

UN experts say Israel carrying out targeted starvation campaign in Gaza

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Palestinians in Rafah line up for free food during the Israeli air and ground offensive on the Gaza Strip [File:Hatem Ali/AP]

United Nations, July 10 (RHC)-- United Nations human rights experts have accused Israel of carrying out a “targeted starvation campaign” that has resulted in the deaths of children in Gaza.

“Israel’s intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza,” 10 independent UN experts said in a statement on Tuesday.

Gaza health authorities have said at least 33 children have died of malnutrition, mostly in northern Gaza, which had until recently faced the brunt of the Israeli military campaign launched in October.

In recent months, the war has also spread to southern Gaza, reducing aid flows into the enclave amid restrictions by Israel, which has accused UN agencies of failing to distribute supplies efficiently. “With the death of these children from starvation despite medical treatment in central Gaza, there is no doubt that famine has spread from northern Gaza into central and southern Gaza,” the experts said.

At a hospital in Khan Younis, Ghaneyma Joma told the news agency Reuters on Monday that she feared her son would die of starvation.

“It’s distressing to see my child ... lying there dying from malnutrition because I cannot provide him with anything due to the war, the closing of crossings and the contaminated water,” she said.

Determining whether a famine exists rests with a UN-backed global monitor called the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which makes an assessment based on a set of technical criteria.

Last month, the IPC said Gaza remained at high risk of famine as the war continues and aid access is restricted. More than 495,000 people across Gaza – more than a fifth of the population – are facing the most severe, or “catastrophic”, level of food insecurity, it said, down from a forecast of 1.1 million in the previous update in March. This level means people are experiencing an extreme lack of food and starvation.

The Israeli mission in Geneva noted that the latest assessment by the IPC determined that famine had not materialised after aid access improved somewhat.

“Israel has continuously scaled up its coordination and assistance in the delivery of humanitarian aid across the Gaza Strip, recently connecting its power line to the Gaza water desalination plant,” it added.

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