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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 February 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

The Weaponization of Economy and Ecology: From Global Over-Compliance to Agro-Genocide in Gaza

Introduction

Our organization expresses alarm regarding the structural dismantling of food sovereignty in conflict zones, most notably in the Gaza Strip. We draw the Council's attention to the convergence of two destructive forces: the physical destruction of food systems (Agro-Genocide) and the bureaucratic suffocation of humanitarian relief through Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs) and over-compliance.

In this context, our organization has long maintained that land is not merely a commodified resource, but the fundamental basis of life and sovereignty. We find this position powerfully vindicated by the latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Mr. Michael Fakhri (A/HRC/61/51) (1). The report confirms our assessment that in Gaza, the systematic denial of access to land has manifested as an intentional "Starvation Campaign". As validated by the Special Rapporteur's findings, this is the fastest starvation campaign in history, serving as a brutal method to attack the food sovereignty of the Palestinian people. Today, the Gaza Strip represents the Ground Zero where the structural violence of global financial exclusion meets the physical violence of genocide.

The Global Context

Over-Compliance as an Invisible Blockade:

Before addressing the physical devastation in Gaza, we must address the global legal and financial framework that prevents effective aid. As highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on UCMs, Alena Douhan, the phenomenon of over-compliance has rendered humanitarian exemptions virtually meaningless. Financial institutions, fearing secondary sanctions and reputational risks, engage in aggressive de-risking policies. This results in the refusal to process authorized transactions for food, medicine, and essential equipment. (2)

Banks often decline to handle transactions involving sanctioned territories or high-risk conflict zones because the costs of legal due diligence outweigh the value of the transaction. This creates an Invisible Blockade where the fear of inadvertent violations leads to a total freeze on life-saving transfers. In the context of Gaza, this global pattern of over-compliance exacerbates the physical siege. Humanitarian NGOs struggle to transfer funds to pay staff or purchase supplies because donors and banks fear legal repercussions or backlash from sanctioning entities. (3)

Furthermore, the dual-use restrictions imposed on Gaza function similarly to sanctions regimes described by Special Rapporteur Douhan, where lack of clarity and fear of penalties deter the supply of essential goods. This chilling effect ensures that even items theoretically exempt from the blockade—such as water purification tablets or agricultural spare parts—are blocked at the source by financial intermediaries. (4)

Gaza: The Physical Destruction of Food Sovereignty

What manifests as banking hurdles globally has transformed into physical erasure in Gaza. While previous FAO assessments indicated substantial damage, the Special Rapporteur's latest report (A/HRC/61/51) reveals a total collapse of the agrarian system.

Systematic Ecocide: According to the Special Rapporteur, over 95% of Gaza's agricultural land has been rendered unusable. By mid-2025, 97.1% of tree crops and 82.4% of annual crops had been destroyed. This destruction is not collateral damage; it is a targeted erasure of the Palestinian connection to their land. (5)

Expansion of Buffer Zones: We draw specific attention to the expansion of "Buffer Zones." The newly announced "Yellow Line" has significantly expanded no-go zones, encompassing nearly 58% of Gaza's territory. This land confiscation policy has rendered major groundwater wells and the most fertile soil inaccessible, effectively shifting control of land and resources to foreign colonial control. (6)

The destruction extends to infrastructure: over 1,200 agricultural wells have been ruined, and the port of Gaza City—vital for fishers—remains non-functional. Beyond immediate destruction, soil contamination with heavy metals from relentless bombardment, coupled with the blockade on remediation materials due to sanctions, has decimated Gaza's food security for decades to come. (7)

The Human Cost and the Death Trap of Aid

Despite recent reports indicating that a full-scale famine declaration may have been technically pushed back due to sporadic aid entry, the situation remains catastrophic. As of late 2025, 1.6 million people—the majority of the population—still face high levels of acute food insecurity. The improvements are fragile and reversible, as the entire Gaza Strip remains classified in an emergency phase. (8)

The destruction of civilian infrastructure is absolute. With the total collapse of sanitation infrastructure leaving 740,000 people vulnerable to toxic flooding, especially during the winter months, the risk of waterborne diseases exacerbates malnutrition. Winter conditions have further deteriorated the living situation for millions living in substandard tents. (9)

Tragically, the distribution of aid itself has been weaponized. We have documented incidents where aid distribution centers have become death traps, with starving civilians killed while seeking flour. The flour massacre and subsequent attacks on aid seekers underscore that hunger is being used to lure and target civilians. Moreover, the dual-use restriction lists imposed by Israel continue to hold up essential supplies needed for the rehabilitation of critical infrastructure, such as shelter materials and medical equipment. This mirrors the logic of sanctions regimes where security is used as a pretext to deny the right to development. (10)

Legal Analysis

The actions described above constitute gross violations of international law and specific crimes under the Rome Statute:

- **Starvation as a War Crime:** The intentional destruction of food systems, including water wells and agricultural land, violates Article 54 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions. It criminalizes the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.
- **Settler-Colonial Land Appropriation:** As stated in report A/HRC/61/51, the regime in Gaza is not merely a temporary occupation but a "settler-colonial project" operating through land appropriation and organized deprivation.
- **Genocidal Intent:** The totality of these actions—announcing a total siege, destroying the means of production, and obstructing aid—demonstrates an intent to destroy the Palestinian people in whole or in part.
- **Violation of international obligations:** The chilling effect of secondary sanctions and over-compliance prevents the effective delivery of aid, violating the obligation of states to respect and protect the right to food and health.

Recommendations

We urge the Human Rights Council and Member States to:

Formally recognize the systematic destruction of Gaza’s agricultural land, wells, and greenhouses as a deliberate act of Agro-Genocide aimed at making the territory uninhabitable and permanently dependent on aid.

Implement the recommendations of special rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures to ensure that humanitarian exemptions are effective. States must ensure that banks and financial institutions are not penalized for processing legitimate humanitarian transactions and that “de-risking” does not become a tool of collective punishment.

Demand the immediate lifting of restrictions on imports considered to have a dual use, particularly materials needed for shelter, water purification, and agricultural rehabilitation.

Demand full compliance with the International Court of Justice’s orders to ensure the unhindered provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance, recognizing that failure to do so implies complicity in genocide.

Ensure that humanitarian aid distribution points are safe zones and investigate all attacks on aid seekers as potential war crimes.

References:

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