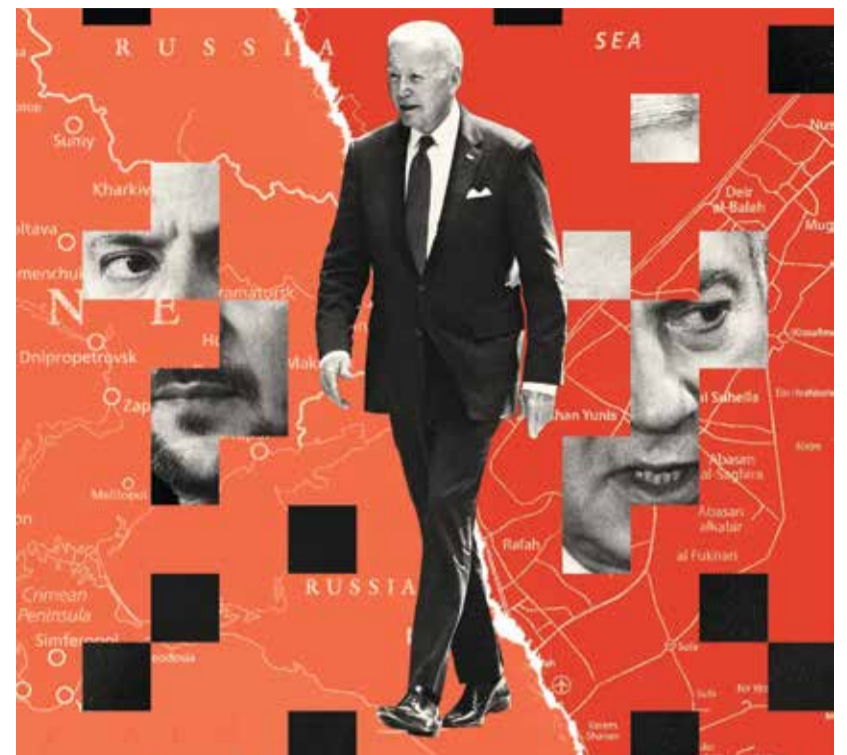


Commenting on the targeting of a hospital in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, President Biden was quick to describe the attack as “injustice” and a “disgrace to the entire world,” but failed to show the same level of urgency and care for the continuous bombardment of patients in numerous hospitals throughout Gaza. In a speech at a rally on April 12, 2022, Biden called mass graves found in the Bucha region of Ukraine “genocide,” but one year later, he deferred to reporters when asked about the Israeli war. Biden was not alone in showing double standards. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that he agrees with Biden that “war crimes are being committed in Ukraine.” However, in a news conference on October 20, 2023, Blinken did not address the issue of “war crimes” regarding civilians who died in Gaza and only held Hamas responsible for the deaths of civilians killed in Israeli attacks. Blinken also once understood that hitting heat, water, and electricity facilities in Ukraine is wrong but simply forgot the fact when it came to Israeli moves to deprive Gaza’s two million residents of food, electricity, drinking water, and fuel. Progressive thinkers of the American left, such as Noam Chomsky, applauded Putin for waging war in a more “humane” way than the Pentagon. Overall, I’d say there’s nothing completely humane about a war. However, there are indeed better and worse ways of engaging in a battle. The United States has been involved in all the major wars of this cen-

tury, but none has been as inhumane as the war in Gaza. **Ukrainians insiders, Palestinians outsiders** Washington’s inability to see and befittingly respond to Israel’s clear and very serious transgressions of international law, human rights, and common decency begs the question: What happened to those lofty ideals in over a year? How are Gazan lives different from Ukrainian lives? The Western world has taken more practical, sincere steps for Ukrainians in almost two years since their war began on February 24, 2022, than it has ever taken for Palestinians in almost a century since at least 1948, when an entity called Israel came into existence. It’s not like the West did not have enough time to exhaust all humanitarian and politically sound options. Many US presidents, UK prime ministers, and officials throughout the world ran specifically on the platform of solving the issue of Palestine. Even the isolationist, arguably cold-hearted Donald Trump repeatedly claimed that his business-minded approach would be the be-all and end-all solution, only to fail miserably by ignoring every principal demand and right of Palestinians in his plan, making it dead on arrival. Circling back to explore what difference between Ukrainians and Palestinians justifies this disparity in reactions, it’s worth employing Occam’s razor. Occam’s

razor is a principle that says that if you have two (or more) competing ideas to explain the same phenomenon, you should prefer the simpler one. Essentially, the first simple answer that comes to mind is probably the correct one. The simplest answer to our question is that Ukrainians are predominantly white-skinned European Christians, while Palestinians are considered brown-skinned West Asian Muslims. As unrefined as that seems to be — which is the point if we are to adhere to Occam’s razor — many Western officials have had slips of the tongue and said something along the same line. The refined version of that answer is that Ukrainians and Israelis are insiders — that is, “one of us” — to most Western administrations, while Palestinians are outsiders. In the end, if the West has to choose between the two, it will go with what it considers to be its kin. If the language of race seems crass to you, you should put yourself in the shoes of Middle Easterners who have felt and experienced this racial discrimination at the crossroads of history. Even African-Americans and other minorities in the US, UK, France, and other countries of Europe have been fighting a similar ingrained racism for decades now. Compared to Christian African-Americans, for example, Palestinians naturally have a higher hill to climb. Just look at how often the Palestinian death toll since October 7 gets eclipsed by the Israeli death toll in statements



The illustration shows US President Joe Biden (C) torn between the double standards of supporting both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (L) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. **JOAN WONG/GETTY IMAGES**

from US and EU officials, even though it is nearly 20 times higher. I hope we will see a day when the violent loss of one life will demand immediate explanation, but until that day, it will always be bitterly

amusing how the magnitude of casualties from one group gets spotlighted by a government even though the magnitude of casualties from the other side is multiple times higher.

