



المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان  
PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

# **GHF Aid Distribution Centers in Gaza:** **Starvation, Killings, and Humiliation of Women**





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## Introduction:



Since October 2023, Israel has implemented a systematic policy of starvation against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip, deliberately employing starvation as a method of warfare. This policy has been enforced through a series of coercive practices, including the closure of border crossings; the destruction of laboratories and farms; the cutting off of fuel and other essential supplies; the obstruction of humanitarian aid convoys; and the targeting of civilian and humanitarian workers as well as civilians. These policies and practices have transformed survival into a daily struggle fraught with grave risks, particularly affecting women, children, older persons, and other vulnerable groups. One of the most recent manifestations of this policy was the establishment of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) in February 2025, which is directly funded by the United States. GHF assumed responsibility for the distribution of humanitarian aid from late May through October 2025. This development formed part of a broader pattern of systematic violations that have stripped humanitarian assistance of its life-saving character, effectively transforming aid into a mechanism of lethal harm. Within this framework, humanitarian aid has been instrumentalized as part of a military strategy aimed at exterminating civilians by exposing them to starvation, humiliation, deliberate killing, and serious bodily injury.

This report seeks to document and expose the scale of suffering and grave violations committed against women in the Gaza Strip during the period in which



the GHF was operating, up until its announced cessation of activities in November 2025.<sup>1</sup> Within this profoundly unhumanitarian system, women have found themselves at the center of the crisis, bearing a disproportionate burden of war, siege, starvation and injury. Many have endured the killing of their husbands, children, and primary breadwinners. Despite the grave and well-documented risks, women have been compelled to go to aid distribution sites in desperate attempts to secure minimal food supplies capable of staving off hunger among their families. In this context, the act of obtaining food has ceased to be a routine survival measure and has instead become a life-threatening endeavor, exposing women to lethal danger as they seek to secure basic means of subsistence. These conditions reveal a systematic pattern of brutality resulting in serious violations of human dignity and the fundamental right to life.

This report, based on testimonies documented by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), examines harrowing aspects of women's lived realities in the Gaza Strip during attacks on U.S. aid distribution sites. The report documents a range of crimes committed against women, including deliberate killings, the infliction of serious bodily injuries, the coercive shift in family roles, and the degradation of human dignity. Furthermore, the report demonstrates how these policies constitute a clear extension of the crime of genocide against the civilian population.

<sup>1</sup> BBC Arabic (25 November 2025). U.S.-backed "Gaza Humanitarian Foundation" ends its operations in Gaza.  
<https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/cnv2jeq41qyo>

## Israel's Systematic Policy as a Method of Genocidal Warfare

Since October 2023, the Gaza Strip has been subjected to an unprecedented and systematic pattern of starvation, following public declarations by Israeli officials. In a widely reported statement, the Israeli Defense Minister, Yoav Galan, declared: *"We are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel – everything is closed."*<sup>2</sup> This statement was reinforced by the Israeli Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, who stated: *"So long as Hamas does not release the hostages – the only thing that should enter Gaza is hundreds of tons of air force explosives – not an ounce of humanitarian aid."*<sup>3</sup> These declarations formalized starvation as an explicit policy, used as a tool of military pressure and collective punishment. Upon these decisions, all crossings into Gaza were completely closed, resulting in the rapid depletion of food stocks within the first weeks of the military aggression.

Following 21 October 2023, the Rafah Crossing was opened for limited access for the first time since the onset of the military aggression. However, the humanitarian aid allowed to enter southern Gaza remained extremely scarce, amounting to only 4% of the daily average available before the war.<sup>4</sup> Aid convoys were subjected to opaque and complex Israeli inspection

<sup>2</sup> Channel 14 (2023), a video on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLXJx9C3Fgs>

<sup>3</sup> **Ben-Gvir, Itamar (2023)**. Itamar Ben-Gvir on the X platform, 17 October 2023. <https://x.com/itamarbengvir/status/1714340519487176791>

<sup>4</sup> **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2023)**. *Hostilities in Gaza and Israel | Flash Update No. 15*: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-15>

procedures, which frequently prevented trucks from entering or caused repeated delays.<sup>5</sup> In addition, many relief convoys were directly exposed to attacks.<sup>6</sup> The severity of the crisis was compounded by destroyed roads from bombings, a complete blackout of communications, and waves of mass forced displacement, which collectively rendered the aid distribution process nearly impossible.

At the beginning of 2024, the food shortage in Gaza hit catastrophic levels. Thousands of families were forced to reduce their daily meals, subsisting on one meal every two days instead of two meals daily, while other families were entirely unable to secure any food. During this period, only 17% of the required food aid entered Gaza, compared to 66% in the previous year. Consequently, malnutrition became widespread, particularly among children, who were the most vulnerable and severely affected by these conditions.<sup>7</sup>

On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a ruling ordering Israel to take immediate and effective provisional measures to ensure the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza.<sup>8</sup> Despite this decision, Israel completely disregarded the ruling, continuing to prevent the entry of

5 **United Nations General Assembly (2024)**, *Starvation and the right to food, with an emphasis on the Palestinian people's food sovereignty – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri*, 17 July, para. 51.: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/right-to-food-report-17jul24/>

6 **See, for example:** United Nations News (2024), “UN food agency suspends staff movements in Gaza following attack.” <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153701#:~:text=A%20%E2%80%9Cclearly%20marked%20UN%20humanitarian,at%20UN%20Headquarters%20on%20Wednesday>

7 **Norwegian Refugee Council (2024)**, “Israel’s siege now blocks 83 of food aid reaching Gaza, new data reveals,” 16 September. <https://www.nrc.no/news/2024/september/israels-siege-now-blocks-83-of-food-aid-reaching-gaza-new-data-reveals>

