News



Palestinians gather to receive food from a charity kitchen in Gaza City July 24, 2025, amid a hunger crisis. For months, U.N. officials, aid groups and experts have warned that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are on the brink of famine without formally declaring one. (OSV News/Dawoud Abu Alkas/Reuters)

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Despite daunting odds, Catholic Relief Services and its on-the-ground partners have managed to deliver aid to 1.7 million people in Gaza since 2023, according to new data.

On July 29, CRS — the official relief and development agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops — updated its diocesan coordinators regarding efforts to provide essential assistance to the population of Gaza, where CRS has maintained a continuous presence since 1984.

Amid "severe access limitations and aid blockades," Baltimore-based CRS and its partners have still managed to supply basic needs as well as psychosocial support, wrote CRS diocesan engagement adviser Jesús J. Huerta in his email, with the agency "mobilizing supplies from Egypt and Jordan" following "the recent humanitarian pause."

Israel enacted an 11-week blockade of aid starting in March, in an effort to pressure Hamas to release the remaining Israeli hostages taken in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, which sparked the current war. In late May, aid distribution was resumed under the controversial Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a joint initiative of the U.S. and Israel. GHF has drawn international criticism for security concerns surrounding its distribution points, which have been reported to result in numerous fatalities.

Israel has also initiated aid drops into Gaza, but humanitarian groups have described them as dangerous and inefficient.



Palestinians carry aid supplies, that entered Gaza on trucks through Israel, in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip July 29, 2025. Despite daunting odds, Catholic Relief Services and its on-the-ground partners have managed to deliver aid to 1.7 million people in Gaza since 2023, according to new data. (OSV News/Dawoud Abu Alkas/Reuters)

Hutera said in his email that "decades of work with communities, the local Catholic Church and partners in Gaza and the region have enabled our (CRS') rapid, flexible and impactful response."

At the same, he noted that "our staff and partners continue to operate under grave risk."

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas War, more than 60,000 Palestinians have died, according to the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry. Some 1,200 Israelis have been killed and more than 5,400 injured. Of the 251 Israeli hostages taken by Hamas that Oct. 7, 50 remain in captivity, with only 20 of them believed to still be alive, with 83 of the hostages confirmed killed to date. More than 100 were released later in 2023;

eight were rescued by Israeli forces.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC — a measurement initiative by a global consortium of food security organizations and agencies, including CRS — has warned that Gaza is at risk of famine, with both serious and critical levels of acute malnutrition throughout the densely populated region. "Increasingly stringent blockades" by Israel have "dramatically worsened" conditions, said the IPC.

In a fact sheet attached to Huerta's email, CRS said that its current program priorities are safe, dignified shelter and housing; water, sanitation and hygiene; psychosocial support; and assisting church partners in Gaza, "who enjoy community trust and have strong grassroots connections."

Noting that its Gaza church partners "serve as temporary shelters for approximately 400 people," CRS said it has supplied "hygiene items, cash assistance, clothing, tarps and other humanitarian goods as available."

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Among the aid CRS has so far provided since 2023:

- Shelter assistance (including bedding, living supplies, tarps, tents and shelter repair kits) to 341,790 people.
- Clean water, latrines, hygiene and sanitation kits and supplies to 500,268 people.
- Psychosocial support to 10,399 children and teens, and to 1,333 caregivers.

Linked to the fact sheet was a new report produced by CRS and two global humanitarian organizations, Save the Children and Mercy Corps, titled "Markets Under Fire," which assessed market conditions in Gaza and their impact on food security and humanitarian aid.

Led by Save the Children, the July 2025 report marks the second phase in an analysis first undertaken by the three agencies — which are "three of the main cash actors in Gaza," the report notes — in August and September of 2024.

The latest report found that "about 70% of structures" in Gaza are damaged, and "key urban areas are largely non-functional."

More than 86% of Gaza is within the "Israeli-militarized zone," which has made "key market hubs inaccessible," the report said.

In addition, 83% of cropland and 95% of farmland — the latter of which encompasses broader uses, such as livestock grazing — have been rendered "damaged or inaccessible," said the report. Agricultural production has plummeted by more than 80%.

Livestock numbers have declined, with owners forced to kill their flocks due to the cost of fodder, the report said.

Overall, "the food system has collapsed due to blockade, destruction of productive assets, and looting," said the report.

The data showed that as of June 2025, "food consumption, dietary diversity, and (food) access have all sharply deteriorated," with 79% of households having "poor food consumption scores," and 98% resorting to "extreme coping strategies like meal skipping and portion reduction."



Palestinian children react near pots of food from a charity kitchen in Gaza City July 25, 2025, amid a hunger crisis. For months, U.N. officials, aid groups and experts have warned that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are on the brink of famine without formally declaring one. (OSV News/Dawoud Abu Alkas/Reuters)

At the same time, "some staples have risen over 3,000% in price," said the report, adding that "households continue to depend on markets but face severe supply shortages and unaffordable prices."

Exponential inflation in Gaza extends to durable goods as well, with a single vehicle tire costing "up to $17,000," the report found.

Economically, Gaza continues to experience a "multi-faceted liquidity crisis," including "diminished purchasing power among consumers, a shortage of usable physical currency, and severe capital constraints limiting suppliers' ability to restock," the report said.

As a result, humanitarian organizations "increasingly use e-wallets and mobile transfers for cash assistance," but such strategies are "only partial solutions due to Gaza's cash-based economy, recurrent power and network outages, and the enforced isolation of its financial system," said the report.

In response, "citizen-led price monitoring platforms and informal practices like bartering and peer-to-peer exchanges" have emerged, while formal market regulation "has collapsed under blockade and conflict," leading to "severe inflation … price fluctuations, and reduced competition," the report found.

"This environment exacerbates inequality and undermines market integrity," said the report. "The absence of security, law and order and predictable access fragments the market, fuels speculation and leaves space for price manipulation."

Energy access in Gaza "has collapsed," with the grid down and insufficient fuel entry into the region between March and June, leaving residents to "rely on unreliable and hazardous alternatives" such as "car batteries, firewood, solar panel and burning plastic," said the report. Most households have less than four hours of electricity per day.

Formal transport and communication systems have been undermined, with public transport now "nearly non-existent" and relying on donkey carts.

Yet the scope of such challenges has not deterred CRS or its partners, the agency said in its fact sheet.

"In a time of fear and flight, CRS works with its partners to uphold human dignity, even amid bombardment and continuous displacement," said the agency.