



“What can we do?”:

Global and local actions to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2417

Introduction

In 2023, 282 million people worldwide faced acute food insecurity¹ - nearly triple the figure recorded in 2016². Year after year, conflict continues to be the primary driver of hunger and malnutrition, including for 135 million people in over 20 countries and territories in 2023. Civilians bear the brunt of these conflicts, as livelihoods collapse, food production halts, communities are displaced and access to markets and health services becomes limited.

These figures are unacceptable and avoidable, and they call for extensive and concerted intervention. The human right to adequate food was initially inscribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³, and is recognised in several instruments under international law. Alarming, however, hunger is often deliberately used as a weapon of warfare. Actions aimed at harming civilians are preventable, and they contravene provisions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) that protect civilians in conflict. Whether driven by deliberate intent or not, the devastating impact of conflict on civilian’s access to food must be addressed.

In 2018 the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2417 (UNSCR 2417)⁴, which recognises the link between conflict and hunger and condemns the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, as well as the unlawful denial of humanitarian access to civilian populations. This ground-breaking resolution identifies conflict-induced hunger as a matter of international peace and security and demands compliance with IHL. Yet its adoption has not significantly influenced the conduct of hostilities.

Concerted global action remains insufficient, fostering a sense of impunity for parties to conflict. Moreover, high-level engagement must shift to a longer-term approach, integrate development programming, and focus on peace-building, good governance and democracy in post-conflict environments to avoid the danger of relapse into conflict.

As hunger and humanitarian conditions worsen in places like Gaza and Sudan, this toolkit provides a brief overview of how conflict and violence can impact food and nutrition insecurity⁵, and outlines practical actions that key actors – from governments to multilateral institutions and parliamentarians – can take to help reverse the devastating rise of conflict-driven hunger and malnutrition.

How do conflict and violence affect food insecurity?

Conflict affects food and nutrition security in numerous ways, with immediate and long-term impacts on food accessibility, production and distribution. In most cases, civilians bear the brunt of these effects. Situations of armed conflict are regulated by IHL, which imposes rules on parties to a conflict to limit the impact of war on civilians and civilian infrastructure. It regulates how people affected by conflict, especially civilians, should be treated and protected in international and non-international conflicts, including in contexts of occupation.

Several rules of IHL safeguard civilians' access to food, water and medicine. They prohibit parties to a conflict from using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare⁶, restricting access to humanitarian relief⁷, attacking or restricting humanitarian personnel delivering aid⁸, or destroying⁹, damaging, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population¹⁰. By disregarding these norms, parties to a conflict can contribute to long and short-term hunger for the civilian population.

Some of the ways in which conflict fuels food and nutrition insecurity include:

Disruption of food systems

- *Loss of agricultural production.* Violence and insecurity may force farmers to abandon their fields or prevent them from planting and harvesting crops. This diminishes local food supplies and devastates the livelihoods of those who rely on agriculture
- *The destruction of crops and killing of livestock.* This inherently undermines the ability of farmers and communities to make a living and produce for their own consumption
- *The destruction and damage to infrastructure critical to food production.* This includes irrigation systems, drinking water infrastructure and food storage facilities, and further cripples the production and preservation of food. This leads to immediate shortages and long-term declines in agricultural productivity
- *Severe disruption to supply chains.* Transportation routes, critical for moving food from farms to markets, become impassable due to insecurity and damaged infrastructure. Markets can be destroyed or become inaccessible, breaking down the distribution networks that communities rely on.

Impediments to humanitarian access

- *Humanitarian aid often cannot reach those most in need.* Conflict zones are frequently too dangerous and inaccessible for aid organisations to effectively deliver food and medical assistance for acute malnutrition
- *Aid workers and convoys are deliberately targeted.* Deconfliction mechanisms, intended to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, may fail
- *Bureaucratic obstacles in delivering aid.* Authorities or armed forces controlling a territory may demand excessive documentation or deliberately impose entry restrictions on items essential to the survival and dignity of affected populations. For international staff, lengthy visa processes can be used to hinder a humanitarian response.

Loss of livelihoods

- *Displacement of populations.* Civilians are uprooted, often fleeing to seek safety in areas that lack sufficient resources to support them. Displaced populations strain the limited resources of host communities, exacerbating food insecurity
- *Economic instability.* This is an inevitable consequence of conflict and frequently leads to job loss, depriving people of the income needed to buy food. Inflation, a common consequence of prolonged violence, drives food prices to soar, pushing even basic sustenance out of reach for many
- *Scarcity of production and supply chain disruptions in conflict-affected areas increase food prices,* deepening poverty and hunger amongst the most vulnerable populations. The war in Ukraine, for example, has demonstrated how food speculation and global interdependencies can harm regional supply chains, with severe human costs.



Agricultural infrastructure in Gaza

In October 2024, the IPC analysis classified the entire territory of Gaza as facing Emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 4), and indicated a substantial risk of famine throughout the Gaza Strip until at least April 2025. Children are dying of malnutrition. Beyond the immediate and deteriorating devastating conditions in Gaza, the conflict will have long-term repercussions on food security.

The destruction of agricultural infrastructure—including cropland, greenhouses, and agricultural wells—has reached unprecedented levels due to razing, shelling, and other conflict-related pressures. The UN Satellite Centre (UNOSAT)'s data published in January 2025 suggests that approximately 75% of Gaza's cropland has been damaged¹¹. By the end of 2024, also 50% of agricultural wells and 90% of greenhouses had been damaged¹².

The potential for food production, now and in the future, has been so severely compromised, that it forces the population to urgently rely on humanitarian assistance, whilst humanitarian access is still severely restricted. The near-total collapse of the agricultural sector risks taking a toll on the population for years to come.

Humanitarian access in Sudan

The conflict that erupted in Sudan in April 2023 has led the population to “the worst possible levels of food insecurity the country has ever faced”, according to the latest IPC report¹³. Over 25 million people – more than half of the population of Sudan – face “crisis or worse” conditions of food insecurity. This includes over 8 million people on the brink of famine (IPC Phase 4) and over 750,000 people facing “catastrophe” levels of food insecurity.

14 areas, including parts of Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan and Al Jazirah states, are facing the risk of famine. Two years into the conflict, 8.8 million people have been displaced. The influx of displaced population is putting great pressure on Chad and South Sudan, which currently host almost 2 million refugees.

Humanitarian access in Sudan has often been restricted by parties to the conflict. Aid organizations have been attacked, including, among many others, UN World Food Programme trucks, and their operations impeded. By September 2024, OCHA reported 73 access incidents since the beginning of the year, such as bureaucratic and operational impediments¹⁴. In 2025, such impediments keep rising. In February alone, 60% of visa applications were approved. Active fighting is leading some humanitarian partners to suspend operations in Zamzam camp¹⁵.

