

# Flash Analysis Report: Over Five Months of Attacks on Food Security in Gaza

March 2024



## Introduction

This is the third update of Gaza flash reports issued by Insecurity Insight (previous editions: **December 2023** and **November 2023**). It reveals an extremely worrying trend of persistent conflict incidents directly undermining food security in Gaza since 7 October 2023.<sup>1</sup> The consequences for Gaza's civilian population are acute.

**“There is no type of food in the market here, any type. [...] Most families use animal fodder to make flour and they eat it.”**

**Displaced resident, Gaza, January 2024**

## Key findings

- Bakeries or their vicinities have reportedly been struck by air-delivered explosive weapons on at least 17 occasions, often resulting in severe damage or destruction. According to the **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** (UN OCHA), this had contributed to only 15 bakeries being operational as of 17 January 2024, compared to the 97 bakeries that were active before 7 October 2023.
- Agricultural land has been struck by explosive weapons on at least 119 occasions. This creates clearly foreseeable long-term and negative consequences for food production due to land contamination.
- Satellite image analysis shows the large-scale degradation of agricultural land and orchards and the destruction of greenhouses. Since early December this process of land degradation has expanded in southern Gaza, adding to large areas of land already degraded in the north.<sup>2</sup>
- Fishing ports and boats have been severely damaged and food shops and markets destroyed.
- Gazan civilians have become highly dependent on food aid, but its delivery has been obstructed by restrictions imposed by the siege and widespread insecurity.
- Recurrent communications blackouts and severe obstacles to accessing electricity have further disrupted food production, processing and distribution, as well as aid responses.
- Skyrocketing prices have resulted in severe economic barriers for civilians seeking to access food. Furthermore, the availability of staple foods is extremely limited, while a lack of cooking utensils, water and fuel among Gaza's 1.7 million internally displaced people (IDP) has impeded the effective utilisation of nutritious food when it is available and accessible.
- As indicated by the high intensity of explosive weapons use in populated areas and incidents such as the large-scale destruction of greenhouses and degradation of agricultural land, limited precautions appear to have been taken to protect civilian objects vital for Gaza's food security.

## Key recommendations

- All conflict parties should agree to an immediate and sustained humanitarian ceasefire to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and allow the increased delivery of vital life-saving humanitarian assistance.
- Third-party states should actively promote and monitor the implementation of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2712 (2023), which calls for urgent humanitarian pauses to the fighting and the establishment of safe corridors throughout the Gaza Strip for a sufficient period to enable rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian actors consistent with international humanitarian law.
- In compliance with UNSC Resolution 2417, all conflict parties must immediately stop the targeting of civilians and infrastructure critical to the survival of the civilian population, including food production and distribution facilities.

**Insecurity Insight's data covering conflict incidents directly affecting food security in Gaza is available for download on the [Humanitarian Data Exchange \(HDX\)](#).**

## Background

Violence severely escalated in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in Gaza, following a series of attacks by Hamas-affiliated militant groups from Gaza into southern Israel on 7 October 2023 that killed more than **1,000** Israeli and foreign nationals and took over 250 people hostage. On 9 October Israel imposed a “total siege” on the already blockaded Gaza Strip, preventing the supply of water, food and fuel into Gaza. A seven-day humanitarian pause that started on 24 November allowed for some food aid to reach civilians. However, the humanitarian pause ended on 1 December and heavy conflict violence resumed. By 29 February 2024 the Gaza Health Ministry reported that at least **30,000** people had been killed in Gaza since 7 October.

