# Five-month-old’s malnutrition crisis highlights Gaza aid blockade’s deadly toll



In the heart of a relentless humanitarian crisis, the plight of a five-month-old girl named Siwar Ashour poignantly illustrates the devastation unfolding in Gaza. As the brutal conflict continues, aid access remains heavily restricted, exacerbating a dire situation where children suffer catastrophic malnutrition amid increasing military offensives. Local journalists, capturing the harrowing reality on the ground, report on children like Siwar who, despite recently being discharged from a hospital, struggle to thrive under an Israeli blockade that severely limits food supplies and medical care.

The grim reality, as highlighted by a BBC correspondent, reveals not only the physical toll on Siwar—who weighed just over 2 kg when she first became a focus of concern—but also the psychological burden on her young mother, Najwa. Najwa faces the daunting challenge of finding special baby formula for Siwar’s allergies in a war-torn landscape where basic necessities are often unavailable. Daily life involves navigating through a backdrop of bombings and gunfire, with Najwa lamenting, “The situation is very dire… the insects come at her, I have to cover her with a scarf.” This harrowing scene is eerily common, as many mothers like Najwa struggle with malnutrition themselves and report they are unable to breastfeed their children due to a lack of resources.

Compounding these struggles, recent data from various humanitarian organisations paint a chilling picture of the ongoing crisis. Since the blockade began, food security experts have warned of famine risks, with more than 14,000 children under five reportedly suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Tragically, at least 57 children have died from hunger-related causes. International advocates are rallying for attention, urging world leaders to intervene. Rachel Accurso, known as 'Ms. Rachel,' has gained both support and criticism for her outspoken calls to assist Gaza's children, highlighting a disturbing trend where the suffering of innocents becomes a politicised issue.

Critics of Israeli policy assert that claims of sufficient aid being delivered are grossly exaggerated. Reports indicate that the volume of aid entering Gaza remains drastically below what is required to meet the urgent needs of its inhabitants—a mere 305 trucks entered recently when estimates suggest 500 to 600 are needed daily. International bodies, including the United Nations, have condemned the Israeli blockade and its devastating impact, asserting that the adjustment of access to aid amid military actions only contributes to the mounting death toll, now reported to surpass 53,000 Palestinians since the onset of intensified conflict in October 2023.

Moreover, as frustrations grow, so too does the international backlash against Israel’s military operations. Calls for a cessation of hostilities and a full reopening of aid routes are echoing across global political platforms, with critics arguing that ongoing military action and insufficient humanitarian assistance are leading to a worsening humanitarian catastrophe. The destruction of Gaza’s infrastructure and the collapse of its healthcare system further exacerbate these challenges, creating an environment where the innocent, especially children, are caught in the crossfire of a complex and tragic geopolitical conflict.

In this context, the resilience of families like Siwar's shines through. Although Najwa’s circumstances are dire, she remains determined to care for her daughter, even as she grapples with the harsh realities of war and deprivation. Her story, reflective of countless others, not only highlights the urgent need for humanitarian intervention but also challenges policymakers and the global community to act decisively, lest the cycle of suffering continue unabated.

