

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Officially Declared That Famine is Occurring in Gaza

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) officially declared that famine was occurring in the Gaza Governorate, including Gaza City. The IPC is a multi-agency initiative of UN organizations and international NGOs that provides standardized classifications of food insecurity. The news triggered a strong international response and sparked renewed debate over humanitarian aid access.

Key findings and projections

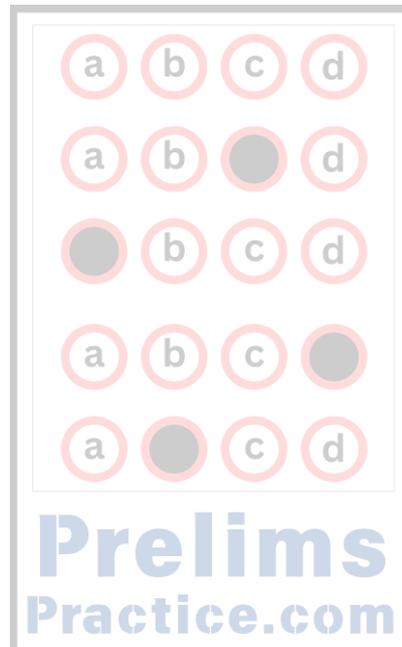
- **Famine confirmation:** On August 22, 2025, the IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC) confirmed that famine (IPC Phase 5) was present in Gaza Governorate. This was the first official famine declaration in West Asia.
- **Expansion projections:** The IPC report projected that famine conditions would likely expand to the Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis governorates by the end of September 2025.
- **Human toll:** The report indicated that over half a million people in the Gaza Strip were facing catastrophic conditions of starvation, destitution, and death, with an additional 1.07 million in a state of emergency (IPC Phase 4).
- **Child malnutrition:** The analysis showed that acute malnutrition was worsening rapidly, with projections for at least 132,000 children under five to suffer from the condition through mid-2026, including over 41,000 severe cases at high risk of death.
- **Man-made crisis:** International officials, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres, described the famine as a "man-made disaster" caused by the conflict, mass displacement, and severe restrictions on aid.

International reactions

The declaration prompted a wave of international condemnation and renewed calls for action.

- **United Nations:** Several UN entities reacted strongly. The UN Security Council held a meeting on August 27, where multiple speakers warned that Gaza's population was being "systematically starved to death". UN aid officials, including the deputy relief chief and the head of the World Food Programme, stated that the famine could have been prevented and called for immediate action.

- **Security Council statement:** On August 27, 2025, 14 members of the UN Security Council issued a joint statement expressing "profound alarm and distress" over the IPC report and emphasizing that the use of starvation as a weapon of war is prohibited under international law. The U.S. did not join the statement.
- **International rights groups:** Groups like Amnesty International and the International Rescue Committee referred to the famine as a direct consequence of Israeli military actions and blockages, describing it as a "moral indictment" and "failure of humanity itself".
- **Calls for ceasefire and access:** UN officials and several countries, including the UK, Kuwait, and the Palestinian Authority, called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the opening of all land routes, and unrestricted humanitarian access to halt the spread of the famine.



Explanation of Exam Oriented Key Terms

01

National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of tools for classifying the severity of food insecurity and malnutrition to guide decision-making. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative that uses an evidence-based, technical consensus to provide a standardized scale from "Generally Food Secure" to "Famine". The IPC system aims to provide actionable information for strategic decision-making in response to food crises.

Basic facts

- **Origin:** Developed in 2004 during the Somalia food crisis by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and its partners.
- **Purpose:** To provide evidence-based, actionable knowledge for decision-makers to prevent food crises and coordinate responses.
- **Nature:** A multi-stakeholder global initiative governed by a partnership of international organizations, NGOs, and national governments. It serves as a neutral, technical tool.
- **Scope:** Used in over 30 countries and recognized as a key metric in the UN's Global Report on Food Crises.