## Food security in Gaza

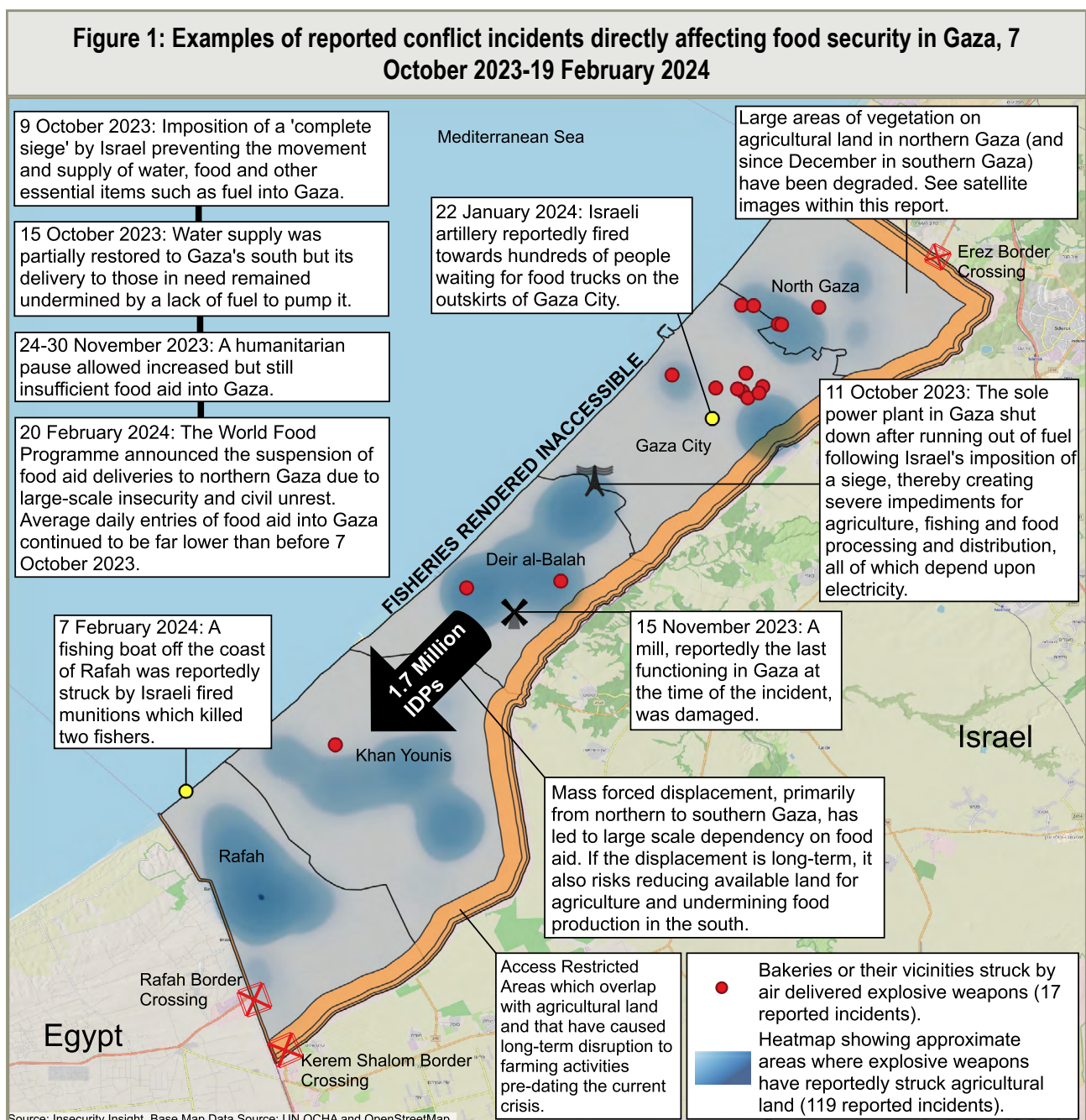
The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report **warned** in December 2023 of an imminent risk of “famine” in Gaza which increases “each day that the current situation of intense hostilities and restricted humanitarian access persists”. Of the 2.1 million population analysed in the assessed period (24 November to 7 December 2023), 93% faced high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Worryingly, it was projected that the situation would continue to deteriorate. The results of a Global Nutrition Cluster **nutritional situation analysis** conducted for Gaza between December 2023 and January 2024 suggest that the following types of deterioration have occurred:

- 95% of 304 households surveyed between 22 and 31 January 2024 were found to be reducing portion sizes or limiting the number of meals consumed. The overwhelming majority of households reported eating only one meal (64%) or two meals (33%) per day.<sup>3</sup>
- People often had access to food of only the lowest nutritional value. Among children aged 6-23 months and pregnant and breastfeeding women, over 90% reported eating two or fewer food groups (e.g. dairy, eggs, meat, etc.) each day.
- The nutritional situation was most concerning in northern Gaza, where one in six children were acutely malnourished and 3% were experiencing the “most severe form of wasting” that required “immediate treatment”.

This state of affairs is already producing tragic life outcomes. **UNICEF** said on 3 March that at least ten children had died in one hospital in northern Gaza in the preceding days due to “dehydration and malnutrition.”

Although acutely aggravated by the latest hostilities, food insecurity in Gaza pre-dates the current crisis.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, **1.3 million** people in Gaza – over half the territory’s population – were estimated to need food security and livelihood assistance. Recurrent violence and a decades-long Israeli blockade of Gaza are key contributing factors to this state of affairs. Since September 2000, farmers’ access to land has been limited by an Israeli-imposed Access Restricted Area between 300 and 1,500 metres wide on the Gaza side of the Israel-Gaza border fence. Farmers living in the Gaza Strip have faced **grave security threats** in this area. Buffer zones on Gaza’s coastline have also limited fishing to within three nautical miles of the coast, which has effectively placed 85% of the fishing areas officially allocated to Gaza **off limits** to its fishers.

## Reported conflict incidents directly affecting Gaza’s food production, processing and distribution infrastructure 07 October 2023-19 February 2024