With the world watching, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains at a critical juncture. As aid organisations strive to navigate the complexities of delivering support amidst hostilities, the call for a sustained and effective response becomes ever more pressing, serving as a call to conscience in every corner of the globe.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5y2kd1nkleo), [[3]](https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2025/05/gaza-children-starving-israel-aid/682902/?utm_source=apple_news)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5y2kd1nkleo), [[3]](https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2025/05/gaza-children-starving-israel-aid/682902/?utm_source=apple_news), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/49805dd8-abb8-49b3-9781-1f992fff895c)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-strikes-kill-palestinians-protecting-gaza-aid-trucks-hamas-says-2025-05-23/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/49805dd8-abb8-49b3-9781-1f992fff895c), [[5]](https://qa.time.com/7283582/regression-no-ones-coming-inside-gaza-as-israel-expands-its-military-control/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/3a25af5414e513d26ea3696b317bb423), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-strikes-kill-dozens-gaza-criticism-israel-grows-2025-05-20/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5y2kd1nkleo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-strikes-kill-palestinians-protecting-gaza-aid-trucks-hamas-says-2025-05-23/> - Israeli airstrikes and looting have severely hindered the delivery of essential aid to Gaza. Hamas officials report that at least six Palestinians guarding aid trucks were killed by Israeli airstrikes. The UN indicates a significant shortfall in aid deliveries, with only 305 trucks entering Gaza since Monday, while 500-600 are needed daily. Looting near Khan Younis has further disrupted distribution efforts, with the World Food Programme confirming that 15 trucks were looted. International criticism has intensified, with the UN Secretary-General warning of dire consequences without rapid and sustained assistance. Concurrently, Israeli military operations continue, with ongoing airstrikes adding to the already high Palestinian death toll, now over 53,600 since the conflict escalated in October 2023. The region remains in crisis with widespread malnutrition and human suffering.
3. <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2025/05/gaza-children-starving-israel-aid/682902/?utm_source=apple_news> - The article highlights the dire humanitarian crisis facing children in the Gaza Strip amid an ongoing blockade that has severely restricted the flow of humanitarian aid. Since Israel imposed a total blockade on March 2, 2025, food security experts have warned of a critical famine risk, with food transport trucks unable to reach starving civilians. Reports indicate that at least 57 children have died from malnutrition, and over 14,000 children under five are at risk of severe acute malnutrition. Efforts to ease the blockade have allowed some aid to reach Gaza, but the situation remains catastrophic. Children's advocate Rachel Accurso, known as 'Ms. Rachel,' has publicly urged world leaders to help Gaza's children, drawing both praise and criticism. Some accused her of bias, despite her earlier expressions of sympathy for Israeli children affected by the conflict. The article stresses that acknowledging children's suffering should not be controversial and criticizes the political and logistical barriers preventing adequate aid delivery. While Israeli leaders claim sufficient aid has been sent, international bodies dispute this, citing ongoing hunger and logistical challenges. The article calls for a collective moral response to prevent needless suffering among innocent children.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/49805dd8-abb8-49b3-9781-1f992fff895c> - The article, penned by a public health expert and Israeli philanthropist, addresses the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, focusing on the severe malnutrition affecting children due to prolonged restrictions on aid by the Israeli government. The author, who is also a seasoned nutritionist with experience in conflict zones, criticizes Israel's decision to block humanitarian aid for 77 days, a move that has led to widespread starvation. While condemning the violent actions of Hamas during the October 7, 2023, attacks, which resulted in over 1,200 deaths and the abduction of 250 individuals, the writer stresses that innocent Palestinian children, who comprise nearly half of Gaza’s population, should not suffer as a consequence. The article highlights data from the UN’s Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, indicating that one in five Gazans faces starvation, and nearly 71,000 children under five are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition. Questioning skeptics of these figures, the writer urges that starvation resulting from lack of food access is a clear and avoidable reality and warns that limiting aid further erodes Israel's moral standing in the world.
5. <https://qa.time.com/7283582/regression-no-ones-coming-inside-gaza-as-israel-expands-its-military-control/> - As of May 2025, Gaza faces an escalating humanitarian catastrophe amid Israel’s expanded military operations. In response to a devastating Hamas attack in October 2023 that killed over 1,200 people, Israel has intensified its offensive, deploying tens of thousands of reservists and announcing indefinite military control over the territory. The new strategy involves deep territorial occupation, demilitarization, eradicating Hamas governance, and implementing a controversial emigration plan endorsed by President Trump. Humanitarian aid has been severely restricted with a near-total blockade, and access to food and basic necessities is dwindling. Organizations like the UN and NGOs have condemned the Israeli approach, warning of weaponized aid distribution and humanitarian law violations. The devastation is immense: 92% of residential infrastructure has been damaged, nearly 50 million tonnes of debris cover Gaza, and the education system has collapsed. With over 52,000 Palestinians and at least 408 aid workers killed, local residents, such as Oday Basheer, describe life under constant bombardment and despair at the global community’s inaction. Resistance is emerging within Israel as reserve troops refuse mobilization and hostages' families criticize the strategy for valuing territory over lives.
6. <https://apnews.com/article/3a25af5414e513d26ea3696b317bb423> - After nearly three months of a complete blockade, Israel has allowed limited humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, amid mounting international pressure and warnings of imminent famine. The first trucks, carrying baby food and medical supplies, entered via the Kerem Shalom crossing. The blockade, initiated to pressure Hamas during ceasefire negotiations, has led to severe shortages and rising death tolls. Gaza's Health Ministry reports over 53,000 Palestinians killed in the ongoing conflict, which began after a deadly Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023. Humanitarian organizations and 21 countries, including the UK, France, and Canada, have criticized the limited aid as insufficient and urged Israel to fully reopen access and cease military actions. Critics, including Medecins du Monde, have raised ethical concerns about the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's aid distribution plan, perceiving it as a mechanism for forced population displacement. Additionally, efforts for a ceasefire in Qatar have stalled, and Israeli military actions in Gaza continue. Meanwhile, Cyprus is prepared to ship more aid, and a freed hostage has appealed to Israeli lawmakers to end the war. Despite the first aid deliveries, the humanitarian situation remains dire with ongoing violence and contested aid mechanisms.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-strikes-kill-dozens-gaza-criticism-israel-grows-2025-05-20/> - On May 20, 2025, Israeli airstrikes in Gaza resulted in at least 55 Palestinian deaths, including children, intensifying global criticism of Israel. The conflict, now in its 20th month, has devastated Gaza and caused a worsening hunger crisis due to Israel's blockade since March. Despite some easing of restrictions, humanitarian aid remains limited, with only a few dozen trucks, including baby food and medicine, entering Gaza under strict Israeli security checks. The United Nations confirmed no aid had yet been distributed on the ground. International backlash has grown, with Britain suspending trade talks and imposing sanctions over Israeli policies. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas called for a review of the EU-Israel trade pact, while potential EU sanctions on violent settlers face internal obstruction. Amid faltering ceasefire talks in Qatar, Israel recalled its negotiators, while Hamas accused Israel of insincerity. Israeli strikes have killed over 500 Palestinians in the past nine days, pushing the total death toll in Gaza past 53,000. The international community, including France and Canada, has joined Britain's call for a ceasefire, warning of further actions if Israel continues its military campaign.