



'Flour Massacre': Impunity Persists as Israeli Forces Open Fire On Starving Palestinians Seeking Vital Aid

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The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), Al Mezan, and Al-Haq condemn in the strongest terms the “flour massacre” committed by the Israeli occupying forces (IOF) against thousands of Palestinians seeking aid to feed their starving families in the northern Gaza Strip, which resulted in killing of at least 112 Palestinians and the wounding of 760 others, [according](#) to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. This horrific massacre and genocidal act, a blatant violation of

the legally-binding provisional measures order issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in January, comes at a time when Palestinians in northern Gaza are enduring unprecedented levels of famine, as Israel continues to deliberately hinder the delivery of vital humanitarian aid. The continued perpetration of such horrific crimes and massacres by Israel is a direct result of the international community’s failure to comply with its moral and legal obligations and take concrete steps to end Israel’s genocide in the Gaza Strip and hold it accountable. According to initial information obtained by our field researchers, on 29 February 2024, at approximately 4:30 am, Israeli tanks and snipers stationed southwest of Gaza city opened heavy fire on thousands of Palestinian civilians who were desperately waiting for hours for aid convoys to arrive. The intense shooting by the IOF, which continued for approximately an hour and a half, coincided with the arrival of aid trucks near Al-Nabulsi roundabout on Al-Rashid Street, after they entered through an Israeli checkpoint. Dozens of people boarded the trucks to take flour bags and packages of canned food. The continued shooting subsequently caused more injuries and hampered the prompt arrival of ambulance and rescue teams, impeding the transfer and adequate treatment of the victims. In another demonstration of Israel’s complete distortion of facts, the Israeli military has falsely [claimed](#) the people were killed as a result of the “pushing, trampling and being

run over by the tucks”. However, witness testimonies obtained by our field researchers and videos [shared](#) on social media documenting the events, clearly and unequivocally demonstrate that the crowd was hit by bullets coming from Israeli tanks and snipers. Moreover, the head of Kamal-Adwan Hospital, Hossam Abu Safya, [said](#) that the bullets were concentrated in the head and upper parts of the body, indicating a willingness to inflict fatal or grievous bodily harm upon starving Palestinians. One of the witnesses of the massacre, Mahmoud Ibrahim Abdel Salam Obaid, 30, told our researchers: “Due to extreme hunger, I went for the first time to get aid. I did not see anyone approaching the tank, which was stationed near Al-Rashid Street. I took aid from the first truck, and when I turned around, I was hit by two bullets from the tank, one in my back and another in my hand.” Another witness, Atiya Abdel Fattah Lafi, 34, told our researchers: “The first and second trucks entered and people approached them and started taking aid. Then, when the third and fourth trucks entered, the occupying forces started shooting. I was able to take a share of the aid and decided to return to my house. I was then hit with a bullet in my back while I was around 700 meters away from where the Israeli tanks were stationed.” This is not the first instance of the IOF firing upon starving Palestinians desperately seeking life-saving aid during the ongoing genocide. However, this massacre stands as one of the most cruel in light of the significant number of victims involved. Our organizations have previously documented the IOF’s deliberate targeting of Palestinians awaiting for aid trucks, as Israel insists on its continued use of [starvation](#) as a genocidal technique and a [weapon of war](#). For example, on 25 February 2024, it was [reported](#) that at least 10 Palestinians were killed while they were gathering near Al-Nabulsi roundabout on Al-Rashid Street, southwest of Gaza city, anticipating the arrival of aid. Israel’s Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, praised, in a [post](#) on social media platform X, the actions of the “heroic fighters” involved in the flour massacre. He asserted that they had “acted excellently against a Gaza mob that tried to harm them”, and advocated for Israel to “stop transferring” humanitarian aid into Gaza. This statement adds to the long and extensive list of statements made by Israeli officials, proving their genocidal intent and acts against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. On 27 February, the United Nations (UN) Humanitarian Country Team [stated](#) that humanitarian partners have been unable to reach northern Gaza and increasing parts of southern Gaza safely, as aid convoys have come under fire and are systematically denied access to people in need. According to [HelpAge](#), approximately 111,500 older people in Gaza are among those most at risk of hunger, dehydration, illness, injury and death. Earlier in January, UN experts [warned](#) that Palestinians in Gaza now make up 80 percent of all people in famine or catastrophic hunger worldwide, marking an unparalleled humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The Chief of the United Nations Relief Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Philippe

Lazzarini, [said](#) that February registered a 50% reduction in terms of the humanitarian aid entering Gaza compared to January, pointing out that aid “was supposed to increase not decrease to address the huge needs of 2 million Palestinians in desperate living conditions.” He [described](#) the famine as “a man made disaster” and pointed out that the last time UNRWA was able to deliver food aid to northern Gaza was on 23 January, explaining that UNRWA’s “calls to send food aid have been denied & have fallen on deaf ears.” According to our field researchers, thousands of Palestinians risk their lives every day in pursuit of essential food supplies, such as flour, near Israeli checkpoints where aid trucks are expected to arrive. Despite the IOF’s full awareness of the circumstances imposed by them, they target the individuals waiting for hours to secure food supplies for their starving families. Palestinians are compelled to take such risks due to enduring starvation, which has reached its peak and spread dangerously over the past months. With all food supplies depleted, there is nothing left to sustain themselves. We note that Palestinians in northern Gaza have previously been forced to eat animal food to survive. Alarming, ‘deaths’ among children due to malnutrition and dehydration have increased in northern Gaza. The Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza [announced](#) the deaths of ten children, with eight succumbing at Kamal Adwan Hospital and two at Al-Shifa Hospital, as a result of dehydration and malnutrition, amid warnings of other children in danger, susceptible to the same fate. We renew our warning against leaving about half a million Palestinians to die from hunger and thirst in Gaza city and the North Gaza Governorate, as they continue to be deprived of much needed aid due to Israel’s intentional policy of preventing humanitarian aid trucks from reaching their intended destinations. We reiterate that Israel’s policy of starvation is aimed to displace the residents of the northern Gaza Strip, compelling them to leave southward, and potentially forcibly expel Gaza’s Palestinians to Egypt. In light of the above, our organizations renew their call on the international community to:

- Abide by their legal obligations under the Genocide Convention and take practical and effective steps to end the ongoing genocide by Israel against 2.3 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including by calling for and exerting pressure on Israel to enact an immediate and permanent ceasefire;
- Ensure that Israel complies with the legally-binding provisional measures order issued by the ICJ on 26 January 2024;
- Pressure Israel to fulfill its obligations as an occupying power, to promptly restore the supply of water and electricity to Gaza, to allow the free and unrestricted passage of all consignments of humanitarian aid essential for the survival of the civilian population, and to immediately stop its policy of starvation;

- Ensure the establishment of a safe humanitarian environment to facilitate the work of international and local humanitarian organizations throughout the Gaza Strip, specifically in the north, allowing for the urgent and prompt delivery of essential and sufficient quantities of food and medical supplies, including medicine, to Palestinians; and
- Strengthen international support to, and urge States to [reinstate](#) funding to, UNRWA, which provides critical, life-saving humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza, in line with their legal obligations amid an ongoing genocide.

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