

# It's time for the whole truth on the UN's declaration of famine in Gaza

Over the course of the war, the West has lost sight of the realistic capabilities of a wartime democracy fighting for its survival



Jake Wallis Simons

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As I write, Israeli troops are mobilising to conquer Gaza City. In response, the United Nations has declared that the Strip has succumbed to famine, a claim that has been denied by Israel but amplified unquestioningly by the media. There you have it: attack and counterattack.

Such is the asymmetry of this war. When it comes to military might, the IDF is unstoppable. As Benjamin Netanyahu pointed out on a podcast this week, Hamas would have been defeated without a single Israeli casualty if Jerusalem hadn't striven to limit civilian deaths.

The jihadis have lost hundreds of their tunnels and tens of thousands of men, including several generations of leadership. But this is not the war they are fighting.

No, Hamas is fighting for your sympathy. Embracing death and misery, both real and exaggerated, for the sake of propaganda, they keep the hostages for bait and use gullible ideologues in NGOs and the media to conjure international pressure on the enemy. Sooner or later, Israel will buckle. All they have to do is hold out.

Both sides are on the ropes. While Hamas is a shadow of the light infantry corps it resembled in 2023, Israel is enduring the worst crisis of legitimacy in its history, with country after country lining up to recognise a Palestinian state. Hamas openly applauds Keir Starmer, Emmanuel Macron and the rest. They push on regardless.

Weakened by trauma, grief, political infighting, fatigue, anti-Semitism and international demonisation, the unity and resilience of Israel's population has ebbed. The campaign to take Gaza City is a last-ditch attempt to force Hamas to release the hostages and end this appalling war.

Enter the UN. For all its veneer of authority, this is not an assembly of democracies. Rather, most members are autocracies or corrupt regimes seeking legitimacy by equivalence with free countries. Many derive individual benefit from vilifying the Jewish state.

Indeed, the obligation to single out Israel for condemnation is enshrined in the rules. Don't believe it? Look up Agenda Item 7 of the UN Human Rights Council, a body which has been chaired by that exemplar of human rights, Iran. It's there in black and white.

At least 12 UN staff allegedly took part in the atrocities of October 7. Terrorists have routinely operated from its facilities; at least one in 10 of its employees in Gaza are believed to be members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Then there are characters like Francesca

Albanese, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Last week, she insisted that the perpetrators of October 7, were not “cut-throats, people armed to the teeth, or fighters”, but a “political force”. Seriously?

In May, her colleague, Tom Fletcher, the UN humanitarian chief, informed BBC Radio 4 that “14,000 babies” would die in Gaza within “48 hours”, a claim that was repeated by 13 MPs in Parliament. When the deaths failed to materialise, nobody cared. The sorry truth is that in the hands of the UN, humanitarian aid is another political weapon. When the organisation oversaw distribution in Gaza, aid regularly found its way into the hands of Hamas, which sold it to pay its fighters.

So Israel took over the operation, distributing aid directly to residents for free. To run down the stockpiles in the jihadi tunnels, it first cut off supplies for several months.

This was an error, causing panic, hoarding and soaring prices. As usual, Jerusalem's failure was seized on as evidence of “genocide”. Predictably, the UN – which was worsening the deprivation by downing tools entirely – claimed that Israel was “using starvation as a weapon of war”.

So much for the UN. But by officially declaring famine in Gaza, a Rubicon has been crossed. We are being asked to believe that the privations match the small number of internationally recognised famines of this century, in South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia.

This seems unlikely, given that 10,000 lorries of aid have entered Gaza since May, 2,300 boxes have been dropped from the air and more than 2.2 million family food parcels have been handed out weekly. Analysis of data from January to March 2024 showed more food going into Gaza than before the war. Yet according to

the UN, Jerusalem is both pouring huge resources into feeding the Gazans and starving them.

How did the UN arrive at its famine classification? According to Israel's foreign ministry, it ignored its own death rate criteria, used unreliable data from Hamas and lowered the hunger threshold to grant Gaza a bespoke famine.

Predictably, defenders of the UN unironically accused Israel of “a campaign of concerted disinformation”.

Which brings me to journalists. Occasionally – as when the BBC recently passed off a leukaemia patient as a victim of starvation – false claims are debunked. This week, the Free Press revealed that more than a dozen images of starvation used by the world's media were actually cases of illness.

Israel has now directed its fabled Unit 8200 intelligence agency to collect evidence of food consumption in Gaza. But the information is already in the public domain. Search Instagram for “Gaza restaurants”. I've seen falafel, hot dogs, six types of ice cream and Nutella crêpes. Look at what people are posting in the Strip on Snapchat in real time. Pockets of hunger there may be, but Somalia this is not.

True, distribution has been a grim challenge. This is, after all, a war zone. There have been cases of malnutrition. Yet even before the war, this was so; that is what happens to the poorest when a society is ruled by incompetent jihadis.

So much for common sense. Over time, the West has lost sight of who glories in murder, rape, mutilation and kidnap, who started the war, and who prolongs it by holding the hostages.

We have lost sight, in other words, of the difference between an imperfect wartime democracy and jihadis. Somewhere along the way, we are losing ourselves.

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<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/08/23/its-time-for-the-whole-truth-on-the-uns-declaration-of-fami/>