Three harmonized scales

The IPC approach is built on three complementary scales for classifying different aspects of food insecurity:

- **IPC Acute Food Insecurity:** Measures the severity of immediate food insecurity, which changes rapidly (days, weeks, or months).
- **IPC Chronic Food Insecurity:** Measures the long-term, persistent lack of adequate food access. Chronic food insecurity is a gradual process that lasts for years.
- **IPC Acute Malnutrition:** Assesses the severity of acute malnutrition based on a set of criteria, including measures like weight-for-height and Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC).

The IPC five-phase scale (Acute Food Insecurity)

The scale classifies the level of food insecurity and requires different levels of intervention.

- **Phase 1: Minimal:** Households can meet their basic food needs with no need for atypical coping strategies.
- **Phase 2: Stressed:** Households have adequate, but barely minimal, food consumption and cannot afford some essential non-food expenses.
- **Phase 3: Crisis:** Households either have food consumption gaps that result in high or above-normal acute malnutrition, or are only marginally able to meet minimum food needs by depleting essential assets.
- **Phase 4: Emergency:** Households face extreme food gaps, resulting in very high levels of acute malnutrition and excess mortality. People are forced to sell off assets to survive.
- **Phase 5: Catastrophe/Famine:** The most severe phase, where there is an extreme lack of food and/or basic needs. Starvation, destitution, and death are evident.

How famine is determined

For a specific area to be classified as being in "Famine" (IPC Phase 5), three specific thresholds must be met:

- **Extreme food shortages:** At least 20% of households face extreme food shortages.
- **Severe malnutrition:** Over 30% of children suffer from acute malnutrition.
- **High mortality rate:** The crude death rate exceeds 2 per 10,000 people per day due to starvation or malnutrition-related diseases.

Relationship with famine declaration

- The IPC itself does not formally "declare" a famine. Instead, it provides the technical analysis for governments and humanitarian agencies to make the formal declaration.
- A "Famine Review Committee" of international experts is activated to validate the findings when famine conditions are suspected.

Practice Questions:

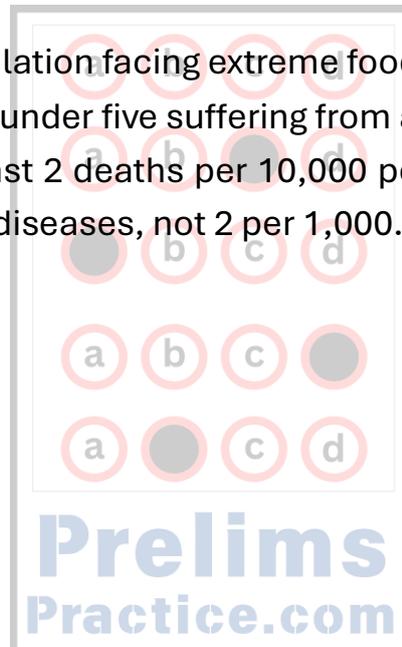
1. Regarding the famine in Gaza as classified by the IPC, which of the following is a criterion for an area to be classified under IPC Phase 5 (Famine)?

- a) A sudden economic collapse due to natural disaster
- b) Acute malnutrition affecting at least 30% of children under five years of age
- c) A mortality rate of 2 deaths per 1,000 people per day due to starvation
- d) An entire region experiencing food consumption gaps

Answer: b

Explanation: The IPC defines specific thresholds for an area to be classified as famine (Phase 5), which includes:

- At least 20% of the population facing extreme food shortages.
- At least 30% of children under five suffering from acute malnutrition.
- A mortality rate of at least 2 deaths per 10,000 people per day due to starvation, malnutrition, or related diseases, not 2 per 1,000.



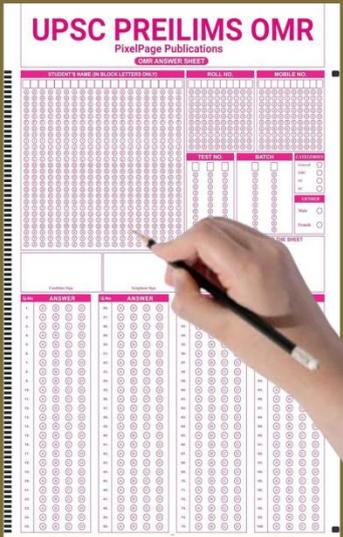
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