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UN says Israel using starvation as weapon

‘RESTRICTIONS ON ENTRY OF GAZA AID AMOUNT TO WAR CRIME’

GENEVA

The United Nations warned yesterday that Israel's severe restrictions on aid into war-ravaged Gaza coupled with its ongoing attacks could be seen as using starvation as a “weapon of war”.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk decried the rampant hunger and looming famine in Gaza. “The situation of hunger, starvation and famine is a result of Israel's extensive restrictions on the entry and distribution of humanitarian aid and commercial goods, displacement of most of the population, as well as the destruction of crucial civilian infrastructure,” he said in a statement.

“The extent of Israel's continued restrictions on the entry of aid into Gaza, together with the manner in which it continues to conduct hostilities, may amount to the use of starvation as a method of war, which is a war crime.”

Court to decide

His spokesman, Jeremy Laurence, told reporters in Geneva that the final determination of whether “starvation is being used as a weapon of war” would be determined by a court of law. “The suffering of the people of Gaza is unconscionable,” he said.



Reuters

■ Palestinians gather to receive free food as Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger, in Jabalia, northern Gaza, yesterday.

1.1million
people in Gaza experiencing ‘catastrophic’ hunger, according to UN

The comments came after a UN-backed assessment determined that the war-torn Palestinian territory is facing imminent famine.

The devastating war since Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel has left roughly half of Gazans — around 1.1 million people — experiencing “catastrophic” hunger, a UN-backed food security assessment warned.

Without a surge of aid, famine would hit the 300,000 people in Gaza's war-battered north by May, it said Monday.

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told reporters in Geneva his agency feared that without action, “you're looking at more than 200 people dying from starvation per day”.

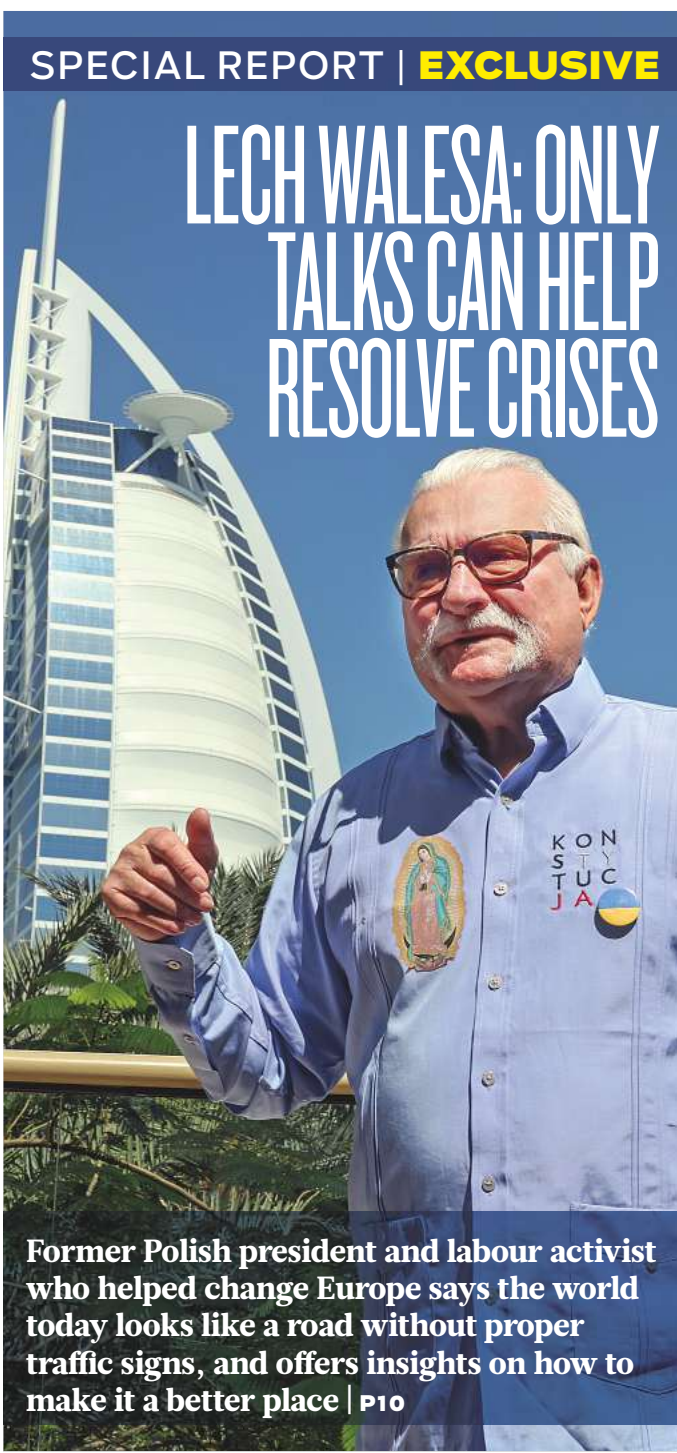
Turk also stressed that “the clock is ticking”. “Everyone must insist that Israel acts to facilitate the unimpeded entry and distribution of needed humanitarian assistance and commercial goods to end starvation and avert all risk of famine.”

—AFP

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Virendra Saklani/Gulf News

How health cover will benefit UAE private sector

DUBAI

BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN
Chief Reporter

The UAE has implemented a nationwide mandate requiring private sector employers to provide health insurance coverage to employees and domestic workers who currently lack such benefits. The decision will be enforced mandatorily starting January 1, 2025.

According to insurance sector experts, this ensures guaranteed coverage for employees, increased revenues for insurance companies, and their risk pools will expand; and for the health care sector, it offers an incentive to enhance health care infrastructure nationwide. Only the Dubai and Abu Dhabi governments have made health insurance mandatory for private-sector employees.

“Premiums may rise initially, especially in Sharjah due to its large population and associated cost of living, but should stabilise over time once businesses adjust to this new operational expense,” an insurance broker told *Gulf News*.

With Dubai's population projected to reach 5.8 million by 2040 from the current 3.5 million and the UAE's overall population expected to reach 11.1 million, insurers' risk pools are set to expand.

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