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# Starvation in a Time of Genocide:

## A Weapon of Israeli Settler Colonialism in Gaza

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## The Retreat of Israel's Reserve Forces

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
The Concept of Starvation .....	2
Starvation as a Characteristic of Settler-Colonial Projects .....	3
Starvation in the Gaza Strip .....	5
Engineering Starvation in the Gaza Strip: A Weapon in a Genocidal War .....	7
Closing the crossings and controlling the type and route of aid .....	7
Letting Israeli Settlers Block the Entry of Aid Trucks .....	8
Banning the Operation of UNRWA and International Relief Organizations .....	9
Feeding and Protecting Aid-Stealing Gangs .....	10
Destruction of Food Security Infrastructure .....	11
Creating an alternative “aid” system – a trap for killing, subjugating, and displacing Palestinians ..	12
Starvation and the Establishment of a Post-War Reality .....	13
References .....	16
Arabic .....	16
English .....	16

## Introduction

On 22 August, for the first time since 7 October 2023, the United Nations confirmed that a famine was underway in Gaza Governorate, classed under the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) as Phase 5: Famine/Humanitarian Catastrophe. The famine was projected to expand to Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis by the end of September. According to the mechanism's report, "over half a million people in the Gaza Strip are facing catastrophic conditions characterised by starvation, destitution and death." A further 1.07 million people, 54 percent of the Gaza Strip's population, faced Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity, and another 396,000 people (20 percent) were experiencing a food security Crisis (IPC Phase 3).<sup>1</sup>

Since the beginning of Israel's genocide in Gaza in October 2023, several international relief and human rights organizations had issued pre-emptive warnings that Israel was using deliberate starvation as a weapon in its war on the Strip.<sup>2</sup> These warnings escalated in recent months, with reports from the ground confirming that famine was "imminent," as a result of the accelerating collapse of the food security system.<sup>3</sup> By late July this year, the World Food Programme (WFP) was confirming that nearly a third of the Gaza Strip's population was going days without food,<sup>4</sup> and that more than 500,000 people – about a quarter of the population – were facing "famine-like conditions, while the rest were suffering from emergency levels of hunger,"<sup>5</sup> due to Israel's blockade on humanitarian aid and its destruction of the Strip's infrastructure.

By 13 August, the Palestinian Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip was reporting that 235 people had starved to death – including 106 children, 19 women, 75 elderly people, and 35 men over the age of 18.<sup>6</sup> Forty thousand infants under a year old were at risk of death from malnutrition, while 250,000 children under the age of five were suffering from life-threatening malnutrition. Some 1.2 million children under the age of 18 were severely food insecure, and more than 40 percent of pregnant and lactating women were acutely malnourished.<sup>7</sup> The food security crisis was further compounded by an intensifying crisis afflicting the health system in Gaza, where several hospitals and health centres

<sup>1</sup> The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a global initiative involving UN agencies, regional partners, and relief organizations. It classifies food insecurity into five phases, the most severe of which is famine. See: "Li-'Awwal marra: ta'kid ḥudūth al-majā'a fi muḥāfaṣṣat Ghazza wa-tawaqqu'āt bi-imtidadihā ilā manātiq 'ukhrā khilāl asābī'," *UN News*, 22/8/2025, accessed 22/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/nhfv27rx>.

<sup>2</sup> "Israel: Starvation Used as Weapon of War in Gaza," *Human Rights Watch*, 18/12/2023, accessed 7/8/2025, at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/18/israel-starvation-used-weapon-war-gaza>.

<sup>3</sup> "Gaza Strip: Famine is Imminent as 1.1 Million People, Half of Gaza, Experience Catastrophic Food Insecurity," *Integrated Food Security Phase Classification*, 18/3/2024, accessed on 6/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/y4a435k8>.

<sup>4</sup> Maia Davies, "Almost a Third of People in Gaza not Eating for days, UN Food Programme Warns," *BBC News*, 25/7/2025, accessed on 13/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/2z333xxd>.

<sup>5</sup> "Ghazza - wakālat umamiyya tuḥadhdhir min anna mu'ashshirāt al-ghidhā' tatajāwaz 'atabāt al-majā'a," *UN News*, 29/7/2025, accessed 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/48axa5es>.

<sup>6</sup> "Tajwī' Ghazza: 235 shahīdan bi-sū' al-taghdhiyya wa-40 'alf raḍī' yuwājīhūn khaṭar al-mawt," *Ultra Palestine*, 13/8/2025, accessed 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/yx3f44h7>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Ammar al-Najjar, "Munaḥamat al-sihha al-'ālamīyya: mustawayāt sū' al-taghdhiyya fi Ghazza bātāt tundhir bi-l-khaṭar," *France 24*, 28/7/2025, accessed 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/bday6sj8>.

had halted or suspended their services due to Israeli attacks and shortages of medical supplies and fuel.<sup>8</sup>

Since the beginning of its genocide in the Gaza Strip, Israel has been waging a campaign of starvation as a deliberate policy, based on the pretext that the Palestinian movement Hamas confiscates humanitarian aid – a pretext repeatedly refuted by the international press and news agencies.<sup>9</sup> Yet while heads of state and government, mainstream media outlets, and international relief and human rights organizations continue to voice their concern at the spread of famine in the Gaza Strip and call for urgent action to address its impact, they make little mention of the structural, deliberate nature of starvation as a tool of the Israeli colonial-settler project.

This policy paper examines the policy of food deprivation and starvation that Israel has pursued in the Gaza Strip since 1948 as a pillar of its settler-colonial project. It argues that this deliberate policy, culminating in a genocidal war, constitutes a key tool for killing Palestinians and reshaping the geographical and demographic map of the Gaza Strip to serve Israel's strategic goals of destroying the territory, consolidating its colonial domination and expanding its settlement project, while undermining the Palestinians' ability to remain on their lands and paving the way for their forced displacement. After defining starvation and demonstrating that it is a hallmark of many cases of settler colonialism, the paper discusses the state of food security in the Gaza Strip before and throughout the genocide, shows the risks that this policy of starvation will continue even when the war is over, and offers proposals on how to confront it.

