

Position Paper (7)

A War Without Human Rights

The Engineering of Death: War, Hunger, and Disability

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The State of South Africa's lawsuit against the Occupation State in the International Court of Justice was a foundation to prove the occupation's intention to commit genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, South Africa has submitted evidence and proof and provided a detailed explanation of the genocidal practices that the "Israeli" occupation imposes on Palestinians. The occupation is waging a genocidal war against Palestinians using various lethal military weapons against civilians and civilian buildings in the Gaza Strip, including the deliberate destruction of infrastructure, hospitals, universities, schools, bakeries, water purification plants, and other basics of life and survival in the Gaza Strip. The occupation has deliberately transformed all the basics and needs of the people of the Gaza Strip into weapons that kill them, by depriving the people of everything, without any exception.

In a recent report issued by several United Nations committee rapporteurs, they warned that the occupation is using starvation leading to famine as a weapon against civilians. They stressed that "Israel has destroyed the food system in Gaza and used food as a weapon, during more than 100 days of aggression and war of genocide in the Gaza Strip, and that the population of Gaza now constitutes 80% of the people facing famine or catastrophic hunger around the world, which represents an unparalleled humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip amid the continued "Israeli" bombing and siege."¹ This report is consistent with the statements of the Minister of the Occupying Army at the beginning of the war, who stressed that there would be no electricity, food, or medicine in the Gaza Strip², which contradicts their claim that they are not an occupying force in the Gaza Strip, meaning that they do not bear full responsibility for the lives of the Palestinians there. This prompted the World Health Organization to warn that the levels of acute food insecurity in Gaza are "unprecedented in modern history."³

¹ "UN Experts: Israel destroyed Gaza's food system and used food as a weapon." *Maan* (16 January 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/d45ne5>.

² "The Israeli Minister of Defense: Complete siege on Gaza, no electricity, no food, no water, and no gas." *France 24* (9 October 2023). Website: <https://n9.cl/vixdo>.

³ "World Health Organization: The levels of acute food insecurity in Gaza are "unprecedented in modern history." *Algeria Press Service* (2 February 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/otwus>.

In one of our previous position papers published under the title “Ethnic Cleansing by Weaponizing Food, Water, and Medicine”⁴, we gave an analysis of the occupation’s deliberate implementation of the policy of starvation that is based on mere survival through its siege of the Gaza Strip, that has been going on for many years. This policy is implemented by calculating the number of calories that are allowed into the Gaza Strip, which are sufficient to maintain the bare minimum of life only. This was confirmed by South Africa’s claim that this policy was part of the colonial practice of the occupying state. “Israel regulates food imports into Gaza according to calories per person, to limit food transfers to the ‘humanitarian minimum’, without causing hunger or malnutrition.”⁵ In this war, the occupation deliberately closed all commercial crossing borders leading to the Gaza Strip and prevented commercial and aid trucks from entering. Moreover, in the same position paper, we provided a detailed explanation of the number of trucks that entered the Gaza Strip during the war in comparison to the number of trucks before the war. Despite all international pressure, including the decision of the International Court of Justice, the decision of the UN Security Council, and the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly, the occupation continues to ignore all of these decisions and weaponizes food and hunger to kill civilians in the Gaza Strip.

As a result of implementing this policy, more than half a million residents (one-quarter of the population) have fallen into catastrophic conditions of hunger, this is according to Richard Peeperkorn, WHO representative in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Dr. Ahmad Daher, the head of the WHO branch office in Gaza, as they confirmed that no one in Gaza is safe from famine⁶. These effects are also accompanied by the scarcity of drinking water, as of all the wells that were operated by UNRWA, only 7 operating wells are left with a capacity of 3,000 liters per day⁷. This amount of water is hardly enough to cover the needs of the displaced. This means that displaced men and women are forced to drink salty water, or are forced to purchase drinking water for very high prices. In Gaza City and North Gaza, there is extreme difficulty in obtaining salty and sweet water, and obtaining sweet water is much more difficult. The only solution is to provide fuel to operate water stations, but it does not exist⁸. Drinking polluted water and salty water also weakens the body’s immunity and causes intestinal infections and gastroenteritis.

⁴ To view the position paper, visit the following link: <https://n9.cl/znk77>.

⁵ “Review of South Africa’s case before the International Court of Justice.” *Jerusalem Legal Aid Center* (2024): 16. Website: <https://n9.cl/92bpi>.

