

“The Hunger in Gaza”, Prof. Roni Strier, University of Haifa & Ruppin Academic Center, 26.6.2025

Lecture

During the war, I made a public appeal to the Israeli government to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, particularly with regard to food insecurity. This was already in March 2024. As an official representative of the State of Israel, my call received wide international attention—in Israel, around the world, and even in The Hague. The response was immediate: I was summoned to the Ministry of Welfare and harshly reprimanded, including threats of legal action against me for allegedly using government resources and my official status to promote political agendas—though, in reality, there was no basis for such claims. It was simply an attempt by the government to silence dissenting voices.

There has been intense debate among experts about whether Gaza is truly facing a humanitarian crisis. Some analysts approached the issue quantitatively—calculating how many aid trucks entered Gaza, estimating total caloric content, dividing by population—and concluded that there was sufficient food. Others strongly disagreed. The most recent data we have is extremely alarming. I won’t go into all of it, as I believe many of you are already familiar with the figures, but I will mention a few.

According to UN reports from June 2025, Gaza’s entire food ecosystem has collapsed. One million people are now experiencing emergency levels of food insecurity, corresponding to Phase 4 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). Close to 100,000 people are in famine conditions—Phase 5 of IPC. According to the same report 83% of agricultural land, 83% of wells, and 71% of greenhouses have been damaged. Less than 5% of Gaza’s farmland is currently usable (Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO, April 2025). 72% of the fishing fleet has been destroyed (Food Security Sector, December 2024). Even before the war, Gaza’s economic and agricultural infrastructure was on the brink of collapse. Nearly 50% of the population suffered from food insecurity even before October 2023. It’s important to understand: Israel did not enter a stable and flourishing situation—Gaza was already in crisis.

In the few minutes I have left, I’d like to highlight the following figures:

- As of February 2025, over 92% of children aged 6 to 23 months, and pregnant and breastfeeding women, do not meet their minimum dietary needs due to lack of food diversity.
- 290,000 children under age 5 and 150,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women require nutritional supplements and micronutrients.

- Between April 2025 and March 2026, an estimated 17,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women will need treatment for severe acute malnutrition (IPC Special Report, Gaza Strip, 12 May 2025).
- In the same period, approximately 71,000 cases of acute malnutrition are expected among children aged 6 to 59 months, including 14,100 severe cases (IPC, 12 May 2025).
- 100% of the population surveyed (2.1 million people) is expected to face high levels of food insecurity, classified as IPC Phase 3 or above.
- 1 million people are at emergency level (IPC Phase 4).
- 100,000 people are already in catastrophic food insecurity—IPC Phase 5.

These are horrifying figures. My original appeal to the Israeli government—in Hebrew and English—calling for accountability and response to the humanitarian crisis, was made over a year ago. Even then, I described the situation as catastrophic. Today, it is far worse. All of the data I presented comes from official UN sources. The entire population of Gaza is now dependent on the international community's ability to respond to its food crisis. The scope of the disaster is almost beyond comprehension. There is no solution other than a comprehensive political one, which must include an immediate ceasefire. Let me explain why: food security is built on several pillars—availability, which is currently extremely low; accessibility, which has collapsed economically; utilization, meaning even when food is available, people lack the means to cook, refrigerate, or store it without electricity, hygiene, or clean water. People do not know if they will survive the next day. Sustainability is nonexistent. And agency—the ability of people to be active participants in securing their food—has been utterly destroyed. No one can fetch food, store it, or influence their situation. This is why nothing short of ending the war and creating a comprehensive international recovery framework will suffice. A recent article by Elliot Berry, Dorit Nitzan, and Martin Kussmann titled "*Providing Food Security in Gaza for the 'Day After'*" (*Israel Journal of Health Policy Research*, 14(1), Article 34. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13584-025-00700-9>) outlines principles for rebuilding Gaza's nutritional system. But without an immediate ceasefire and political solution, there can be no recovery.

One final point: hunger inflicts multigenerational, multidimensional collective trauma. Even if Israel ends the war now, the trauma will last for generations. If the government speaks of "total victory," it must reckon with the fact that no such victory can erase the memory of this devastation. If we truly wish to live alongside the Palestinian people, we must end this conflict now and begin building mechanisms that can support two million lives in Gaza.