## The Concept of Starvation

Famine can be seen as a deliberate policy, driven primarily by political leaders and their policy choices which aim to deprive the targeted population of access to the basic necessities of survival – such as food, water, and medical care.<sup>10</sup> Unlike traditional famines, which resulted from an unusual shortage of food and led to high mortality rates over a specific period of time, the intentional starvation of a population is a political decision, by which food is used as a tool to exert pressure on specific individuals, communities, nations, classes, or peoples, for the sake of political or military objectives.<sup>11</sup> In this context, Alex de Waal argues that modern famines (such as those examined in his historical review of the period 1870–2010) have been man-made, and that the starvation of a population is

8 “Munawwamat al-ṣiḥḥa al-‘ālamīyya tuḥadhdhir min anna al-nisām al-ṣiḥḥī bāta ‘alā ḥāffat al-inhiyār ma‘a taṣā‘ud al-a‘māl al-‘adā‘īyya fī Ghazza,” *World Health Organization*, 22/5/2025, accessed 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/vpd73we9>.

9 Natan Odenheimer, “No Proof Hamas Routinely Stole U.N. Aid, Israeli Military Officials Say,” *The New York Times*, 26/7/2025, accessed on 5/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/mr3jbwk7>; Jonathan Landay, “Exclusive: USAID Analysis Found no Evidence of Massive Hamas theft of Gaza Aid,” *Reuters*, 25/7/2025, accessed on 5/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/6cwjfk3x>.

10 Stephen Devereux (eds.) *The New Famines: Why Famines Persist in an Era of Globalization* (New York/ London: Routledge, 2009); Alex de Waal, *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018).

11 Devereux; de Waal.

a political act resulting from the decisions and practices adopted by decision-makers.<sup>12</sup> From this perspective, much of the related literature has focused on famine as used in war, as a multifunctional tool that can be used to kill or carry out genocide,<sup>13</sup> control and subjugate populations,<sup>14</sup> seize land,<sup>15</sup> plunder resources, exploit workers, forcibly displace people or cause them to migrate, carry out collective punishment, and even bring about radical changes in the economic and social structure of society.<sup>16</sup> The proposition that “all modern famines are essentially political events”<sup>17</sup> has enabled a new understanding of how the deprivation and denial of a population’s basic needs can be transformed into tools of subjugation, exploitation, expulsion, and murder.

In their comparative historical study, Ingrid de Zwart and Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco introduce the concept of “the politics of famine,” which they define as “the various ways in which famines result from political decision-making.”<sup>18</sup> Their historical review demonstrates how starvation or the threat thereof, its mitigation, or even its memorialization in the history of nations and peoples, has been used by political regimes as an effective tool to achieve their goals.<sup>19</sup> Although the politics of famine is not a single conceptual unit, the literature suggests that it has four main features: First, depriving people of access to food, preventing or disrupting work and trade activities, disrupting people’s access to clean water, and destroying health facilities; Second, linking this deprivation with multiple direct military events, such as acts of violence, killing, displacement, and the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure, in addition to creating the conditions for the spread of infectious diseases among the population; Third, linking deprivation with the structural political, economic, and social conditions that afflict a particular society, whether internal or external, such as poverty, siege, and invasion; Fourth, imposing deprivation not as a one-off event, but rather as a gradual and systematic process, marked by emerging signs of the population’s suffering and the deterioration of its well-being.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Bridget Conley & Alex de Waal, “Genocide, Starvation and Famine,” in: Ben Kiernan, T. M. Lemos & Tristan S. Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> Simone Hutter, *Starvation as a Weapon: Domestic Policies of Deliberate Starvation as a Means to an End under International Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Tatjana Tönsmeier, “War, Occupation and the Politics of Causing and Fighting Hunger in World War II,” in: Ingrid de Zwart & Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (eds.), *The Politics of Famine in European History and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Conley & de Waal.

<sup>17</sup> Ingrid de Zwart & Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, “Introduction: The Politics of Famine,” in: de Zwart & del Arco Blanco, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Bridget Conley & Alex de Waal, “The Purposes of Starvation: Historical and Contemporary Uses,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2019).

## Starvation as a Characteristic of Settler-Colonial Projects

Settler colonialism is defined as a form of colonialism that focuses on seizing land in order for the settler society to take the place of the indigenous residents.<sup>21</sup> To achieve this, settler colonial projects (like other forms of colonialism) rely on a range of strategies, from direct conquest to assimilation, repression, and political, economic, and cultural erasure.<sup>22</sup> In this context, from the moment they arrive in the territory to be colonised, settler-colonial regimes deliberately target the food systems of indigenous populations, in view of their close connection to the land,<sup>23</sup> which constitutes the cornerstone of their lives and their political and economic destinies.<sup>24</sup> Colonial regimes seek to dismantle and erase all these components, as part of their settlement projects. Therefore, the concept of starvation is central to understanding the dynamics of the settler-colonial domination of territory and the expulsion of indigenous populations. Kristin Burnett, Travis Hay and Lori Chambers have noted that far from being a byproduct of settler colonialism, food insecurity is a sophisticated construct, developed by settlers. Food is a powerful tool for undermining the way of life of indigenous people, controlling them, subjugating them, and ultimately displacing and erasing them.<sup>25</sup>

Historically, many settler colonial regimes – including the United States,<sup>26</sup> Canada,<sup>27</sup> Australia,<sup>28</sup> South Africa,<sup>29</sup> and Algeria<sup>30</sup> – have used starvation as a tool to subjugate indigenous peoples and force them to leave their lands. The colonial empires of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries also made notable use of deliberate policies of starvation, with colonial authorities controlling food distribution as a means of dominating and subjugating the colonized, as occurred in Ireland and India under British rule<sup>31</sup> and in many African countries during the French colonial era.<sup>32</sup>

Deliberate starvation was also a prominent and effective tool in the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1904-1908), when the colonial administration in German South West Africa (later Namibia) pushed the Herero and Nama peoples to the edges of the Kalahari Desert, placed them under siege, deprived

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21 Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2006).

22 Ibid.

23 Dawn Morrison, “Indigenous Food Sovereignty: A Model for Social Learning,” in: Annette Aurélie Desmarais, Nettie Wiebe & Hannah Wittman (eds.), *Food Sovereignty in Canada Creating Just and Sustainable Food Systems* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2011).