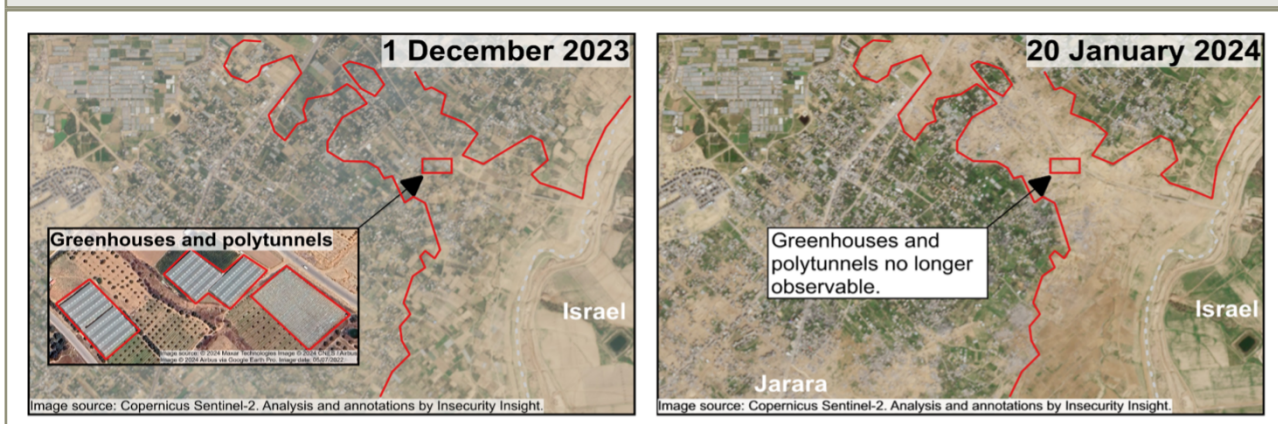
Civilian infrastructure for the production, processing and distribution of food has suffered severe damage and destruction. Bakeries producing bread – a staple part of Gazan diets – have reportedly been directly struck or directly affected by Israeli air-delivered explosive weapons detonating in their vicinity on at least 17 occasions. Often, the bakeries were severely damaged and rendered inoperable. The reported **deaths of multiple bakery workers** during these incidents have created further obstacles to bakeries' continued operations. These bakeries were primarily in the northern half of Gaza, but Israeli air strikes have also damaged at least one bakery in Khan Younis in southern Gaza according to an incident reported by **UN OCHA**. Several incidents occurred in refugee camps, including the **only bakery** in the al-Maghazi camp in Deir al-Balah governorate, which is said to have previously been frequented by thousands of people each day. In another incident in Deir al-Balah governorate reported by **CNN** in early December, on the day following the bakery's destruction by an apparent Israeli air strike, civilians struggled with one another to loot the remaining bags of flour among the rubble. It highlights their desperate need for basic food items.

**“Our daily life [has] turned into [a] daily struggle to secure food for [our] kids and [...] survive.”**

**Displaced resident, Gaza, November 2023**

The capacity of bakeries that have not been directly damaged or destroyed to continue functioning has been hampered by a lack of electricity and fuel caused by the siege, and a lack of water, which requires fuel for its desalination. Gaza's **last operating seawater desalination plant** reportedly shut down on 17 October, and while desalination operations have since **resumed**, the water produced remains woefully insufficient to meet people's needs. The energy-generating equipment (e.g. solar panels) of some bakeries has also been reported to have been **damaged**. The combined impact of these factors resulted in not a single bakery reportedly **remaining operational** in northern Gaza by 7 November. As of 17 January, **15 bakeries** were reported to be operational in Gaza, compared with the 97 that had been active before 7 October.

**Figure 2: Satellite images showing vegetation degradation and the possible destruction of greenhouses on territory in southern Gaza, north-east of Khan Younis, 1 December 2023 and 20 January 2024**

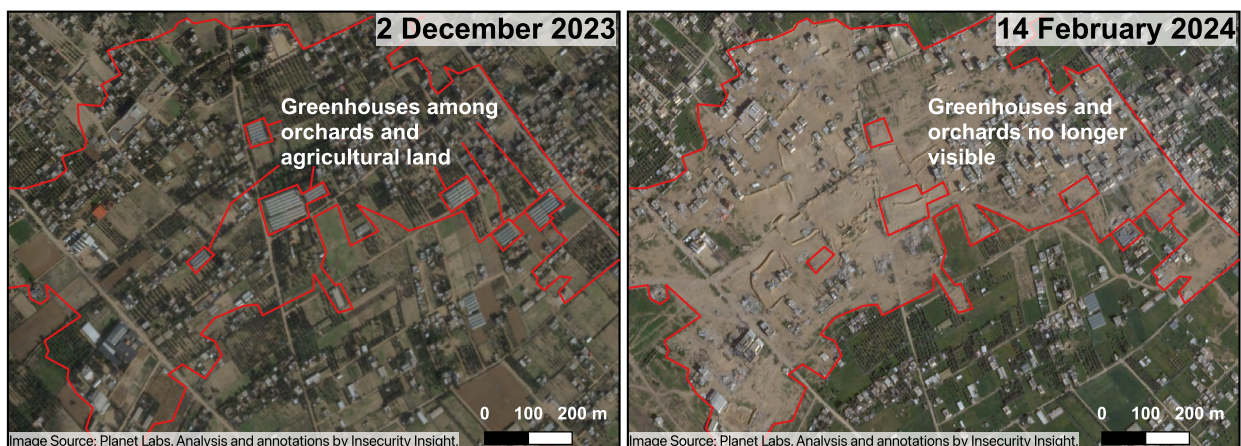


In addition to bakeries, markets and market areas are reported to have been struck by Israeli explosive weapons on at least 16 occasions. According to **Amnesty International**, this includes a marketplace struck by an Israeli air strike on 9 October in the Jabalia refugee camp in which at least 69 people were killed, some of whom were on their way to buy bread.

Some markets have been struck on multiple occasions. Indeed, the **Palestine News Agency** reported that marketplaces in the Jabalia refugee camp were struck again on 24 November by “phosphorus bombs”, which can cause serious burns to humans. **Human Rights Watch** had previously verified Israel’s use of this munition in an attack on Gaza City’s port in October. On other occasions, people transiting through markets have been directly affected by violence. For example, the **Palestine News Agency** reported that three civilians were killed in late January travelling in their car through Yarmouk market in Gaza City when it was struck by an Israeli drone strike. Given the wide blast radius of explosive weapons, these incidents have similarly devastating consequences by preventing people from safely buying and selling food.