Tragically, 2024 has been the deadliest year ever recorded for aid workers in Sudan, with 54 deaths, and an unprecedented number of kidnappings and abductions¹⁶. The deliberate targeting of humanitarian operations, including humanitarian personnel, is regarded as using starvation as a weapon of war, therefore contravening IHL and UNSCR 2417. The lack of food and humanitarian aid lead to widespread food insecurity, severely impacting the population of Sudan.

In both these contexts, accountability towards perpetrators is lacking. UNSCR 2417 explicitly condemns violations of IHL described above. However, its implementation is far from successful. Specific UN sanctions, such as those against Sudan outlined by Resolution 2750¹⁷, and UNSC ceasefire resolutions, have not served as deterrents. As the number of people affected by conflict-induced hunger continues to rise, different stakeholders must act to ensure those responsible for IHL violations are held accountable.

Factsheet on UN Security Council Resolution 2417

In May 2018, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2417, which addresses the relationship between armed conflicts and food insecurity worldwide. UNSCR 2417 remains one of the main conceptual and legal frameworks that can drive action to prevent and respond to conflict-induced hunger. The resolution emphasizes:

1. The devastating humanitarian consequences of armed conflict and violence, which hinder an effective humanitarian response and contribute to the threat of famine
2. Concern over the escalation of armed conflict in different regions and the need to prevent and resolve them through diplomacy and regional agreements
3. A commitment to seek inclusive and sustainable solutions to address the underlying causes of armed conflicts and the need to break the cycle between armed conflict and food insecurity.
4. The many ways in which armed conflicts affect food security whether through land destruction, disruption of food supply systems or forced displacement of people. It also highlights the threat posed by landmines and explosives in affected areas
5. How armed conflicts disproportionately affect women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly.

The resolution urges all parties to a conflict to comply with their obligations under IHL and strongly condemns practices that drive hunger in conflict, particularly the use of starvation as a method of warfare.

UNSCR 2417 also has important accountability objectives. It strongly urges States to conduct investigations within their jurisdiction into IHL violations related to the use of starvation as a weapon of war and to act against perpetrators, following domestic and international law. It further urges those who may have influence over parties to a conflict - including third states - to remind them of their obligations under IHL, thus working to put an end and prevent further violations.

Reporting mechanisms for UNSCR 2417

UNSCR 2417 was initially conceived as a platform to create opportunities to raise awareness and enhance reporting on the impact of conflict on food security. There are three main reporting channels to the Security Council:

- UN Secretary General country-specific reports. They provide context-specific information and may cover issues of conflict-driven hunger
- UN Secretary General Annual Report on the protection of civilians. It is now a requirement to include a section on conflict-induced hunger
- White Papers. OCHA develops the early warning reports, or white papers, to flag the risk or early signs of famine in specific contexts and offer recommendations for Security Council action to prevent it. For the most part, their circulation is limited to Security Council Members.

More can be done to mainstream topics of conflict and hunger in the work of the Security Council, and to enhance country-specific analysis and recommendations. In particular, country-based actors should be more systematically consulted when developing white notes to ensure that recommendations to the UN Security Council are reflective of local realities and will address the drivers of conflict-induced hunger.

Lack of implementation of UNSCR 2417

Despite growing awareness of how conflict and hunger are intrinsically linked, significant gaps remain in translating evidence, advocacy and high-level commitments into effective action to prevent and respond to conflict-induced hunger. Political considerations often influence the

implementation of accountability measures, such as international prosecution or sanctions, thus limiting their effectiveness. A culture of impunity leads to violations against the civilian population.

Several challenges hinder the effective implementation of UNSCR 2417:

- *Ineffective ownership*: The resolution lacks a dedicated focal person within the UN system. Unlike the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) and the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) agendas, there is no Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) specifically addressing conflict and hunger. While OCHA is the de facto lead on UNSCR 2417, political considerations can influence its appetite to proactively lead on this agenda
- *Insufficient awareness*: Knowledge of UNSCR 2417 remains low among governments, UN country teams, and civil society organisations. Reports often lack sufficient contextualisation and localisation, preventing effective follow-up actions at the country level and limiting meaningful conversations beyond restricted groups
- *Implementation gaps*: Partners outside of the New York and Geneva UN circles need more details on how the resolution can be operationalised and on the responsibility, process and stakeholders involved in the reporting process
- *Lack of preventative focus*: The resolution has not been leveraged through a prevention lens. Reports often reflect crises already occurring, rather than addressing emerging risks. Therefore, the resolution is often viewed as punitive rather than preventative
- *Weak response mechanisms*: The UN has limited tools to hold Member States to account for the unlawful conduct of hostilities, including attacks against civilians or destruction of objects indispensable for their survival. Political and security considerations often override humanitarian needs, leading to inadequate accountability measures. Both Gaza and Sudan highlight significant gaps in the enforcement of IHL. The lack of accountability and follow-up measures weakens deterrents and undermines the legitimacy of the ICC, ICJ and UNSCR 2417
- *Limited regional engagement*: organisations such as the African Union, European Union, IGAD or ECOWAS could play a greater role in regional efforts to prevent and mitigate conflict-induced hunger. Greater discussion is needed within these bodies on how to leverage UNSCR 2417
- *Cross-thematic approach*: UNSCR 2417 is an intrinsically complex resolution that links the humanitarian and the political spheres. However, it is often perceived as part of a solely humanitarian agenda. Therefore, diplomatic and political efforts may not always be part of the strategy adopted to address hunger caused by conflict.

Application of UNSCR 2417: Success stories

Whilst the operationalisation of UNSCR 2417 has been slow, the resolution was a norm-setting measure. It reinforces Customary International Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Law, Human Rights law, and States' commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the protection of civilians. Some examples include:

- UNSCR 2573 (April 2021)¹⁸: Unanimously adopted by the Security Council, it focuses on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. It condemns the starvation of civilians and urges parties to armed conflicts to ensure the proper functioning of food systems and markets
- Rome Statute Amendment (2019)¹⁹: Starvation in non-international armed conflicts was recognised as a war crime. By the end of 2024, 18 Member States, including Germany, Switzerland and The Netherlands, ratified the amendment at the national level

- Resolution 2428 on South Sudan (2018)²⁰: This resolution, passed after a White Paper briefing, acknowledged “conflict-induced food insecurity and the threat of famine” and imposed an arms embargo and targeted sanctions
- Resolution 2451 on Yemen (2018)²¹: Following the White Paper on Yemen, the Security Council Resolution explicitly called for the protection of objects indispensable to civilian survival.

Conclusion

The urgency of the Conflict and Hunger agenda demands collective and institutional action to hold perpetrators accountable. Progress, whilst limited, is possible, as the legal advances driven by UNSCR 2417 demonstrate. Strengthening the prevention aspect of the resolution, particularly through earlier, data-driven reporting on emerging risks, is essential to reducing civilian suffering. Consultative, locally-driven reports are key to effective recommendations. By bridging gaps in implementation, accountability measures, and awareness, stakeholders can make significant progress in minimizing hunger caused by conflict.

