



Date: 25/07/2025

Webinar Report- Starving Gaza: The Crime, The Silence, The Action Needed

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) held a webinar on Thursday, 24 July 2025, titled "[Starving Gaza: The Crime, The Silence, The Action Needed.](#)" The webinar addressed the systematic use of starvation by the Israeli occupation as a weapon against the Palestinian population in Gaza and the broader context of international complicity, legal accountability, and humanitarian failure. Experts from across legal, humanitarian, political, and religious fields provided testimony and analysis on the unfolding genocide in Gaza, highlighting the role of the international community in either enabling or challenging these crimes.

The webinar featured a distinguished group of speakers: Solomon Sacco, Legal Adviser to the OHCHR Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Professor Michael Fakhri, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food; Chris Gunness, former Chief Spokesperson for UNRWA; Professor Michael Lynk, former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories; Jeff Halper, Head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD); Professor Haim Bresheeth, Professor of Film Studies at SOAS; and Dr. Munther Isaac, Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah.

In his contribution, Dr. Munther Isaac, Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah, opened by expressing the profound emotional burden of witnessing the tragedy in Gaza. He described the situation as "really unprecedented," stating, "we are watching a genocide through starvation," and lamented how global systems once believed to exist to defend the vulnerable had completely failed. Speaking as a faith



leader, he called it “a low point for all of us,” describing the moment as one of “reckoning,” where humanity as a whole must confront its responsibility. He criticised the global moral failure in clear terms: “Many of us tried, yet many were silent. Many actually justified, defended, called it a war of self-defense.”

Dr. Isaac highlighted that the starvation in Gaza is not the result of a natural disaster, but a calculated consequence of geopolitical inaction: “Children [are] being starved... because superpowers are not willing to act and demand sanctions to force Israel to let food and aid get in.” While acknowledging the efforts of those who have long spoken out, including within the faith community, he questioned the sincerity of those only now issuing condemnations. “We can’t just feel helpless,” he insisted, “we owe it to the children of Gaza.” He stressed that failure demands renewed and intensified effort: “The demand is clear: immediate intervention, stop this, to allow food and aid to enter.”

He concluded with a powerful call to action, particularly directed at fellow faith leaders: “Don’t just condemn, don’t just be appalled... demand action, demand accountability, boycott if needed, demand sanctions.” Dr. Isaac called for grassroots mobilisation and a clear rejection of complicity, reminding listeners of the collapse of the global legal and political system: “We failed to stop the genocide that we’re watching—then what would we do?” He warned that the implications go beyond Gaza: “It’s Palestine now, it’s Gaza now, God knows who’s next.” Ending with a heartfelt message to the people of Gaza, he said: “They have dignity. The world does not. They have honor. The world and world leaders do not.” He closed by urging immediate intervention, a ceasefire, and full accountability for those enabling this catastrophe.

In his speech, Chris Gunness, former Chief Spokesperson for UNRWA, began by fully endorsing the words of Dr. Munther Isaac, aligning himself with the moral urgency expressed by the previous speaker. He then offered a detailed historical context to what he called the “live streamed pictures of starvation, ethnic cleansing and genocide,” reminding the audience that “genocide is a continuum” as originally defined by Raphael Lemkin. He explained that 66% of Gaza’s population are refugees or descendants of refugees displaced during the 1948 Nakba, and that the refugee camps where UNRWA operates are a direct result of this mass dispossession. He



traced the progression of Israeli policies—from the 1967 occupation and its denial of rights and land confiscation, to the blockade imposed in 2007 that severely restricted the flow of essential goods, creating a bottleneck used to “strangle Gaza.” Since October 7, 2023, he noted, “there’ve been months where literally nothing has gone into Gaza.”

Gunness highlighted the unique and horrifying nature of the current situation: “Gaza has a fence built around it... there’s nowhere safe to run.” He described how humanitarian aid is now being distributed in fenced-off agricultural zones where “people come like cattle. And indeed, they’re being slaughtered like cattle.” He stressed the staggering death toll—“about 1,000 people” killed in the six or more weeks since the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation began operating, a figure that he pointed out is comparable to the number killed in the October 7th attacks. Yet, he emphasised, “whereas there was huge global outrage for the October 7th attack, there’s so little outrage or meaningful outrage” in response to Gaza’s ongoing catastrophe. He used this contrast to underscore the failure of global accountability and called for immediate activation of international legal mechanisms, including both the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). He reminded the audience that the ICC has issued arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Galant, and that “it is an obligation on all 123 state parties... to arrest and hand over these two men” should they enter their jurisdiction.