The continuing hostilities have created significant obstacles to growing crops and producing food. Satellite imagery shows that large areas of vegetation on agricultural land, including orchards, have been seriously degraded. Insecurity Insight first documented this process in northern Gaza (see previous **Flash Analysis Report**). However, as Figure 2 shows, this process has since expanded into southern Gaza as Israel has intensified its operations in these areas. Overall, **analysis of UN Satellite Centre** (UNOSAT) data published in January suggests that 21% of arable land in Gaza has been damaged due to the ongoing violence, with this figure reaching around 56% in Deir al-Balah governorate. Frequently, entire communities have been devastated and their private assets, including greenhouses, have been destroyed, in addition to the degradation of agricultural land, as shown in Figure 3. One estimate suggests that at least 150 agricultural greenhouses have been destroyed in Gaza since 7 October.<sup>5</sup> The destruction of greenhouses undermines the ability of farmers to **produce nutritional food** efficiently across seasons.

**Figure 3: Satellite images showing vegetation degradation and the possible destruction of greenhouses on territory to the west of Abisan al-Kabira, Khan Younis governorate, southern Gaza, 2 December 2023 and 14 February 2024**



Explosive weapons use has contributed to the damage to agricultural land. Insecurity Insight’s data shows that these weapons reportedly struck agricultural land on at least 119 occasions between 7 October 2023 and 19 February 2024 in incidents spread widely across Gaza. Satellite images showing large craters on agricultural land, which are likely due to explosive weapons detonating, suggest that these reports are credible (see Figure 4). The contamination of farmland by explosive weapons remnants and unexploded ordnance (UXO) will have long-term negative and foreseeable consequences even after the current violence has decreased. This is because of the risk of farmers and their livestock being killed or injured by the later detonation of UXO.

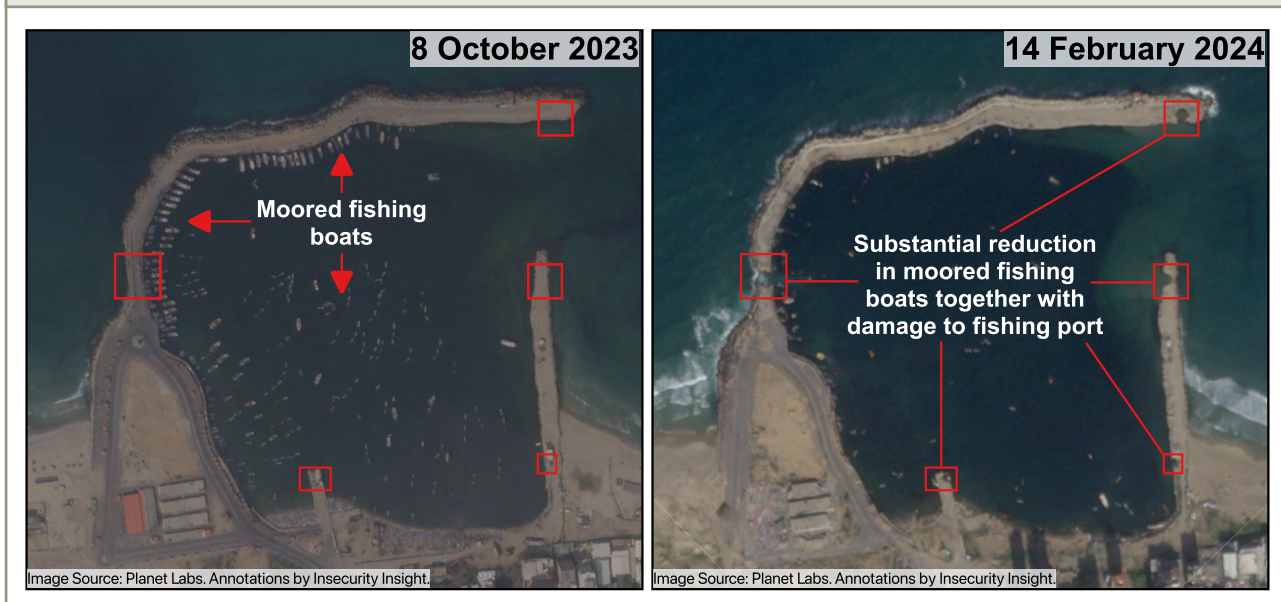
Figure 4: Satellite image showing craters on agricultural land in Beit Lahia, north Gaza, 14 February 2024



The violence has forced the overwhelming majority of agricultural activities to come to a complete halt, while some of the few farmers who have continued to farm their land have been injured or killed. The **Gaza Ministry of Agriculture** reported that, as of 6 November, Israeli air-delivered explosive weapons had killed almost 20 farmers working in areas east of Khan Younis alone. Given the overall extent of civilian casualties in Gaza since 7 October, it is likely that the number of farmers killed is considerably higher than is known.