8 **International Court of Justice (2024)**, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel) – Order of 26 January 2024*, paras 72. and 86 <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

relief convoys. Humanitarian workers were frequently exposed to direct attacks while performing their duties.<sup>9</sup> Amid the tightening of the siege, northern Gaza became a deadly ambush zone that is totally besieged with only a very limited number of trucks permitted entry. Many of these trucks were targeted by bombings or sniper fire, making access to humanitarian assistance a perilous undertaking.<sup>10</sup>

In parallel, the Israeli authorities launched a systematic campaign aimed at undermining UNRWA's role as the primary provider of humanitarian aid in Gaza, pressuring many countries to suspend their funding.<sup>11</sup> In March 2024, the United Nations was informed that Israel would not permit the passage of any UNRWA food convoys into northern Gaza, effectively cutting off the only remaining major relief route for the civilian population. UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini described this decision as a deliberate measure likely to cause famine, noting that blocking UNRWA operations severs the last remaining lifeline for civilians. He emphasized that UNRWA is the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza, with the greatest capacity to reach displaced communities.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, **United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) (2024)**, "Delivering food to northern Gaza faces further setbacks": <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2024/03/1128977>

<sup>10</sup> **World Central Kitchen (WCK) (2024)**, "7 WCK team members killed in Gaza.": <https://wck.org/news/gaza-team-update>.

<sup>11</sup> **Human Rights Watch (2024)**, "Gaza: US, UK Outliers in Holding Back UNRWA Funding," Human Rights Watch, 23 July 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/18/gaza-us-uk-outliers-holding-back-unrwa-funding>

<sup>12</sup> **United Nations News (2024)**, "Israel tells UN it will reject UNRWA food convoys into northern Gaza", <https://palestine.un.org/en/264314-israel-tells-un-it-will-reject-unrwa-food-convoys-northern-gaza>



On 28 March, the ICJ issued another ruling emphasizing starvation has not become only an imminent threat but a de facto reality.<sup>13</sup> shortly after, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) took over Rafah Crossing and almost completely banned entry of aid. In May, no big quantities of relief were allowed although a third ruling was issued by the Court ordering cessation of military operations in Rafah and permission of aid entry. However, the flow remained almost inexistent, and the starvation continued to spread across the entire Gaza Strip.<sup>14</sup>

After Israel partially yielded and allowed the entry of limited food supplies, this step was not intended to alleviate the humanitarian crisis but was instead used as an additional instrument of military pressure. IOF reportedly deployed collaborators in areas under their control to target aid trucks and confiscate their contents, depriving already starved Gazans of access to food. The establishment of the GHF centers represented the latest manifestation of this starvation policy, following Israel's Knesset declaration labeling UNRWA-a provider of food to roughly 85% of Gaza's population- as a "terrorist organization."<sup>15</sup> These centers were deliberately designed and implemented to inflict harm on the civilian population and to subject individuals to humiliating and undignified conditions. After enduring coercive starvation, civilians were forced to access these so-called "humanitarian centers", where they were made to wait for long hours in queues,

<sup>13</sup> **International Court of Justice (2024)**, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)* – Order of 28 March 2024, para. 21.

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240328-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> **United Nations General Assembly (2024)**, Starvation and the right to food, with an emphasis on the Palestinian people's food sovereignty – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, 17 July, paras. 62–64:

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/right-to-food-report-17jul24/>

<sup>15</sup> The Times of Israel. (2024, October 29). *Knesset approves laws barring UNRWA from Israel, limiting it in Gaza and West Bank.*

[https://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-approves-laws-barring-unrwa-from-israel-limiting-it-in-gaza-and-west-bank/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-approves-laws-barring-unrwa-from-israel-limiting-it-in-gaza-and-west-bank/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

often exposed to shootings, arrests, torture, or bombardment. These practices resulted in the killing of more than 2,000 Palestinians, including women, children, and elderly persons, in addition to hundreds of critical injuries. As a result, these centers became systematic death traps, functioning as a component of a broader genocidal policy against the population of Gaza, particularly in the most densely populated areas under full control of the IOF.

As a result of this systematic policy, at least 460 Palestinians died from starvation, while more than 2,600 starved Gazans were killed in what amounted to death ambushes carried out under the guise of humanitarian aid.<sup>16</sup> Given conditions of extreme deprivation and the near-impossibility of comprehensive documentation, the actual toll is expected to be far higher as many fatalities remain unrecorded.

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<sup>16</sup> Government Media Office ( 10 October 2025), Press Release No. (1000). <https://t.me/s/mediagovps>

## Humanitarian Aid Distribution Centers as a Method within the Systematic Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip

From late May 2025 until October of the same year, the aid distribution process in the Gaza Strip was regulated under a newly established mechanism implemented by the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Organization, a non-governmental organization created by Israel in February 2025 and directly funded by the United States.<sup>17</sup> The Foundation was assigned responsibility for aid distribution under an explicitly “humanitarian” mandate, while in practice operating under strict security arrangements imposed by the IOF in areas under their full military control. This mechanism constituted a dangerous transformation in the administration of humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip. Rather than alleviating suffering, it reproduced the siege through new operational tools, instrumentalizing humanitarian aid as a means of military pressure aimed at subjugating the civilian population and undermining their capacity to survive. As a result, this policy directly threatened the fundamental conditions of civilian survival, leading to the killing of hundreds of Palestinians while attempting to access food assistance. By October 2025, the number of Palestinians killed while seeking aid—the so-called “martyrs of livelihood”—had risen to at least 2,615, underscoring that civilians approached these sites in pursuit of survival, not at the risk of their lives.<sup>18</sup>