⁶ “World Health Organization: Levels of food insecurity”.

⁷ “UNRWA Situation Report NO: 85 on the Situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem.” *UNRWA* (2 March 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/6c7bz>.

⁸ An interview with Thareef AlGhurra - Head of the Disabilities Representative Persons Network in Gaza, conducted on 21/1/2024.

The Weapon of Famine:

Since the 7th of October 2023, which is the date on which the date of the start of the most brutal genocidal war in the twenty-first century, this war is being implemented with an integrated policy, with a clear engineering and design, to create conditions of death, killing, displacement, disabilities, permanent injuries, and chronic diseases, to eliminate the Palestinian presence in the Gaza Strip. This all was confirmed by the statements of senior “Israeli” officials. However, this did not make the world take serious steps to lift the deadly siege on the Gaza Strip and bring in aid, while the aid and commercial trucks that have been lining up for months on the Egyptian side have accumulated with no prospect of arriving, specifically to the besieged residents in the northern Gaza Strip, the area witnessing the worst famine in Gaza Strip, in which the occupation was described to be implementing an “engineered famine.”⁹

The entrance of aid, even if all of it entered into the Strip, is not sufficient to reverse the effects of famine, as there are basic nutritional requirements to maintain good health and a disease-resistant body. Young children need between 1000 - 1800 calories, while older children and teenagers need between 1200 - 3200 calories, and adults need between 1600 - 3000 calories. It is necessary to increase the number of calories as the level of activity increases¹⁰. In addition to calories, the average person needs a minimum amount of fiber, vitamins, and protein daily, and this comes by eating healthy foods that vary between vegetables, meat, nuts, and fish.¹¹

The International Partnership for Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (which includes the World Health Organization) said that in the period between the 8th of December 2023 and the 7th of February 2024, all the residents of the Gaza Strip (around 2.2 million residents) were classified in the third stage of the Integrated Phase Classification (a crisis or worse). This is the highest percentage among people facing high levels of acute food insecurity ever classified by the International Partnership in any area or country. Among those, about 50 percent of the residents (1.17 million individuals) live in a state of emergency (the fourth classification of the International Integrated Partnership). At least one of every four families (over half a million individuals) faces disastrous conditions – which is the fifth classification of the International

⁹ "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" Day 150: Israel is "Engineering Famine" In Gaza" *Mondoweiss* (4 March 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/g56xz>.

¹⁰ "Calories" *MSD Evidence*. (2023). Website: <https://n9.cl/19j49>.

¹¹ "Food and your Life Stages" *Better Health*. Website: <https://n9.cl/2o9t5>.

Integrated Partnership (disaster). These families are characterized by severe food shortages, hunger, and exhausted coping capacities¹².

Although the levels of severe malnutrition and deaths not associated with health shocks may not yet have crossed the thresholds of famine, these are usually the results of long and severe gaps in food consumption. The increasing nutritional vulnerability of children, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly is of particular concern¹³. A report issued by the UNRWA explained that 15 children have died due to hunger and dehydration at Kamal Edwan Hospital¹⁴. According to another report issued by the UNRWA, at least 18 children in the North of Gaza have died due to dehydration and malnutrition¹⁵. The report also indicated high rates of malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women, which exposes them to great danger. Persons with disabilities, specifically children and women with disabilities can be added to these groups at risk of death due to famine, especially since some persons with disabilities, depending on the type of the disability, need specific nutritional programs or specific types of foods and their unavailability or availability at high prices threatens their food security and health conditions.

The weapon of starvation means depriving Palestinians not only of access to food, but also preventing them from accessing healthy and diverse food, which works to maintain the vitality and energy of the body, its ability to regenerate, and resist diseases, etc.. This has forced the Palestinians to reduce their consumption of food to a dangerous degree, and eat unhealthy food, and sometimes they are forced to consume contaminated food that is not properly cooked as a result of the bombing and destruction of homes in the Gaza Strip. The situation has gotten so difficult that many families in the northern Gaza Strip now have to grind animal feed to make bread¹⁶.

The direct results are death from starvation, as happened in several cases of children in northern Gaza, and a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) states that 90% of children in the Gaza Strip suffer

¹² "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>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "UNRWA situation Report NO. 86 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem." *UNRWA* (6 March 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/4zzfq>.

