Maat for Peace’ submission on “the impact of Covid-19 on the right to food”

* **Permeable:**

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected all aspects of life and led to wide-ranging effects on almost every aspect of ​​development. Among these repercussions are the significant increase in the level of food insecurity in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. It should be noted that the pandemic has exposed the fragility of the international system, especially the global food system, as it has become difficult for small food producers to access the resources they need and sell their products, especially in light of Isolation and closure procedures applied by almost all countries of the world, and in some cases this led to an increase in evictions and the acquisition of agricultural land on a large scale, in addition to the fact that the closure of schools exacerbated hunger among children. Moreover, school closures have exacerbated child hunger in addition to rising food prices at record rates due to the pandemic and subsequent successive global economic crises; Some countries have borrowed from international institutions, which has exacerbated the problem of food security.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In a related context, coinciding with the global crisis in the field of nutrition, there has been a noticeable lack of coordination of multilateral policies and an effective response to the impact of the pandemic on food security and nutrition, and there has become an urgent need to coordinate appropriate and effective political responses and broad political consultations by actors in the international system; To find quick and appropriate solutions that would reduce the negative effects of the spread of the epidemic, or that would deal with future crises that might threaten food security and nutrition, Maat for Peace appreciates the effort made by the Committee on World Food Security to deal with the crisis. Maat for Peace also welcomes the initiative of the Special Rapporteur of The meaning of the right to food, and related UN initiatives, which could work to redirect food policies, including analysis of the deficiencies in current food systems from a multilateral perspective, and from a human rights perspective, and working through a participatory environment to find the best possible solutions, and envision alternative policies from It would help the world food system to withstand for a longer period in the face of current and future crises.

In this report, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (Egypt) attempts to review the repercussions of the pandemic on the food security and nutrition in the world, especially in the Republic of Yemen, and some of the measures taken or solutions and policies that can be pursued by the international system, which would work to reduce the negative effects resulting from the impact of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic or similar future crises on food security and nutrition.

* **The Effects of the Coronavirus on food security:**

According to international statistics, the Coronavirus pandemic has led to a significant increase in the prevalence of nutritional deficiencies. It rose from 8.4% in 2019, with the onset of the pandemic, to about 9.9% for the year 2020, which means an increase of between 720 and 811 million people who became hungry in the year 2020, which is equivalent to an additional 161 million people compared to the previous year. There are about 233 million people in the world suffering from food insecurity, according to the latest global statistics, and with estimates of an increase in those numbers in 2021 and the following years, and also according to global estimates, 22.0% of children were stunted, in 2020, Also, 6.7% of them experienced wasting, and 5.7% were overweight; This negatively affects the weakening of human capital and economic productivity in the future, and 29.9% of women in 2019 suffered from anemia.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Apart from the pandemic, conflicts, extreme climatic events and economic contraction have greatly affected the high proportion of children suffering from hunger and stunting. This has been particularly evident in countries affected by conflicts, economic crises and climate disasters, which number 20 countries and regions around the world.[[3]](#footnote-3) The ongoing armed conflicts, economic crises, natural climatic changes and an unstable working environment with limited access, all in the midst of the effects of the covid-19 pandemic and the consequences it has had on all walks of life, and has put millions of lives at risk, the number of which continues to increase daily, with expectations of acute food insecurity in 2022; As in the Republic of Yemen, Nigeria, southern Sudan, Sudan, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Syria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Haiti, Niger, Somalia, Honduras, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mozambique, Mali, Chad, Angola, Madagascar and Mauritania.[[4]](#footnote-4)