17 OHCHR. (2025, August 5). *UN experts call for immediate dismantling of Gaza Humanitarian Foundation*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/08/un-experts-call-immediate-dismantling-gaza-humanitarian-foundation-un.org>

18 **Palestinian Ministry of Health**, Telegram platform ( 10 October 2025), *Daily Statistical Report on the Number of Martyrs and Injured as a Result of the Israeli Aggression on the Gaza Strip*. <https://t.me/MOHMediaGaza/7061>

This plan constituted a fundamental violation of international humanitarian law and established standards governing humanitarian relief operations, due to the deliberate marginalization of neutral humanitarian organizations and international bodies, most notably the United Nations and UNRWA, which had long served as the primary providers of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian population. Information available on the ground at the time indicated that responsibility for administering this new aid distribution mechanism was transferred to a recently registered non-profit entity based in Geneva, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which operated the process under a newly imposed framework.<sup>19</sup>

The United Nations has emphasized that the aid distribution policy imposed by the Israeli authorities constitutes a systematic effort to dismantle the existing humanitarian aid framework administered by the United Nations and its international partners, and to replace it with a mechanism operating under full supervision and control of the IOF and dictated by military field conditions. The United Nations has further assessed this policy as a blatant violation of the core principles of humanitarian action, as it seeks to exercise complete control over the flow of life-saving supplies and to instrumentalize humanitarian assistance as a tool of pressure against civilians in the Gaza Strip. The UN warned that this approach is likely to deprive large parts of the population—particularly the most vulnerable and least mobile groups—of access to essential aid, in direct contradiction to the humanitarian purpose of relief operations. Moreover, the United Nations cautioned that this dangerous policy would drive civilians to risk their lives by

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<sup>19</sup> Geneva Solutions. (2025, May 15). *A Geneva-based foundation at the heart of Israel's Gaza aid plan*. <https://genevasolutions.news/peace-humanitarian/a-geneva-based-foundation-at-the-heart-of-israel-s-gaza-aid-plan>

entering active military zones in search of food, while simultaneously endangering humanitarian personnel. Such practices, the UN warned, risk entrenching forced displacement rather than mitigating it, thereby transforming humanitarian aid from a means of survival into a coercive instrument employed as part of a military strategy.<sup>20</sup>

At a time when the IOF continued to promote public claims regarding the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, field monitoring by PCHR revealed a reality that directly contradicted these assertions. No substantive improvement was observed in the flow of humanitarian supplies, as only a limited number of aid trucks—amounting to merely dozens—were permitted entry, without any effective measures to ensure security or equitable distribution. Humanitarian aid was restricted to areas under full Israeli military control, compelling thousands of civilians to risk their lives in order to access food. Aid distribution was concentrated in four primary locations: Tal al-Sultan in Rafah, the Saudi Neighborhood in Rafah, Khan Younis (north of Rafah), and the Gaza Valley (Netzarim Corridor) area. Residents of all these areas had previously been forcibly displaced, rendering attempts to reach aid distribution points fraught with lethal danger at every stage.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Occupied Palestinian Territory. (2025, May 4). Statement by the Humanitarian Country Team of the occupied Palestinian territory on principled aid delivery in Gaza. OCHA OPT. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-humanitarian-country-team-occupied-palestinian-territory-principled-aid-delivery-gaza>

<sup>21</sup> **Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR)**, (10 July 2025), «In Persistence of Starvation and Genocide, Israel Kills Children and Women in Deir al-Balah While Searching for Food» <https://pchrgaza.org/in-persistence-of-starvation-and-genocide-israel-kills-children-and-women-in-deir-al-balah-while-searching-for-food/#:~:text=In%20Persistence%20of%20Starvation%20and,and%20preserve%20their%20fragile%20lives.>

Aid seekers in the Gaza Strip were forced to cross areas experiencing active clashes, often walking for hours across distances exceeding tens of kilometers, particularly those coming from northern and central Gaza. Upon reaching aid distribution points, civilians were subjected to complex and intrusive search procedures, including facial recognition and identity screening, reportedly carried out by U.S. security companies under strict oversight by IOF, whose presence was heavily concentrated around these sites. This arduous and perilous journey did not end up by access to food. Instead, the distribution centers themselves became high-risk environments, where civilians were directly targeted in the absence of protection, safe corridors, or effective humanitarian safeguards. Amid widespread hunger and the absence of viable alternatives, civilians were confronted with two equally devastating choices: to face death through starvation, or to risk bombardment and humiliation while attempting to secure food. In this context, humanitarian aid, intended to serve as a means of survival, was transformed into an instrument that entrenched suffering and perpetuated a systematic policy of starvation and genocidal conduct.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> PCHR Staff field monitoring.

## Gaza Women and the Systematic Targeting of U.S.-Funded Aid Areas:

Women in the Gaza Strip have endured a compounded tragedy, as they have borne the heaviest burden of Israel's aid distribution policies. Centers established to meet basic humanitarian needs were transformed into high-risk sites that threatened women's lives and dignity. Many women were killed while attempting to obtain food, while others sustained critical injuries. Some were subjected to humiliation and degrading treatment while walking long distances, waiting for hours, or being caught in overcrowded and chaotic scenes, conditions that starkly reflected the collapse of the most basic standards of humanitarian protection. Their suffering has been further compounded by the loss of children and spouses, forcing many women to assume sole responsibility for supporting their families under harsh conditions that exhaust both body and spirit.

### First: Killings of Women at U.S Aid Distribution Centers:

Samah Abu 'Anzah, sister of Khadijah Abu 'Anza (46), recounts the details of that tragic day as she witnessed the moment when IOF killed her sister while they were waiting to receive humanitarian aid.

