

Famine Early Warning Systems Network report says famine already stalking northern Gaza

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Washington, June 6 (RHC)-- Famine is likely already under way in northern Gaza, an independent group of experts has warned in a new report. "It is possible, if not likely," that famine is already stalking the

enclave, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) said as it released its report on Tuesday.

The continuing conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, and the restrictions on humanitarian access to the enclave, have impeded the data collection to investigate the issue, says the report -- the first technical assessment by an international organization.

Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), FEWS NET is an internationally recognized authority on famine that provides evidence-based and timely early warning information for food insecurity. It also helps inform decisions on humanitarian responses in some of the world's most food-insecure countries.

A declaration of famine could be used as evidence at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and/or International Court of Justice (ICJ), where Israel faces allegations of genocide -- although the United States refuses to recognize the slaughter as genocide.

The group stated that for a formal declaration to be made, the data must be available, but it cautioned that data collection would likely be impeded as long as the war continues.

However, it noted that people are dying of hunger-related causes across the territory and that these conditions will likely persist until at least July if there is not a fundamental change in how food aid is distributed.

The report cautioned that efforts to increase aid into Gaza are insufficient, and urged Israel's government to act urgently. It was joined in this push this week by further statements calling for improved humanitarian relief from international agencies.

UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said on Tuesday that delivering aid into Gaza "has become almost impossible." "We are nowhere near where we need to be. We need all border crossings open. We need safe and unimpeded access. We need to prioritize humanitarian aid," he wrote on X.

Hanan Balkhy, the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean regional director, said on the same day that some Gaza residents have been reduced to drinking sewage water and eating animal feed. "Children are barely able to eat, while the trucks are standing outside of Rafah," he said.

The UN has long warned that famine is looming in Gaza, with 1.1 million people -- about half of the population -- facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA on Tuesday said access constraints "continue to undermine the safe delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza", and conditions "further deteriorated" in May.

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