The vast majority of fishing activities have halted. Some Gazans attempted to fish in January and February, reportedly out of desperation to find food, but often found themselves subjected to gunfire from Israeli naval vessels. **Videos** posted on social media by Middle East Monitor suggest that these reports are credible. In several cases, the incidents have led to the **deaths of Palestinian fishers**, including two killed off the coast of Rafah in early February, as reported by UN OCHA. As shown in Figure 5, considerable damage has also been done to the jetty of the Port of Gaza, Gaza City's main fishing port, which has been split in two. The substantial reduction in stationed and intact fishing boats observable on 14 February 2024 compared with 8 October 2023 supports reports of their large-scale destruction. Video footage published by **Sky News** as early as 10 October appeared to show fishing boats in the port burning after being hit by rockets fired from Israeli naval vessels. Similar incidents have been **reported elsewhere** along Gaza's coast, including near Nuseirat and Rafah.

Figure 5: Satellite images showing visible damage to the Port of Gaza, 8 October 2023 and 14 February 2024



Water distribution and supply facilities essential for sanitation and food preparation have suffered large-scale damage and destruction. Seven water facilities (including reservoirs) in Gaza City, Jabalia refugee camp and Rafah were reportedly **destroyed or severely damaged** during the first week of November alone. While some water desalination in Gaza has **resumed**, it continues to only be partially functional and trucking remains the main means of distributing water, but this is itself very limited by damage to transportation infrastructure and a lack of fuel for vehicles.

The desperation of civilians has led to masses of individuals forcibly looting food aid, often amid considerable disorder. The most notable incident was first reported in late October, when civilians forcibly entered UN warehouses in Deir al-Balah and **looted** food aid. Similar incidents of **disorder** were reported in December and again in February. In the latter incident, a **World Food Programme (WFP) truck driver** was physically beaten. As one displaced civilian observed:

**“The starvation is making people aggressive. The survival mode is at its highest [...] ever.”**

Displaced resident, Gaza, December 2023

### **Food security and international humanitarian law in Gaza**

International humanitarian law (IHL) obliges conflict parties to protect the access of civilians to food and water during armed conflict. Customary IHL, as compiled by the International Committee of the Red Cross, prohibits attacks against objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. These include foodstuffs, crops, livestock, and drinking water supplies (Rule 54). IHL further provides that the parties to the conflict must allow access for humanitarian relief to civilians in need (Rule 55) and ensure the freedom of movement of authorised humanitarian relief personnel.

The UN Security Council reaffirmed these principles in 2018 when it unanimously passed Resolution 2417, legally binding all conflict parties to protect civilian infrastructure critical to the functioning of food systems and markets and the delivery of humanitarian aid. Moreover, in January 2024, the **International Court of Justice** (ICJ) ordered Israel to “take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip”.

Other relevant principles under IHL include the obligations of:

- **occupying powers** to provide food to the population under their occupation to the fullest extent of the means available to them; and
- all conflict parties to ensure, to the greatest practicable extent, that if a civilian population has been evacuated for imperative military reasons or the security of the civilians involved, they can go to a location where adequate nutrition is available to them.

Concerningly, on several occasions crowds of people waiting to receive food aid have been **fired at by Israeli forces** and, as CNN has documented, a UNRWA<sup>6</sup> food aid truck was struck by Israeli gunfire in early February. The combination of this insecurity and civil disorder led the WFP to announce a **suspension of food aid** deliveries to northern Gaza on 20 February.

Due to recurrent communications blackouts and access restrictions, it is likely that more incidents directly affecting food security have occurred than have been recorded. **Satellite image analysis** published by the BBC in January estimated that between 144,000 and 175,000 buildings in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed since 7 October, accounting respectively for between 50% and 61% of buildings in Gaza. Many of these structures are likely to have been markets, food shops, bakeries and other buildings for distributing food or water. This further underscores the gravity of the situation facing Gaza's civilian population.

## The conflict's impact on food security

### Economic barriers to accessing food

Marked price rises combined with difficulties in accessing cash have created chronic difficulties for economically viable access to food. Figures from the **Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics** indicate that the consumer price index for food and soft drinks increased by 76% between September and December 2023. However, the rate of price increases was considerably higher for essential commodities. For example, the price of wheat increased by 768.4% between September and December 2023, while that of potatoes increased by 416.8% over the same period. Key informants in Gaza interviewed in January for this report highlighted the “extreme high prices of food” as one of the primary reasons why they could not access food.

According to the **International Labour Organization**, the majority of jobs in Gaza have been lost since 7 October. Hence, civilians have also lost their income sources. Even for those who do have financial resources, many face difficulties in obtaining cash. ATMs provide the main way to obtain cash after all 55 branches of Gaza's **ten banks suspended** their operations, but they have been forced to close during regular communication blackouts, and even when they are open, queues have been very long.<sup>7</sup>

### Food availability: critical shortages of staple foods

**Market monitoring** published by the WFP in early February showed that among shops surveyed in Gaza, all reported a “depletion of stocks in dairy products and mineral water”. Meanwhile, 86% of shops reported that they had run out of essential items such as wheat, flour, eggs and rice. Vegetables and meat have also been in short supply, as a key informant interviewed for this report noted in Jabalia, north Gaza:

“[As] for the vegetables, [they're] not available. There [aren't] any type[s] of vegetables in the market, and meat [...] it's random and not every day.”

Displaced resident, Gaza, January 2024

Although the situation is becoming ever more severe, food availability had already been a major problem for several months. A displaced resident noted in December:

“Women are knocking on the doors of the remaining houses seeking a portion or a handful of flour to bake anything for their children using wood [fires].”