# Hunger crisis in Gaza to worsen: Report

## Burn solid waste or eat raw meat; That is the question



WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME



Hungry Palestinians rush with their pots to get some food provided by aid agencies in Rafah, the Gaza Strip. **FATIMA SHBAIR/AP**

Weeks of restricted access to food in the Gaza Strip have culminated in severe hunger and growing risks of famine in the besieged enclave. Since early October, Israeli attacks across Gaza have damaged local bakeries and food warehouses, along with roads that are used to transport humanitarian aid. Israel’s total blockade on the enclave has also restricted food, water, and fuel from entering in the first place. How bad is the starvation in Gaza, and what is the food supply like since the war? Here is Al Jazeera’s investigation of the situation.

### IPC: Food insecurity acute

More than 90 percent of Gaza’s 2.3 million population is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, according to an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report on December 18, 2023. The IPC, which measures hunger risks, also reported on December 21 that 2.08 million people in Gaza are facing “acute food insecurity” that can be classified in the organization’s phase three of risk or above.

The IPC has five phases of acute food insecurity, ranging from none (phase one) to catastrophe or famine (phase five). Phases three and five are consid-

ered crisis and emergency. “Acute” food insecurity is a short-term phenomenon and tends to stem from unusual or man-made shocks, compared with “chronic” food insecurity, which is long-term and a result of insufficient means for living. Between December and February, Gaza’s entire population is projected to fall under phase three or above, according to the United Nations-backed report. If current hostilities and limited aid continue, Gaza is also at risk of experiencing a famine by early February. The IPC definition of famine is when at least 20 percent of the population in an area falls under phase five of acute food insecurity.

### Food access in Gaza

Families in Gaza have had to cope with deteriorating quality and declining quantities of food, along with an inability to cook meals due to fuel shortages. Spending a day without eating any food has become usual. In early December, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that nine out of 10 people across the enclave skip meals for long periods of time. Nutritionally vulnerable groups such as pregnant women are at heightened risk, while baby formula and milk have been in severely short supply for toddlers

who rely on them. Even preparing meals requires finding alternatives to cooking gas, and aside from using firewood or cardboard, at least 13 percent of displaced people have been forced to burn solid waste, says the WFP. Hunger has also quickly escalated since a brief truce ended in early December: Just 12 days after it ended, the WFP found that at least half of the internally displaced people surveyed knew someone who had resorted to consuming raw meat. Access to water is also scarce, with less than two liters (0.5 gallons) available for each person per day — far short of the 15 liters needed to survive, according to the WFP.

### Food aid level

Since October 7, the number of trucks carrying food that entered Gaza in a month has fallen by more than half, compared with at least 10,000 trucks before the war. Over the course of two months of war, only 1,249 trucks carrying food assistance reached Gaza, the WFP reported on December 6. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also reported that over the first 70 days of the war, only 10 percent of the food needed

for Gaza’s entire population entered the enclave. The WFP has recommended that at least 100 trucks carrying just food and water enter Gaza a day, but on most days since the war, even the total amount of trucks entering has been less than that. The agency also noted that damaged roads near Rafah at the border with Egypt — where most aid is now dispersed from — cannot accommodate this increase. At the height of aid supply during the truce lasting from November 24 to December 1, some 200 trucks entered daily, while the WFP was only able to reach about 10 percent of Gaza’s population with in-kind and cash-based food assistance. Even once food aid is supplied, access to a sufficient share has not been possible. A report from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) and Al Mezan, a human rights organization based in Gaza’s Jabalia refugee camp, on December 14 found that people near Rafah’s food distribution centers would often have to wait in line for 10 hours and sometimes still returned home empty-handed. “I have to walk three kilometers to get one gallon [of water],” Marwan, a 30-year-old Palestinian who fled south with his pregnant wife and two children on November 9, told Human Rights

Watch. “And there is no food. If we are able to find food, it is canned food. Not all of us are eating well.” Still, Gaza’s population primarily relies on humanitarian assistance for food, followed by local markets and assistance from friends or relatives. With rising shortages across all of these, support from relatives is also dwindling, according to the WFP. As more of Gaza’s population is pushed into shelters in southern governorates, which are also under intense bombardment, competition for food is expected to increase, said the IPC.

### Can Gazans access food locally?

Fighting across the Gaza Strip, and especially in the northern governorates, has made it particularly difficult to access food and aid. Local farmlands, flour mills, bakeries and warehouses have also been directly damaged by Israeli bombardments. Only a month after fighting broke out, all of northern Gaza’s bakeries closed due to a lack of supplies such as flour and fuel, the UN reported on November 8. The risk of being hit by Israeli strikes also resulted in movement restrictions for those seeking to leave their homes for food.