

WFP: Gaza Could Surpass Famine Thresholds in Six Weeks

GENEVA (Dispatches) – The Gaza Strip could surpass famine thresholds of food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality in six weeks, an official from the World Food Programme said on Wednesday.

"We are getting closer by the day to a famine situation," said Gian Carlo Cirri, Geneva director of the World Food Programme (WFP).

"There is reasonable evidence that all three famine thresholds — food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality — will be passed in the next six weeks."

A UN-backed report published in March said that famine was imminent and likely to occur by May in northern Gaza and could spread across the enclave by July. On Tuesday, a U.S. official said the risk of famine in Gaza, especially in the north, was very high.

Cirri was speaking at the launch of a report by the Global Network Against Food Crises, an alliance of humanitarian and development actors including United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the European Union and the United States.

In its report, the network de-



Palestinians await approaching aircraft about to drop humanitarian aid packages over the northern Gaza Strip on April 23, 2024.

scribed the 2024 outlook for the Middle East and Africa as extremely concerning due to the Gaza war and restricted humanitarian access, as well as the risk of the conflict spreading elsewhere in the region.

"As for Gaza, the conflict makes it difficult and sometimes impossible to reach affected people," Cirri said.

"We need to scale up massively our assistance... But under the current conditions, I'm afraid the situation will further deteriorate."

The United Nations has long

complained of obstacles to getting aid in and distributing it throughout Gaza in the six months since Israel began an aerial and ground onslaught against.

Cirri said that the only way to steer clear of famine in Gaza was to ensure immediate and daily deliveries of food supplies.

"They've been selling off their belongings to buy food. They are most of the time destitute," he said. "And clearly some of them are dying of hunger."

Meanwhile, the commissioner-

general of UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees, has called for a probe and accountability for what he described as "blatant disregard" for the UN operations in Gaza.

Philippe Lazzarini, speaking at a UN press briefing, said that 180 UNRWA staff had been killed and 160 premises belonging to the agency were damaged or destroyed as a result of Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip.

Lazzarini said that he recently "called on the members of the Security Council for an independent investigation and accountability for the blatant disregard of UN premises, UN staff, and UN operations in the Gaza Strip."

He made the remarks a day after an independent report said that the Israeli regime has not provided evidence over its claim that tied some UNRWA members to the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas.

The claims by the Israeli regime led to a massive budget deficit as a number of the countries donating to the agency cut off their aid. Lazzarini said he hoped the donors would resume aid.

Yemen's Ansarullah Launches Missile Attack on U.S. Ship in Gulf of Aden



A Yemeni military helicopter closing in on an Israeli vessel travelling in the Red Sea

SANA'A (Dispatches) – The Ansarullah movement launched on Wednesday a missile attack on a U.S. commercial ship sailing in the Gulf of Aden off the southwestern coast of Aden, Yemen, a Coast Guard official said.

According to the official, who spoke to Xinhua on condition of anonymity, the Ansarullah movement targeted at noon the MV Yorktown, a commercial vessel owned by the United States and operated by Danish shipping company Maersk Line.

The source stated that at least two missiles were fired at the ship, with one intercepted by a nearby warship and the other landing in the vicinity of the vessel.

Since November 2023, the Houthis have intensified military operations in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, targeting Israeli-linked ships. This escalation comes amid the

ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, leader of Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement, has called on European countries to withdraw their warships from the Red Sea.

He also emphasized that the European vessels, which are not going to the occupied territories, are not at risk.

Israel waged its bloody war on the Gaza Strip on October 7 following a historic operation by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group against the usurping regime.

In solidarity with the Palestinians in the besieged Gaza, Yemeni forces have targeted ships going to and from ports in the occupied lands, or whose owners are linked to Israel, in the southern Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Gulf of Aden, and even in the Arabian Sea.

Israel Shells Northern Gaza, Says Poised to Start Rafah Ground Invasion

GAZA (Dispatches) – Palestinian civilians were fleeing their homes in northern Gaza on Wednesday just weeks after returning because of an Israeli bombardment which they said was as intense as those at the start of the war.

Much of the shelling was focused for a second day on Beit Lahiya on the northern edge of Gaza, where the Israeli military gave evacuation orders to four neighborhoods on Tuesday, warning they were in a "dangerous combat zone".

After weeks of relative calm, Israel intensified its attacks overnight on Monday, focusing on areas - particularly in the north - from where it had previously withdrawn troops.

Israel's military said on Wednesday it was ready to launch a ground assault on the southern city of Rafah.