Displaced resident, Gaza, December 2023



The combined impact of the lack of available food is large-scale dependency on food aid. Key informants interviewed in Rafah in January also reported that “buying stolen food [from food aid assistance]” was one of the other main food sources. The extremely limited supplies of nutritious food will have severe consequences. For example, the **Global Nutrition Cluster** stated in February that the “lack of dietary diversity and reduced consumption” was “likely to lead to low birth weights and negatively impact the nutritional status of infants” in Gaza.

### **The obstruction of food aid deliveries and killing of desperate civilians: The urgency of upholding international humanitarian law**

On 29 February 2024, **over one hundred Palestinians were killed** amongst a large crowd desperately waiting to receive food aid near Gaza City. Whilst doing so, Israeli armed forces opened fire and people were run over by trucks. It is unclear exactly how all of the individuals were killed. However, the incident forms part of a broader history.

The delivery of food aid has repeatedly been obstructed by Israeli fired munitions that have landed in the vicinity of or directly struck vehicles and personnel delivering aid as well as distressed individuals waiting to receive food. In just one example, an **investigation by CNN** showed how a UNRWA convoy transporting food supplies in central Gaza in early February was hit by Israeli naval gunfire, destroying much of the wheat flour being carried. The incident occurred despite the vehicle’s route already having been agreed upon between the UN and Israel’s armed forces.

The incident on 29 February 2024 not only reveals the absolute severity and desperation of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, particularly in the north. It further indicates a worrying trend which contravenes IHL obligations (See Customary IHL Rule 54, Customary IHL Rule 55 and UNSC Res 2417, among others). These must be upheld.

### **Acute obstacles to utilising available food**

When people have managed to access food, they have often struggled to utilise it effectively, partly because they lack the utensils needed to cook or process it, which has led to a reliance on less nutritious pre-prepared or canned food. As an individual in Rafah commented:

**“[M]ost people evacuated without the[ir] cooking utilities, and [there is a] lack of [these] specific items in the market (dishes, cooking pots, bowls, etc.) so, they rely on canned food to eat.”**

**Displaced resident, Gaza, January 2024**

Key informants also highlighted the obstacles created by the lack of cooking gas and water, and the cramped conditions and limited space for cooking in areas housing displaced people (see below).

### **Mass forced displacement with immediate and long-term consequences for food insecurity**

As of 20 January 2024, 1.7 million people were reported to be **internally displaced** in Gaza, accounting for approximately 85% of the territory’s population. Their loss of private assets and livelihoods has forced them to depend on food aid, insufficient amounts of which have been able to reach them due to the Israeli-imposed siege and access restrictions.

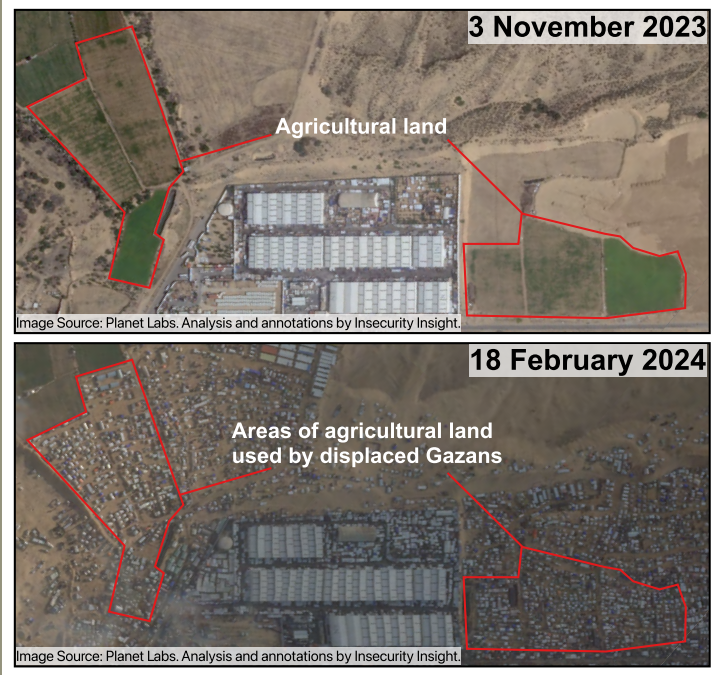
After dangerous journeys, displaced people have found overcrowded conditions in the areas they have reached, and have sometimes been forced to sleep on the streets. The situation has been dire even for those who have reached shelter, as one Gazan resident reported:

**“The elderly don’t have mattresses to sleep on, they sleep on wet floors, on the sand.”**

**Displaced resident, Gaza, December 2023**

This exacerbates the overcrowding that had already existed in Gaza prior to 7 October, when most refugee camps, including the Beach and Jabalia camps, lacked land on which crops could be grown. Instead, food production was largely only possible in these camps on the rooftops of buildings. As Figure 6 shows, IDPs have already used some areas of agricultural land as sites to build temporary shelters. This adds further obstacles to food production in Gaza.

