



Joint Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Food on Root Causes of Palestinian Food Insecurity: Israel's Zionist Settler-Colonialism and Apartheid Regime

2 July 2024

1. This submission is prepared in response to a call for input 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.¹ **This submission, to be read in conjunction with our two other joint submissions, addresses the root causes of Palestinian food insecurity; Israel's Zionist settler-colonial apartheid regime.**²
2. Food sovereignty, as defined by La Via Campesina, is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.³ Within a settler-colonial framework, such as the one entrenched in historic Palestine, food sovereignty is systematically undermined through, *inter alia*, land dispossession, destruction of local food systems, and imposition of economic dependencies. By definition, food sovereignty cannot exist within a settler-colonial framework. The apartheid regime of discriminatory laws, policies and practices against the Palestinian people is used to entrench and further the settler-colonisation and *de facto* and *de jure* annexation of Palestinian territory. As such, the struggle for Palestinian food sovereignty is inseparable from the broader plight of the Palestinian people for the realisation of their inalienable right self-determination and permanent sovereignty over their land and resources. If the Palestinian people exercised sovereignty over their land and resources, they would not face food insecurity, starvation, and famine. Dismantling Israel's settler-colonial apartheid regime and ending its illegal occupation are prerequisites for Palestinian food sovereignty and, by extension, food security.
3. Food insecurity does not happen accidentally; it is deliberately inflicted, and famine like the ongoing one in the occupied Gaza Strip is human-made. Long before the ongoing genocide, the majority of Gaza's population faced food insecurity, and 97% of Gaza's water was unsafe for human consumption. The ongoing Israeli blockade and closure imposed on Gaza since 2007 has systematically denied Palestinians access to adequate food, water, raw materials, and inputs for food production. Further, Israel has long imposed a "buffer zone" or "access restricted areas" within the Gaza Strip, covering approximately 35% of Gaza's cultivable land and 85% of its maritime area, making these areas largely inaccessible to Palestinians, including farmers and fishermen.
4. Since 7 October 2023, Israeli government ministers and senior Israeli military leaders have issued statements of genocidal intent, to destroy Palestinians in Gaza. On 9 October 2023, Israeli Minister of Defence, Yoav Gallant stated, "[w]e are imposing a complete siege on [Gaza]. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel – everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we act accordingly".⁴ Under genocidal conditions of total siege,

¹ OHCHR, "Call for input - Human Rights and Starvation, with an emphasis on the Palestinian People's Food Sovereignty", available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-input-human-rights-and-starvation-emphasis-palestinian-peoples-food>.

² Rania Muhareb et.al, *Israeli Apartheid: Tool of Zionist Settler Colonialism* (2022, Al-Haq), available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/20931.html>.

³ La Via Campesina, "Food Sovereignty | Explained", 15 January 2003, available at: <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty/>.

⁴ יואב גלנט - Yoav Gallant, @yoavgallant, available at: <https://x.com/yoavgallant/status/1711335592942875097>.

killing, starvation,⁵ the targeting of aid deliveries and aid workers,⁶ and the total destruction of the Gaza Strip, including the widespread destruction of agricultural lands (more than 57 percent damaged since May),⁷ the pollution of the sea, and the contamination of land from munitions “containing heavy metals and explosive chemicals...contaminating soil and water resources” in Gaza.⁸

5. This tactical strategy to prevent Palestinians self-sufficiency is evident in the occupied West Bank, including eastern part of Jerusalem, where Israeli colonial and discriminatory policies and practices target the foundation of Palestinian food systems: natural resources, including land and water,⁹ and their infrastructure; as well as Palestinian rural and herding communities and small-scale farmers. There are around 850 Israeli-imposed movement obstacles throughout the West Bank, restricting Palestinian access to essential services, further isolating communities, and severely disrupting livelihoods. Israeli settler violence serves as another arm of occupation, as the settlers – often accompanied by occupying forces – systematically target Palestinian agricultural lands and infrastructure.¹⁰
6. For decades, Israel has appropriated, pillaged and prevented access to the Palestinian people’s land and water, electricity, and fuel.¹¹ The rapid escalation of starvation and famine in Gaza,¹² along with the rapidly increasing food insecurity in the West Bank,¹³ are inherently rooted in Israel’s settler-colonialism and apartheid regime and its systemic oppression of the Palestinian people since 1948.
7. International institutions, ostensibly designed to uphold human rights and prevent such crises have been prevented by Israel, the Occupying Power from carrying out their

⁵ IPC, “Gaza Strip: Famine is imminent as 1.1 million people, half of Gaza, experience catastrophic food insecurity”, available at: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/alerts-archive/issue-97/en/>.