*"On Thursday, 24 July 2025, at approximately 07:00, I went with my sister Khadijah, her friends, and my daughter Farah from Martyr Mahmoud al-Mabhouh School, where*

*we had been displaced, in the al-Namsawi neighborhood of Khan Younis, to the U.S. aid distribution center in the al-Hashash area of northern Rafah. We had learned that this day was designated for aid distribution to women only. At the time, the economic conditions were extremely dire, and we were in urgent need of food and basic supplies to support our families. For this reason, we decided to go together despite the long distance.*

*We walked for approximately half an hour until we reached al-Maslakh al-Turki (al-Tina Street). In order to shorten the distance to the aid waiting point, we then got into a small vehicle. Upon arrival, we waited for some time, as the distribution center had not yet opened. Suddenly, an Israeli tank appeared only a few meters away and opened fire indiscriminately. Two women who were with us were wounded: one sustained a gunshot injury to the shoulder, and the other was shot in the abdomen. This occurred amid chaos and extreme panic among thousands of women who were waiting to receive humanitarian aid. Shortly afterward, a soldier positioned on the tank signaled for us to retreat, and we complied, stepping back gradually until we reached a nearby agricultural area, located a short distance behind the Turkish Hawouz area. There, I saw injured women lying on the ground, with no ambulances or medical assistance available. A short time later, two Israeli military vehicles arrived and opened fire indiscriminately on the area. All of this took place before 9:00, while we—and the other women—were still waiting for the aid distribution centers to open.*

*At approximately 08:59, just one minute before the aid center was scheduled to*



*open, the tank and military vehicles dramatically intensified their gunfire. Suddenly, my sister Khadijah fell face-down onto the ground, while everyone around us was also lying on the ground. Her friend screamed for help, and when the shooting briefly stopped, I tried to turn my sister to check on her condition. I saw blood flowing from her mouth and nose, and I was unable to determine the exact location of her injury. We attempted to evacuate her to Nasser Hospital using a donkey cart, walking for more than 20 minutes while she was bleeding heavily. Upon our arrival at the hospital, doctors immediately pronounced her dead.”*

*“Khadijah was a mother of three children, and her killing left a deep and irreparable wound in our hearts, as well as an irreplaceable void in our daily lives. She was the pillar of strength and safe haven for her children, caring for their smallest details and shielding them, as much as possible, from the harsh reality and suffering surrounding them. With her loss, her children were deprived of the sense of security and warmth that had enabled them to endure this harsh reality.”<sup>23</sup>*

Five testimonies collected by PCHR’s staff- out of approximately 38 documented cases involving the killing of women inside U.S. aid centers<sup>24</sup>-confirmed the commission of horrific killings in locations that were supposed to be safe. In these incidents, the IOF opened sudden and indiscriminate fire on women while they were present at food distribution waiting points, resulting in the killing of several women in areas designated for humanitarian aid. These attacks targeted unarmed women

<sup>23</sup> PCHR staff received the testimony on 11 August 2025 at Martyr Mahmoud al-Mabhouh School, al-Namsawi neighborhood, Khan Younis

<sup>24</sup> PCHR’s telephone interview with Dr. Ismail Thawabteh, Director General of the Government Media Office on 20 November 2025.

who posed no threat that could justify the use of lethal force. In many instances, the shootings occurred on days specifically designated for women only, underscoring the systematic nature of these assaults and their deliberate intent, pointing to a direct genocidal purpose.

Khawla Ahmed Salem (46) sits with tears filling her eyes, recounting with terror and heartbreak the moments in which she lost her sister Maria at the aid distribution points.

*“The IOF intensified the restrictions on our lives through a starvation policy that has impacted children, the elderly, and patients, as they continued to close the crossings and prevent the entry of aid, foodstuffs, and medical supplies. As a result, people in Gaza began collapsing on the streets due to the lack of food and flour, and many children suffered from malnutrition.*

*My sister Maria and I began lacking the most basic necessities of life, including flour and food, and for several days we had nothing at all. Our children went to sleep hungry, which filled us with deep fear for them due to the effects of malnutrition. My sister Maria decided to go to the U.S. aid distribution point in al-Shakoush area, and she returned with small amounts of chickpeas, lentils, and flour. We thanked God for the little we were able to obtain from that aid.*

*One day, when the IOF designated a women-only access day, my sister Maria and I decided to go together. At around 06:00, on 24 July 2025, we left our children sleeping and set out on foot from Asdaa City toward al-Shakoush area. We arrived at around*

*08:00 to find the aid distribution point crowded with women waiting to receive aid, while the men remained outside, away from the distribution point.*

*When we arrived, Israeli military tanks and a crane were stationed directly in front of us, and traces of dried blood from previous incidents were stained across the ground, filling us with fear. I wanted to turn back, but Maria refused. Afterwards, Israeli soldiers fired stun grenades and incendiary bombs filled with pepper spray, causing severe burning in people's eyes and bodies, which sparked a chaotic push through the crowd. Everyone fled in panic, while the IOF, through loudspeakers, threatened the women and ordered them to move back.*

*During those moments, I lost sight of my sister Maria and began searching for her amid the chaos, while I was extremely exhausted and fell multiple times, with my foot burning from the bombs. Suddenly, the Israeli crane began firing indiscriminately, and Khadija Abu 'Anzah was shot with a live bullet, killing her instantly. A 12-year-old girl and a pregnant woman named Houria Al-Shalabi (Khalifa) were also injured, bleeding heavily until they succumbed to their wounds.*

*I fled the scene and went to my brother in the Water Well 19 area, then tried to call my sister Maria around 14:00, and she told me she was fine. When I tried calling her again, a woman informed me that Maria had been injured and then hung up. On a third attempt to check on her condition, I was shocked when the woman told me that my sister died after being shot directly in the neck with a bullet. She was immediately*

*taken to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Field Hospital.*

*My sister Maria, who had been divorced for seven years, left behind seven children without a mother or father, after her ex-husband was killed on 4 September 2024. The children have endured immense psychological trauma following the loss of their mother, left without protection or support, living with a profound emotional void and struggling with the effects of loss amid extremely harsh conditions in Gaza, where hunger, scarcity of basic necessities, and constant fear prevail. Her children are Malak (20), Qusai (18), Maya (16), Miral (15), Marlin (14), Rayan (11), and Suleiman (8), who are now forced to live alone amid a suffocating humanitarian crisis engulfing Gaza.”<sup>25</sup>*

Hala al-Ayyam Eyad Shalabiyia (16) describes the moments of terror and loss as she witnessed her mother being shot and killed without warning at the humanitarian aid center.