Endnotes

- 1 FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises. (2024). Global Report on Food Crises 2024. Rome.
- 2 (Ibid)
- 3 UN General Assembly. (1948). Resolution 217A (III), Universal Declaration of Human Rights, A/RES/217(III). Art 25
- 4 United Nations Security Council. (2018). Resolution 2718, S/RES/2417 <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2417>
- 5 For more information on this subject see Action Against Hunger's report: Action Against Hunger (2023). No matter who's fighting, hunger always wins. How violent actions drive food insecurity.
- 6 Art. 54(1) Additional Protocol I; art. 14 Additional Protocol II; ICRC Customary IHL Rule 53 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule53>
- 7 Arts. 23, 55, 59 Fourth Geneva Convention; Art. 70 Additional Protocol I; Art. 18 Additional Protocol II; ICRC Customary IHL Rule 55 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule55>
- 8 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (1977). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977. Art. 56 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule56>
- 9 Ibid. Art. 54(2) https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule54#refFn_560A1CEA_00012
- 10 Ibid. Arts. 27 and 55. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/380>
- 11 FAO, UNOSAT (2025) Gaza Strip Cropland Damage Analysis - December 2024. https://unosat.org/static/unosat_filesystem/4072/FAO-PAL-012_UNOSAT_A3_Gaza_Strip_Cropland_DA_December2017-2024.pdf
- 12 FAO, UNITAR (2024). Agricultural Damage Assessment in the Gaza Strip from October 7th 2023 to September 1st 2024. Rome: FAO. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/6dff587c-451b-4afe-a56d-a707b27a1449>
- 13 IPC (2024). Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation - Updated Projections and FRC conclusions for October 2024 to May 2025. IPC. <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1159433/?iso3=SDN>
- 14 OCHA (2024). Sudan Humanitarian Access Snapshot: September 2024. Available at: [https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-access-snapshot-september-2024#:~:text=The%20most%20frequently%20reported%20access.impediments%20\(26%20per%20cent](https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-access-snapshot-september-2024#:~:text=The%20most%20frequently%20reported%20access.impediments%20(26%20per%20cent)
- 15 OCHA (2025). Sudan Humanitarian Access Snapshot: February 2025. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-access-snapshot-february-2025>
- 16 ReliefWeb (2024). Aid Worker Security Database Signal Alert: National Aid Workers Facing Increased Fatal Attacks in Sudan - 29 October 2024. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/aid-worker-security-database-signal-alert-national-aid-workers-facing-increased-fatal-attacks-sudan-29-october-2024-enar>
- 17 United Nations Security Council. (2024). Resolution 2750, S/RES/2750 <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2750>
- 18 United Nations Security Council. (2021). Resolution 2573, S/RES/2573. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2573>
- 19 International Criminal Court (ICC). (2019). Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, amendment to article 8 to include starvation in non-international armed conflicts, ICC-ASP/18/Res.5, 7 December 2019.
- 20 United Nations Security Council. (2018). Resolution 2428, S/RES/2428. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2428>
- 21 United Nations Security Council. (2018). Resolution 2451, S/RES/2451. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2451>



“What can we do?”:

The role of the UN Security Council in tackling Conflict and Hunger

Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is normally one of the most influential international political bodies. The primary responsibility of its fifteen members is to ensure international peace and security by identifying threats to peace or acts of aggression and the appropriate responses including, if necessary and as a last resort, the use of force and other measures¹. It is the only UN body with the authority to issue resolutions that are legally binding for its Member States.

Existing relevant frameworks within the UN Security Council

In 2018, the Security Council unanimously adopted the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417 (UNSCR 2417), which condemns the use of hunger as a method of warfare and recognises the connection between conflict and hunger. The resolution also condemns the “unlawful denial of humanitarian access” and the “willful obstruction of aid deliveries”.

Whilst International Humanitarian Law (IHL) already prohibited the use of hunger as a weapon of war, it was only considered a war crime in international armed conflicts (IACs²). One year after the adoption of UNSCR 2417, the Rome Statute was modified to include the crime of starvation of civilians in Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs³). However, by the end of 2024, only 18 States had ratified the amendment, and the use of hunger as a weapon of war remains common practice⁴.

In the following years, the UNSC adopted several other resolutions related to the protection of food systems and continued access to food. Most notably, in 2021 it unanimously approved Resolution 2573, condemning attacks on objects indispensable to survival. Further, in 2024 it approved Resolution 2761, which outlines the parameters of humanitarian exemptions in the case of asset freezes imposed by UN sanction regimes.

Challenges in driving UN Security Council action

Geopolitical interests, lack of operational clarity, and conflicting priorities often prevent collective action to stop perpetrators from harming civilians. This is aggravated by the fact that, despite its global leadership role, the UN Security Council inconsistently addresses, and rarely enforces, International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law in conflict settings⁵.

What can the UN Security Council do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

- Promote compliance with International Humanitarian Law, and accountability for its violations**
 - The Security Council is mandated to report situations of concern to the International Criminal Court (ICC), such as violations of the 2019 amendment to the Rome Statute
 - Use resolutions, statements and diplomatic pressure to ensure that unimpeded humanitarian access is granted in conflict zones

- Establish commissions of inquiry or fact-finding missions investigating specific situations that could endanger international peace and security, as mandated by the UN Charter⁶
- Consider imposing sanctions against individuals or groups who infringe IHL, deliberately block access to food, destroy food systems, or deny humanitarian access. Ensure that sanctions make provisions to protect the civilian population.

2. Keep conflict-induced hunger on the global agenda

- The UNSC can drive visibility by designating champion Member States to raise awareness and mobilize action, such as members of the Group of Friends of Action on Conflict and Hunger⁷
- Convene regular Council meetings on the topic; Arria-formula meetings on specific contexts, and continue holding informal ambassador-level meetings to discuss relevant reports.

3. Enhance Early Warning Systems

- The UNSC should mandate the provision of clear guidance on evidence collection and reporting mechanisms required to monitor areas at risk, with a focus on preventative action
- Mandate regular reports on the state of food security in conflict-affected areas
- Ensure that key UN agencies, such as WFP and FAO collaborate with conflict-monitoring bodies to provide early warnings about food crises in conflict. OCHA, as the penholder on this agenda, must also play a key role in supporting reporting mechanisms.