24 Bilal Awad Salameh, *Fī ma ‘nā al-arḍ: isti’ādat al-dhāt al-Filasṭīniyya* (Doha/Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2021).

25 Kristin Burnett, Travis Hay & Lori Chambers, “Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Peoples and Food: Federal Indian Policies and Nutrition Programs in the Canadian North since 1945,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2016).

26 Rachel B. Herrmann, *No Useless Mouth: Waging War and Fighting Hunger in the American Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

27 James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Indigenous Life* (Regina, Canada: University of Regina Press, 2013).

28 Zane Ma Rhea, *Frontiers of Taste: Food Sovereignty, Sustainability and Indigenous–Settler Relations in Australia* (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

29 Mpho Manaka, “‘From Spoiling Natives to No Work, No Food’: Food Scarcity and the Controversy of Food Rations during the South African War,” *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, vol. 50, no. 3 (2022), pp. 1–23.

30 Yan Slobodkin, *The Starving Empire: A History of Famine in France’s Colonies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023).

31 Bohdan Klid (ed.) *Empire, Colonialism, and Famine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Toronto: Edmonton: CIUS Press, University of Alberta Press, 2022).

32 Slobodkin.

them of food and water, and killed those who tried to flee, resulting in the deaths of approximately 40,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama.<sup>33</sup>

## Starvation in the Gaza Strip

Israel differs little from other colonial powers that have used starvation as a tool in their settler-colonial and genocidal projects. Zionist gangs committed dozens of massacres against Palestinians and systematically expelled more than 700,000 of them from their lands during the Nakba of 1948. This event quickly transformed Gaza into an enclave heaving with Palestinians who had been expelled from some 144 cities, towns, and villages. In total, around 250,000 refugees arrived in Gaza, nearly tripling its population, to a density of 1,800 people per square mile. This exerted enormous pressure on the basic necessities of life, including food.<sup>34</sup> Beryl Cheal has shown that in the wake of the Nakba, Gaza's basic supplies such as flour, rice, and baby formula ran out, leading to widespread malnutrition. By February 1949, approximately 260,000 Palestinians in the territory had been forced to rely on food aid.<sup>35</sup>

Prior to 1948, Gaza had been connected to its agricultural hinterland, and served as a centre for the collection and onward transportation of citrus crops, wheat, and barley. Most of its residents worked in agriculture on the lands adjacent to the area that later became the Gaza Strip.<sup>36</sup> However, Zionist gangs' seizure of that land and expulsion of its inhabitants isolated Gaza from its natural sources of food, as well as from markets in the territory that later became Israel. This stripped Gazans of their lands and livelihoods, forced some to emigrate, and forcibly changed the agrarian economic and social lifestyles of those who remained, forcing them into hunger and submission to Israeli policies.<sup>37</sup>

After occupying the territory in 1967, Israel entrenched its colonial policies aimed at impoverishing the Gaza Strip and undermining the population's capacity for economic development, by systematically depriving it of essential resources for production and transforming the territory into an enclave subservient to the Israeli economy.<sup>38</sup> On the eve of the Six Day War of June 1967, only 14 percent of households in the Gaza Strip owned land they used as a source of income, compared to 42 percent in the West Bank. Meanwhile, industrial activity in Gaza remained underdeveloped, consisting primarily

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33 Khatija Bibi Khan, "The Kaiser's Holocaust: The Coloniality of German's Forgotten Genocide of the Nama and the Herero of Namibia," *African Identities*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2012), pp. 211–220.

34 Beryl Cheal, "Refugees in the Gaza Strip, December 1948-May 1950," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1988), pp. 138 - 139.

35 Ibid., p. 146.

36 Ibid., pp. 138 - 139.

37 After 1948, the Mediterranean provided a vital lifeline preventing a famine from taking hold in Gaza. Many Palestinians, expelled from their farmland, shifted from agriculture to fishing, which over time became a major food source for the population and provided an important source of economic activity. See: Ziad Abu-Amr, "The Gaza Economy: 1948–1984," in: George Abed (ed.), *The Palestinian Economy: Studies in Development under Prolonged Occupation* (London: Routledge, 1988).

38 Sara Roy, "The Gaza Strip: A Case of Economic De-Development," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1987), p. 56.

of small workshops producing traditional crafts.<sup>39</sup> Most Gazans relied primarily on employment in the service sector, particularly as employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).<sup>40</sup>

After the war, Israel intensified its policy of structurally impoverishing the Gaza Strip, focusing on tightening its control over land, water, and productive resources, while simultaneously dismantling the local economy.<sup>41</sup> Although the agricultural sector achieved average annual growth of 8.8 percent in the 1960s, this declined to 0.9 percent in the 1980s, due to much of the Palestinian labour force resorting to finding jobs within the Green Line, as well as the strict restrictions Israel imposed on the production and export of citrus fruit from the Gaza Strip.<sup>42</sup> Israel also imposed restrictions on water resources, including a ban on the drilling of new wells and a system of water quotas for farmers, imposing heavy fines on anyone who violated these rules.<sup>43</sup> As for industry, although the number of industrial facilities grew in Gaza after 1967, the sector's development was limited; these outfits were mainly small workshops serving the local market, and were held back by Israeli restrictions on the import and export of raw materials. By the late 1980s, industrial facilities employed only 17.5 percent of Gaza's workforce.<sup>44</sup>

The 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (the Oslo Accords) held out the promise of a Palestinian state to be established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, this did not deter Israel from continuing to entrench its settler-colonial hegemony, to the point where it controlled the number of aid trucks and even calories allowed into the Strip.<sup>45</sup> Since 2007, Israel has imposed a land, air, and sea blockade on the territory, accompanied by repeated wars that have killed and wounded thousands, displaced large swathes of the population, and destroyed health and educational facilities and infrastructure, leading to Gaza being described as "the largest open-air prison in the world."<sup>46</sup> Throughout years of blockade, Israel has used food as a weapon against the Strip's population, restricting food imports to a minimum of basic necessities. Even before October 2023, it used relief aid as a tool to engineer hunger and to slow, rather than to prevent, economic and social collapse.<sup>47</sup> These concurrent policies of violence and slow starvation sent unemployment rates in the Strip surging to nearly 50 percent, with 83 percent of the population

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 58 - 59.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.62.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.70.

