Cluster partners are urging all parties to enable urgent famine relief. A credible response requires immediate interventions: scaling up treatment for malnutrition, restoring infant and child feeding programs, linking nutrition with health and WASH services, and ensuring safe delivery of fuel, medicines, and medical supplies.

## 4) Water and Sanitation

As of August 16, partners [distributed](#) about 13,439 cubic meters of drinking water per day through 1,193 points—down from late-June levels. With limited fuel available, pumping and treatment faltered. A new well in Deir al Balah is producing roughly 60 m<sup>3</sup> per hour. In theory, it could serve up to 53,000 people, but network damage and fuel constraints reduce effective reach to around 16,000. These metrics illustrate how even small gains are easily erased when fuel or access dips.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) [effort](#) to extend potable water from desalination plants in Egypt across Rafah 7.5 km to Al-Mawasi and Khan Younis has started laying pipe. Once completed, the pipeline aims to support upwards of 600,000 persons per day. However, with no completion date and a pause in construction likely should Israel again invade, this remains a moving target.

## 5) Emergency Shelter

OCHA [reports](#) no shelter items in stock across Gaza and no new UN and NGO shelter materials allowed in since March 2. Families continue to crowd into damaged buildings or makeshift tents, raising exposure to heat, vector-borne disease, and protection risks. Without tarps, timber, or tools, agencies cannot even conduct basic emergency repairs before autumn.

In an August 17 [IDF statement](#), the IDF announced plans to provide Gaza residents with tents and other shelter equipment outside combat zones “to ensure their safety.” [UN aid officials](#) welcomed this acknowledgment of the desperate need for shelter but noted it was “deeply troubling ... that it comes in connection with a looming offensive” and warned that a military invasion would only intensify civilian suffering and undermine stability at a moment of extreme humanitarian need.

According to the [Shelter Cluster](#), some one million tarpaulins, 86,000 tents, and five million related shelter items were procured for delivery to Gaza. However, ongoing restrictions on INGOs and UNRWA continue to block shelter deliveries, and critical materials remain denied for entry.

## 6) Access

Movement coordination [data](#) for August 13-19 show that only 57 percent of planned humanitarian missions were fully facilitated; many were impeded en route or denied, including road-repair missions essential to restore safe corridors. The operational takeaway is direct: without predictable movement approvals and protected routes, trucks, clinics, and kitchens cannot scale.

On August 14, more than 100 organizations issued a [joint statement](#) calling for an end to the imposition of a new registration system for NGOs that would further block aid through new registration rules. The rules allow for an organization to be de-certified for actions or statements that “delegitimize” the state of Israel, including but not limited to public statements about the conduct of war and famine. This obstruction is inconsistent with established international law.

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## Recommendations for the U.S. Congress

- **Demand a full ceasefire on humanitarian grounds:** Congress should call for an immediate ceasefire to allow a full famine response. Past ceasefires showed what is possible: aid operations expanded quickly, 400 demilitarized sites reopened, hospitals and bakeries were powered with fuel, and hundreds of thousands of people received food, water, shelter, and medical care.
- **Restore the UN-led aid architecture to lead the famine response in Gaza:** Congress should press for an end to the current reliance on a militarized aid model and support the reestablishment of a UN-led system. This includes reopening multiple crossings; permitting entry of truck and generator parts; lifting bans on essential supplies such as hygiene items, medicines, surgical equipment, and fuel; ensuring secure warehouses; and creating “deconflicted” last-mile delivery windows and routes respected by all armed actors.
- **Deploy emergency funds for famine response:** Congress should ensure that available IDA and MRA funds are used to support a UN-led famine response across all sectors outlined above. Funds should go to agencies and frontline NGOs with proven ability to deliver aid and respect humanitarian principles.
- **Protect NGOs:** Congress should demand removal of restrictive NGO registration rules that silence civil society, put staff at risk, and violate international law.
- **Introduce Joint Resolutions of Disapproval:** Congress should introduce Joint Resolutions of Disapproval to condition pending and future security assistance to Israel on concrete progress in establishing humanitarian access, delivery of aid, protection of civilians and aid workers, and freedom of movement necessary to stop famine inside Gaza.