4. Drive country-specific implementation of UNSCR 2417

- Timely, accurate, and systematic information about country-specific violations is essential. Current reporting mechanisms, such as the Secretary General's country reports; the annual report on the protection of civilians, and the white papers, must include actionable, specific recommendations
- Clarify the ownership of the topic of conflict-induced hunger in the Secretary General's yearly country reports. Whilst OCHA is the de facto pen holder, this agenda is not its primary concern, so data availability and situational challenges might not be as accurate
- Ensure that the "white papers" include actionable recommendations, to drive context-specific change when famine conditions arise
- Recommendations should encompass a wide range of actors, beyond the UN Security Council, and should therefore be made public. White papers should also focus on prevention, rather than outlining the situation in contexts where the situation has already deteriorated.

Conclusion

Overall, it is key for the UN Security Council to step up its leadership in driving consistent action in the fight against conflict-induced hunger. Clear ownership and guidance, regular early warning reporting on violations, and follow-up on specific actions would renew the credibility of this agenda, and contrast the current climate of impunity.

Endnotes

- 1 United Nations (1945). Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, 24 October 1945. Art. 24(1). Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-5>
- 2 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (1977). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977. Art. 53 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule53>
- 3 UN General Assembly. (1998). Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (last amended 2021) Art. 8(2)(e)(xix). Available at: https://legal.un.org/icc/statute/99_corr/cstatute.htm
- 4 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. (2023). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural-urban continuum. Rome: FAO, p. 8.
- 5 The Lancet. (2024). Starvation as a weapon of war must stop The Lancet, 403(10434), p.1309. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)00684-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)00684-6/fulltext)
- 6 United Nations. (1945). Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, 24 October 1945. Art. 34(1).
- 7 E. Gillard. (2021). Conflict-induced hunger and the Security Council The State of play three years after the adoption of SCR 2417: Challenges and Opportunities Oxford Institute for Ethics, Laws and Armed Conflict, p. 4-5.



“What can we do?”:

The role of UN Country Teams in tackling conflict and hunger

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) country teams and UN special political and peacekeeping missions have an essential role in implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2417. Despite this, their engagement at the country level has been limited. This is partly due to a lack of awareness of, and emphasis on, the conflict and hunger agenda among UN agencies at HQ level, which have not sufficiently supported or encouraged country-level action aligned with UNSCR 2417.

In countries where a Special Political Mission (SPM) or a peacekeeping mission is deployed, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) are well-positioned to advance the UNSCR 2417 agenda. This is particularly important, as most peacekeeping operations include mandates for the protection of civilians. The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), as the highest-ranking UN representative in these contexts, regularly interacts with government counterparts.

UN actors at the country level can also leverage early warning mechanisms by alerting donors and headquarters leadership to situations where conflict-induced hunger is increasing, due to IHL violations or other causes. UN leadership in-country should have the authority to call for early-warning ‘white notes’ and advocate privately for greater engagement by the UN Security Council in specific contexts. Given the political sensitivity of conflict-induced hunger, public advocacy in support of UNSCR 2417 could jeopardize humanitarian operations, making it essential for UN leaders to carefully manage these risks.

The recommendations below outline actions that UN country teams can take to enhance awareness, action, and accountability when conflict-induced hunger occurs.

What can the UN country teams do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

1. Increase political engagement and country leadership

To effectively support the implementation of UNSCR 2417, the SRSG, the Resident Coordinator or Humanitarian Coordinator, should:

- *Integrate UNSCR 2417 in diplomacy and advocacy efforts.* Incorporate UNSCR 2417 in their engagement with government counterparts, using it as a tool for humanitarian diplomacy. This will enhance advocacy for better humanitarian access and the protection of civilians
- *Ensure familiarity with UNSCR 2417 among UN leadership:* Ensure that UN heads of agencies and mission leadership are well-versed in UNSCR 2417 and its focus on conflict-induced hunger. This knowledge is crucial for effective coordination and response
- *Incorporate UNSCR 2417 in country strategies and operational planning.* Further, ensure both military and civilian staff are knowledgeable about its provisions, particularly concerning the intersection of conflict and hunger
- *Leverage UNSCR 2417 for early warning and prevention.* To support UNSCR 2417’s preventive

function, the SRSG should privately alert UN Headquarters when there are increasing risks of conflict-induced hunger, facilitating timely interventions

- *Integrate conflict and hunger analysis in humanitarian response plans (HRPs):* Additionally, relevant clusters, such as protection, logistics, and food security, should collaborate to address conflict-induced hunger. This issue must also be prioritized in discussions with government stakeholders
- *Facilitate joint analysis between clusters and mission components.* In order to enhance coordination and response to conflict-induced hunger
- *Enhance coordination in access and civil-military mechanisms.* Conflict and hunger should be integrated into access working groups and civil-military coordination mechanisms, ensuring a unified approach to addressing hunger in conflict zones.

2. Strengthen Early warning systems, monitoring and accountability

As the penholder for the UNSCR 2417 agenda, OCHA should take a more proactive role in consistently championing it. As part of its leadership role, OCHA should:

- *Enhance early warning systems for conflict-induced hunger:* Support UNSCR 2417's early warning function by identifying contexts at risk of increasing conflict-induced hunger. Proactively developing white notes, instead of waiting for UNSC member requests, will help ensure timely interventions
- *Appoint a dedicated UNSCR 2417 focal point within OCHA:* To ensure consistency and focus, this person should be responsible for coordinating and advancing the implementation of UNSCR 2417
- *Collaborate with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA):* OCHA should consult with the DPPA to develop stronger political recommendations within white notes, reinforcing them with concrete facts and actionable steps to better support UNSCR 2417's objectives
- *Encourage proactive white note production by UN Country Teams (UNCTs):* They should take the initiative to produce white notes on conflict-induced hunger without waiting for directives from UN headquarters or member states, in collaboration with FAO and WFP, and present them to the UN Security Council (UNSC), even without a formal request. These white notes should contain concrete recommendations and serve as early warning alerts for relevant UN bodies
- *Ensure regular discussion of UNSCR 2417 in Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs):* Humanitarian Country Teams should routinely discuss UNSCR 2417, especially when conflict-induced hunger cases emerge. The HCT and RC should then engage with governments, local authorities, and other conflict parties to address these issues
- *Engage with the DPPA's Early Warning Team:* OCHA should consider increased engagement with the DPPA's Early Warning Team to strengthen the integration of political and humanitarian efforts in preventing and addressing conflict-induced hunger.

3. Enhance cluster coordination

The UN cluster system plays a key role in advancing 2417. Some of the actions that clusters could take to enhance their impact include:

- *Enhance coordination between key clusters.* Strengthen collaboration between the food security, protection, and logistics clusters to facilitate joint analysis and the development of integrated program strategies. This enhanced coordination should be used to alert UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) about emerging UNSCR 2417-related risks,

particularly regarding conflict-induced hunger

- *Leverage the protection cluster for early warning.* The protection cluster should play a key role in raising alerts to the UN when there are risks or signs of conflict-induced hunger. This would help ensure early identification and a timely response to escalating humanitarian crises
- *Engage in private advocacy* with UN agency leadership to raise alerts in contexts where conflict-induced hunger is either at risk of increasing or increasing.

