

## Food and security for mothers in Gaza, Global Action Against the Israeli Blockade

### Infant formulas are not a solution

Many of the journalists who report on the genocide in Gaza and who have witnessed the criminal use of hunger as a weapon of war, have emphasized that among the worst consequences of the offensive that the Israeli army is carrying out are the murder, mutilation, orphanhood and severe psychological damage suffered by Palestinian children. The use of hunger and thirst as weapons of war exceeds the levels of cruelty that Israel's actions had already reached, equating them with the most opprobrious acts that have been committed against humanity in all time.

It turns out, however, that in denouncing that the youngest children, including newborns, are among the main victims of the food restrictions imposed by Israel, it is wrongly pointed out that the worst consequence is the lack of milk formula to feed them. The worst consequence is, however, that the mothers of all these babies also suffer from severe malnutrition, they are also attacked and killed. They are in terrible tension and therefore have enormous difficulties for breastfeeding their babies, which could really prevent malnutrition and death.

An urgent global appeal for food and support for pregnant mothers and mothers with young children should be, after the ceasefire, the main and most urgent action to prevent further malnutrition and hunger in Gaza. Global action to enable Palestinian mothers to breastfeed would be the best contribution to health and nutrition in these times of great emergency.

In experiences in wars and other disaster situations in many parts of the world, it has been shown that infant formulas are not the solution for most babies, but cause more damage and their negative effects tend to last over time.

Infant formulas can help some babies who have lost their mothers or who are in very special health conditions. For other infants and toddlers, infant formulas are an added danger and not a solution. In Gaza, not only is water scarce, but the little that can be obtained is contaminated. There is no way to safely dilute formulas, or to keep utensils clean to prepare and administer them without them becoming a source of infection. Under these conditions, infant formulas become a lethal weapon that adds its destructive effects to that of bombings.

The negative consequences of the use of milk formula in emergency situations have negative effects that last a lifetime for children who manage to survive.

Babies in Gaza must be protected and saved along with their mothers. They will never be well if their mothers are not. Urgent food and conditions of safety and tranquility for their mothers are required.

There are international guidelines for infant and young child feeding in emergency situations, which are valid even for the extremely difficult conditions in Gaza.

The United Nations and the valuable humanitarian organizations working on the ground in Gaza, with all the political, technical and logistical support they can provide from inside and outside this enclave, should join forces to create special spaces so that the thousands of mothers who are pregnant and/or have young children can receive food as a matter of priority. They can drink safe water, rest, wash themselves, and breastfeed their babies. If such an action is also not respected by Israel, a new line against human rights will have been crossed.

IBFAN calls on the World Health Organization, UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies and organizations to ensure that babies and young children in Gaza, who have lost almost everything, can count on their mothers' milk. The contribution that such action can also make to restoring peace in Gaza will not be negligible.

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