



The Israeli Weaponization of Humanitarian Aid Amidst Genocide

Israel’s policy of forced displacement in the Gaza Strip – along with accompanying acts – is an act of genocide which falls within Article 2(c) of the Genocide Convention. From the direct targeting of displaced persons on designated “escape routes”, to the deliberate destruction of homes and denial of adequate shelter, separation of families, and the infliction of deadly health conditions, obstruction of humanitarian aid and starvation, the orchestrated actions by Israel reveal a calculated aim to physically destroy Palestinians in Gaza. These are direct conditions that can, in the long term, lead to death of those affected; in other words: conditions of “slow death”.

Today, Palestinians in Gaza make up [80 percent of those facing famine](#) or catastrophic starvation globally, marking an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that is the direct result of Israel's genocidal war, its campaign against UNRWA and third states' complicity.

At the UN Security Council, various states have condemned Israel's [use of starvation as a "method of war,"](#) and [UN experts](#) have stated that “Israel must end its campaign of starvation and targeting of civilians.”

In addition to the 17 year blockade and the “total siege” on the Gaza Strip, Israel has systematically and deliberately targeted local, international and UN humanitarian organizations, facilities and workers. Particularly, Israel has escalated its [longstanding campaign against UNRWA](#), the most capable and legitimate UN agency, which constitutes a lifeline to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip prior to and under the ongoing genocide.

With the [intention to dismantle and replace UNRWA](#), Israel has [destroyed 187 UNRWA facilities and killed 193 staff members](#), while orchestrating a demonization campaign against the Agency. While Israel [still hasn't provided evidence](#) of its allegations, its allies have deemed the most [recent UN review](#) of UNRWA as “insufficient” and the United States, United Kingdom and Australia continue to suspend the Agency’s funding and obstruct its work.

Instead of challenging Israel to open border crossings and facilitating the work of UN and international agencies, states have chosen inefficient, ineffective and humiliating methods like [air drops](#) and [the construction of a maritime corridor](#). Not only are these methods incapable of meeting

the food needs of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, but more importantly, these approaches allow Israel to manipulate aid distribution: by deliberately obstructing and bypassing UNRWA's well-established and effective mechanisms. By controlling aid distribution, Israel seeks to dismantle and replace UNRWA and weaponize aid to perpetuate starvation and genocide beyond a ceasefire. Furthermore, an Israeli approved and controlled aid delivery entity would increase Palestinian vulnerability and access to aid.

In the case of UNRWA, its reliance on voluntary funding makes it extremely vulnerable to political pressure and this has led to [chronic financial crises](#), the imposition of [securitization policies](#) and the [decline of services](#) provided to Palestinian refugees. Today, UNRWA's defunding by Israel's allies, and the obstruction of its services in the Gaza Strip is contributing to a large degree to the genocide of Palestinians there.

[According to UN experts](#): “At this existential time for millions of Palestinians in Gaza, who are enduring famine coupled with unfathomable humanitarian conditions, UN operations and facilities must be protected.” “It is imperative that once funding to UNRWA is reinstated to the fullest, UNRWA be fully recognised and protected both as a subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly, epitomising among others the permanent responsibility of the United Nations toward the Question of Palestine, and for its pivotal role in many areas of life of Palestinian refugees,” the experts said.

Recommendations to Prevent Politically-Induced Starvation and Weaponization of Humanitarian Aid

UN humanitarian agencies, especially UNRWA, must be able to operate independently solely on the basis of their mandates, free from state influence, especially in times of war and conflict. According to [the UN Charter](#) and [Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations](#), ensuring their protection and autonomy is crucial for maintaining impartiality and effectiveness in delivering aid.

By safeguarding the independence of UNRWA and similar agencies, the international community can ensure that humanitarian efforts are consistent, reliable, and focused solely on addressing the rights and needs of protected populations, hence preventing the weaponization of humanitarian aid and politically-induced starvation, especially in a catastrophic context such as the Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip.

Therefore, BADIL calls for the following international institutional changes to liberate UN and international agencies from political manipulation (especially during crises irrespective of political pressure and specific states' political agendas, including those who cause or are part of the crisis):

- Obstruction of the operations and services of UN and international agencies by parties in a conflict or during crises constitutes and must be considered an international crime.

- The failure of states to fulfill their obligations to facilitate and ensure the operations and services of UN and international agencies should be considered a form of complicity in an international crime.
- The funding mechanisms of UN agencies or organizations (including UNRWA) must be through the UN not through bilateral relations/contracts with states. States must be required to make obligatory contributions to the UN which will be responsible for redistributing the funds as necessary. This will significantly decrease the political impact of states on the UN and its agencies.
- The UN General Assembly must [make UNRWA funding obligatory](#) for all Member States, integrating it into the main UN budget, ensuring that UNRWA's core budget is secure and sustainable, so that it can fulfill its mandate without political interference or limitations.