4. Leverage the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's global coordination platform

- *Strengthen the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)'s leadership.* The Emergency Directors Group should include monitoring and reporting visits on UNSCR 2417 compliance as part of their missions. The findings from these visits should be used in private advocacy to mobilize timely action
- *Formalize OCHA's leadership on this agenda within the IASC.* This should include the political dimensions of this issue. This includes providing guidance and sensitization to UN Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and OCHA field teams.

Conclusion

At the national level, UN Country teams can leverage their influence and leadership to integrate the conflict and hunger agenda, and UNSCR 2417, into several mechanisms and conversations. By referencing UNSCR 2417 consistently, providing guidance on how to operationalise the resolution, and coordinating the conversation in different fora, they can ensure that issues of conflict-driven hunger are proactively tackled.



“What can we do?”:

The role of regional bodies in tackling conflict and hunger

Introduction

As hunger driven by conflict soars globally, regional government bodies have a crucial role to play in addressing some of the ongoing limitations in accountability, upholding International Humanitarian Law, and progressing the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2417. Article 52(1) of the UN Charter¹ explicitly recognises that regional arrangements or agencies can play a significant role in maintaining international peace and security.

In a context where Security Council members often exercise their veto power - as shown over the last decade in the wars in Syria, Ukraine and the conflict in Israel and occupied Palestinian territory - it is crucial to consider other effective actors. Regional bodies could enhance their potential to strengthen accountability under UNSCR 2417. They can integrate this agenda into existing governance structures and meetings, engage with reporting mechanisms, provide training and capacity building, and reinforce international advocacy and diplomatic efforts.

What can regional bodies do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

1. Utilise and support the development of monitoring and early warning systems:

- *Monitor conflict and food insecurity.* Establish, or leverage existing regional early warning systems to track signs of conflict and food crises
- *Share data.* Closely monitor early warning systems, and use the data to mobilise political and diplomatic action. Especially when a crisis encompasses several countries in a region, ensure that there is prompt, integrated information sharing to enable timely and coherent action.

2. Create legal mechanisms and policies to uphold International Humanitarian Law

- *Ensure that International Humanitarian Law, UNSCR 2417 and UNSCR 2761 are transposed into regional and national legislation.* Regional bodies can support this by articulating a regional framework that guides Member States in integrating international legal principles, including IHL, into their national laws and regulations
- *Hold perpetrators to account.* Monitor and condemn instances where starvation is used as a method of war – privately if necessary, but publicly when possible. Support investigations and accountability mechanisms
- *Embed the Protection of Civilians agenda in relevant policies, such as regional and national humanitarian strategies.* Where possible and relevant in different contexts, ensure coherence and cohesion across Member States' strategies.

3. Raise awareness and build capacity on the conflict and hunger agenda

- *Train civil servants on International Humanitarian Law and on UNSCR 2417.* Ensure a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a violation, as well as how to collect evidence and report critical contexts, with a particular focus on prevention

- *Ensure that the reporting and accountability mechanisms are clear* and that encompass local, national and regional actors, as well as cross-thematic considerations.

4. Foster regional coordination

- *Enhance humanitarian diplomacy.* Reinforce coordination among regional Member States by developing joint humanitarian diplomacy strategies to address issues of Protection of Civilians, conflict and hunger, and humanitarian access.
- *Leverage existing regional coordination mechanisms.* Use existing platforms as well-established mechanisms to foster knowledge and implementation of the resolution. For example, conflict and hunger can be a standard agenda point in regular meetings, or be integrated in early warning systems
- *Facilitate cross-border humanitarian aid.* If necessary, facilitate cross-border agreements to enable the distribution of food, and in particular aid assistance, to conflict-affected areas
- *Enable cross-thematic engagement.* Often, conflict and hunger are discussed in isolation - conflict belongs to the political sphere, and hunger to the humanitarian or food security conversation. In their coordination capacity, regional bodies can ensure that the relevant connections are made, and different departments engage on this agenda to analyse and tackle the impact of conflict on food insecurity.

5. Foster international coordination

- *Undertake strategic partnerships.* Collaborate with relevant UN agencies to promote the implementation of UNSCR 2417. For example, as the penholder on this agenda, OCHA can facilitate the compilation of reports to the UN Secretary General. WFP and FAO, as agencies with a mandate specific to food and food systems, could support the training of staff, data collection, and reporting.

Conclusion

Regional government bodies have a critical role in implementing UNSCR 2417 and addressing the links between conflict and hunger. By fostering regional and international collaboration, promoting and enforcing international humanitarian law, supporting humanitarian access, and monitoring and addressing the root causes of food insecurity, they can contribute to breaking the cycle of violence and starvation. Through transparent accountability mechanisms, regional bodies can contribute to ensuring that civilians are protected in conflict-affected areas.

Endnotes

- 1 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, Article 52(1), 24 October 1945.



“What can we do?”: The role of the European Union in tackling conflict and hunger

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is one of the largest humanitarian donors and actors on a global level. Promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a core priority for the EU, in order to achieve its humanitarian objectives, ensure the safety of its staff and partners, and protect civilians disproportionately affected by conflict¹. In some contexts, the EU actively engages in advocacy and diplomacy to secure humanitarian access in conflict zones and to prevent starvation from being used as a weapon of war².

When addressing issues of conflict-induced hunger, EU officials can draw on several established policy and legal frameworks, including:

- The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2005, ratified by all EU countries
- The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid
- The European 2018 Council Conclusions on “Strengthening global food nutrition and security” and the 2024 Council Conclusion on “Stepping up Team Europe’s support to global food security and nutrition”, which reference UNSCR 2417
- The 2021 European Commission Communication on “EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles”
- The European Union Guidelines on Promoting Compliance with IHL (adopted in 2005; updated in 2009) “An operational tool guiding the EU’s external relations aimed at mitigating the impact of armed conflict on civilians”.

Other EU instruments also reference IHL compliance, without making specific linkages to hunger, food security or starvation as a method of warfare. For example, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) plan integrates human rights considerations into all EU external actions, including compliance with the IHL and safeguarding the humanitarian space. The plan calls to “enhance efforts to ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, including civilian and humanitarian infrastructure”.

Looking at the EU external action and conflict resolution policies, several policies and strategies set out the principles of the EU external action as the Common Foreign Security Policy (2016) and the EU Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crisis (2018). Overall, they provide an integrated approach to conflicts and crises through a coherent use of EU policies at different levels of governance.

They recall that the EU humanitarian aid is not influenced by any political, strategic, military or economic objective, a critical prerequisite to ensure that aid can be delivered to people affected by crises in complex political and security environments, without tackling the impact of IHL violations in conflict-affected contexts on food security.

What can the European Union do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

The EU and its Member States can take various actions, individually and collectively, to address conflict-driven hunger through an integrated, preventative, and long-term approach.

