

# Inputs for The Special Rapporteur on the right to food

## Right to food submission – Palestine

Submitted by: SHS<sup>1</sup> & Al Marsad<sup>2</sup>

June 2024

### Food Sovereignty in Palestine/introduction

1. Palestine has always been a land of agricultural, a rich source of natural resources, and rich with livestock. The Nakba in 1948 cut the ties between the Palestinians and their homeland causing the destruction of more than 530 villages and the forced transfer of most of its population, changing their lifestyle from framers to refugees.
2. Since the occupation of West Bank and Gaza Strip till now the occupation is controlling the water resources in West Bank and Gaza, even after signing the Oslo Accords the occupation kept it's colonial control over water, using it to support the settlements on the expenses of the Palestinian rights<sup>3</sup>, including having control over their underground water, drinking supplies, and water used for agricultural, which caused agriculture to become an expensive sector due to the colonial policies, while the settlers enjoy non-stop, subsidized water to their illegal frames and cooperatives.
3. Israeli settlements cover 42% of West Bank lands, with 68% under "Israeli" control. This area holds 87% of the region's natural resources, 90% of its forests, and 49% of its roads.<sup>4</sup> About 62.9% of arable land is in "Israeli"-controlled Area (C), while 18.8% is in Area (B), and 18.3% in Area (A).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Stars of Hope Society for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities (SHS): is the only organization in Palestine run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities. SHS has been established in response to the high levels of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities combined with the lack of relevant organizations. SHS was founded in 2007 to address the needs of women and girls with disabilities and to abolish disability and gender discrimination; empower women with disabilities to achieve equality; and access to integration; and claim their rights through implementing rights-based development programs and projects; and advocating for the implementing, monitoring and evaluating laws, by-laws and policies.

<sup>2</sup> The Social and Economic Monitor - Al-Marsad: is a Palestinian research and campaigning CSO specialized in monitoring the Palestinian government's socio-economic policies and holding them to account to ensure social justice for all Palestinians, particularly the most vulnerable. It was founded in 2012 by a group of young activists and researchers who came together to protect the social and economic rights of Palestinians and was registered at the Palestinian Ministry of Interior as an association in March 2014.

<sup>3</sup> "Occupying Water" *Amnesty International* (29/11/2017). Website: <https://n9.cl/uybtn8>.

<sup>4</sup> "Settlements in the West Bank...Israeli gatherings are eating away Palestinian lands" A-Jazeera (3/11/2023). Website: <https://n9.cl/41m4a>.

<sup>5</sup> "Fact sheet entitled: Environmental practices harmful to the agricultural sector in Palestine" *The Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies – MASARAT*. Website: <https://n9.cl/59jxer>

## The Palestinian Policies:

4. The Palestinian Authority established its economic system based on a neoliberal framework. The World Bank laid the economic administrative foundation for the Palestinian Authority shortly after the signing of Oslo. The Palestinian Authority's subordination of the occupation through economic agreements hindered its ability to build a developmental national economy capable of enhancing the concept of food sovereignty.<sup>6</sup>
5. The concept of "food security" even in its neoliberal sense is unsustainable due to the Palestinian Authority's dependence on constrained economic agreements and its subjugation under controlling occupation, which governs all border crossings, restricts exports and imports, controls land, water, and natural resources, and launches direct attacks aimed at destroying the Palestinian economy and controlling land and resources.
6. The Public Policy Agenda for 2017-2022 highlighted the provision of food security as one of the policy interventions, yet it was not linked to an inclusive policy framework to achieve it as an objective.<sup>7</sup> Some agricultural policies in recent years have included a set of objectives aimed at promoting agricultural development in Palestine, such as reducing food imports, supporting Palestinian farmers' resilience, and increasing the agricultural sector's contribution to reducing food insecurity. However, the contribution of the agricultural sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remains low and declining.<sup>8</sup>
7. Palestinian General Budget for the year 2023 allocated 6.3% of the total budget for economic sector, which includes six ministries including the Ministry of Agriculture, Economy, along with a group of other institutions and committees.<sup>9</sup> The budget of the Ministry of Agriculture constitutes 1.1% of the general budget.<sup>10</sup> Data on food exports and imports shows that Palestine's exports of food items reached 55 million Dollars to "Israel" while the imports of food items amounted to 300 million Dollars.<sup>11</sup>
8. limited effectiveness of policies to achieve food sovereignty in Palestine exacerbates unemployment and poverty rates due to reliance on food consumption rather than production. In the absence of a social protection system, this extremely affects marginalized and impoverished groups, including people with disabilities.

---

<sup>6</sup> Tareq Da'na, "An Introduction to the Political Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory" *Omran for Social Sciences* 30, no. 57 (2016). Website:

<sup>7</sup> Belal Falah et al., *Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Palestine* (Ramallah: Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute – MAS, 2017) <https://n9.cl/6ekyij>.

<sup>8</sup> Iyad Riyahi et al., *National policies in the agricultural sector* (Ramallah: Agricultural Work Committees, 2019). website: <https://n9.cl/ku9d4>.

<sup>9</sup> Citizen's Budget 2023. For more please view the following link: <https://n9.cl/7ezpu>.

<sup>10</sup> Citizen's Budget for the Ministry of Agriculture. For more please view the following link: <https://citizenbudget.ps/ar/node/535>.

<sup>11</sup> "Palestine prevents the import of Israeli food products" *Al-Anadoul* (3/2/2020). Website: <https://n9.cl/2t2mt>.

## Gaza Strip within the Genocide:

1. Amid the ongoing genocidal war, the occupation imposed a restrictive siege, blocking food and medicine. Over half a million individuals, at least one in four families, face catastrophic conditions in Gaza, classified as a Disaster by the International Integrated Partnership. They suffer acute food shortages, hunger, and depleted coping capacities.<sup>12</sup>
2. The blockade disproportionately affects marginalized groups, particularly people with disabilities who need nutrition programs. Preliminary results from the General PWD Survey indicate that all surveyed individuals with disabilities in Gaza during the genocide required food, medicine, and clothing. Data shows 75% of Gaza's agricultural lands were destroyed since October 7. In 2023, Gaza's exports made up 55% of total exports, with merchandise at 32.1%. Mainly, exports were vegetables and agriculture, despite severe damage to livestock and fishing.<sup>13</sup>

Food sovereignty in Palestine requires restoring Palestinian sovereignty over their land, water, and natural resources, as well as stopping the occupation's theft and plunder of Palestinian lands, water, and natural resources. We also need a shift in the Palestinian Authority's public policies towards steadfastness-oriented development based on agriculture and production to improve food sovereignty for Palestinians.

---

<sup>12</sup> "Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for 24 November – 7 December 2023 and Projection for 8 December 2023 – 7 February 2024." Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (21 December 2023). Website: <https://n9.cl/l7vrw>.

<sup>13</sup> Fouad Abu Saif, "Destruction of the Agricultural Sector in Gaza: Effects of the Israeli War and Paths to Recovery and Food Sovereignty." *Institute For Palestinian Studies* 43. Website: <https://n9.cl/91lku>.