**Figure 6: Satellite images showing how areas of agricultural land in southern Gaza have become used by densely packed groups of IDPs, 3 November 2023 and 18 February 2024**



## Conclusions

**“When we look at the sky, we don’t see clear sky. They are grey skies. Not from rain clouds, but clouds from the heavy bombardments. The shelling. [...] We are breathing the bombs every day.”**

**Displaced resident, Gaza, December 2023**

### Infrastructure Damage and Agricultural Land Degradation:

- The reported information indicates clear, direct, targeted, and severe damage and destruction of infrastructure vital for the production, processing, and distribution of food by Gaza’s civilian population.
- Satellite images show large areas of agricultural land degraded by military operations alongside the destruction of agricultural infrastructure, including greenhouses. Limited precautions appear to have been taken to protect agricultural lands for food production.
- Indications of increased agricultural land degradation in southern Gaza in early December following the earlier destruction of large areas of vegetation on agricultural land in northern Gaza are especially concerning.

- Farmers, herders and rural workers have faced extreme security risks from explosive weapons and land contamination. Even after the violence has ended, agricultural land will require clearing of explosive remnants of war.

### **Impact on Food Availability, Access, and Utilisation:**

- Food availability, access and utilisation among Palestinian civilians in Gaza have been severely affected. Food stocks have been seriously depleted and remaining food is less nutritious.
- Livelihoods have been destroyed, whilst skyrocketing inflation has made access to food unaffordable. Before the war, one kilogram of lentils was one EUR, now it is 20 EUR. Before the war, one kilogram of wheat flour was less than one EUR, now it can reach up to 30 EUR/kilogram.
- Transport infrastructure needs immediate repairing to enable the distribution of food and associated goods essential for its production.
- Water scarcity, limited gas, and the consequences of mass displacement have made cooking and effectively utilising remaining food extremely challenging.
- Poor-quality diets and lack of access to safe water will have long-term consequences and may increase mortality rates and health deterioration in the short term.

### **Recommendations:**

- All conflict parties should agree and take proactive measures to realize an immediate and sustained humanitarian ceasefire to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and end the blockade in Gaza that is preventing civilians from access to life-saving humanitarian assistance including food, fuel, and water.
- All conflict parties must immediately end the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure critical to the survival of the population, including food production and distribution facilities, ensuring compliance with UNSC Resolution 2417 (2018) which condemns the use of starvation as a weapon of warfare.
- All actors should take all necessary steps to realize a massive increase in the quantity and diversity of humanitarian assistance entering Gaza including meat, eggs, milk, flour, salt, and yeast, as well as non-food items such as fuel and generators, whilst also ensuring safe unfettered humanitarian access to all parts of the Gaza Strip.
- In accordance with the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) legally binding provisional measures, third States must act independently and immediately to employ all means reasonably available to them to prevent violations of the Genocide Convention in Gaza. This must include taking all possible diplomatic and political measures to halt a military ground invasion in Rafah which threatens the lives and livelihoods of more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million population. Israel should agree to allow the immediate entry of sufficient fuel into Gaza to restart vital civilian infrastructure, including food production and distribution sites.
- Israel must take all feasible precautions to end damage to agricultural land for the production of foodstuffs.

## Specific proposals:

### General

- All international donors should rapidly resume and continue funding UNRWA, taking all possible steps to ensure donors do not cut further support, especially at a time when famine and disease outbreaks are evidently worsening. UNRWA facilities in Gaza host 1.7 million displaced Palestinians across or near 154 shelters, and are vital to providing essential health, psychosocial support, food, and WASH services.
- Dozens of UN and INGO staffers have been **waiting months for their visas** to support Gaza operations from Jerusalem, while dozens more are facing visa expiration in the next three months. At least **67 visa requests** across UN agencies had received no response as of 7 March. The Israeli Population and Immigration Authority should grant blanket work visas for UN and INGO employees and third-party states should take all diplomatic measures to realize such a goal, thus adhering to the ICJ provisional measures which include taking immediate and effective measures to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza.
- Internet and telecommunications in Gaza should be safeguarded to allow the use of electronic payments through PayPal and other financial service providers, as well as to facilitate adequate access to markets and authorizations required to import telecommunications equipment including off-grid, solar solutions with batteries and generators, radio communication equipment (antennas, handsets, repeaters), and satellite-based communications (VSAT, satellite phones).

### Malnutrition

- Unimpeded, immediate and safe humanitarian access across Gaza, particularly to the North of Gaza, is urgently required to prevent further deaths from dehydration and malnutrition. Israeli authorities must stop denying access of food trucks, a recent example being on 6 March when a 14-truck **WFP convoy was turned around**.
- Reports of death and threats of death among children who suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) due to inadequate food and nutrition supplies indicate a need for immediate and urgent access to the northern regions of Gaza, supplying both food and the establishment of SAM stabilization centres, along with outpatient therapeutic feeding programs.
- Healthcare settings (hospitals, primary health centres, mobile medical teams) must be protected and fully supplied with lifesaving equipment and supplies of medicines, fuel, water, and medical personnel to treat the sick and wounded, including power generators, water purifiers, solar panels and medical equipment. Such measures shape the foundation for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In adherence with IHL, armed actors must not use or attack health establishments and units, including medical personnel. Insecurity at hospitals has discouraged women from going for needed treatment, instead forcing them to leave prematurely for fear of their safety.
- Women are traumatised and struggling to breastfeed. Skilled counsellors need safe access to lactating women to support breast-feeding. Breast milk substitutes must be made available for infants less than 6-months-old, as well as the necessary micronutrient supplementation for children under 5-years-old (including vitamin A, MNP, medium and small quantity lipid-based supplements). Safe drinking water is also critical for lactating women using milk supplements and sterilising items such as baby bottles (see specific WASH recommendations below).