1. Align and strengthen collaborative humanitarian diplomacy

- *Include the conflict and hunger agenda in a consolidated EU humanitarian diplomacy strategy.* This approach should build on existing EU and Member State initiatives and common guidelines. It should be reflected in national humanitarian strategies and prioritize unimpeded humanitarian access, compliance with IHL, protection of civilians and their livelihoods, and prevention of the use of violence against food security. Efforts should be systematic and context-specific
- *Formulate joint positions and messages on conflict and hunger.* A unified stance will enhance the EU's response to hunger crises. Include stance on leveraging UNSCR 2417 as a tool in conflict zones, including for negotiations on humanitarian access
- *Update the 2009 European Union Guidelines on Promoting Compliance with IHL.* This update will ensure alignment with contemporary challenges.

2. Integrate UNSCR 2417 into the global and regional agenda

- *Include conflict and hunger in strategic dialogues with local, national, and regional stakeholders.* Work with regional bodies such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the League of Arab States, as well as national and local stakeholders, to incorporate diverse perspectives and approaches to the UNSCR 2417 agenda
- *Advocate for the appointment of a Hunger & Conflict special envoy within the UN system.* This role would help elevate the agenda and ensure a consistent focus on it
- *Strengthen national and international legal accountability mechanisms.* Demonstrate support for mechanisms that enforce international law related to starvation, and ensure domestic compliance.

3. Shift the perception of UNSCR 2417 from humanitarian to political agendas

- *Promote UNSCR 2417 consistently.* Explicitly reference the resolution in political engagements, including through private humanitarian diplomacy
- *Comply with, and promote, UNSCR 2664 and UNSCR 2761.* Ensure that humanitarian exemptions are included in all sanctions and counter-terrorism regimes to enable the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need.

4. Reinforce the preventative aspect of UNSCR 2417

- *Advocate for UN Arria-formula meetings on conflict and hunger.* These meetings provide a platform for evidence-based advocacy
- *Enhance public access to data on IHL violations.* Leverage open-source databases to enhance transparency and accessibility of information and enable evidence-based advocacy
- *Strengthen global reporting mechanisms.* Promote regular and evidence-based reporting on food insecurity in armed conflicts. Share transparent reporting guidelines, clear responsibilities and accountability mechanisms, and include contributions from civil society organisations (CSOs)
- *Ensure early warning systems systematically translate into anticipatory and early action.* The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has brought significant progress but early action interventions need to be scaled up through increased prepositioned financing. Ultimately, we

must establish systems that can swiftly react at the onset of crises, emergencies or famine, to ensure a proactive approach to IHL compliance and crisis prevention

- *Increase investments in capacity-building initiatives.* Focus on IHL and IHRL compliance, emphasizing the impact of breaches on food security.

5. Increase funding allocation to the food security agenda within the EU budgetary framework

- *Leverage the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)* to provide long-term, flexible humanitarian and development assistance.
- *Address the underlying drivers of conflict and violence* by promoting sustainable and local food production, building social cohesion among host communities and ensuring fair access to resources and services
- *Increase funding for conflict-related early warning action.* Investment in early warning is predominantly focused on natural disasters, such as droughts and floods. Early warning funding must also include conflict-driven crises.

Conclusion

The EU has a critical role to play in addressing hunger driven by conflict, leading global efforts to prevent starvation from being used as a weapon of war, ensure humanitarian access, and protect civilians. To achieve this, the EU must strengthen its humanitarian diplomacy, integrate political and humanitarian agendas, and reinforce preventative measures. Strategic collaborations with local, regional, and global stakeholders, alongside increased funding and capacity-building, are essential to advancing sustainable solutions to food insecurity in conflict zones. By prioritizing UNSCR 2417 as both a humanitarian and political imperative, the EU and its Member States can contribute to a long-term vision of peacebuilding, resilience, and accountability.

Endnotes

- 1 Council of the European Union. (2024). Working party on public international law (COJUR): Report on the EU guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law January 2023 - December 2023. Brussels. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ahzanx-gy/7th-ihl-report.pdf>
- 2 Ibid. Pg. 30.



“What can we do?”:

The role of National Governments in tackling conflict and hunger

Introduction

Power and political influence in matters of peace, international relations and security largely lie in the hands of states. Recent years have seen a decline in multilateralism, weakening even the highest levels of inter-state cooperation, notably the UN Security Council. Increasingly, parties to a conflict – including some states – have shown disdain for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), with the deliberate use of starvation as a method of warfare becoming more apparent in numerous conflicts.

IHL establishes the right to food and demands that states create an environment conducive to the production of, and access to, adequate food for all, at all times. States, whether parties to conflicts or not, are also responsible for the erosion of humanitarian space when they politicize principled humanitarian aid or constrain humanitarian operations by imposing bureaucratic, administrative, or counter-terrorism measures, thus complicating or making impossible the delivery of life-saving food assistance.

States are signatories to the Geneva Conventions and guarantors of IHL. When they are not a party to a conflict, third-party states are obligated to take all necessary measures to ensure that all parties to conflicts respect the provisions of international humanitarian law in all conflict-affected territories¹.

What can national governments do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

1. Promote International Humanitarian Law

- *Develop a humanitarian diplomacy strategy* to promote unimpeded humanitarian access and IHL compliance, protect civilians and their livelihoods, and prevent the use of violence against food security in a systematic and context-specific manner. The conflict and hunger agenda should be leveraged in bilateral relations as part of an ambitious and coordinated state diplomacy to uphold the fundamental principles of IHL related to food security issues, including:
 - ⌞ The fundamental prohibition of the use of famine as a method of warfare (Rule 53 of the Geneva Convention)²
 - ⌞ The fundamental obligation to spare, during hostilities, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, especially those related to the production, processing, and distribution of food (Rule 54 of the Geneva Convention)³
 - ⌞ The moral and legal obligation to allow and facilitate the safe and unimpeded access of impartial humanitarian relief to civilians (Rule 55 of the Geneva Convention)⁴
- *Embed the conflict and hunger agenda* in national humanitarian strategies, foreign policy frameworks, and legal systems. A clear national strategy is key to reinforcing the engagement in this agenda and ensuring the allocation of adequate resources. National institutions, related to conflict-induced hunger. But they must be awarded a high degree of political status and influence to inform a country’s foreign diplomatic relations
- *States can ratify the Rome Statute amendment* which makes starvation as a method of warfare a

crime in both international and non-international armed conflict

- *Promote the creation of parliamentary working groups* related to IHL and broader humanitarian action and food security issues
- *Invest in capacity building and knowledge of IHL and IHRL* among humanitarian aid implementation partners, national armed forces, and diplomatic personnel
- *Ensure that economic sanctions explicitly include humanitarian exemptions* to avoid impacting the food security of the civilian population. Ensure that UNSCR 2761 is transposed into national legislation to ensure the implementation of the outlined humanitarian carve-out.

