

# VIOLENCE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

The right to food is a fundamental and universal human right. Food must be:

**AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE, ADEQUATE**

Food systems are rife with violence. This violence is what creates inequality and human rights violations in food systems.

The term “**food systems**” describes all actors and activities involved in the production, storage, aggregation, transport, processing, distribution, marketing, disposal and consumption of food.

Violence pervades all aspects of food systems at every level. Working people face unsafe working conditions in factories, farms, and kitchens. They confront harassment and discrimination on a daily basis. Food is increasingly ultra-processed with high levels of salt, sugar, and fat making people less healthy and undernourished.

The spread of industrial food production has also led to the spread of monocultural food production, which has had disastrous effects on crop diversity and releases high amounts of greenhouse gases. While the overreliance on fertilizers and herbicides has made the soil more barren; it has also made peasants, workers and rural communities increasingly sick.

People continue fighting for and defending their land and territories in the face of land grabs and occupation. Armed conflict is on the rise, leading to a rise of hunger and increased risk of famine.



Here are four forms of violence in food systems:

### **DISCRIMINATION AND INEQUALITY**

People usually go hungry because they are denied access to food. Discrimination by denying people access to food, and to means and entitlements for its procurement, is always an instance of violence. Poverty and social exclusion also undermine people's access to Food.

### **BODILY HARM**

Violence causing bodily harm not only includes direct harm but also denial of access to food by destroying infrastructure or crippling an economic system. Bodily harm is the most tangible result of violence in food systems, and it creates a climate of fear that denigrates individuals and communities, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

Five contexts in which food systems systemically produce bodily harm include: malnutrition; famine; sexual and gender-based violence in food systems; unilateral coercive measures; and armed conflict.

### **ECOLOGICAL VIOLENCE**

Food systems are compromising people's relationship with the environment, leading them to disconnect from and destroy the very same ecosystems that sustain them. Global food systems emit approximately one third of the world's greenhouse gases. The industrial intensive agriculture and export-oriented food policies lead to the loss of biodiversity at a massive scale.

### **ERASURE**

Destroying ancestral farmland or herding, hunting, fishing and foraging conditions is one of the most common way for people to be erased from their homeland. Erasure occurs in food systems by systematically disregarding people's right to self-determination and their very existence. Violating food sovereignty, seed sovereignty, outlawing artisanal forms of hunting and fishing. All of this contributes to the erasure of entire communities and cultures.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE IN FOOD SYSTEMS**

All forms of violence in food systems can and must be ended. Ending violence requires:

- Strong land and labour rights
- Zero tolerance for sexual harassment
- Ending unilateral coercive measures
- Recognition that starvation is always a human rights violation, regardless of whether a person is a combatant or civilian
- Supporting a just transition to agroecology
- Supporting the preservation, protection, development and dissemination of traditional knowledge.