

UNRWA warns that Israel blocks food for more than one million Palestinians in besieged Gaza

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Palestinians gather for a demonstration in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on January 30, 2024, calling for continued international support to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) amid a genocidal Israeli war. (Photo by AFP)

Geneva, February 11 (RHC)-- The Israeli regime has been holding up food aid for over one million Palestinians starving in the besieged Gaza Strip, the main UN aid agency to Palestinians has warned. The director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Philippe Lazzarini, said that a convoy of food donated by Turkey has been kept for weeks in Israeli confiscation.

Lazzarini warned that Tel Aviv had imposed restrictions on UNRWA, a measure that prevents the shipment of food from reaching the Palestinians.

Reports said 1,049 shipping containers of rice, flour, chickpeas, sugar, and cooking oil — enough to feed 1.1 million people for one month — are blocked in the port city of Ashdod awaiting clearance from regime's customs authorities while an estimated 25 percent of families in Gaza face catastrophic hunger.

On Friday, the World Food Program warned that the besieged Palestinian territory could be plunged into famine as early as May. The UN agency defines a famine as when 30 percent of children are malnourished, one-fifth of households face acute food shortages and two of every 10,000 people are dying from hunger or malnutrition.

According to the UN organization, 1.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are living in makeshift camps and don't have enough food to feed their families, despite receiving food aid.

Also, less than four percent of fresh water is drinkable and the surrounding sea is polluted by sewage. "Our water is salty as if you are drinking from the sea," says 50-year-old Um Amir, a mother of 11 whose home accommodates an extended family of 20.

So far, international efforts have failed to stop the months-long onslaught against the Palestinians trapped in Gaza, leaving the hapless population in dire conditions as the 2.3 million people have nowhere to go.

The U.S. and other countries, as well as international organizations, have warned Israel that an invasion of the southern city of Rafah would lead to "disaster," while the United Nations has continued to express concern over devastating consequences for the Palestinians. "Where are they supposed to go? How are they supposed to stay safe?" asked the UN's humanitarian affairs and relief chief Martin Griffiths on Saturday.

Israel's ceaseless attacks on the Gaza Strip since early October have killed at least 28,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, with thousands more missing, buried under the rubble.

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