2. Protect the humanitarian space

- *Integrate the promotion of IHL and UNSCR 2417* at the heart of national humanitarian and diplomatic engagement strategies with conflict parties in major conflict-driven food crises to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access, including for example in contexts such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, and Myanmar
- *Coordinate and support an international diplomatic initiative to address bureaucratic and administrative measures* restricting humanitarian aid in areas most affected by conflict-induced hunger
- *Translate the humanitarian exemption measures* outlined in UNSCR 2761 into all multilateral and unilateral sanctions regimes and national legal frameworks, including criminal law
- *Avoid restrictive measures* that make any contact with certain groups or individuals illegal, or that limit the provision of humanitarian aid to civilians.

Success story: In December 2024, the UN Security Council unanimously approved resolution 2761⁵, following resolution 2664. UNSCR 2761 extends the humanitarian exemptions related to counter-terrorism sanctions regimes specific to Al-Qaeda and Da'esh, and will allow the continuation of humanitarian operations while mitigating the unintended consequences of UN sanctions against specific regimes. The resolution must now be popularised across Member States and their institutions to be as effective as possible. Transposing it into regional and national laws and financial codes would allow diplomatic and financial channels to support humanitarian operations, allow safe bank transfers, and minimise donor risks.

3. Promote accountability for perpetrators of IHL violations

- *Request the UN and specifically OCHA strengthen monitoring mechanisms* in support of UNSCR 2417, including by producing White Notes on major conflict-driven food crises, with strong and actionable recommendations, which are often lacking. These should be compiled in collaboration with CSOs and made publicly available beyond the UN Security Council and limited Member States
- *Strengthen global governance and evidence-based reporting on conflict-driven hunger* by establishing a specific monitoring, reporting and accountability mechanism. This mechanism should collect and channel sensitive information on food insecurity in armed conflicts and violations of UNSCR 2417 and IHL
- *Conduct investigations* at the national jurisdiction level on IHL violations, war crimes, and the use of famine as a method of warfare⁶.

4. Ensure that military strategies and training align with the rules on the conduct of hostilities

- *Implement policies and guidance* that integrate international law in armed conflicts (IHL, IHRL),

particularly on the conduct of hostilities, military manuals, and rules of engagement

- *Train military and diplomatic personnel on IHL* and concrete measures to mitigate the impact of conflicts on civilians and hunger (Rules 141, 142)⁷
- *Include the prohibition of forced displacement* in national military manuals, reaffirming the protection of civilians and essential civilian infrastructure, and the requirement to protect natural environments
- *Formally recognise the essential nature of principled humanitarian aid*. Study and anticipate the impact of conflicts on hunger and food security to inform military planning in case of new armed conflicts, and plan emergency mitigation measures. Study planting and harvest periods in main intervention theatres, identify market days and locations, transhumance routes, and the locations of essential infrastructure for civilian survival related to food production, processing, and distribution
- *Evaluate the impact of conscription measures on the agricultural and food sector*, and, if necessary, plan exemption measures for farmers, herders, fishers, and people involved in food production, processing, and distribution.

5. Align funding commitments with a triple-nexus approach, aligning humanitarian, development and peace to fight food insecurity

- *Strive to meet existing commitments*, such as the G7 Elmau commitment of June 2015 to lift 500 million people out of food insecurity and malnutrition by 2030⁸ and the commitments under the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact⁹
- *Increase investment* in anticipatory action, humanitarian early recovery, peacebuilding and resilient livelihoods to prevent humanitarian crises from becoming catastrophes
- *Address protracted displacement* caused by conflict by facilitating voluntary return in safety and dignity. Invest in reintegration, recovery and resilience-building for displaced, host and returning populations
- *Provide long-term and flexible humanitarian and development assistance* to tackle the underlying drivers of conflict and violence. This includes promoting sustainable and local food production solutions to boost food availability and diversity, therefore reducing reliance on emergency food provision
- *Ensure that humanitarian programmes go beyond conflict sensitivity* by building social cohesion among host communities, internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees and returnees using a triple nexus approach and ensuring fair access to natural resources and services
- *Support farmers by strengthening good governance* in line with the Sphere Handbook's standards on security of tenure in shelter and settlement¹⁰, which ensures that people can live in their homes without fear of forced evictions. Promote consensual land use and dispute resolution and ensure equitable access to land for farmers and herders
- *Ensure that Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) is accompanied by diplomatic action* aimed at upholding humanitarian law and protecting food producers and food markets from attacks
- *Promote and support the security of humanitarian personnel* by adequately and non-competitively funding the security costs of international and national humanitarian organisations.

Conclusion

National governments have a critical opportunity and responsibility to address the links between conflict and hunger and ensure that their actions do not lead to civilian suffering. By upholding IHL,

embedding the conflict and hunger agenda in national strategies, and fostering diplomatic initiatives to protect the humanitarian space, states can mitigate the catastrophic impact of armed conflicts on food security. Promoting accountability for IHL violations, aligning military and diplomatic strategies with international legal frameworks, and supporting the resilience of affected populations through a triple-nexus approach are indispensable steps. These actions not only uphold legal and moral obligations but also contribute to long-term stability, reducing the human cost of conflict paving the way for sustainable peace, and reversing this rising sense of impunity.

Endnotes

- 1 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (1949). Geneva Conventions, Common Article
- 2 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (2005) Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, Rule 144. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (2016). Updated Commentaries to the Geneva Convention, Common Article 1, 131; 143-149; 153-183 https://ihl-data-bases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gci-1949/article-1/commentary/2016?activeTab=#_Toc452378931.
- 3 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (2005) Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, Rule 53 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule53>
- 4 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (1977). Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977. Art. 54(2) https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule54#refFn_560A1CEA_00012
- 5 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (2005) Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, Rule 55 [Customary IHL - Rule 55. Access for Humanitarian Relief to Civilians in Need](#)
- 6 United Nations Security Council. (2024). Resolution 2761, S/RES/2761
- 7 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (2005) Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, Rules 157, 158, 161 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule157>
- 8 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (2005) [Customary International Humanitarian Law Database. Rule 141 and 142 Customary IHL - Rule 142. Instruction in International Humanitarian Law within Armed Forces](#)
- 9 G7 Germany (2015). Leaders' Declaration G7 Summit, 7-8 June 2015. Scholss Emau. Pg. 21. Available at: <https://www.g7germany.de/resource/blob/998440/436680/e077d51d67486b1df34e-539f621aff8c/2015-06-08-g7-abschluss-eng-en-data.pdf?download=1>
- 10 G7 United Kingdom. (2021). G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact. London. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communique/g7-famine-prevention-and-humanitarian-crises-compact>
- 11 Sphere Project. (2018). The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Fourth edition). Geneva: Sphere Association. P.266



“What can we do?”:

The role of Civil Society Organisations in tackling conflict and hunger

Introduction

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in any community. They can serve as important sources of independent information to both citizens and the government, monitor governments' actions to hold them accountable, engage in advocacy and offer propositions for policies and courses of action. Civil society holds a key role in promoting change, advancing policies and creating space for discussion around topics that might not have been sufficiently considered by politics thus far.