<sup>45</sup> "Dirāsa 'an al-ḥiṣār al-Isrā'īlī li-Ghazza ḥasabat al-sa'rat al-ḥarāriyya li-l-Filasṭīniyyīn," *Reuters*, 17/10/2012, accessed 9/8/2025, at: <https://shorturl.at/srEfJ>.

<sup>46</sup> Theresa Farhat et al., "Responding to the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza: Damned if You do... Damned if You don't!" *Annals of Global Health*, vol. 89, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>47</sup> Hadeel Rizq-Qazzaz, "Handasat al-tajwī': istikhdam juhūd al-ighātha silāha ḍaght 'alā al-Filasṭīniyyīn," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, No. 143 (Summer 2025).

living below the poverty line, 80 percent dependent on humanitarian aid, and 73 percent suffering from food insecurity.<sup>48</sup> This also applies to Israel's control over the availability of other necessities, such as medicine, medical equipment, electricity, fuel, and water. This reality has forced Gaza's residents to reshape their economy to resist being starved and subjugated and to challenge the fracturing of the very foundations of their survival on their land.<sup>49</sup>

## Engineering Starvation in the Gaza Strip: A Weapon in a Genocidal War

Since 7 October 2023, several Israeli ministers have explicitly announced comprehensive blockades on the Gaza Strip and measures to deprive its residents of food, water, electricity, medicine, fuel, and medical equipment. Among them are then-defence minister Yoav Gallant, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, and Energy and Infrastructure Minister Yisrael Katz (who at the time of writing had taken over as defence minister. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich went so far as to say that it “may be just and moral” to starve two million residents of Gaza.<sup>50</sup> As the famine in the Strip worsened, these statements continued. In April 2025, Likud party Knesset member Moshe Saadeh said Israel should “starve Gaza completely” and expel its population.<sup>51</sup> In May 2025, Heritage Minister Amihai Eliyahu said Israel should bomb humanitarian aid.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, over the course of its genocide, Israel has employed multiple tactics aimed at starving the population of the Gaza Strip and depriving them of the basic essentials of life, in the harshest phase of its starvation campaign so far:

### Closing the crossings and controlling the type and route of aid

On 9 October 2023, Israel bombed the Rafah border crossing with Egypt for the first time following the 7 October attacks on Israel by Gaza militants. Trucks carrying food and fuel aid to the Gaza Strip were forced to return to the Egyptian city of El-Arish after Israel threatened to bomb them if they crossed.<sup>53</sup> Prior to 7 October, approximately 500 trucks of aid had entered the Gaza Strip daily, amounting to some 15,000 trucks per month. That level has not been seen since. Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health and UN agencies indicate that only 52,815 aid trucks entered between 7 October 2023 and 31 July 2025 – an average of 79 trucks per day or around 2,400 per

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48 Hamdan, Ayat. “The Gaza Hellscape: Ethnic Cleansing and Displacement in the Gaza Strip,” Policy Analysis, *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies*, 24/10/2023, at: <https://shorturl.at/ZZ6vZ>.

49 From 2007 onwards, residents of the Gaza Strip developed became known as the “tunnel economy,” in direct response to the Israeli blockade. Over time, this transformed into a semi-organized economy that helped mitigate the effects of the siege, supporting the industrial and agricultural sectors, and providing new job opportunities. See: Nicolas Pelham, “Gaza’s Tunnel Phenomenon: The Unintended Dynamics of Israel’s Siege,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 41, no. 4 (2012).

50 Dana Karni, “Israeli Minister Says it may be ‘Moral’ to Starve 2 million Gazans, but ‘no One in the World would let us,’” *CNN*, 6/8/2024, accessed on 10/8/2025, at: <https://shorturl.at/eERdK>.

51 “In an Interview with Israel’s Channel 14, Likud MP Moshe Saada Called to ‘Starve Gaza Completely’ and Expel its Population,” *Middle East Eye*, via X, 27/4/2025, accessed on 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdh4mty6>.

52 “Far-Right Minister Says Israel should Bomb Humanitarian Aid, ‘Starve’ Gazans,” *The Times of Israel*, 6/5/2025, accessed on 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/3uuc3ttm>.

53 “Ma’bar Rafah taḥta al-qaṣf wa-taḥdhīr Isrā’īlī li-Miṣr wa-’idāna umamiyya li-l-ḥiṣār al-kāmil,” *Al Jazeera*, 10/10/2023, accessed 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/3a2wsdu9>.

month.<sup>54</sup> Notably, between March 2 and May 18, 2025, not a single aid truck entered the Gaza Strip, as Israel completely closed all crossings into the territory.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, Israel imposes a mechanism that controls the type of aid that is allowed into the territory or not, imposing severe restrictions on certain medical supplies such as anaesthetics, gauze, sterilization materials, and even death shrouds.<sup>56</sup> It also requires ad hoc approvals for trucks to enter. According to the WFP, between 19 and 25 July 2025, Israel approved only 76 of 138 requests for trucks to enter the Gaza Strip. Trucks often wait up to 46 hours for final approval, then face obstacles along the route, meaning their journeys can last up to 12 hours due to inspections at Israeli checkpoints, requirements to unload their cargo at crossings and transfer it to trucks authorized to enter the Gaza Strip, and changes of route.<sup>57</sup> The Palestinian Ministry of Health has found that many food items entering Gaza are unfit for consumption, having passed their expiration dates or been ruined due to long waits at crossings before being allowed into Gaza.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, trucks are frequently subjected to shelling, gunfire, and intense surveillance by Israeli drones, and Israeli forces often arrest and harass drivers, alleging they are members of Palestinian factions.<sup>59</sup>

## Letting Israeli Settlers Block the Entry of Aid Trucks

Israel also empowers extremist settlers, particularly members of the “Order 9” movement, to intercept humanitarian aid trucks heading to the Gaza Strip through the Karam Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing, the main commercial crossing linking Gaza to both Egypt and Israel.<sup>60</sup> The Israeli authorities have acknowledged that the Israeli police and army indirectly collaborate with members of the movement, providing them with information on the locations of aid trucks heading to Gaza so they can block their entry and damage their cargoes.<sup>61</sup> Activists of the movement hold regular demonstrations at the crossings to protest the entry of aid, shouting slogans explicitly calling for Gaza residents to be starved. They also destroy the contents of the trucks, throwing them into the road, and sometimes smash or burn the trucks themselves.<sup>62</sup> Since the beginning of 2024, the

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54 Alia Chughtai & Marium Ali, “How Much Aid has Entered Gaza?” *Al Jazeera*, 5/8/2025, accessed on 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/599mfedj>.

