



GAZA: HUNGER, STARVATION AND THE SYSTEMATIC DESTRUCTION OF PALESTINIAN LIFE

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For nearly two months, Israel has unilaterally violated the ceasefire, resumed bombardments of Gaza, and obstructed the entry of humanitarian aid and essential services. Consequently, Gaza is facing its gravest humanitarian crisis since October 2023. Over 51,000 Palestinians, including nearly 16,000 children, have been killed. Behind these devastating numbers lies the profound suffering of a population systematically stripped of dignity and humanity.

Still 24 living Israeli hostages remain in Gaza and military force will not bring them back home. Despite the clear calls from the street, the Israeli government seems willing to give up the hostages to pursue its war on Gaza. The Israeli government has now announced a new major attack, that will lead to massive displacement, with the intention to fully reoccupy and annex parts of the Gaza strip.¹ Furthermore, the Israeli government has proposed a new modality for the distribution of aid which is incompatible with humanitarian principles, creates security risks and is unlikely to deliver the assistance that is needed by extremely vulnerable groups. This move would violate humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence and further exacerbate the existing crisis.²

Meanwhile, the Israeli military continues to issue arbitrary evacuation orders, forcibly displacing civilians with no safe refuge. Tents for the displaced, schools, hospitals, and other critical civilian infrastructure are being deliberately targeted in bombardments, acts that constitute war crimes under Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions. Even places of worship—mosques and churches—have not been spared.

Widespread hunger has set in due to the Israeli blockade. With food convoys halted at the borders, prices have surged by up to 1,400 percent compared to levels during the ceasefire. Acute malnutrition is now afflicting at least 60,000 young children, while pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and the elderly face imminent risk.³ Without an immediate lifting of the blockade, thousands more will perish from starvation and disease.⁴ Jonathan Whittall, Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Gaza, states: *"Gaza is being starved, it's*

¹ www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-cabinet-approves-expansion-gaza-offensive-broadcaster-kan-reports-2025-05-05/

² <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-humanitarian-country-team-occupied-palestinian-territory-principled-aid-delivery-gaza> and Norwegian Refugee Council <https://www.channel4.com/news/israeli-plan-is-total-control-in-gaza-norwegian-refugee-council>

³ https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/Gaza_Reported_Impact_Snapshot_22_April_2025.pdf

⁴ World Food Program, <https://www.dw.com/en/world-food-programme-warns-of-mass-starvation-in-gaza/a-72356829>

*being bombed, it's being strangled. This looks like the deliberate dismantling of Palestinian life".*⁵ This deliberate use of starvation as a weapon of war by Israel is a crime that must be prosecuted and punished.⁶

The healthcare infrastructure of Gaza has been devastated. Last month, the world was shocked when Israeli soldiers indiscriminately killed 15 Palestinian medics and rescue workers and buried them alongside their ambulances⁷. Unfortunately, this is only one example of the way medical personnel has been systematically targeted by the Israeli army. Health care workers have been killed, wounded, forcibly disappeared, or subjected to torture while in detention, as reported by Physicians for Human Rights Israel in their latest report.⁸

In addition, since October 7, at least 418 aid workers, including 295 UN staff, and over 200 journalists have been killed.⁹ This scale marks the deadliest for humanitarian workers and media as compared to other conflicts in recent history.¹⁰

Only an immediate cease-fire and an end to the blockade can end the suffering.

In his first address, Pope Leo XIV urged humanity to *"build bridges through dialogue and encounter so that we may all be one people, united in peace."*¹¹ We also recall the words of the late Pope Francis who, while speaking about Gaza, reminded the world that *"Without justice, there is no peace. Without justice, the law of the prevalence of the strong over the weak is entrenched."*¹²

In this spirit, the EU must not remain passive while human rights law and international humanitarian law are reduced to meaningless declarations, stripped of their power and authority. Nor should they permit our very notions of shared humanity and human dignity to be hollowed out when so selectively applied.

To protect the rights of the Palestinian people in Gaza and those of the hostages—and to ensure accountability for grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law—the EU must end its inaction. CIDSE therefore welcomes the recent Dutch request to review Israel's compliance with the Human Rights clause (Art. 2) of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, as a first long overdue step towards accountability.¹³

CIDSE urges the EU and its member states to:

- Demand an immediate cease-fire in Gaza through effective political and diplomatic measures.
- Ensure that Israel allows the immediate and full access for humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza without restrictions or preconditions, in compliance with the ICJ provisional

⁵ <https://x.com/UNOCHA/status/1913508726172008860>

⁶ Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/israel-opt-two-months-of-cruel-and-inhumane-siege-are-further-evidence-of-israels-genocidal-intent-in-gaza/> and Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/18/israel-starvation-used-weapon-war-gaza>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/24/new-details-on-killing-of-paramedics-in-gaza-appear-to-contradict-idf-account#:~:text=New%20developments%20have%20come%20to,indiscriminately%20at%20the%20medical%20workers>

⁸ Physicians for Human Rights Israel, Unlawfully, Tortured, Detained: Starved and S'gaza of Plight, 5 February, https://www.phr.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/6265_DetentionReport_Eng.pdf

⁹ Nick Turse, News Graveyards: How Dangers to War Reporters Endanger the World. April 1, 2025, Brown University, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2025/Turse_Costs%20of%20War_The%20Reporting%20Graveyard%204-2-25.pdf

¹⁰ Palestinian Journalist Syndicate, <https://pjs.ps/en/index.html>

¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/08/world/europe/pope-leo-xiv-speech-transcript.html>

¹² <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/pope-francis-passing-his-key-statements-on-gaza-and-the-ongoing-genocide/>

¹³ <https://www.politico.eu/article/israel-eu-relationship-must-reviewed-over-gaza-aid-dutch-foreign-minister-veldkamp-kallas/>

measures. Publicly reject proposals for the distribution of aid which are likely to violate the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

- Continue to work toward the immediate release of all the hostages.
- Suspending the Association Agreement with Israel pending a review based on the human rights clause (Art. 2) of the agreement as requested by The Netherlands, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia.
- Suspend all weapons trade with Israel.
- Uphold their legal obligations and execute the arrest warrants issued by the ICC against Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Minister of Defense Gallant.

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