Gunness urged support for efforts like those of Palestinian civil society groups working under universal jurisdiction, such as the Hind Rajab group in Brussels, who have collected social media evidence of Israeli soldiers committing atrocities, including “blowing up housing blocks, blowing up civilians, going into homes, looting wardrobes.” He called for governments and prosecutors to act on this evidence and prosecute perpetrators. He also praised Francesca Albanese’s report, “From the Economy of Occupation to the Economy of Genocide,” which “names and shames specific universities, companies and other entities that are profiteering from the genocide.” Gunness stressed the importance of enforcing her recommendations and pressuring governments to cease military support to Israel. He concluded with a stark reflection: “What we’re now seeing is the army of a people against whom the absolutely appalling



events of the Second World War, the Holocaust, were perpetrated... doing things which are chillingly redolent and reminiscent of what happened during the Second World War.” He quoted former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who said that Israel is “creating a concentration camp in southern Gaza.” Guinness warned that “never again is really not worth the paper it’s printed on” unless concrete action is taken. The children of Gaza, he reminded, are “being killed, starved to death at the rate of at least 20 a day.”

In his remarks, Professor Michael Lynk, former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, began by affirming the gravity of the moment, describing the current situation in Gaza as “a very grave moment in modern human history.” He responded directly to claims that international law has become meaningless in the face of the atrocities in Gaza, stating firmly: “I want to be able to say that international law actually has standing, that international law actually is important for all of us.” Emphasising its universal foundation, he reminded the audience that these laws were born “in the ashes of the Second World War” and signed by nearly every country. These governments can now be held accountable for falling short of their commitments under the human rights and humanitarian treaties they endorsed.

Professor Lynk then traced the historical use of starvation as a weapon of war, citing examples from the German genocide in Namibia, the Armenian genocide, the Allied blockade of Lebanon in WWI, and the Biafra famine in the 1960s. He framed the current Israeli blockade of Gaza as a continuation of this violent legacy, calling it “the continued settler colonialism of Palestine” and “a clear violation of international law” and the Geneva Conventions. He reminded attendees that the ICC had already found “reason to believe that Israel has used starvation as a method of warfare” in its arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Galant in November 2024—“before starvation reached the peak that it’s reached right now.” He detailed the three sets of provisional measures issued by the ICJ in January, March, and May 2024, affirming that “the use of starvation is prohibited under international law” and that “Israel must allow the free flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza at scale.”



He continued by warning that “deliberately cutting off vital supplies... is once again weaponizing aid,” in violation of both international human rights and humanitarian law, and likely constitutes “war crimes and crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute of 1998.” Professor Lynk cited the 1948 Genocide Convention, stressing that it prohibits “the deliberate infliction on a group of conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” He praised Francesca Albanese for being one of the few UN officials to explicitly use the term “genocide” in reference to Gaza, noting that while others “walk right up to the red line,” Albanese has crossed it in her recent reports. He added that other major voices—including Josep Borrell, Martin Griffiths, and Amnesty International—have also declared that what is happening in Gaza is a genocide. Concluding powerfully, he asserted: “Genocide and the creation of the Genocide Convention wasn’t put into place in order to allow historians 20 or 30 years from now to determine that there was a genocide in the distant past... The Genocide Convention is there to compel action now.” He closed with a blunt assessment of global complicity: “This genocide... could not have gone a day longer had the countries of the Global North used their power... They could have cut that off and this war would have stopped the day after.”

Solomon Sacco, Legal Adviser to the UN Human Rights Office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, began contribution by affirming his alignment with the remarks of the previous speakers and emphasised that “starvation, hunger, the blockade and closure of Gaza did not start on the 7th of October,” but had long preceded it. He explained that even before October 2023, the UN Human Rights Office had raised concerns about Israel’s use of collective punishment and hunger against Gaza’s civilian population. However, since the imposition of the “total siege, blockade and closure of Gaza,” he warned that “death by starvation” was no longer a risk but a devastating reality: “Palestinians in Gaza are starving to death... this is a direct consequence of policies and practices put in place.” Many of the dead are unrecorded, he added, with people collapsing from hunger in the streets, hospitals overwhelmed or destroyed, and thousands dying in areas where aid cannot reach.