55 Ibid.

56 “Israel’s Extreme Restrictions on Medical Supplies Entering Gaza Have Caused Death and Anguish: New Study,” *Press Release*, Physicians for Human Rights, 9/7/2025, accessed on 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/am93x9s4>.

57 Chughtai & Ali.

58 “Wizārat al-ṣiḥḥa fī Ghazza tuḥadhdhir min dukhūl muntajāt muntahiyat al-ṣalāhiyya ilā al-qitā’,” *Arabi 21*, 22/5/2024, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/tes9wd2p>.

59 Issa Saadallah, “Shamāl Ghazza: al-iḥtilāl yunkkil bi-sā’iqi shāḥināt al-musā’adāt wa-ya’tāqil al-’adīd minhum,” *Al-Ayyam*, 19/7/2024, accessed 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/yx4cy9aj>.

60 Naif Zidani, “Al-amr 9’...munawwama Isrā’īliyya ta’ mal ‘alā ‘irqalat dukhūl al-musā’adāt ilā Ghazza,” *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 16/5/2024, accessed 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/52ay5ryk>.

61 “The Shame and the Shambles of Israel’s Policy on Gaza Aid,” *Haaretz*, 15/5/2024, accessed on 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/3f4dyrhk>; Lorenzo Tondo & Quique Kierszenbaum, “Israeli Soldiers and Police Tipping off Groups that Attack Gaza Aid Trucks,” *The Guardian*, 21/5/2025, accessed on 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/yj4yu8kc>.

62 Zidani.

group has expanded its operations to include other locations, such as the El Ouga or Nitzana border crossing between Egypt and Israel,<sup>63</sup> and the Tarqumiya checkpoint near Hebron in the southern West Bank, where its members set fire to aid trucks bound for Gaza without any intervention from Israeli occupation forces.<sup>64</sup> On 4 August 2025, Jordan's government spokesman and Minister of State for Communications, Mohammad al-Momani, said that settlers were attacking aid convoys on their way to the Gaza Strip, gathering on public roads and obstructing the movement of trucks in repeated incidents that the Israeli authorities had made no effort to confront.<sup>65</sup> In recent months, the movement has expanded its activities to the port of Ashdod in southern Israel, where activists are obstructing the passage of aid trucks bound for Gaza and destroying their cargoes.<sup>66</sup>

## Banning the Operation of UNRWA and International Relief Organizations

Since 7 October 2023, Israel has waged a systematic war against UNRWA, on two parallel levels:<sup>67</sup> firstly, by directly bombing and destroying the agency's facilities, preventing the entry of aid, killing dozens of its employees, and targeting displaced persons seeking refuge in its schools; and secondly, by securitizing the subject of UNRWA, moving from criticizing some of its activities or programs to a whole-scale attempt to undermine its legitimacy and threaten its very existence.

After Israel accused 12 UNRWA employees of taking part in the 7 October attacks, the agency faced financial pressures that undermined its ability to operate as a result of its major donors – primarily the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom – halting, suspending, or reducing funding.<sup>68</sup> Some donors resumed funding to the agency after the UN investigated the accusations and closed the case due to Israel's failure to provide any evidence to substantiate its claims.<sup>69</sup> However, the cutting of most of its funding had threatened UNRWA's ability to continue operating, even as Israel pressed ahead with its genocide.

To crown this campaign against UNRWA, Israel's parliament, the Knesset, approved two laws in October 2024 that prohibit the agency from engaging in any activity within the occupied territories, revoke its privileges and facilities, and prohibit any official contact with it. These laws entered into

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63 "Yamīniyyūn Isrā'īliyyūn yamna'ūn dukhūl musā'adāt insāniyya ilā Ghazza," *Anadolu Agency*, 2/2/2024, accessed 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/3fvv6d2v>.

64 *Haaretz*, "The Shame and the Shambles."

65 "Al-'Urdunn yu'akkid ta'arruḍ qawāfilihī al-ighāthiyya li-l-ta'īl al-muta'ammid li-man' wuṣūlihā li-Ghazza," *Al-Mamlaka TV*, 4/8/2025, accessed 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/t6v4avth>.

66 "Raghma al-majā'a.. Isrā'īliyyūn yuḥāwilūn mujaddadan 'irqalat musā'adāt li-Ghazza," *Anadolu Agency*, 4/6/2025, accessed 10/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/3n8t4cre>.

67 Ayat Hamdan, "Al-ḥarb 'alā al-'Unrūwā wa-maḥāwalāt inhā' qāḍiyyat al-lāj'īn," *Institute for Palestine Studies* (2024), accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/acbd54au>.

68 Shatha Abd al-Samad, "Al-Taḍḥiya bi-l-'Unrūwā yajibu 'an tatawaqqaf," *Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network*, 30/4/2024, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/7bpxpx6h>.

69 "Al-Umam al-muttaḥida tughliq wa-tu'alliq qāḍiyyā dīdd muwāḍi'ī 'Unrūwā fī Ghazza: lā 'adilla 'alā mazā'im al-iḥṭilāl," *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 27/4/2024, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/4254tn29>.

force on 30 January this year.<sup>70</sup> Israel's campaign to ban UNRWA is not new – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had urged US President Donald Trump to do so during his first term (2017-2021), with the aim of eliminating the Palestinian refugee question and resolving a key final status issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>71</sup> However, the renewed push to ban UNRWA came in the midst of a genocide and a plan to starve the population of the Gaza Strip.