The onslaught will proceed when the military receives approval from the regime, a senior military official told Reuters.

Plans for an attack on the city,

where more than 1 million people have been displaced, have caused widespread international concern. Aid agencies have warned of a potential humanitarian catastrophe.

The war, now in its seventh month, has killed over 34,000 Palestinians, and many more are feared buried in rubble. The carnage has laid to waste much of the enclave, displacing most of its 2.3 million people and creating a humanitarian crisis.

In the past 24 hours, Israeli strikes have killed at least 79

Palestinians and wounded 86, the Gaza Health Ministry said Wednesday.

Two people were killed in a strike on a house in Rafah, four were killed when a missile hit a group standing outside a supermarket in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp and one was killed in a strike on a house in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza, Palestinian health officials said.

Residents in northern Gaza and suburbs of Gaza City reported heavy shelling.

Task Force: Israel Violating Int'l, Humanitarian Law With U.S. Weapons

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – An independent U.S. task force has informed the Biden administration there is "compelling and credible evidence" that the Zionist regime's use of American weapons violates a U.S. national security memorandum demanding U.S. arms be used in accordance with humanitarian law.

The report, viewed by Middle East Eye, was submitted to the U.S. government on April 19.

The authors found "a clear pattern of violations of international law, failures to apply civilian harm mitigation best practices, and restrictions of humanitarian assistance, by the Israel and the IDF, often utilizing U.S. provided arms".

The report was filed as the State Department prepares an official assessment for Congress on Israel's compliance with National Security Memorandum/NSM-20, signed by Biden in February, which calls for assurances from countries receiving U.S. arms that those weapons are not being used in contravention of international law or international humanitarian law.

Israel submitted a written assurance to the U.S. in March that it was using American-sup-

plied weapons per international humanitarian law.

But that letter was not made available to the public and raised eyebrows among some progressive members of Congress who have called on the Biden administration to restrict weapons transfers to Israel amid concerns over the civilian death toll in Gaza.

Over 100 Percent Surge in Military Spending

Military spending in West Asia rose almost 10 percent to \$200bn in 2023, with the Zionist regime powering the arms splurge amid its war on Gaza.

Spending on arms and military gear grew at the highest level in 10 years, according to a new report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The occupying regime led the way with spending rising 24 percent to reach \$27.5bn. The war on Gaza has been the main driver of Israel's spending. Its expenditure increased more than 200 percent from \$1.8bn in the month before 7 October to \$4.7bn in December 2023, accord-

ing to the report.

In total, the occupying regime's military spending has increased 44 percent from 2014 through 2023.

The war in Gaza erupted after October 7 when Israel launched a ferocious assault on the besieged enclave, killing more than 34,000 Palestinians, mainly women and children.

On Saturday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a major spending bill that will allocate an additional \$26bn for Israel, with \$4bn set to replenish Israel's missile system.

According to SIPRI, Israel was followed by Saudi Arabia and Turkey, the next biggest spenders on arms in the region.

Saudi Arabia was the world's fifth biggest military spender globally in 2023.

According to the report, the roughly four percent growth in its military spending in 2023 "was partly financed on the back of increased demand for non-Russian oil and rising oil prices following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine".

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest exporter of crude oil.

Jamaica Officially Recognizes State of Palestine

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Jamaica says it has decided to officially recognize Palestine as a state amid prolonged concerns over the Zionist regime's ongoing war in the Gaza Strip and the dire humanitarian crisis in the besieged territory.

Jamaica's Foreign Minister Kamina Johnson Smith confirmed the decision in a press statement on Wednesday, stressing that the move is aligned with her country's "strong commitment" to the principles of the United Nations Charter, which seek to promote mutual respect, peaceful co-existence, and the right to self-determination.

"By recognizing the State of Palestine, Jamaica strengthens its advocacy towards a peaceful solution," she said.

Smith went on to say that Jamaica continues to support the so-called two-state solution as the only viable option to resolve the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

She also noted that her government underscores its support for diplomatic dialogue rather than military actions as the key

to resolving the conflict.

The Jamaican foreign minister further reaffirmed her country's support for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and increased access to humanitarian aid, as well as lasting peace in the region.

With this move, Jamaica now joins 140 other member states of the United Nations in advocating for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The latest development came after Barbados announced its decision to officially recognize Palestine as a state, becoming the 11th member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to adopt such a measure.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates welcomed the decision of Barbados on Friday to recognize the State of Palestine with East Al-Quds as its capital, calling on all countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to follow suit as soon as possible to confirm the international community's determination to end the suffering of the Palestinian nation.