*“We are a family of seven, including three children, and my father is unemployed and unable to provide even the most basic necessities of life. Since the start of the war, we have been living under extremely harsh and devastating conditions. When the siege intensified and food shortages worsened, we often survived on just one meal a day, usually without bread, and some days we had no food at all, often having to make do with the lentil soup provided by the field kitchens.*

*On Wednesday, 23 July 2025, we learned that Thursday, 24 July 2025, would be*

<sup>25</sup> Testimony was obtained by PCHR’s staff on 03 August 2025 in Asdaa City in Khan Yunis.

*designated for women to collect flour and food from the U.S. aid center established in western Rafah (al-Shakoush area). My mother, Houria Mohammed Mahmoud Shalabi (44) and I decided to go to the distribution center, hoping to obtain any food that could ease our family's hunger.*

*At around 12:00, we left our tent on foot despite the extreme heat, hunger, and thirst, and we reached the al-Joura area near the distribution point at about 14:00, where we took cover behind a burnt bus due to the sporadic gunfire. The area was crowded with thousands of people.*

*We remained there for about half an hour as the sporadic gunfire continued. At first, I did not notice any injuries. Once my mother stood up, heavy gunfire suddenly erupted. Women began running backward, while others threw themselves to the ground to protect their lives. At that moment, my mother fell on her back without uttering a word, and I immediately realized she had been shot, as I saw her bleeding heavily from the head. I tried, with the help of two young men who were present, to pull her back to a safer area. While we were doing so, I saw people running while carrying another woman, saying that she had been killed.*

*Blood continued pouring from my mother's head, nose, and mouth. We walked about 200 meters until we found a tuk-tuk that transported her. She was still breathing, and no first aid was available at the scene. We took her to the ICRC field hospital in al-Mawasi area in Rafah and brought her directly into the reception department,*

*where she was examined for only three minutes. I was standing at the door when one of the doctors came out and told me that my mother had succumbed to her injuries. I was overwhelmed with shock and burst into tears and screams, unable to control my crying or the overwhelming pain and sense of loss that flooded my heart.*

*On the morning of Friday, 25 July 2025, my father, my brother Walid, and my sister's husband went to Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis to complete the burial procedures, while my siblings and I could not go due to the lack of transportation. This incident left us without a mother, without flour, and without food, enduring unbearable living conditions and a profound pain beyond description."<sup>26</sup>*

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<sup>26</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 17 November 2025 in Ard Shurab displacement camp in Deir al-Balah.

## Second: Women's Physical Injuries at U.S Aid Distribution Points:

Aseel Ghazi Abu 'Issa (16) is a girl forced into a struggle for survival between hunger and death, after the war claimed her father's life and left her fighting alongside her mother for her own survival and that of her siblings, amid an Israeli starvation policy that devours their bodies day after day.

*"Before the war, I lived with my father, mother, and younger siblings, and our financial situation was good. My father worked, and we felt safe and had enough to meet our daily needs. But the war took everything from us, and after my father was killed several months ago, our lives were turned upside down. His loss left a profound emotional and financial void, particularly as he was the family's sole breadwinner. As the war intensified and famine deepened, obtaining a loaf of bread became a distant dream, and there was nothing to eat in our tent. Hunger consumed us, and my seven-year-old brother cried throughout the night from severe hunger. My mother and I were compelled to search for any means to secure food.*

*We heard about aid being distributed at the U.S. distribution points, and we hoped to obtain some flour and food. Despite knowing the danger, we decided to go because of our severe hunger.*

*When we arrived at the distribution point, we heard a call from the plane permitting entry, and we went in, only to find that the aid center had not yet been opened.*

*Suddenly, gunfire erupted against us. Our neighbors' daughters were with us; most were injured, and one was killed right before my eyes. I do not know how I survived, but I lost sight of my mother for hours amid the chaos and terror, as I searched for her while she searched for me. That day was one of the hardest of my life. After some time, I found women from our area who brought me back to the tent, where I found my mother completely devastated. At that point, we decided never to return to the aid distribution points again.*

*But the hunger imposed by the IOF had a different outcome—hunger shows no mercy. My mother and I were forced to go again on 10/9/2025, this time to the aid point in al-Shakoush area, on a day said to be designated for women. We went with a group of women, but the scene repeated itself. We heard a call from the plane allowing entry, and as soon as we entered, it became clear that it was a trap, and we were once again subjected to random gunfire. During my escape, my thirst became unbearable, so I sat on the ground to drink water. At that moment, I felt something piercing my body. I screamed before losing consciousness, and my mother, along with the other women present, carried me to the hospital. My injury was in my chest and was very deep. To this day, I continue to suffer from persistent pain that limits my movement, along with recurring infections and purulent discharge from the wound. I can no longer bend my back or carry anything, and I have also begun to experience high blood pressure despite my young age. This injury has had a profound impact on my mental health; I have become irritable and fearful about my future as a girl due to the wound's effects. Worst of all, after once wanting to help my mother support our*



*family, I have become a burden to them because of my ongoing need for treatment and care.”<sup>27</sup>*

Women and girls in the Gaza Strip have endured increasingly tragic conditions under the grip of the Israeli starvation policy, which forced them to risk their lives at humanitarian aid distribution points. Even though specific days were designated for women to receive this aid, they were repeatedly exposed to gunfire and targeted by the IOF, resulting in severe physical injuries that amplified both the physical and psychological suffering they endure, in a harsh reality that disregards the most basic principles of civilian protection and human dignity.