The UNRWA ban coincided with Israel's decision, on 9 March 2025, to restrict the work of relief agencies and international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), requiring them to hand over personal information about their Palestinian staff and aid recipients or face the suspension of their humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip by 9 September.<sup>72</sup> Some UN agencies and international organizations called for the decision to be rescinded, warning that its implementation “would force them to withdraw all international staff, which would prevent the provision of vital and life-saving humanitarian assistance to Palestinians.”<sup>73</sup> In a joint letter in mid-August 2025, 100 international organizations indicated that Israel's new rules aimed at “regulating” the work of international organizations in the Gaza Strip, are increasingly being used to deny their requests to bring aid into the Strip. The letter noted that Israel had rejected at least 60 requests to bring aid into Gaza in July alone.<sup>74</sup>

## Feeding and Protecting Aid-Stealing Gangs

As the genocide rolled on, a local armed group emerged in the Gaza Strip, led by Yasser Abu Shabab, a man in his early 30s who had been imprisoned in Hamas-run prisons in the Strip on drug-smuggling charges.<sup>75</sup> Abu Shabab works with a group of armed men to intercept aid trucks entering the Gaza Strip via the Karam Abu Salem crossing, along a road known locally as “Robbers' Valley,” where the armed men gather and loot aid shipments, which they later sell.<sup>76</sup> In an interview with the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation's Radio Makan in early July 2025, Abu Shabab said that his group “moves easily in areas under Israeli military control, noting that there is coordination between the two sides” and that his group “informs the Israeli forces of their military movements.”<sup>77</sup> In June 2025,

70 “Al-ḥaṣr al-Isrā'īlī ‘alā al-‘Unrūwā yadkhul ḥayyiz al-tanfidh.. mādhā ya'nī hādḥā?” *CNN Arabic*, 30/1/2025, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/zdyuh46e>.

71 “Asbāb waqf idārat Trāmb tamwīl al-‘Unrūwā wa-khalfiyyātih,” Situation Assessment, *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies*, 9/9/2018, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9GPRk>.

72 “Wakālāt umamiyya wa-dawliyya tad‘ū Isrā'īl ilā ilghā' shart' yuqayyid ‘amal al-munaṣṣamāt al-dawliyya fī Ghazza wa-l-Ḍiffa al-Gharbiyya,” *UN News*, 6/8/2025, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/3ba776s6>.

73 Ibid.

74 James Chater, “New Israeli Rules Stopping Critical Aid Getting into Gaza, Charities Say,” *BBC News*, 14/8/2025, accessed on 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/26htaf4k>.

75 “Aḥdarat ‘ā'ilatuhu damahu.. man huwa Yāsir Abū Shabāb qā'id al-quwwa al-jadīda fī janūb Ghazza?” *CNN Arabic*, 8/6/2025, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/bwxzmyrc>.

76 Mohammad Shahadeh, “Rakā'iz Isrā'īl al-arba'a li-tajwī' Ghazza jamā'iyyan,” *Afkār* (blog), Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 28/7/2025, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/4nmmv4vh>.

77 “Za'im milīshiyā al-quwwāt al-sha'biyya al-munāḥida li-ṣamās yuqirr bi-ta'āwunihi ma'a al-jaysh al-Isrā'īlī fī Ghazza,” *France 24*, 6/7/2025, accessed 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/y8x45v3t>.

the Israeli authorities admitted supporting and arming a Palestinian faction opposed to Hamas in the Gaza Strip, supplying it with Kalashnikov rifles, and that this policy had been approved by the Israeli political and security leadership.<sup>78</sup> On 28 May 2025, the head of the UN's humanitarian coordination office (OCHA) in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jonathan Whittall, referred to the group, saying: "The real theft of aid since the beginning of the war has been carried out by criminal gangs, under the watch of Israeli forces, and they were allowed to operate in proximity to the Kerem Shalom crossing point into Gaza."<sup>79</sup>

The impact of the theft of aid is that it is then resold at high prices, which most Gazans cannot afford. This places prices under the control of these armed gangs and local merchants, who sell the most sought-after and valuable goods, leaving the most vulnerable with the remaining, meagre food items, such as pasta. In addition, the Abu Shabab group assaults truck drivers who fail to comply with its instructions; following an incident in which gunmen killed several truckers, a union said its members would halt deliveries of aid within the Gaza Strip entirely.<sup>80</sup>

## Destruction of Food Security Infrastructure

Direct Israeli bombing has led to a near-total collapse of key sectors that underpin Gaza's food security, including agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and bakeries. A UN assessment indicates that more than 80 percent of the total agricultural land in the territory has been damaged, and that 77.8 percent of the land has become unavailable to farmers, leaving only 4.6 percent available for cultivation.<sup>81</sup> In addition, 71.2 percent of the Strip's greenhouses and 82.8 percent of its agricultural wells have been damaged.<sup>82</sup>

Prior to 7 October 2023, agriculture represented approximately 10 percent of Gaza's economy, with more than 560,000 people partially or wholly dependent on it for their livelihoods.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Israel has almost completely wiped out the territory's livestock, killing approximately 97 percent of its farm animals through direct bombing or deliberate starvation.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, a large proportion of the 140 bakeries operating in the Strip, which provided approximately 50 percent of the population's needs, have been completely or partially destroyed by direct Israeli bombing or due to the depletion

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<sup>78</sup> Emanuel Fabian, "Sources Confirm Israel Arming Gazan Gang to Bolster Opposition to Hamas," *The Times of Israel*, 5/6/2025, accessed on 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/2zrn4v3v>.