¹⁵ "UNRWA situation Report NO. 87 on the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem." *UNRWA* (8 March 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/jem2cy>.

¹⁶ "Due to the scarcity of flour... Gazans make bread from animal feed." *AlMashhad* (29 February 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/gxdbh>.

from malnutrition¹⁷, which means loss of weight and activity, increased exposure to diseases, as well as the creation of chronic diseases as a result of the complete absence of food and its scarcity on the one hand, or eating unhealthy, contaminated and improperly cooked food on the other hand, which means long-term health effects on the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. "Experts warn that the silent and slow deaths resulting from hunger and thirst are more dangerous than the violent deaths caused by Israeli bombs and missiles."¹⁸

Several reports indicated an increase in deaths among infants due to the inability of mothers to breastfeed and the absence of infant formula, in addition to an increase in deaths among children as a result of continuous starvation extending over several months. The ability of any party to assess the medium and long-term effects of this famine on the health and immunity of children, and their ability to survive, is unclear, even if the war ends soon.

The Starvation of Persons with Disabilities:

Disability imposes certain requirements on persons with disabilities in their attempt to adapt to an environment that is not suitable for their disabilities, and one of the imposed requirements is special nutrition in some cases, where such special nutrition helps the body perform the effort required for daily tasks. In the genocidal war, we see that the access of persons with disabilities to sources of food has decreased to catastrophic levels, which can be classified as food insecurity for them (classified as a disaster), in addition to the fact that many persons with disabilities rely on their companions and families to provide their food needs, which increases their level of exposure to famine.

Hunger opens the door for the spread of diseases, and due to the special nutritional requirements for some persons with disabilities, they are more likely than others to die of hunger and disease, "while a healthy body can fight these diseases easier, a weak and emaciated body will find it difficult to do so. Hunger weakens the body's defenses and opens the door to diseases. Malnutrition increases the risk of children dying from diseases such as diarrhea, pneumonia, and measles, especially in an environment where they lack access to vital health services."¹⁹

¹⁷ "Gaza Faces Death from Starvation." *Aljazeera* (20 February 2024). Website: <https://n9.cl/5yzow>.

¹⁸ *Review of South Africa's case*, 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 51.

Numerous countries, including Jordan and the United States of America, have airdropped food aid to the north of the Gaza Strip which is currently besieged by the occupation forces, which prevents aid trucks from entering that area, except on rare occasions. The occupation forces have also bombed these trucks many times. A huge massacre committed by the occupation forces was documented against hungry citizens who tried to reach the aid trucks near AlNabulsi roundabout, an incident which was described saying that a bag of flour equals the life of a Palestinian. As for the aid that was airdropped, they were estimated to be very little in quantity and barely sufficient to form one or two meals for besieged and hungry families. Additionally, many of the airdropped aids were dropped in the middle of the sea, or in areas that were besieged by occupation forces. Video reports documented many aids arriving at the coast of "Israeli" cities within the territories of the lands occupied in 1948.

Airdropping food aids in inadequate quantities rather than bringing them by land in quantities that are sufficient to all Palestinian residents, especially in the north of the Gaza Strip which is witnessing the worst humanitarian conditions, represents a political and media indication of an attempt to show the "humanitarian" side by the United States, especially now with the ongoing talks about establishing a naval pier and sending an American ship loaded with aid, while at the same time, the United States continues to provide unconditional support to the occupation and supplies it with weapons, and bombs are being dropped on the heads of citizens since the beginning of the war in quantities that are thousands of times greater than the amount of food it provides.

This also reduces the chances of persons with disabilities accessing these aids in light of the destruction of roads, the loss of their assistive devices, and their inability to move in general, especially with the destruction of infrastructure and all available forms of compatibility. Thus, the ability of persons with disabilities to access airdropped food aid becomes impossible, especially with the dangers associated with this task, as it - almost - requires taking a life-threatening risk to access such small quantities of food. During the past few days, some aids were airdropped without parachutes and landed on some citizens, which caused injuries and deaths, while other citizens that were gathered in anticipation of the aids were directly bombed as indicated earlier. Furthermore, health conditions and the ability to move in a well-prepared death trap designed by the occupation is a source of great doubt for persons with disabilities after suffering for months from the lack of food and its poor quality. This means that they might not have the energy needed to search for food, as "medical workers estimate that the health effects on all Palestinian children, women, men, the elderly,

persons with disabilities, and people with marginalized identities are enormous²⁰”, and “older people and persons with disabilities lack access to essential medicines and are at greater risk of infectious diseases, malnutrition and death.”²¹