Manar Zakaria Salman Khattab (37), a mother of six children, gave her testimony to PCHR’s staff, revealing the severe hardship she and her children endured due to extreme hunger and the risks she exposed herself to, placing her life in danger, to secure their basic means of survival.

*“The war only grew more intense, no longer limited to the bombing, displacement, and other hardships we had grown accustomed to. As time passed, the tragedy deepened, and the Israeli restrictions imposed on us became harsher by the day. Even our means of survival were not spared, as the IOF closed the crossings and prevented the entry of food and flour, and even prohibited canned goods. We found ourselves trapped in a small prison, dying slowly, as the situation worsened with each passing day. Famine escalated catastrophically to the point that my children could no longer sleep from hunger, especially my youngest son, Zakaria, who had not yet reached*

<sup>27</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR’s staff on 05 August 2025 at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.



*his second birthday. I watched them cry from hunger, with nothing to offer them. My husband is unemployed, and we have no source of income and no food at home. On the day it was announced that the U.S. aid distribution points would be allocated to women, I did not hesitate for a moment to go, despite my husband's objections, as the anguish over my children was tearing me apart. At around 12:00, on 24 July 2025, I left with my 14-year-old eldest daughter and my neighbor, heading to the aid distribution point in al-Tina area in Khan Yunis.*

*When we arrived, the crowds were massive, with everyone scrambling to reach the aid quickly and secure something to ease their hunger. Amid the overwhelming chaos, gunfire suddenly erupted from a tank and a quadcopter drone, directly targeting us. The sound of bullets drew closer and closer, and suddenly, I felt intense heat piercing my hand, and blood gushed from it heavily.*

*My daughter screamed and collapsed to the ground in fear, crying loudly, "Help us!" But no one responded, as everyone was rushing to get food. After a long while, with my hand bleeding heavily, a young man approached me, saying he was a nurse. He wrapped my hand to stop the bleeding and helped me leave the area until we found a tuk-tuk that transported me, along with several other injured people, to al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. Doctors there diagnosed my injury as an entry-and-exit gunshot wound that caused torn tendons and a fracture in my hand. They told me that I needed to have a metal rod (platinum) implanted. Since the day I was injured, the doctors have been performing daily wound debridement due to the severe infection that developed because the*

wound remained open for a long time before I reached the hospital. They are still waiting for the wound to heal so they can perform the surgery and implant the metal rod.

Since that day, I have been bedridden in the hospital, unable to bring food to my children or even care for myself. In addition to my suffering, I have become an injured mother, unable to help my children, who grow weaker and more emaciated with each passing day due to extreme hunger. Had the famine not been so severe and had I not heard my children's constant crying or seen their frail bodies, I would never have risked my life by going to the aid distribution point. But seeing your child writhe in hunger makes you willing to sacrifice yourself and everything you have just to provide a small morsel for them... yet, unfortunately, I could neither secure food for them nor even protect myself.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 05 August 2025 at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

### Third: Coerced Shift in Family Roles

Maha Riyad Hussain Mizher (35) was forced, after losing her husband at the aid distribution points, to shoulder the sole responsibility for her children alone. She became the sole provider, confronting the harshness of life and the inhumane conditions in Gaza, amid a complete absence of the basic means for a dignified life.

*"I have four sons and one daughter. 18 July 2025 was one of the hardest days of the famine; the price of a kilogram of flour had reached 150 shekels (about \$40), and we had no flour, food, or water. My husband previously refused to go to the U.S. aid distribution points to collect the assistance out of fear of injury or death, but we had reached a point where we had no choice but to go and obtain anything to ensure our children's survival.*

*On that day, huge numbers of people went to the aid point, and the crowd was overwhelming. Amid the chaos, my husband was pushed under a parked aid truck; it suddenly moved and ran over his head, killing him instantly. This was the most difficult moment I have ever faced in my life. I was seven months pregnant at the time, and my husband had wished for us to have a daughter. He knew before his death that the newborn would be a girl, but he did not live to see this dream come true.*

*Before the war, my life was stable and peaceful with my husband and children in a fully equipped home, and my husband provided us with safety and support. After*

*his death, my life completely collapsed, and I lost the security and support he had provided. I became unable to meet my children's needs under these harsh conditions.*

*Today, I am the sole provider for my family, carrying the full responsibility of caring for my five children alone, facing great difficulty in providing them with food, clothing, and protection. In the months following my husband's death, I suffered from severe depression, especially after the birth of my youngest daughter, whose basic needs for milk and diapers I could not provide, whereas my husband had previously ensured that we had everything we needed in terms of food, clothing, and safety.”<sup>29</sup>*

Repeated Israeli military attacks on civilians trying to secure food for themselves and their children, have caused a dual humanitarian tragedy for women. Many suddenly lost their husbands, the primary breadwinners, becoming the sole caretakers of their families, weighed down by poverty, hunger, and illness. This forced shift in family roles has stripped women of safety, replacing it with a deadly reality where the struggle to secure food, healthcare, and education for their children intertwines with complex psychological trauma caused by ongoing violence and the loss of loved ones, exacerbated by the absence of any institutional or community support. With the collapse of all basic life necessities, including shelter, food, and clean water, their daily lives become a continuous journey of fear and suffering, a relentless struggle for survival.

