



مركز الميزان لحقوق الإنسان
AL MEZAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Joint Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Food on Israel's Policy of Starvation as a Weapon of War and a Tool for Genocide and Forcible Displacement in the Gaza Strip

2 July 2024

1. This submission is prepared in response to a call for inputs [issued](#) by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Mr. Michael Fakhri, for his upcoming report on human rights and starvation, with an emphasis on the Palestinian people's food sovereignty. **This submission, to be read in conjunction with our two other joint submissions, addresses Israel's use of starvation as a weapon of war and a tool for genocide and forcible displacement in the Gaza Strip.**
2. The utilisation of starvation has been a pivotal aspect of Israel's ongoing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. This policy has resulted in [famine](#) throughout the North Gaza and Gaza Governorates, with Palestinians surviving on an average of 245 calories a day between January and April, Oxfam [reports](#). According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH), as of 1 April 2024, the number of 'deaths' caused by malnutrition and dehydration in northern Gaza rose to 32, including 28 children. However, the death toll is likely higher, as the MOH's data only accounts for those who were hospitalised. Between 30 May and 3 June 2024, Al Mezan documented the 'deaths' of three Palestinian children in central Gaza—[nearly 6-month-old Fayez Ataya](#), [13-year-old Abdulqader Al-Serhi](#) and [9-year-old Ahmad Abu Reida](#)—due to malnutrition, lack of access to adequate healthcare, and multiple forced displacements.
3. Throughout its ongoing genocide, Israel has targeted bakeries, food stores, and water stations as well as Palestinians [seeking aid](#) and waiting in queues to buy bread or fill drinking water. For example, **Mahmoud Obeida**, 30, described to Al Mezan how extreme hunger forced him to seek aid for the first time on 29 February 2024. As he collected aid from a truck near al-Rashid Street, he was shot in the back and hand by gunfire from a nearby Israeli tank. Concurrently, Israel has hampered the process of humanitarian aid delivery and distribution in Gaza. This includes closing off land crossings, erupting checkpoints and an alternative floating pier, and allowing for foreign air-dropped aid while crippling the work of existing humanitarian agencies including through [attacking aid workers, convoys](#), and [humanitarian relief operations](#).
4. According to PCHR's field researchers, severe starvation has returned to northern Gaza in recent weeks due to Israel's blockade of aid trucks. With the exception of flour trucks which reach the commercial bakeries, there is a severe shortage of all types of food including vegetables, fruits, meat and poultry. Israel's tightening of its siege on Northern Gaza coincided with Israeli occupying forces' 20-day ground military attack in Jabalia camp and Beit Lahia which took place in May 2024. As such, aid trucks carrying food and medicine were blocked, leaving malnourished people stranded as almost all hospitals in the North have become non-operational due to the constant and deliberate attacks. **Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya**, Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in North Gaza, reported to Al Mezan severe malnutrition and hunger among all patients, with signs of weakness and emaciation with most cases showing pallor and weakness, requiring longer hospital stays despite limited resources. The loss of essential food items like infant milk, flour, and vegetables exacerbates health conditions, particularly for children (who have lost an average of 5 kilograms with those under six months being more vulnerable to death), pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and the elderly.
5. Moreover, humanitarian aid airdrops have ceased completely since early May in northern Gaza but continue in the southern areas. The dangerous, inefficient and dehumanizing airdropping method has caused the 'deaths' of [21 Palestinians](#) due to

falling boxes directly on the residents, stampedes, and drowning, according to Gaza Government Media Office. Since Israeli approval is required for this method, Israel gains control to hinder aid delivery and exacerbate the crisis it has created. Instead of meeting their international obligations to prevent atrocity crimes and enforce a ceasefire, Third States are resorting to inadequate efforts that fail to meet the needs of Gaza's 2.3 million population.

6. Israel's use of starvation as a genocidal weapon of war was highlighted by the International Court of Justice. Despite the issuance of three provisional measures orders to prevent further harm, Israel has continued to block aid, [allow its citizens to obstruct and burn aid trucks](#), and took over and closed off the Rafah border crossing on 7 May 2024. Before this closure, aid entry was erratic and insufficient - less than 50% of the number of trucks that entered before the start of the ongoing genocide.
7. Starvation has also been strategically used to displace Palestinians from their homes as they move about from one unsafe area to another, in desperate search of food and clean water. For instance, **Amal Abu Dan**, 22, resident of Sheikh Radwan in Gaza, recounted to Al Mezan that the Israeli invasion led to a dire food scarcity and high prices of essential goods. She had to reduce her intake to one meal a day while breastfeeding, and eventually turned to wild plants for food. This resulted in severe malnutrition for her and her daughter. Fearing for their lives due to hunger, she evacuated south in search of food and formula. Similarly, **Nadia Abu Sitta**, 40, a mother of six and resident of Beit Lahia, endured Israeli bombing before relentless hunger forced her and her children to flee south on 6 March 2024. Initially seeking refuge at al-Fakhoura School, she faced overcrowding and food shortages. Injuries from a bombing led her to Kamal Adwan Hospital, which was subsequently bombed. Displaced again, she went to al-Yemen al-Saeed Hospital, where conditions were dire with no food supplies for months, she turned to wild plants.
8. In light of the above, we call on the Special Rapporteur to:
 - Acknowledge Israel's utilisation of starvation as a weapon of war and a tool for genocide and forcible displacement in the Gaza Strip; and
 - Address Third States' complicity in Israel's ongoing genocide, including through their military and financial support for Israel and deliberate failure to end the ongoing genocide, including the use of starvation.