Sacco described the current situation as “truly catastrophic,” highlighting the impossible choices facing Palestinians: “being forced to choose between starving to



death or being shot dead or seriously injured by the Israeli military when trying to access food.” Since 27 May 2025, when the Israeli-U.S. mechanism came into effect, “1,060 dead and more than 7,207 injured” were reported while attempting to collect aid, including near GHF sites and while waiting for UN convoys. Although some aid trucks have entered, Sacco made clear this was “a drop in the ocean of the aid needed.” He condemned Israel’s failure to ensure the safe distribution of aid and its “continued attacks in Gaza” which have “dismantled and destroyed Gaza’s governance and law enforcement structures,” escalating disorder and undermining civilian access to basic services. The “unlawful targeting of the civilian police,” he said, directly contributed to chaos and starvation and violated Israel’s obligations as the occupying power.

He detailed the “catastrophic impacts” of Israel’s attacks on Gaza’s food production infrastructure, including agricultural land and fishing sectors, warning of “conditions which threaten the survival of Gaza’s population.” Sacco reaffirmed Israel’s legal duty as an occupying power to “ensure the provision of food and medical care” and to allow unimpeded humanitarian access. He referenced the ICJ’s binding provisional measures issued in March 2024 which required Israel to facilitate humanitarian aid “without delay and at scale.” However, he criticised Israel’s introduction of a “militarised and limited mechanism” for aid distribution, which “endangers civilians and consolidates the forced displacement” of Palestinians. He stated unequivocally: “The weaponisation of food for civilians... constitutes a war crime,” and under certain conditions, “may constitute the crime against humanity of forcible transfer.” While military conduct may give rise to “individual criminal responsibility,” Sacco concluded with a call for immediate action: “The time for strong statements is over. There needs to be action.” He demanded an end to the shooting of civilians, a full ceasefire, the flooding of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and the lifting of all unlawful restrictions. He reminded third states of their duty to “take concrete steps to ensure that Israel... complies with its duty” to sustain life in Gaza.

Jeff Halper, Head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), opened his remarks by affirming his support for the comments made by previous speakers but explained that he would approach the issue from a political rather than



humanitarian or legal perspective. He described the starvation in Gaza not as a humanitarian crisis, but as a “man-made famine”—a calculated strategy of repression: “an engineered mechanism of pacifying the Palestinian people.” Halper emphasised that while legal mechanisms exist, they are often ineffective without political will, since implementation of sanctions and accountability ultimately depends on political systems. He criticised Israel’s dominance in “security politics,” describing Gaza as a testing ground where Israel develops and refines tactics, technologies of control, and systems of surveillance that are later exported globally. According to Halper, “this is really what it exports, including the idea of a security state.”

Halper argued that the repression witnessed in Gaza is not isolated but part of a larger political and ideological system rooted in settler colonialism. He described it as a structured, long-term project: “Settler colonialism has a logic, it has a structure, it has a process and policies... that Israel is developing on the Palestinians and then exporting to other places.” He stressed that concepts like “Judaization” and “pacification” are essential to understanding Israeli policy, even if such terms are not commonly used in legal discourse. “You can’t Judaize a country without genocide,” he stated plainly. While acknowledging the importance of legal terms like genocide, apartheid, and occupation, he insisted that political language is also necessary to grasp the broader logic and intent behind Israel’s actions. He urged a shift from purely legal advocacy to a broader analytical and political framework capable of explaining why these policies are occurring and how they function systemically.

Concluding his intervention, Halper called for the creation of an International Coordinating Committee on Palestine to bridge the current disconnect between legal experts, grassroots activists, and analysts of settler colonialism. He noted the lack of effective organisation to oppose policies like engineered starvation and argued that the tools and instruments exist but are not being sufficiently mobilised: “The tools are there, the instruments are there, the international laws are there... but we’re not able to really effectively end this campaign.” He proposed uniting international law practitioners, activists, and academics into a coordinated network capable of launching meaningful campaigns, both in the short and long term. “This isn’t an answer for ending this immediately,” he said, “but certainly we have to try to more coordinate our



organizations.” He closed by emphasising the importance of integrating Palestinian voices into global advocacy structures and addressing the shared feeling of “powerlessness” that currently pervades the struggle to stop the atrocities unfolding in Gaza.

In his intervention, Professor Haim Bresheeth, Professor of Film Studies at SOAS, delivered a powerful and unapologetic speech on behalf of “many, many hundreds of thousands of anti-Zionist Jews” who stand in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against “the Zionist settler colonial state, which oppresses and genocides the Palestinians.” He spoke as a representative of over a thousand anti-Zionist Jews who convened in Vienna in June 2025 to discuss “means and ways and sanctions to stop this genocide.” Bresheeth affirmed that their movement is rooted in global Jewish conscience and aligns unequivocally with Palestinian liberation. He emphasised the UN’s recognition of the right of occupied peoples to resist with all available means and stressed the importance of “Jews of conscience everywhere” uniting in opposition to Zionism and its crimes.