⁶ United Nations, “Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General”, 25 June 2024, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/db240625.doc.htm>.

⁷ United Nations, “The Question of Palestine, FAO sounds alarm over high risk of famine across the whole Gaza Strip amidst humanitarian access constraints” 26 June 2024, available at <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/fao-sounds-alarm-gaza-260624/#:~:text=FAO's%20recent%20satellite%20data%20analysis,and%2020%20percent%20are%20cereals>.

⁸ UNEP, “Damage to Gaza causing new risks to human health and long-term recovery - new UNEP assessment”, 18 June 2024, available at: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/damage-gaza-causing-new-risks-human-health-and-long-term-recovery#:~:text=Munitions%20containing%20heavy%20metals%20and,especially%20serious%20risks%20to%20children>.

⁹ Al-Haq, “Corporate Liability: The Right to Water and the War Crime of Pillage”, 10 December 2022, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/publications/20995.html>.

¹⁰ Al-Haq, “Israeli Occupying Forces and Settlers Continue to Commit Crimes in the West Bank; the International Justice System is at Stake”, 21 December 2023, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/22376.html>.

¹¹ Al-Haq, “Violations Set in Stone: HeidelbergCement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, 4 February 2020, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/publications/16408.html>.

¹² Al-Haq, “Urgent Call to Declare Gaza a Famine-Stricken Area”, 5 June 2024, available at: <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/23260.html>.

¹³ Al Quds, “WFP warns about the high rate of hunger in the West Bank”, 15 February 2024, available at: <https://www.alquds.com/en/posts/110474>.

mandates to alleviate starvation and other human rights violations against Palestinians.¹⁴ In Gaza, Israeli settler-colonialism — primarily manifested in the closure and blockade of the Strip, and Israel’s intentional acts to destroy the Palestinian people in Gaza — have led to severe food insecurity and malnutrition, with some 90 percent of Gaza’s children facing the severe threat of malnutrition.¹⁵ The critical work of international bodies like the UN and its agencies have been completely frustrated and curtailed by Israel’s armed attacks and international law violations. Allowing food insecurity to reach the point of famine in Gaza requires a series of intentional political choices on the part of not only the Israeli government but also the Third States that are supporting and arming Israel.

8. Palestinian food security should be understood within the context of Israel’s decades long settler-colonialism and apartheid regime, and the concerted denial of Palestinian sovereignty over land and other natural resources. Palestinian food sovereignty can only be realised through the realisation of the Palestinian people to self-determination.
9. In light of the above, we urge the Special Rapporteur to:
 - Address the root causes of food insecurity faced by Palestinians; embedded in Israel’s Zionist settler-colonial apartheid regime, and illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, and demand Third States to adopt effective measures to dismantle the apartheid regime, and end Israel’s illegal occupation including the full, total and permanent withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territory.
 - Recognise that food insecurity is both a result and a tool of Israeli oppression and domination, and denial of self-determination of the Palestinian people;
 - Urge Third States to fully cooperate with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, and the UN ongoing Commission of Inquiry, to ensure justice and accountability; and
 - Demand Israel to provide reparations for the Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees denied their right of return for over 76 years, restitution of their property, including agricultural land, and compensation for the damages inflicted upon them as a result of the ongoing *Nakba*, including the exploitation of their natural resources, as integral to realising the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination.

¹⁴ UNRWA, “Humanitarian Aid Delivery Into Gaza Continues To Be Constrained”, 21 June 2024, available at: <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/humanitarian-aid-delivery-gaza-continues-be-constrained>.

¹⁵ Al Jazeera, “Nine out of 10 children in Gaza lack food for growth: UNICEF” 6 June 2024, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/6/nine-out-of-10-children-in-gaza-lack-food-for-growth-unicef#:~:text=New%20report%20examines%20child%20food,of%20Israel's%20onslaught%20on%20Gaza.&text=About%2090%20percent%20of%20children,United%20Nations%20children's%20agency%2C%20UNICEF.>