- Safe, private and adequate shelter for breastfeeding women is essential to allow for breast-feeding practices and skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby. Due to the flimsy nature of shelters and the cold weather, mothers have reportedly refrained from washing their babies so as not to get them too cold, further increasing their risk of infection and disease.

## Food, Security and Livelihoods

- Humanitarian access on the ground, including the provision of sufficient food and commercial trucks in the Gaza Strip through all possible crossings, must be allowed. It can take up to one month for supplies to enter Gaza, as each truck is submitted to screening by Israeli authorities. Blocking access is directly denying the starving population their daily calory intake and minimum nutritional requirements of 2,100 calories per person per day, including 10-12% of the total energy provided by protein and 17% by fat. Children, pregnant women, and older persons should be targeted for high-energy, nutrient-dense foods items. Gas for cooking and fresh food should also be provided.
- The immediate ground entry and scale up of humanitarian and commercial trucks carrying items including fresh food, meat, eggs, vegetables, fish, milk, animal feed, agricultural production, and food production items should be prioritized to initiate efforts to rehabilitate the food production chain and ensure the availability of a balanced nutrition. Israeli authorities must not remove essential humanitarian items from trucks which are critical to agricultural and food production to feed the starving population.
- Donor states should ensure that items they have funded to enter Gaza are not removed from trucks and that they meet the population in need. Any item that is removed without reason or justification should be duly followed up.
- Ensure distribution of flour, salt, and yeast to functioning bakeries to produce bread for affected population (five loaves per person), including the supply of fuel and 400 metric tonnes of wheat flour per day.
- Objects that are indispensable for the survival of the civilian population must not be targeted including foodstuffs, crops, livestock, agricultural assets, and drinking water installations and supplies, as well as those necessary for food production and distribution such as farms, markets, mills, and food-processing and storage sites. Targeting these objects is a direct violation of UNSC Resolution 2417, which forbids starvation as a weapon of war.
- Third party states should do everything reasonably in their power to prevent and stop violations of IHL and UNSC Resolution 2417 by halting the transfer of weapons or ammunition to Israel that would be used to target civilian and food production infrastructures.

## Humanitarian Access

- Third party states should remain focused on issues of humanitarian access on the ground, utilising all possible diplomatic and political avenues to ensure that Israel and Egypt facilitate safe, open, and unimpeded humanitarian aid routes into and across Gaza. Airdrops are a desperate last resort and should not be a solution to crisis-level conditions of food insecurity and famine-like conditions.
- All parties should massively scale up the entry of humanitarian and commercial goods through all possible ground supply routes, including Ashdod and Gaza City, Allenby and Rabin in Jordan, and Erez/Karni in northern Gaza and Kerem Shalom in Rafah. The opening hours of Kerem Shalom need to be expanded to optimize daylight hours, and the crossing should be fully operable on Fridays and Saturdays.

- The private sector should complement the humanitarian response by the resumption of trade and imports. Basic commodities from the private sector should reflect the target put forth by the February 9 Ceasefire Plan: A minimum of 600 trucks, 300 with commercial trucks, 200 with UN and INGO supplies, and 100 with items collected by the Red Crescent societies. It is only with the entry of commercial goods and the provision of cash and voucher assistance that supply chains will be restored and civilians have access to basic services.

## Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

- WASH services are currently reaching approximately 45-50% of the population in need and UNICEF reports that 81% of households in Gaza lack access to safe and clean water. Even a one-month pause would allow for reach to expand to at least 80% of the population. Water supplies should be provided for Gaza's population in line with the minimum humanitarian emergency response standards of 15 litres per person per day for drinking, cooking and sanitation purposes. This requires fully restoring the uninterrupted Mekorot water supply lines from Israel into Gaza and allowing safe access to repair the Bani Suhaila Mekorot line in South region and Bani Saeed in the Middle region, including technical assessments and material supplies for repair work.
- On October 10, the Israeli government turned off the water pipeline from Israel into northern Gaza, denying the current population of around 600,000 people with an estimated 24,000 cubic metres of clean, drinking water each day. The population in northern Gaza does not have access to clean water. Denying such access is a breach of IHL. The Israeli Government should restart the pipeline and facilitate safe, unhindered access to the UN and INGOs for any repair work required. This requires assured humanitarian personnel safety to undertake initial damage assessments, outline repair needs, and evaluate population needs. Then, such specialised personnel and WASH materials (including those on the dual-item list such as decentralised systems including electromechanic materials and generators) must be granted safe, immediate, and continued access into Gaza. The checkpoints and transport routes needed for the duration of repair work and follow-up should remain open and safe for both humanitarian personnel and materials.

## Endnotes

1 The incidents in this report have not been independently verified and do not reflect a complete or representative sample of all incidents directly affecting food insecurity in Gaza during the analysed period. The Insecurity Insight data in this report is for the period 7 October 2023 – 19 February 2024.

2 Satellite image source used in this report: Planet Team (2024). Planet Application Program Interface: In Space for Life on Earth. San Francisco. <https://api.planet.com>.

3 Results of computer-assisted telephone interviews conducted by the World Food Programme.

4 Key informant interview.

5 The figure of 150 agricultural greenhouses is based on an analysis conducted by The Guardian.

6 UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

7 Key informant interview.