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<sup>29</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 04 November 2025 in al-Nusirat refugee camp.

Amal Suhail Hamdan al-Badawi (36) faces a compounded tragedy, having lost her husband and being forced to shoulder the responsibility of caring for and protecting her children alone amid the harshness of the war and the depth of ongoing suffering.

*"I am the mother of three children: Jouri (8 years), Wasim (6 years), and Omar (3 years). In this harsh reality we live in, I witness every day how humanitarian aid, which is supposed to be a source of survival, turns into death traps that take our beloved ones from us. My family and I have paid the highest price just to secure the most basic necessities of life. As the famine that was ravaging my children worsened, my husband had no choice but to attempt going to the aid distribution points. The first time, he returned with five kilograms of flour and some canned food. Our joy was indescribable, as if we were celebrating Eid. I begged him not to go again, so we economized in everything, and the supplies lasted only three weeks. After they ran out, he tried four more times without obtaining anything, and frustration consumed him day by day. On that day, which changed everything, Musa woke me early in the morning and said in a tired voice, "I didn't sleep enough, Amal." I wished I had asked him to rest, but I said, "May God help you; go get the flour and come back to rest." We had agreed that I would call him to check on him, and if he answered and then hung up, I would know he was fine. But that day, I called him and hung up quickly so as not to disturb him, and moments later, he called me. I answered, but the voice I heard was not his. I asked anxiously, "Who are you? Where is Musa?" The man said, "Pray for him; your husband is at Nasser Hospital." At that moment, I felt as if the ground had collapsed from beneath my feet. I couldn't comprehend anything; I neither cried*

*nor moved. I dressed and ran to my sister's tent to ask her husband to take me to the hospital. On the way, the same man called again, saying that Musa was in critical condition, between life and death, and needed a blood transfusion. Only then did I fully grasp the horror of what was happening, and I began to scream, cry, and pray to God to save him. But when I arrived at the hospital, I saw him lying next to the morgue... I could not see him alive. I sat beside him, pleading for him to wake up and return to his children, who could not survive without him. Those who were there told me that he was not among the crowd; he was standing at the back, waiting for those returning, when he was hit by the bullet. For them, it was just a random shot, but for me, it was a bullet that shattered my sense of security and peace of mind. I did not know how to tell my children. When I finally did, their shock was even more painful than my words. They cried and blamed themselves, saying, "If only we hadn't been hungry, if only you had stopped him from going, why did you tell him we went to bed hungry?" Even today, they do not fully grasp that he is gone. They go to his workplace and ask the neighbors, "Isn't he here? When will he come back?" I am now alone, providing for my children entirely by myself, with no source of income, struggling to secure even the bare minimum to keep them alive. These aid points, which were meant to sustain us, took from my children their father and from me my husband and my support. My role changed overnight; I became both mother and father at the same time, responsible for providing my children's daily sustenance. I face this life alone, enduring each day the psychological pain caused by this tragedy."<sup>30</sup>*

<sup>30</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 26 September 2025 in Tabaria displacement camp in Khan Yunis.

On the other hand, the testimony of mother Shadia Barjas Abu Taha (54) illustrates how women in Gaza were forced to assume family roles after also losing their sons, who were the primary breadwinners. This thrust the daily burden of survival and family care entirely onto their shoulders, amid poverty and deprivation, compounded by the profound psychological pain of losing beloved ones.

*"I had seven children, but the eldest had emigrated abroad before the war, leaving the full responsibility on my son Saed, who brought joy to my heart and was my support system. He was the sole provider for me, my sick husband, who is bedridden due to a herniated disc and other chronic illnesses, and for his five siblings. When the famine worsened and the U.S. aid distribution points opened, Saed initially refused to go, seeing death and humiliation on the faces of those returning. But the situation became unbearable; when he saw his five siblings sharing a single loaf of bread, with all the flour in the house completely gone, he felt that pride had to give way to the family's survival. He risked his life and decided to go, though he failed several times to bring any aid. He succeeded in his fifth attempt, returning with a small amount of supplies, and continued to go for a week. That night, he spoke to me and told me he would not go again. He stayed awake with his brother-in-law until the morning of the day that would forever darken my life. He woke up unusually early and did not wake me to tell me he was leaving. When I woke up, I began searching for him, a creeping fear overtaking me. At that moment, it felt as if a sword had pierced my heart and exited through the other side. I sprang toward my mobile phone and saw a missed call from him. I called back, but he did not answer. I tried again. The line connected,*




*but it was not Saed's voice. Upon hearing that unfamiliar voice, I realized the bitter truth and surrendered to it. With a trembling heart, I asked, "Where is my son Saed?" He confirmed my fears, replying, "The owner of this phone has been killed; he is at Nasser Hospital among the unidentified deceased." As soon as he finished speaking, I collapsed to the ground, losing consciousness. I went to bid him a final farewell. I looked at him and touched his wound; he had been shot at the back of his neck. Eyewitnesses told me that he had turned around to see who was behind him when they suddenly shot him, while he was peacefully standing there, unable to defend himself. I inhaled his scent for the last time. When I stepped outside and saw his friends, I spoke to them with a shattered heart: "You used to call him a hero, and a hero is meant to see his story through to the end. Why was my hero taken from me so soon?" I now stand with a broken heart; my only support is gone. The psychological impact of this tragedy goes beyond grief—it is a collapse of any sense of safety and of life itself. I am frightened and anxious, not knowing how I will face tomorrow or how I will provide for my daughters and my ailing husband. This suffering is marked by helplessness and despair, and by the feeling that the price of a loaf of bread was my life and the life of the one dearest to my heart."*<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 26 September 2025 in Khan Yunis.

