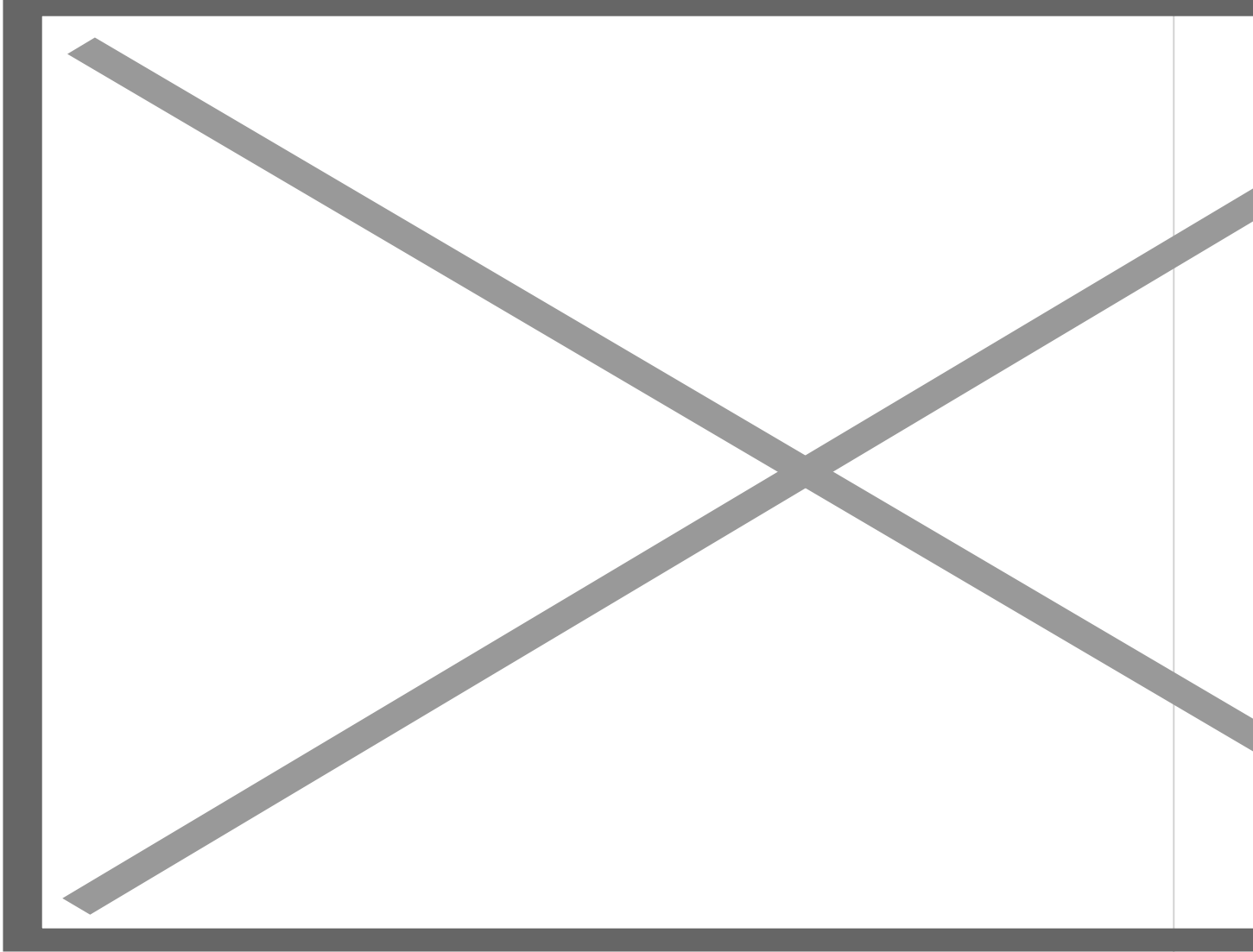


United Nations warns hunger and disease are deadly combination for children in Gaza

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United Nations, February 21 (RHC)-- Alarm bells are being sounded by the UN's children agency (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Program following the publication of a new report on malnutrition in Gaza. "We've been warning for weeks that the Gaza Strip is on the brink of a nutrition crisis," UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Humanitarian Action Ted Chaiban said.

"The Gaza Strip is poised to witness an explosion in preventable child deaths which would compound the already unbearable level of child deaths in Gaza," Chaiban said.

According to the report, the situation is extreme in the north of Gaza, which has been cut off from almost all humanitarian aid relief for weeks and where 15.6 percent – or one in six children – under the age of two are "acutely malnourished".

In the south, in Rafah, 5 percent of children under two are acutely malnourished. "Hunger and disease are a deadly combination," Dr Mike Ryan, head of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program said.

"Hungry, weakened and deeply traumatised children are more likely to get sick... It's dangerous, and tragic, and happening before our eyes," Ryan said.

Palestinians line up for a free meal in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Friday, February 16, 2024.

International aid agencies say Gaza is suffering from shortages of food, medicine and other basic supplies as a result of Israel's war on the territory [File: Fatima Shbair/AP]

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