

*Six children die of malnutrition in Gaza hospitals as Israeli terrorist regime blocks humanitarian aid from reaching civilians*

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**A Palestinian child lies on a bed at Abu Youssef al-Najjar Hospital, while Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger and soaring malnutrition, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip [File: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa/Reuters]**

Gaza City, February 29 (RHC)-- Six children have died from dehydration and malnutrition at hospitals in northern Gaza, the Health Ministry in the besieged Palestinian territory has said, as the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the besieged enclave worsens.

Two children died at al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, the ministry said on Wednesday. Earlier it reported that four children died at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, while seven others remained in critical condition.

“We ask international agencies to intervene immediately to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in northern Gaza,” Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qudra said in a statement, as Israel’s attacks on Gaza continue. “The international community is facing a moral and humanitarian test to stop the genocide in Gaza.”

Kamal Adwan Hospital’s Director Ahmed al-Kahlout said that the hospital had gone out of service due to a lack of fuel to run its generators. On Tuesday, Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia also went out of service for the same reason.

In a video posted on Instagram and verified by Al Jazeera’s Sanad verification unit, journalist Ebrahim Musalam shows an infant on a bed inside the pediatric department at Kamal Adwan Hospital, as power comes in and out.

Musalam said the children in the department are suffering from malnutrition and a lack of infant formula, and that necessary devices have stopped working due to the constant power outages as a result of fuel shortages.

Palestinian group Hamas on Wednesday said that the closure of Kamal Adwan Hospital would exacerbate the health and humanitarian crisis in Northern Gaza, which is already teetering on the brink of famine as Israel continues to block or disrupt aid missions there.

On Wednesday, Israel said a convoy of 31 trucks carrying food had entered northern Gaza. The Israeli military office that oversees Palestinian civilian affairs, the Coordination of Government Activity in the Territories (COGAT), also said nearly 20 other trucks entered the north on Monday and Tuesday.

These were the first major aid deliveries in a month to the devastated, isolated area, where the United Nations has warned of worsening starvation. Israel has held up the entry of aid into Gaza for weeks, with Israeli protesters taking part in demonstrations calling for no aid to be allowed into the territory, even as hunger and disease spread.

UN officials say Israel’s months-long war, which has killed nearly 30,000 people in Gaza, has also pushed a quarter of the population of 2.3 million to the brink of famine.

Project Hope, a humanitarian group operating a clinic in Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, has said that 21 percent of the pregnant women and 11 percent of the children under the age of five it has treated in the last three weeks are suffering from malnutrition.

“People have reported eating nothing but white bread as fruit, vegetables, and other nutrient-dense foods are nearly impossible to find or too expensive,” Project Hope said.

In a joint communique on Wednesday, Qatar and France stressed their opposition to an Israeli military offensive on Rafah in southern Gaza and underlined their “rejection of the killing and starvation suffered by the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.”

They called for the opening of all crossings into Gaza, including in the north, “to allow for humanitarian actors to resume their activities and notably the delivery of food supply and pledged jointly \$200m effort in support of the Palestinian population.”

Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, also said Israel must allow aid trucks into Gaza in order to address the dire humanitarian crisis.

“Hundreds of aid trucks wait in line to cross into Gaza at the Rafah and Kerem Shalom [Karem Abu Salem] crossings to a starving civilian population,” Egeland said in a social media post, with a video showing scores of aid trucks lined up.

“There has not been a single day we have gotten the needed 500 trucks across. The system is broken and Israel could fix it for the sake of the innocent.”

Medical aid group Doctors Without Borders, also known as Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), has meanwhile said that medical workers are struggling to serve hundreds of thousands of displaced people in Gaza who are living in dire conditions with nowhere to go.

“Healthcare has been attacked, it’s collapsing. The whole system is collapsing. We are working from tents trying to do what we can. We treat the wounded. With the displacements, people’s wounds have been infected. And I’m not even talking about the mental wounds. People are desperate. They don’t know anymore what to do,” MSF’s Meinie Nicolai said.

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