Bresheeth listed Israel’s war crimes in explicit detail: “ethnic cleansing, militarized apartheid, herbicide, scholasticide, medicide, mass starvation as an instrument of forced expulsion... and an extant genocide of hundreds of thousands, the worst crime of our time.” He stated clearly that such crimes would not be possible without “the enthusiastic support offered by the whole West,” naming the US, EU, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as complicit through arms, financing, and political protection. He declared that “these states are themselves guilty of genocide according to the Genocide Convention of 1948.” Speaking as the son of two Auschwitz survivors, he rejected Israel’s claim to Jewish identity: “There is nothing Jewish about what Israel is doing to the Palestinians. There never was. Israel is not a Jewish state. Israel is indeed a racist, anti-Semitic state.” He categorically rejected Israel’s claim to speak on behalf of Jews anywhere.

Bresheeth called for firm, unprecedented international action. Drawing a comparison with South Africa’s expulsion from the UN General Assembly in 1974 for apartheid, he stated: “What South Africa did... pales into insignificance almost compared to what



Israel is doing to the Palestinians.” He called on the UN to “expel Israel, a genocidal society,” describing the situation as “the first democratic genocide of humanity,” referencing majority support among Israeli Jews. He further demanded Israel’s removal from associate membership in the European Union, arguing that such a status violates EU principles forbidding ties with regimes committing “genocide, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid.” Finally, he urged the UN to deploy an international protection force for Palestinians not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank, where “mafia behaviour” has escalated. Bresheeth concluded with a direct appeal to the international community: “No one at the moment is protecting the Palestinians because of the West that behaves like an imperial mafia... We ask the UN to enact what it is there to do—to protect, to stop the genocide, and to eject Israel from membership of the UN.”

Professor Michael Fakhri, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, began his remarks emphasising the urgency of addressing the ongoing catastrophe in Gaza. He refrained from recounting the well-known horrors but reminded the audience that “for 20 months, we as independent human rights experts... have raised the alarm over and over.” He recalled how Israel had “announced its starvation campaign” on 9 October 2023 and then implemented it in full, with Prime Minister Netanyahu stating on 1 March 2025 that “nothing was to enter Gaza.” Fakhri noted that from 2 March to 19 May, “no food, no water, no fuel, no medicine, nothing entered Gaza for approximately 78 days.” He stressed that this occurred against the backdrop of a siege that began in 2000 and declared that “we are really at the point now where we’re watching people die from hunger and malnutrition... at horrific rates.”

Professor Fakhri highlighted that “this is the first time anyone’s been charged with the war crime of starvation” since the creation of the International Criminal Court. He recalled that both the ICC and the ICJ had recognised the scale of starvation and famine in Gaza, with the ICJ issuing provisional measures in January 2024. He went further, stating that Israel’s actions go beyond blocking aid: “Israel is also attacking the UN... attacking humanitarian convoys, civilians seeking aid, UN headquarters... and shooting at UN peacekeepers.” In his assessment, Israel has not only “denied and restricted humanitarian aid,” but also deliberately destroyed Gaza’s food system



through targeted bombings of orchards, greenhouses, water infrastructure, and fishing boats. The use of white phosphorus, he said, “poisons the soil,” making it impossible for Palestinians to feed themselves now or in the future. He described this as a “systemic campaign to humiliate, weaken, and deny the Palestinian people the ability to feed themselves.”

Turning to the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, Fakhri criticised its collaboration with the U.S. and the militarisation of aid. He cited warnings from UNICEF and other UN agencies who said the plan was not humanitarian but “a military plan... a system to bait, to trap civilians.” He affirmed that “over 100 people have been killed by either Israeli forces or American mercenaries” while trying to seek aid at these sites. He stated unequivocally: “Israel has been using food and aid and starvation as a mechanism to humiliate, weaken and kill the Palestinians as part of a larger strategy.” That broader strategy, he warned, is aimed at “the full and indefinite occupation of Gaza and ultimately annexation of the remaining Palestinian territories.” In terms of action, he called on states to use the UN General Assembly’s authority to overcome Security Council paralysis and “send peacekeepers to accompany humanitarian convoys.”

He urged countries to execute ICC warrants, apply national criminal laws to block entry of war criminals, and impose “broad-based sanctions against the State of Israel.” Fakhri concluded with a clear legal basis: “The Court of Justice authorises countries to sanction the State of Israel to make sure that Israel complies with international law.”

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK