

UN report exposes Israel's imperialist-backed "intentional starvation campaign against the Palestinian people"

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A report by United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Michael Fakhri has indicted Israel for using starvation as a weapon of war to exterminate the Palestinian people and seize their land. The document provides evidence of the genocidal intent of the Zionist regime and the complicity of the imperialist powers in war crimes unprecedented since World War II.

Circulated to the UN General Assembly last Thursday, Fakhri's report accused Israel of "deliberate starvation" and a "starvation campaign" that includes Gaza's 2.3 million population and Palestinians in the West Bank. He wrote,

Israel made its intentions to starve everyone in Gaza explicit, implemented its plans and predictably created a famine throughout Gaza. Tracking the geography of Israel's starvation tactics alongside Israeli officials' statements confirms its intent. Israel opened with a total siege that weakened all Palestinians in Gaza. Then, Israel used starvation to induce forcible transfer, harm and death against people in the north, pushing people into the south, only to starve, bombard and kill people in newly created refugee camps in the south.

Fakhri pointed out in a social media post accompanying his report, "In Gaza, malnutrition, famine, and disease are killing more people than bombs and bullets." This statement is backed up by the estimate published in *The Lancet* in July that 186,000 Palestinians have died due to Israel's onslaught, far more than the approximately 41,000 shown in official Palestinian statistics.

Quoting in part from the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, which was adopted in the shadow of the Nazis' Holocaust of European Jewry, the report notes, "The Special Rapporteur highlights how Israel has used starvation with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Palestinian people by '(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to Palestinian people; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the

Palestinian people conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction in whole or in part'."

It also addresses the complicity of the imperialist powers, remarking,

perpetrators of starvation are usually supported by foreign States and corporations, making those third parties complicit in starvation. For example, in Gaza, third-party countries and businesses are not only responsible for the illegal supply of weapons for Israel's starvation campaign and genocide, but businesses have been complicit for years in the illegal destruction of the Palestinian food and water systems, and the illegal settlements of Palestinian territories.

In a damning passage underscoring that the political leaders of the United States and its European imperialist allies should be in the dock alongside Netanyahu in a future war crimes trial, Fakhri writes,

Prior to 7 October 2023, approximately half of the people in Gaza were food insecure and more than 80 per cent relied on humanitarian aid; the total siege was an immediate catalyst for starvation. Coupled with repeated dehumanizing statements and calls for the total annihilation of Gaza by Israeli officials, Israel's starvation campaign fulfilled the *actus reus* [criminal act] and *mens rea* [criminal intent] of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and thereby triggered all States' obligation to prevent genocide.

Washington and its European allies did not merely fail to meet their obligation to prevent genocide but massively stepped up their supply of high-powered weaponry to the Zionist

regime. At home, all opponents of the genocide who sought to draw attention to the world historic crimes perpetrated in Gaza and the complicity of the imperialist powers were subject to a vicious campaign of state-orchestrated persecution and intimidation.

Fakhri's report has largely been buried in the American and European media. To the extent that rampant starvation, spread of deadly diseases and absence of healthcare and other basic services receive any attention, it is from the standpoint of claiming that the Palestinians confront a humanitarian crisis that is the unfortunate byproduct of Israel's war of "self-defence" against Hamas. The report provides a refutation of this absurdity when it notes,

The world produces enough food to feed 1.5 times the current population, and yet prevalence of hunger, malnutrition and famine are on the rise. Hunger and famine are not production problems, they are always caused by acts and omissions which deny people access to food. Famines are most often triggered by conflict, economic shocks and drought. But these triggers reflect underlying social relationships based on dependency and extraction. Ultimately, the concentration of power and absence of accountability in food systems increases the risk of famine.

Famines should therefore always be understood as a political problem; they are human-made and are always the result of one group starving another.

The "acts and omissions" by Israel and its imperialist backers that have created famine and misery in Gaza are comparable with the inhuman crimes of the Nazi regime during World War II. The Nazis' Hunger Plan deliberately set out to seize food from the Soviet population for German soldiers and the population so as to facilitate the mass extermination of Soviet citizens, thereby establishing "lebensraum" in the East. It played a major role in the more than 27 million Soviet civilians believed to have lost their lives during the Nazi war of annihilation.

Eight decades on, the Zionists are annihilating the Palestinian population in Gaza in pursuit of their reactionary policy of Greater Israel. The imperialists back the slaughter because they view it as an essential component of their plans for a region-wide war against Iran. This war is one front in a redivision of the world pursued by Washington, Berlin, Paris and London to secure their economic and geostrategic interests in which they will resort to any crime to prevail against their rivals.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board explained in its New Year's statement at the beginning of 2024,

All the "red lines" that demarcate civilization from barbarism are being effaced. The motto of capitalist governments is: "Nothing that is criminal is alien to us."...

Taken as a whole, the normalization of different forms of social barbarism signify that the capitalist class has arrived at a dead end. A class whose policies consist of different forms of sociocide has clearly exhausted its historical, economic, social and political legitimacy.

This is not the explanation of the Gaza genocide shared by the political forces who have dominated the mass protests that have swept the world over the past 11 months against Israel's extermination of the Palestinians. Forces like the ANSWER Coalition and Democratic Socialists of America in the US and Stop the War Coalition in Britain advance the strategy that if enough pressure is brought to bear on Israel and its allies, the imperialist powers will come to their senses, end the genocide and improve the lot of the Palestinians. The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is to be stopped by convincing the blood-soaked Netanyahu regime to allow aid into the enclave under pressure from its chief weapons supplier and political accomplice, American imperialism. For these groups, there is no connection between the Gaza genocide and the global eruption of imperialist war, which they generally endorse unreservedly when it comes to waging war on Russia.

In July, Netanyahu addressed a joint session of Congress, receiving standing ovations from Democrats and Republicans alike for his genocidal rant and pledges to go to war against Iran. On the same day in Washington, the Socialist Equality Party organised a rally that outlined the basic political programme upon which a genuine struggle against genocide and war must be based:

- The essential cause of war lies in the capitalist nation-state system, the global financial interests of the giant corporations and the relentless drive of the American ruling class for world hegemony.
- The struggle against war requires the mobilization of the immense power of the American working class and its political independence from the Democrats and Republicans, the ruling class parties of imperialist war.
- The movement against genocide and war must be international, uniting workers globally based on their common class interests.



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