

We Need Creative Measures Against the Genocidaires

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As Gaza nears four months of siege, as the number of trucks being allowed into Gaza do pitifully little to ease hunger, Genocide Joe and leaders of a dozen other countries have decided to double-down on genocide. They are “suspending” money to UNRWA, the UN agency that has been keeping Palestinians from starvation and misery for decades. The cut-off to UNRWA took place on the same day the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings that demanded Israel prevent acts of genocide while the ICJ mounts a years-long investigation into whether genocide has already occurred. The timing was no coincidence. Israel knew the ICJ would hand down a tough judgement against it. So, it prepared an offensive against the UNRWA to blunt the impact of the ICJ opinion.

Israel has long opposed an independent agency to help Palestinians, but this year during its war on Gaza it saw a chance to destroy it. At the start of January researcher Noga Arbel told the Israeli Knesset Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy subcommittee, “It will be impossible to win the war if we do not destroy UNRWA and this destruction must begin immediately”. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz called for the United Nations’ refugee agency for Palestinians to be “replaced with agencies dedicated to genuine peace and development.” The *Times of Israel* reported on January 29 that a classified Foreign Ministry report has a plan to “push the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, out of the Gaza Strip post-war.”

UNRWA received the Israeli charges about a dozen workers on the 26th and immediately fired nine of them. Two others accused are dead. Did the workers get a chance to defend themselves? Apparently they were fired first with the “independent investigation” to come later. Despite cooperating to the hilt with Israel UNRWA now is being charged further. *Reuters* reports Israel claims “190 UN staff to be hardened militants.”

After hearing about the alleged crimes of 12 out of 13,000 UNRWA workers in Gaza, the “West”

rushed to further punish Palestinians with the aid suspension. UNRWA doesn't have any reserves. It relies on constant donations. The agency won't have money to provide food and educational services after February. All the outrage coming from Israel and the U.S. over the supposed participation in the October 7 attacks contrasts sharply with the total *lack* of outrage at Israeli killings of UN workers. As of December 2023 Israel had killed 134. No country suspended aid to Israel over those crimes.

Is it too soon to use the word Holodomor, the Ukrainian word for hunger-murder, to describe what's going on in Gaza? The Holodomor was Stalin's mass murder by starvation of Ukrainians in the 1930's. The U.N. is already describing starvation in Gaza. A group of its agencies said in December, "At least one in four households - or 577,000 people - in Gaza are already facing catastrophic hunger." The United Nations has categories for "acute food insecurity", five categories, as if it was a hurricane: stressed, crisis, emergency, catastrophe and famine. Famine is when people start dying in large numbers daily, but "catastrophe" which is the category where half a million in Gaza find themselves is bad enough. Its characteristic are "Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition." The Israeli government says their war is likely to go on for months. The U.N. predicts this will mean Gaza will suffer famine, the absolute worst hunger situation.

I'm directly anguished from hearing about hunger sufferings of the family of one person with whom I've worked. The father's name is Anas and he worked at a project to create sustainable food sources in Gaza City. Now his own family is starving. His home was bombed right after the Hamas attack on Oct. 7. The family went from place to place. For a while he was living in a closed hospital until that was bombed. His wife gave birth without any medical care. Anas had to deliver the baby himself while listening to instructions over the phone. But the family is starving. His wife can't produce enough milk for the newborn.

There's no mystery on the cause of this. Responding to the Hamas attack and atrocities Israel's Defense Minister on October 9 said his military was fighting "human animals" and "there will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed." He was as good as his word. Because of 17 years of Israeli blockade Gaza cannot feed itself, cannot even get enough clean water from its aquifers. It has relied on massive charity. In recent years 500 trucks a day brought in aid. That was totally cut by the Israeli siege. After protest by aid agencies Israel allowed in 100 trucks a day and then another 79 in mid-December, but because the roads and streets have been ruined it's very difficult to distribute. The *New York Times* reported in mid-January 2024 that an average of 129 trucks per day were making it into Gaza. In late January some of those deliveries were obstructed. Israeli protesters unhappy with Netanyahu's efforts to free hostages blocked trucks at the Kerem Shalom crossing.

The situation in northern Gaza is the worst with regard to food. With all the attention to Israeli bombing in Khan Younis and Rafah it's almost forgotten that there are 300,000 to 400,000 Palestinians still in the north. It's getting worse. The *New York Times* reports that the U.N. was able to get only 21% of their food trucks into northern Gaza in the first weeks of January compared to 70% at the end of 2023. Andrea de Domenico, the U.N. official in charge of coordinating humanitarian aid in the West Bank and Gaza, told the *Times* the situation "is reaching a level of inhumanity that for me is beyond comprehension."

What's it like to starve? Within days, faced with nothing to eat, the body begins feeding on itself. The body starts to consume energy stores — carbohydrates, fats and then the protein parts of tissue. Eventually the body consumes its own muscle including heart muscle. Without food death is imminent.

What can be done? The protests of hundreds of thousands were important, but we have to move on.

Walking down empty streets with signs empowers us, but does little more than make genocidaires uncomfortable. Instead, we need pickets of Congressional offices, not one-off affairs, but continuing ones with names and pictures of the members of Congress supporting genocide. Find the names of their big contributors and picket them, too.

On the positive side we need efforts to pack City Councils to demand resolutions calling for ceasefire, withdrawal of Israeli troops and the restoring and restocking of Palestinian hospitals and the rebuilding of Palestinian homes. That's happened already in a number of big cities including Bridgeport, Providence, Detroit, Minneapolis, Oakland and San Francisco. We need those resolutions, too, in unions. Unlike during past attacks on Gaza American unions now are rising to the challenge. The two-million-member Service Employees International Union is the largest and latest. It follows the United Auto Workers, the United Electrical Workers, and the American Postal Workers Union and a host of others. Eventually this could lead to job actions.

Raise also the question of investments in Israel, whether in State of Israel bonds, Israeli shekels, and Israeli companies especially those directly involved with Israeli warfare and enforcement of the occupation. After decades of pressure most state governments and many labor unions own Israel bonds. Write to your state's Treasurer's office and ask for a spreadsheet of their expose to Israeli securities and currency. You probably have a legal right to it. Put the spreadsheet or PDF through the excellent free online app created by the Quakers (AFSC) called "Investigate". It will tell you in seconds about investments in warfare, prisons and occupations.

Use all kinds of peaceful creative measures to embarrass, shame, inconvenience and bother the mass killers. Take hints from climate and Black Lives Matters movements and imitate their most effective methods. Remember, from Ukraine to Palestine, genocide is still a crime.