

SE28: Right to Food and Conflicts: implementing human rights based monitoring and global coordination

Organized by: UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CFS) for relations with the CFS.

Summary of the side event

This event spotlighted the challenges faced by conflict affected populations in the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, and Mali, to foster a conversation beyond technical measurements that could provide a better understanding of the contexts in which food crises are embedded. Emphasizing the role of the CFS and the international community, the panel underscored the need for immediate action to ensure accountability for violations on the right to food, and to adopt a human rights approach to address structural causes of conflicts. The event was moderated by Therese Arnesen of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

H.E. Abeer Odeh, Ambassador of Palestine in Italy, and permanent Representative to the UN FAO, IFAD, and WFP, opened the panel providing details on the worsening situation in Northern Gaza where 470,000 people are seized, lacking of food, water and electricity. In other areas people are only able to eat once every two or three days, stressing in Palestine there is no right to food. She shed light on how the CFS could report on violations of the right to food and how Israel uses food as a weapon, and called on the international community to uphold international law and dignity, and hold Israel accountable.

Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, explained how the current food systems create the conditions that enable starvation. He spoke about his recent report on Starvation and the right to food, with an emphasis on the Palestinian people's food sovereignty, emphasizing famine is political, structural and has long-lasting effects. He noted that rising global starvation is driven by direct or indirect support from major powers and rich countries, warning that inaction could make more regions vulnerable, stating, "*We're all next, if we don't do something right now.*"

Lisa Shahin, from CSIPM and the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, spoke on violations of the right to food in the Arab region. She explained that despite all of the

horrors unfolding, the official criteria for declaring a famine have not been met, particularly in situations like Gaza, where gathering reliable data is extremely challenging. She also pointed the damage of Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon, where the impact to agricultural lands and community infrastructure is forcing farmers to abandon their fields. Additionally, war has driven severe food insecurity in other countries in the region such as Yemen, Syria, and Sudan.

Hamadi Mohamed Abba, from CSIPM and the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), spoke online about the intersection of conflicts and climate change in rural communities in Mali, and across the Sahel. In these areas, livestock and subsistence farming —both sensitive to climate change—are worsened by armed conflicts. He stressed conflicts disrupts nomadic herders access to pastures, water, and market access for supplies, undermining food sovereignty for rural communities. He highlighted the urgent need for improved coordination among humanitarian actors, local governments, and the CFS; respect state commitments; multilateral cooperation with accountability; and a human rights-based approach to ensure the right to food in conflict zones. *“The international community cannot remain silent and do nothing in the face of this humanitarian crisis”.*

The panel concluded with the intervention from Hilal Elver, from the Steering Committee of the HLPE-FSN, who referred to the CFS workstream on collaborative governance for coordinated policy responses to emerging global food crisis, as a space that forces the CFS and all in general to look at what is happening in the world in relation to starvation and famine. She highlighted the preventive role of the CFS by finding critical emerging issues to bring them to its agenda with support from the HLPE-FSN, such as the latest Issues Paper on Conflict-induced acute food crises: potential policy responses in light of current emergencies. Concluding her intervention, in view of the limitations of international bodies, and the international community, she called on civil society to mobilize outside UN forums, advocating for arms embargoes, and social exclusion to the perpetrators of conflicts.