Workers in the humanitarian field working on the ground in the Gaza Strip say that the conditions related to food available to the displaced in UNRWA shelters, including persons with disabilities, are very difficult. Biscuits, mortadella, and water are distributed to them on one day, and on the next day, feta cheese, and only once a day. As for flour, it is distributed to families according to the number of individuals. Residents of Gaza also face a major problem in getting fuel, and purchasing firewood costs 4 Shekels per kilogram, with the absence of eggs, chickens, and vegetables, and the price of meat reaches 120 Shekels per kilogram when available. As for the aid, it consists of canned foods, most of which are legumes, and does not consider the required nutritional diversification of vitamins, proteins, or calories²².

Shelter centers that include persons with disabilities are experiencing great pressure, as a large portion of persons with disabilities choose to reside in public schools due to their compatibility for their disabilities, however, the UNRWA classifies these centers as (b) grade centers, meaning that they are unofficial shelter centers, and the UNRWA does not distribute food aids in these centers, except for some food vouchers or packages, which are provided on an irregular basis²³. Thus, persons with disabilities are deprived of food aid that the UNRWA distributes in its shelters.

Interviews conducted with employees working with persons with disabilities indicate that there is a state of chaos in distribution and chaos in receipt by people, with multiple reference entities and a lack of coordination between the different entities that provide humanitarian and food aid. These entities include the Ministry of Social Development, the Red Crescent Association, and charitable societies. There is no registration of the displaced, which if available will allow for more organized delivery of aid to each family, although several months have passed since the beginning of the war. This comes in light of the absence of humanitarian work standards, including registering persons with disabilities in the system and providing them with appropriate assistance.

²⁰ "Review of South Africa's case," 37.

²¹ Ibid, 50.

²² An interview with Iyad Krunz - Gaza Office Manager, Stars of Hope Society, conducted on: 20 January 2024.

²³ Ibid.

Humanitarian work standards are not being applied by the agencies that are supposed to care for and protect persons with disabilities, such as UNRWA and OCHA, so that they provide qualitative and good services to persons with disabilities. According to the testimonies of those working with persons with disabilities, there is no assignment for UNRWA staff to follow up on every service for persons with disabilities, such as health, food, and hygiene, which means marginalizing them and making their conditions even worse, and there is no allocation of food for persons with disabilities by UNRWA²⁴. This is the case after almost five months have passed since the start of the genocidal war, which means that there is a clear shortcoming and defect in the nature of the provided humanitarian work directed at persons with disabilities. Furthermore, there is an absence of international organizations, such as the World Food Program, Save the Children, and UNICEF in Gaza City and the north of Gaza City, and they send messages to residents of Gaza City and the North of Gaza City informing them that they can receive a voucher in the value of 700 Shakles, but these vouchers are only handed in Rafah or Dair AlBalah, and otherwise, the receiver is deprived of it.²⁵

The results of a survey conducted by the Social and Economic Policies Monitor (AlMarsad) and the Stars of Hope Society for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities (SHS) with injured children and children with disabilities (both males and females) indicate that 98.5% of the surveyed children suffer from an injury, and among the priorities of these children in having food, which is the priority for 34.5% of these children²⁶. This priority comes in fourth place after the need for adequate shelter, covers, mattresses, and clothes, which indicates the seriousness of their nutritional and health situation, and the decline in the quantity and quality of food available to them.

These conditions, which were engineered by the occupation to complement its genocide, to more displacement from the north to the south. Thareef AlGhurra indicates that “many people have migrated to the south in search of food, not safety. There is no flour, and when the flour came in, the occupation forces threw it away and destroyed it.”²⁷

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ An interview with Thareef AlGhurra - Head of the Disabilities Representative Persons Network in Gaza, conducted on 21/1/2024.

²⁶ “An unpublished report: The Preliminary Results of the Monitoring for the Needs of Disabled and Injured Children in the Gaza Strip during the War of 2023-2024” *Stars of Hope Society for the Empowerment of Women and the Social and Economic Policies Monitor (AlMarsad)*. (14 January 2024).

²⁷ An interview with Thareef AlGhurra - Head of the Disabilities Representative Persons Network in Gaza, conducted on 22/2/2024.