<sup>79</sup> Lorenzo Tondo, "Israel Accused of Arming Palestinian Gang Who Allegedly Looted Aid in Gaza," *The Guardian*, 5/6/2025, accessed on 11/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/mr23d7nd>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> "Ghazza - taḥdhīr umamī min tadawhur al-qīṭā' al-zirā'ī bi-mu'addalāt muqliqa: 95% min al-ard' al-zirā'iyya ghayr mutāḥa," *UN News*, 26/5/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdd95665>.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> "Isrā'īl dammarat 97% min al-tharwa al-ḥayawāniyya wa-l-ḥayawānāt al-'āmila fī Ghazza bi-l-qaṣf wa-l-tajwī' wa-l-nahb," *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor*, 2/8/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/2s5yn7xz>.

of flour, cooking gas, and fuel stocks.<sup>85</sup> In April 2025, the WFP announced that the 25 bakeries it supports in Gaza had closed after their warehouses ran out of fuel and flour.<sup>86</sup>

Even as Gaza's residents turned to the sea to compensate for food shortages caused by the genocide, Israel tightened its restrictions on 12 July, prohibiting them from entering the sea at all – an extension of measures that began on the first day of the war.<sup>87</sup> Since then, the fishing sector has been subjected to a deliberate campaign of destruction, including the killing, persecution, and arrest of fishermen, the destruction of most boats and equipment, and severe damage to marine infrastructure, including the Gaza port, small harbours and fishing facilities. As a result, Israel has wiped out more than 85 percent of the fishing sector's assets, cutting more than 5,000 Gazan fishermen off from their only source of livelihood.<sup>88</sup>

## Creating an alternative “aid” system – a trap for killing, subjugating, and displacing Palestinians

On 27 May 2025, the Israeli and US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation launched operations, intended to replace all UN activity in the territory. The GHF replaced a network of approximately 400 distribution points run by UNRWA with just four sites, located in Israeli-controlled military zones within the Strip. To reach these sites, Gaza residents are forced to walk long distances, sometimes sleeping in the open, and to wait in narrow, fenced-off paths under direct sunlight, exposed to indiscriminate gunfire, tear gas, and sound bombs. The GHF forces Gazans of all ages to undergo rigorous security screening, including verification of their identities using advanced biometric technologies, in an bid to prevent anyone suspected of affiliation with Hamas from receiving aid.<sup>89</sup> Dozens of international organizations have repeatedly called for the GHF to be shut down, saying it poses a direct threat to the lives of residents, including the risk of injury or death.<sup>90</sup> The territory's Ministry of Health says 1,838 people have been killed and a further 13,409 injured while waiting for aid.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the organization's aid distribution mechanism helps to forcibly displace more Gaza residents. The distribution points are limited to southern and central Gaza, forcing residents of the north to migrate southwards in search of food.

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85 Rim Swaisi, “Ra’īs jam’iyyat al-makhābiz fī Ghazza: al-makhābiz satatawaqqaf ghadan ‘alā ab’ad taqdīr,” *Wafa*, 31/3/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/5cvmaev2>.

86 Khaled Haridi, “Ighlāq al-makhābiz fī Ghazza ‘ma’sāt’, wa-tahdhīr min ‘azmat jū’ hā’ila,” *UN News*, 1/4/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/59hdm4af>.

87 “Tashdīd al-ḥiṣār al-baḥrī wa-ḥirmān sukkān qitā’ Ghazza min al-tharwa al-samkiyya im’ān fī jarīmatay al-ibāda al-jamā’iyya wa-l-tajwī’ al-mumīt,” *Palestinian Centre for Human Rights*, 2/8/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/47fnf6dh>.

88 Ibid.

89 Lamis al-Talibi, Mohammad Shalabi and Omar Hassan, “Mādhā na’rif ‘an ‘mu’assasat Ghazza al-insāniyya” al-mas’ūla ‘an tawzī’ al-musā’adāt fī al-qitā’?” *BBC Arabic*, 28/5/2025, accessed 3/6/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/44hwb5u7>.

90 “‘Akthar min 170 munaḥama dawliyya tuṭālib bi-ighlāq ‘mu’assasat Ghazza al-insāniyya,” *Al Jazeera*, 1/7/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/mwnswk33>.

91 “Wizārat al-ṣiḥḥa al-Filasṭīniyya: 100 shahīd khilāl 24 sā’a wa-l-ḥaṣīla tatajāwaz 61 ‘alf shahīd,” *Shehab News*, 12/8/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/4jba3ea9>.

Israel has allowed airdrops of aid, a move Palestinian and international human rights and relief organizations have criticised as being merely a cover for Israel's deliberate, mass starvation of the population of the Gaza Strip. In this context, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights notes that "airdropping aid constitutes an additional step toward negating the humanity of starving Palestinians," explaining that the aid "does not meet the minimum needs of the population, as the quantities dropped are extremely limited, and are dropped in crowded areas, sparking bloody fights among starving people trying to survive, systematically undermining their human dignity."<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, this method poses a direct threat to the lives of the population. At least 133 Palestinians have been killed as a result of aid airdrops, which often land in areas under Israeli military control within the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the airdrops have destroyed the tents and property of displaced people.<sup>93</sup> On 5 August 2025, Israel announced that it intended to impose measures to control the movement of goods within the Strip, and subsequently the movement of residents, by allowing Israeli commercial goods to enter Gaza through limited channels via local merchants on the condition they undergo strict security monitoring.<sup>94</sup> This step guarantees Israeli control over the type and quantity of food entering, and further cements Gaza's dependence on the Israeli economy, strategically serving to eliminate the Palestinian presence and consolidate Israeli control over the land and population.

## Starvation and the Establishment of a Post-War Reality

Although international law explicitly criminalizes the use of starvation as a weapon of war, historical experience shows that the chances of successfully prosecuting perpetrators of such crimes remain slim.<sup>95</sup> However, this does not detract from the importance of emphasizing that the shaming of starvation and the acts that cause and accompany it, as crimes under international law, could alter political calculations in the future. Thus, it is vital to prosecute Israel for using starvation as a weapon of war during a genocide, given the role this can play in affirming the primacy of international law, achieving justice for all residents of the Gaza Strip who have been subjected to the crime of starvation, and building on international efforts aimed at isolating Israel and its settler-colonial project and pressuring its allies. Equally important is deterring Israel – or any other state – that might consider repeating the use of starvation as a weapon of war. Israel would not have dared to starve the population of the Gaza Strip in this genocidal war had it not been for the impunity it has enjoyed for its deliberate policy of spreading hunger in Gaza since 1948, and more so since 2007. This is on top of the impunity extended to other perpetrators of recent crimes of deliberate starvation in Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Ethiopia.

