



العربية لحماية الطبيعة  
Arab Group for the Protection of Nature

## Call for Input – UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

### Human Rights and Starvation, with an emphasis on the Palestinian People's Food Sovereignty

Statement by:

The Arab Group for the Protection of Nature

Dear Mr. Michael Fakhri,

Thank you for the most critical Call for Input focused on "Human Rights and Starvation, with a Focus on Palestinian People's Food Sovereignty".

In the context of the starvation and genocide in Gaza, and global clarity that:

- food is weaponized as a tool for subjugation and genocide, in situations of settler-colonialism, occupation, conflict and war through recurrent tactics mainly the systematic destruction of local food systems and sanctions,
- the absence of fair accountability mechanisms that forces the respect of international law including extra-territorial obligations, and
- ineffective legal and intergovernmental institutions and skewed foreign intervention that sustains the status quo of oppression, injustice, and violations to preserve economic and geo-political interest,

we do not want to re-iterate and elaborate these root causes once again. Change is only possible through a shift in political will, at all levels: the governmental and intergovernmental levels, **including structures of policy making that incorporates civil society.**

As such, we prefer to give recommendations from our over 24 years first-hand struggle for advocacy to protect the rights to food and food sovereignty in the context of occupation and conflict and we will give concrete examples.

1. We need to institutionalize genuine structures of dialogue and solidarity between peoples of the world and combat colonial indoctrination among policy platforms including civil society spaces to.

Our aim has consistently been to be proactive rather than reactive, demanding accountability and action against the weaponization of food before reaching the crisis point we are facing now. Unfortunately, we were, as all other communities from conflict-affected areas continue to be marginalized, silenced, and excluded from crucial discussions.

For example:

- Back in 2010, APN called for the formation of a CSO working group on food in the context of wars and conflict within CSO work with FAO. However, our efforts were consistently met with resistance and disregard, as this issue was not deemed a priority by other countries.
  - Between 2010 and 2021, we attempted to secure permanent constituency seats for communities living under conflict, occupation, and protracted crises at CSM. However, it proved to be a very painful experience, as organizations from the Global North dominated and blocked these efforts. These seats could have served as "early warning systems" rather than merely symbolic gestures of inclusion and diversity.
  - The most recent example comes from the latest CFS-51 when the CSIPM refused to adopt the statement developed by impacted communities on Gaza to be delivered during the plenary in October 2023, missing a crucial moment to present a strong position. The formal CSIPM statement was only recently released in April 2024. Nonetheless, in collaboration with our partners at PCFS, we launched an [urgent appeal](#) in November 2023 that garnered 130 signatures.
2. We need to be aware of the colonial use of terminologies to advance political agendas and maintain an oppressive status quo. It is not a conflict or a dispute, it is settler colonialism and occupation. It is not a war or crisis, but a genocide. There is not imminent risk of famine, it is a famine. All actors must work hard to fix the narrative and concepts.
  3. Push for the legal recognition of ecocide (for example in the ICC) as a crime and perpetrators as liable to criminal persecution.
  4. Legal action is crucial for exposing crimes and violations, but it should not neutralize our work in other spheres of pressure, including direct action, boycotts, advocacy, protests, among others.
  5. Support Palestinians to revive local food system towards achieving food sovereignty.

On Palestinian Land Day this year, APN launched the "Revive Gaza's Farmland" project to rehabilitate Gaza's agricultural land and restore local food systems. Implemented in three phases; the project will involve the rehabilitation of vegetable farms, cultivation of fodder seeds and fruit trees, construction of farm ponds, distribution of beehives, and rehabilitation of artisanal fishing and poultry farms. We have already commenced the first phase by distributing seeds to cultivate over 500 dunums, constructing fences, and rehabilitating irrigation networks. If farmers are provided with essential inputs of production, the agricultural sector has the potential to regain its vitality. This will enable Gazans to counter the blockade and famine.