## Fourth: Women's Exposure to Degrading Treatment

A.A., 55, stated to PCHR's staff about the suffering and humiliation she faced while trying to obtain aid, saying:

*"I am an English teacher; I used to give students private lessons. But as the hardship intensified and our health and financial situation deteriorated, and since we are married without children, and my husband is ill and cannot walk... I had no choice but to go to the U.S. aid distribution points to try to secure what would keep us alive. I had to walk long distances to reach those points, as I could not afford any form of transportation. At the same time, I was no longer young enough to endure such strenuous walking; I dragged my feet despite the painful cracks and wounds caused by the barbed wire surrounding the aid points, and my clothes tore more than once because of it. I remember one time I had to borrow money because I could no longer walk, so I rode an animal-drawn cart, but I fell off and nearly lost my life. I felt as if I were going to sustain a pelvic fracture, and another cart almost ran me over if I had not been spared. I sat crying that day, saying, "What kind of humiliation is this?! We were subjected to humiliation repeatedly. We stood under the scorching sun for hours, waiting our turn in long queues. At first, the staff tried to assist the elderly, but as the numbers and overcrowding increased, everything changed. We would stand for long hours, only to eventually hear that the aid had already been fully distributed, forcing us to return empty-handed. Often, we were informed that the day was designated for women, so we walked those long distances only to be told upon arrival, "there is*



*no aid today.” In those moments, disappointment drained the last of our energy and patience. On top of that, we were repeatedly exposed to teargas and felt suffocated, while the humiliation intensified in the overcrowded chaos. I remember being pushed to the ground and unable to get up easily due to my age, yet I had no choice but to compose myself and stand so as not to be trampled. This is how we were humiliated—just to receive some aid that would keep us alive”.<sup>32</sup>*

Women at the U.S. aid distribution points established in the Gaza Strip have endured severe and degrading treatment on multiple levels. They were forced to walk arduous distances—sometimes exceeding five kilometers—from their places of displacement, due to the absence or high cost of transportation, amid widespread famine and malnutrition that have significantly weakened their physical capacity. They were forced to walk under the scorching summer heat and blazing sun, further exhausting their bodies and exacerbating their pain. Many sustained foot injuries and bleeding, and their shoes and clothing were torn by rubble and barbed wire scattered along the way. Many were also trampled amid severe overcrowding, in the absence of any mechanisms to preserve their dignity or protect them from harm.

While waiting at the aid distribution points, women faced severe risk and constant fear, as they were subjected to teargas canisters, pepper spray, and gunshots, forcing them to protect themselves by any means possible. The sense of oppression and humiliation was further deepened when the women returned empty-handed, without receiving any aid despite the suffering and indignities they endured, while their children waited for food with patience and hope.

<sup>32</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR’s staff on 23 November 2025 in al-Namsawi neighborhood in Khan Yunis.

Riham Abu Sa'da (37) told PCHR's staff about the harsh and degrading treatment she endured while attempting to obtain aid for her children, stating:

*"I am married and have three children. On 24 July 2025, as famine worsened under the siege imposed on Gaza, circumstances forced me to go to the U.S. aid distribution points to secure food for my children. My husband was unable to help me, as he is ill and has a hand disability that prevents him from working or going to the distribution points. When I told him I needed to go to the U.S. aid distribution points, he initially refused, but our difficult circumstances and urgent need for food outweighed everything else. I had to walk long distances, sometimes for two to three hours, until my feet started bleeding from the prolonged walking, my shoes were torn, and I sustained injuries to my feet. In addition, we were subjected to humiliation and degradation, as the IOF sprayed pepper spray against us, causing us to suffocate. This occurred during the peak of summer, with extremely high temperatures; we stood under the sun from 10:00 to 13:00, during which I suffered heatstroke. We asked for water, but no one responded, which intensified our feelings of humiliation and oppression in those moments. I also suffered from a torn shoulder ligament while carrying the aid and was subjected to blackmail by drivers who demanded that I share the aid with them in exchange for transporting me to the displacement camp. Sometimes, some women received aid while others did not, and when I returned to my children empty-handed, I felt helpless and oppressed, seeing the sadness in their eyes. While heading to receive aid, we were met with gunfire, and I felt extreme fear, trying to protect myself—not just to get food, but to be able to return to my children safely. I saw death with my own eyes,*

*witnessed a woman being injured, and a child being hit by a shell in her back. These aid distributions were not a means of relief, but a tool to humiliate and kill us.”<sup>33</sup>*

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<sup>33</sup> Testimony obtained by PCHR's staff on 23 November 2025 in al-Namsawi neighborhood in Khan Yunis.

## Conclusion and Recommendations:

Based on testimonies obtained from surviving women and eyewitnesses, this report documents the systematic and grave violations endured by women during the IOF's targeting of U.S. aid distribution points established in the Gaza Strip. These violations include direct killings, severe physical injuries, the degradation of human dignity, the loss of children and spouses, and the resulting forced shifts in social roles.

The report reflects a tragic and systematic reality, in which humanitarian aid has been transformed from a means of survival into a tool of a deliberate Israeli policy aimed at the extermination of Gaza's population. These violations constitute acts of the crime of genocide, involving deliberate killings, severe physical and psychological harm, and the partial or complete destruction of a group protected under international law. The IOF has continued committing these acts against Gaza's population, including women, in an escalating and systematic manner since 07 October 2023.

Accordingly, PCHR calls on the international community to uphold its legal and moral responsibilities and to take urgent action to hold accountable all parties involved in the aid distribution policies that have caused serious violations in Gaza. This includes military and political officials who approved or oversaw

the implementation of these policies, as well as anyone who facilitated or participated in their execution. PCHR emphasizes the importance of taking all necessary legal measures to ensure that those responsible are held accountable and to end the culture of impunity that has encouraged the continuation of crimes committed against civilians.