* **The effects of Covid-19 on food security in the Republic of Yemen:**

Prior to the escalation of the Yemeni conflict in 2015, of course, Yemen was suffering from one of the highest levels of malnutrition in the world, and with the spread of the Corona pandemic and the subsequent partial and total closure procedures, many countries in the world were affected, especially those experiencing armed conflicts such as the Republic of Yemen, which is one of the most famous hotspots of hunger in the world.[[5]](#footnote-5) Whereas in 2022, more than 17.4 million Yemenis are suffering from food insecurity, and the number may reach 19 million people by December 2022. More than 2.25 million children under the age of five have been exposed to risk due to acute malnutrition, and it is expected that 535,000 children will suffer Yemen suffers from severe malnutrition, and they may die if they are not properly received the proper health care.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In the same context, according to the latest international reports, there has been a 16% increase in acute malnutrition, A 22% increase in the incidence of severe acute malnutrition among children under the age of 5 in the 2021 year compared with the year's estimates 2020 the highest number ever recorded in Yemen,[[7]](#footnote-7) as well as more than 1 million pregnant and breastfeeding women suffering from acute malnutrition women ", amounting to approximately 1.3 million pregnant or breastfeeding women as of January 2022 in Yemen, These numbers and ratios are expected to increase fivefold over the second half of 2022, in addition to the difficulty of transferring children or women with malnutrition-related illnesses to health facilities for treatment; Because of the inability of most Yemenis to afford transportation, it puts the lives of Yemeni children and women at risk and often dies of food insecurity.[[8]](#footnote-8)

* **Actions adopted to address the impact of the pandemic and future crises on food security:**

To this day, the effects of Covid-19 continue despite the fact that some countries have disrupted the work of precautionary measures. The effects of Covid-19 along with the economic decline, climate change and increasing levels of local, regional and international conflicts predict an increase in the level of food insecurity in the coming years, which may have a severe negative impact, especially on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society, such as children and women, and in a way that threatens life in the poorest countries, where the level of food insecurity is high, and therefore it is necessary to develop policies, strategies and emergency response plans to deal with the pandemic or any other. A similar crisis may occur in the future, ensuring immediate and effective intervention to reach the most threatening groups in the targeted communities, especially hot spots, such as the Republic of Yemen. Efforts must be mobilized to save lives, put in place mechanisms to ensure livelihoods, and encourage small and medium enterprises, especially in rural communities; In order to meet the financial liquidity needs of small food producers and agricultural land workers, in a way that helps in developing the chain of workers in the food sector.[[9]](#footnote-9)

In a related context, States must be obliged to classify food services as basic services, establish mechanisms through which States support children who have been deprived of their school meals because of Covid 19, provide adequate safeguards and protection to food workers, and involve local governments by strengthening social protection systems; to provide and expand humanitarian food assistance; To include all the most vulnerable and needy individuals in their communities, as well as to support small and medium-sized enterprises and companies owned by women working in the food sector[[10]](#footnote-10), in addition to the need to open all roads and ensure the maintenance of food supply chains, and to provide the necessary protection for humanitarian food relief assistance by international organizations to reach its beneficiaries in countries in armed conflict. To equip food and logistics services to local food markets, provide all means under normal conditions, and develop coherent strategies and proactive policies for exceptional conditions such as pandemic conditions or future crises; So as to ensure that trade corridors remain open even in a crisis, so as to ensure that food systems are not disrupted.[[11]](#footnote-11)

* **Recommendations:**

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights recommends the international community of the following:

* The need to work hard for effective and mutual integration of humanitarian and development policies, particularly those related to food, particularly in areas of armed conflict and hotspots; Like the Republic of Yemen.
* Ensure that exceptional food systems are available as alternatives to those currently in existence; Such systems can provide healthy, more sustainable and inclusive food patterns than existing ones; with the aim of eliminating food insecurity and ultimate malnutrition.
* The importance of strengthening global capacities to develop policies, programs and strategies that are better able to cope with global changes and future crises; To ensure a more rapid response to reducing the impact of those changes and crises on the global food and security sector, particularly in conflict-affected areas.
* The need for international mechanisms to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in societies; to withstand international crises, especially economic and food crises; ensuring effective intervention to reduce the cost of food and commodities.
* Develop mechanisms that maintain the functions of conflict-sensitive food systems and ensure that those systems are harmonized with humanitarian action; to protect lives and livelihoods, ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected from poverty and hunger.
* The importance of effective action to promote food environments and positive dietary patterns; To change consumer behavior positively supports the promotion of human and public environmental health.
* Promote coherence in the formulation and implementation of policies and investments related to food systems; in order to ensure more efficient and effective solutions to food systems and to provide healthy and affordable diets for all members of society.
* Dissemination of training courses and awareness-raising campaigns on food culture, awareness-raising on food health habits in order to reduce malnutrition and to stabilize or reduce the level of food insecurity in hotspot countries.
* The need to ensure continuity of the food supply chain, including in rural, semi-urban and urban areas, by supporting the functioning of local food markets, value chains and systems through various activities.
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