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<sup>92</sup> "Inzāl al-musā'adāt min al-jaww: ihāna jamā'iyya wa-tamwīh li-jarīmat tajwī' Isrā'īliyya mumanhaja fī qitā' Ghazza," *Palestinian Centre for Human Rights*, 28/7/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/mw8nfxw4>.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> "Isrā'īl tasmaḥ "juz'iyyan" bi-dukhūl al-sil' 'abra tujjār maḥalliyyīn ilā Ghazza," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 5/8/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/2s4jkbzh>.

<sup>95</sup> Conley & de Waal.

In addition to holding Israel to account for the crime of starving the population of the Gaza Strip, urgent measures are needed to strengthen the ability of the population of the Gaza Strip to stay on their land, ensuring that this is linked to the provision of decent livelihoods. The reality today is that the survival of the population of the Gaza Strip is under threat. Most of the Strip – north, south and central – has been devastated and left uninhabitable due to the massive destruction of urban facilities, housing, and infrastructure, in addition to the fact that the Israeli army is in control of approximately 75 percent of the territory.<sup>96</sup>

The reality is that Israel controls every aid shipment entering Gaza: Israel decides who eats and who does not, the type and size of food rations allocated to those who eat, and the time when they can eat. Israel controls the Strip's water, electricity, fuel, and cooking gas. Maintaining the status quo effectively grants Israel the power to decide who lives and who dies, and allows it to use food as a tool to manage the movement of Palestinians, forcibly displacing them to areas it pre-determines, as it controls the quantity and quality of aid, the place, time, and conditions under which it is delivered, where Gazans must reside if they wish to receive food, and the number of hours they must wait before receiving their rations. All this turns the basic necessities of life tools of pressure, which Israel is using to reshape the demographic and geographic map in ways that serve its settler-colonial objectives.

Israel is preparing to reoccupy the Gaza Strip or parts of it – or at the very least, to consolidate a comprehensive system of security control over it. This will maintain the blockade and Israel's control over the entry of relief and humanitarian aid, as key tools it can use to perpetuate collective punishment, impose control over the Palestinians, monitor and subjugate them, seize their lands, and plunder their resources, all as part of a deliberate strategy to undermine their ability to remain on their land and to pave the way for their forced displacement. Today, Israel is openly declaring its plan to reshape the political geography of the Strip, as part of what it calls the “day after” plans for Gaza. On 7 July, Israeli Defence Minister Yisrael Katz announced a plan to establish, on the ruins of Rafah city in the southern Gaza Strip, what he called a “humanitarian city” – a vast concentration camp that would gather hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into a single area containing tent shelters, food distribution centres, and basic medical facilities.<sup>97</sup> This project would rest on the classification of Palestinians and on Israel's control over their access to aid, which it would grant only to those allowed to live within this area, and on the condition that they do not leave it. Thus, Israel would use food and humanitarian aid as a tool to control the movement of Palestinians, subjugate them, and dismantle their social fabric, on the one hand, and as a tool to perpetuate the population's confinement to the southern Gaza Strip, paving the way for mechanisms that would encourage their forced displacement to other countries, on the other.

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<sup>96</sup> Alexander Cornwell, “Israel's Security Cabinet Approves Plan to Take Control of Gaza City,” *Reuters*, 8/8/2025, accessed on 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/h98rc7aw>.

<sup>97</sup> Yasser Manaa, “Mu'askarāt iḥtijāz jamā'ī taḥta musammā "al-madīna al-insāniyya"!” *Madar: The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies*, 21/7/2025, accessed 12/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/47rj9ycz>.

Strengthening the ability of Gaza's residents to remain on their land requires the formation of a Palestinian national political leadership that can confront the existential challenges facing the Palestinian people and formulate a new path toward liberation from colonialism and apartheid, based on global campaigns to defend and support Palestine. Furthermore, Palestinians today, more than ever, need to formulate a national strategy to achieve food security, to strengthen their resilience and enable them to remain on their land, and to protect their existence from the policies of impoverishment, siege, and starvation through which the settler-colonial regime seeks to uproot and forcibly displace them. The sea provided a lifeline protecting Gaza's residents from starvation after the 1948 Nakba. The smuggling tunnels played a major role in alleviating the siege Israeli imposed from 2007 onwards. Palestinian relief initiatives since the 1970s have contributed to curbing the policy of starvation and promoting independent economic and social development in the Gaza Strip.<sup>98</sup> Yet today, the formulation of a national strategy to achieve food security is more urgent than ever, in order to enhance the ability of Gaza's residents to remain on their land.

Achieving this will require concerted Palestinian efforts to leverage both old and new political and economic experiences – most notably that of the cooperative, an institutional model that embodies the values of cooperation and social solidarity, contributes to strengthening productive, industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity, and constitutes a path to breaking free from dependence on the Israeli economy and international relief aid. For this experiment to succeed, bridges must be built between Palestinians within and outside Palestine, in order to establish a dedicated, independent fund to support food security, managed in an institutional and transparent manner, and financed by contributions from Palestinian, Arab, and international individuals and institutions. The population of the Gaza Strip and civil society organizations operating there must also be empowered to benefit from the successful experiences of other peoples in the Global South in rehabilitating damaged lands, improving agricultural productivity, building individual and collective farms, and innovating in technology-based production and industrial alternatives capable of meeting at least the basic needs of the population.

The establishment of cooperative institutions represents not only an opportunity to reduce hunger, poverty, and unemployment, but also a means of protecting the social fabric from disintegration, ensuring the sustainability of action and political participation, revitalizing national institutional and union activity, and consolidating economic independence. These are all essential building blocks of food sovereignty, and consequently, of ensuring the continued survival of Gaza's people on their land. Resisting Israeli plans on the ground requires us that we view Palestinian food security as one form of the struggle against the settler-colonial system.

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<sup>98</sup> For more on the history of aid work in the Gaza Strip and its role in development, see: Ahmed Mamoun Abu Amer, "Hal yuḥarrir al-jā' i' waṭanan? Tārīkh al-'amal al-ighāthī fī Ghazza," *Alpheratz*, 20/1/2025, accessed 14/8/2025, at: <https://tinyurl.com/ycxz93ms>.

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