

In just 24 hours, two children and an elderly man starve to death amid rising malnutrition rates in Gaza



08 Mar 2024

Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Geneva - An alarming hunger, malnutrition, and dehydration crisis is sweeping through the northern Gaza Strip, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor reported. This occurs as Israel continues its five-month-long genocide against the Palestinian people in the Strip, with no international pressure to stop the crime or ensure the establishment of effective mechanisms to deliver the required humanitarian aid.

In a statement on Thursday, Euro-Med Monitor highlighted that its field team in Gaza City and the northern part of the Strip is documenting deaths, nearly daily, as a result of the famine that has spread throughout the area, whether in hospitals or displacement centres and remaining homes. The number of deaths is also showing a notable increase among children and the elderly.

The rights group said that as of Wednesday evening, 6 March, the official death toll from hunger and malnutrition announced by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza stood at 20. However, this figure only accounts for the number of deaths that occur inside hospitals, all of which are partially operational and difficult to reach due to road destruction and fuel shortages that impede the operation of ambulances and other means of transportation.

The Euro-Med Monitor team documented three deaths yesterday evening (Wednesday) due to the famine. Three-year-old Ahmed Wael Ahl has died of hunger and dehydration, as did a 15-year-old child in Al-Shifa Medical Complex, whose name is not yet known. A 72-year-old man died from malnutrition and dehydration in Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza.

Israel's ongoing imposition of a comprehensive and illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip obstructs the continuous entry and delivery of humanitarian aid, said Euro-Med Monitor, particularly to the northern section of the Strip. Because of this, hundreds of thousands of residents are in real and imminent danger of dying from starvation and dehydration, the rights organisation warned. This includes thousands of pregnant and lactating women, children, sick people, newborns, and elderly people.

According to Euro-Med Monitor, the truly tragic situation lies within the remaining destroyed neighborhoods throughout the Gaza Strip, where 10s of thousands of people live in extremely harsh conditions due to unprecedented levels of famine. These people risk their lives with every attempt to travel to Israeli checkpoints, where aid trucks sporadically arrive, given that Israeli army forces have deliberately and repeatedly targeted those trying to secure aid for themselves and their families. Starving individuals are also risking their lives by going to agricultural lands in dangerous border areas, added Euro-Med Monitor, in an attempt to obtain some of the remaining crops.

In this context, the Geneva-based organisation cited remarks made on 3 March by Adele Khodr, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, in which she said: "These tragic

and horrific deaths are man-made, predictable, and entirely preventable.”

Euro-Med Monitor said it supports Khodr’s assertion that “The lives of thousands more babies and children depend on urgent action being taken now” to prevent further famine, and her statement that this requires “reliable multiple entry points that would allow us to bring aid in from all possible crossings, including to northern Gaza; and security assurances and unimpeded passage to distribute aid, at scale, across Gaza, with no denials, delays and access impediments”.

The Republic of South Africa submitted an urgent request to the International Court of Justice yesterday, said Euro-Med Monitor, imploring the Court to take new actions and reinforce its previous measures to prevent famine in the Gaza Strip. This request was prompted by the extreme starvation that has reached the point of famine and acute malnutrition, as well as the high number of deaths from hunger and dehydration, particularly among children and infants.

In order to address the famine, hunger, and substandard living conditions faced by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, South Africa asked the Court to take immediate precautionary measures to ensure the swift cessation of hostilities there. It also demanded that Israel take immediate and effective measures, including suspending military operations in Gaza, lifting the blockade, and removing any hindrances to Palestinians’ access to aid.

As an occupying power, Israel is required to provide urgently needed basic services and humanitarian aid to address issues like famine and inhuman living conditions in the Strip; it must ensure access to basic necessities like water, food, shelter, clothing, fuel, personal hygiene supplies, sanitation, and medical assistance.

In its request, South Africa also asked that all parties to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide refrain from any actions that may undermine the rights of Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from genocide and related prohibited acts.

Euro-Med Monitor emphasised the significance of the request submitted by South Africa to the International Court of Justice in an attempt to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. This request is especially important seeing as the ICJ previously recognised that there was a reasonable suspicion that Israel had violated its international obligations as a State Party to the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide.

It is obvious to see that Israel's collective punishment of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Euro-Med Monitor asserted, is directed towards starving the Strip's entire population and putting all residents at risk of death. Israel is clearly using starvation as a tactic of war—which is illegal under international law—and as a means of carrying out its genocide against the Strip's residents, which has been ongoing for five months now. It is deliberately deepening the catastrophic starvation crisis for all Gazans, Euro-Med further stated, by depriving them of food and basic necessities.

The rights group said that obstructing the entry and distribution of humanitarian supplies, especially in Gaza City and the northern Strip, comes as part of Israel's collective punishment policy against those who have challenged the illegal Israeli evacuation orders. These orders are a blatant attempt to force Palestinians who remain in the north to evacuate to the south, which is not safe from Israeli violence either, in continuation of Israel's forced displacement crime against the 2.3 million Gazans in the Strip.

In order to prevent the impending catastrophe of mass famine in the Gaza Strip, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor urged the international community to apply immediate pressure on Israel to halt its starvation campaign against Palestinians there, plus hold it accountable for its crimes and grave violations against the Gaza Strip and all of its Palestinian residents. Additionally, the rights group called for more effective and decisive international intervention to ensure the safe, complete, and reliable delivery of humanitarian supplies without any hindrance. This would enable all affected people to access the provision of desperately needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, Euro-Med Monitor said.