A Death Trap for Persons with Disabilities:

Persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip have fallen into a fatal death trap, and they ran out of options to escape the policies of engineering of death produced by the occupation. Those who remained in the north of Gaza due to bad previous displacement experiences fell into the death trap of starvation as a result of preventing food aid from reaching the north. Those who fled to areas that were called “safe” areas were subjected to bombing from sea, air, and artillery, and some of them were exposed to new injuries and disabilities. For those who took refuge in UNRWA shelters, it turned out that they were suffering from enormous difficulties as a result of the lack of accessibility of the centers and the life-saving services provided, including food with the requirements of their disabilities. Iyad Krunz confirmed that “the World Food Program has distributed packages to married people, and a great percentage of persons with disabilities are not married, thus, they are excluded from the distribution of food packages. However, after putting pressure on the Program, some of them were included in this program²⁸”. This often led to a deterioration in their health conditions, and even an aggravation of their disabilities as a result of the absence of medicine, rehabilitation, medical treatment, assistive devices, and a spatially appropriate environment.

Persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, were trapped in a triangle of death; death by killing, death from hunger, and death from illness. Those who preferred to stay in their accessible homes were subject to death due to the brutal bombing of civilian homes by the occupation, including those of persons with disabilities. Despite the absence of accurate numbers issued by official bodies regarding the number of martyrs from persons with disabilities, the predictions are that their numbers are very high considering the extent of the targeting of civilian homes.

Moreover, the lack of complete and appropriate medical treatment and appropriate medications has led to the worsening of disabilities, as Krunz confirms that “there is a significant decrease in weight, the appearance of pale features, and an increase in diseases, including intestinal infections, hepatitis, and other diseases²⁹.” The war also created new disabilities that could have been avoided if they had been followed up appropriately medically, or if the injured had been transferred outside the Gaza Strip to receive appropriate treatment and rehabilitation.

²⁸ An interview with Iyad Krunz - Gaza Office Manager, Stars of Hope Society, conducted on: 20 January 2024.

²⁹ Ibid.

Airdropping aid marginalizes the role of international and humanitarian organizations and increases the randomness of the aid distribution process and it does not reach the people of the Gaza Strip equally. This process also comes in light of the reduction in financial support for UNRWA and the restrictions on its work, as this mechanism for distributing aid represents another marginalization of its role, especially since it is one of the main bodies that was receiving aid and distributing it to a large number of displaced people in its schools, which establishes great randomness, famine conditions, and increases the risks imposed on citizens. This also leads to dealing with relief aid in a temporary and irregular manner, not in a mandatory human rights logic, and paves the way for the abandonment of the displaced.

The existing data, which we previously mentioned, confirm that the conditions of war and hunger that accompany disability, under which persons with disabilities fell, led them to become one of the groups most vulnerable to disease and death as a result of the death engineering policies, and then disability becomes an additional cause of suffering and death due to the absence of any protection for persons with disabilities in terms of sparing them from the scourge of war, or in terms of fulfilling their various requirements and needs by providing quality services. What happened in the Gaza Strip is that disability turned into an additional reason for death!

The occupation has been trying for long, especially during the genocidal war, to dehumanize Palestinians, treating them as if they were “disposable humans”. Due to these criminal and brutal practices, persons with disabilities have fallen under the pressure of conditions from which many people without disabilities do not survive, let alone persons with disabilities who do not have any components of inclusion, which forces them to depend on others to perform their daily tasks, how can they survive from policies designed to kill those without disabilities?

Disability should not be a reason for marginalization and exclusion, nor a reason for persecution, violence, and death. However, due to the practices of the occupation and the engineering of death, it became so. As the survival of persons with disabilities from all that they are exposed to has become a matter of question, not to mention the medium and long-term impacts on their psychological and physical health, and the worsening of their disabilities to the point of losing the strenuous effort they have made to attain self-reliance.

We see that international organizations, especially UNRWA, must assume their responsibilities towards protecting citizens in the north of the Gaza Strip, and providing them with food, health services, and healthy water necessary for their survival while applying work standards that are sensitive to the needs and

requirements of persons with disabilities, especially women and children, in the services that it offers and in the distribution of various types of aid. This applies to the displaced people in the south of the Gaza Strip, as they must stop their marginalization by ceasing to adopt non-inclusive distribution policies that lead to creating more suffering for persons with disabilities.