Ending hunger - including hunger driven by conflict - is in line with the goals and objectives of many civil society actors. By adding their voice to the conversation and focusing on this issue, they can ensure it is brought to the table, discussed and considered - and they can hold governments accountable to their commitments.

What can Civil Society Organizations do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

1. Provide information on hunger driven by conflict

- *Raise awareness.* Do not underestimate the lack of knowledge around this issue. UN Security Council Resolution 2417 is not widely known or well-understood. Ensuring that all stakeholders engaged in decision-making - governments, members of parliament or ministry employees - have access to the relevant information is the very first step
- *Engage the public.* Hunger is a topic that resonates with many people. Integrate it in public campaigns and press briefings to raise awareness and show governments and parliaments there is widespread concern and support for the issue
- *Highlight the many implications and interconnected issues around conflict and hunger.* Even if you do not work predominantly on hunger-related issues, these are linked with many other areas of concern, including access to basic services like water or health. Include the hunger-conflict dynamic in your analyses on gender, children, refugees and IDPs, or its linkages with water security, climate change or economic shocks
- *Collect and share data.* Knowing the exact impact of an issue is the first step. Evidence-based analysis is vital to explain the issue, informing the design of a good programmatic or policy response. To minimise workload and maximise impact, CSOs should explore secure data-sharing practices
- *Be the voice of operational actors.* Sharing first-hand information on how conflict affects food insecurity on the ground can have an incredible impact. Governments, or members of the public, often do not have access to these stories. CSOs can and should amplify the voices of staff and people who live in conflict contexts.

2. Hold governments accountable

- *Challenge government actions that may contribute to conflict-driven hunger.* For example,

highlight in public or private fora that arms sales to conflict parties may increase the risk of enabling parties that target civilians or destroy food systems. Equally, policies related to counterterrorism and sanctions may prevent NGOs from delivering humanitarian assistance and therefore contribute to conflict-driven hunger

- *Demand transparency* on the government's stance, commitments, and actions taken to address conflict-driven hunger, either publicly or during bilateral meetings and confidential exchanges
- *Draw attention to it*, when government actions contribute to conflict-induced hunger or a government remains silent on the use of starvation as a weapon of war by a party to the conflict. Confront the government with the realities on the ground, the impact their action or inaction has on individuals, families and communities and ask them to justify their decision. This can be done publicly or privately
- *Compare government actions to their commitments* and point out any inconsistency, bilaterally or publicly, as appropriate. Policy coherence across government bodies, especially amongst traditional donor community, must be tabled consistently.

3. Engage in advocacy

- *Build alliances*. Unite different (kinds of) organisations to strengthen one common voice and show broad concern for conflict-driven hunger. If feasible, work across the humanitarian, development and peace spectrum to address the short- and long-term impact of conflict-induced hunger
- *Demand political action*. Engage in advocacy work demanding not only funding, but also political action from governments. The fight against hunger needs funds, but it also needs a political landscape in which the use of hunger as a weapon of war or actions that can limit access to food become unacceptable. Advocate for donor states to include clear messaging on UNSCR 2417
- *Promote a joint approach* across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, ensuring joint ownership by different decision-makers to upholding the right to food in conflict
- *Provide innovative ideas* to donor governments on how to approach UNSCR2417. For example, expanding support for early warning and anticipatory action frameworks can be a less politicised way to prevent a hunger crisis in conflict.

Conclusion

Civil society organisations can significantly impact political action through sustained scrutiny and awareness raising on the topic of conflict and hunger. They are strategically placed to provide detailed evidence from their operations, ensure governments stick to political commitments, and to drive public pressure and engagement.



“What can we do?”:

The role of parliamentarians in tackling conflict and hunger

Introduction

Parliamentarians, within or outside of governing political parties, can play a critical role in turning the tide on rising rates of conflict-driven hunger. They can hold governments accountable for problematic decisions, and they can table questions, debates, votes and legislation that help drive better policy, diplomatic action and resource allocation.

Parliamentarians whose party is currently represented in government can also use internal fora and party processes to ensure the topic of conflict-induced hunger is included in decisions. Parliamentarians in opposition parties can make use of their rights, such as the right to publicly question the government, to ensure transparency on what topics have been considered and how. All speeches made in parliament, committees or publicly on the topic of hunger and conflict can contribute to the overall awareness of the topic and its inclusion in all relevant decision-making processes.

What can parliamentarians do to advance the implementation of UNSCR 2417?

1. Legislate for and uphold international humanitarian law

- *Ensure that International Humanitarian Law is transposed into domestic legislation.* This includes new developments, like the 2021 Amendment to the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court (ICC) that makes the deliberate starvation of civilians in non-international armed conflicts (NIACs) a war crime. Most parties to the ICC have not yet transposed this into their domestic law, so there is an opportunity to table this in parliament
- *Hold governments to account.* When there is evidence of state-backed action that has led to the starvation of civilians or depriving civilians of objects indispensable to survival, ensure the state responsible is held accountable. This should include both direct and indirect actions contributing to the starvation of civilians. Holding governments accountable could mean sharing evidence through speeches and debates in Parliament and asking targeted questions of Ministers, challenging them to show how they are preventing or responding to potential IHL breaches.

2. Advocate for upholding IHL

- *Fund IHL mechanisms.* Ensure the government supports the work of and provides the necessary funding for humanitarian coordination mechanisms, such as HCTs and mechanism of civil-military coordination (CMCoord). These mechanisms are fundamental for ensuring safe and reliable humanitarian access
- *Embed the conflict and hunger agenda in relevant policies and strategies,* such as humanitarian responses and foreign affairs committees' agendas. If the government is developing new policies and plans that relate to this agenda, use your role in parliament to challenge the government on how it will ensure that the needs of communities affected by conflict-driven hunger are at the heart of policy-making

- *Uphold coherent policy and action.* Ensure the government is consistently applying the same interpretation of humanitarian law, as well as the same principles, in all contexts. Noting what countries the government applies humanitarian law most strictly to, challenge Ministers to apply the same standards and language in all contexts
- *Use your voice in parliament to push for high and sustained investment in peacebuilding and conflict prevention as a foreign policy priority.* Military budgets are increasingly dwarfing ODA spend - and military and security concerns may take away attention from humanitarian topics, and risk the politicisation of ODA. Governments need to be held accountable for their ODA investment; in a world with rising conflict, the global human development agenda, tackling humanitarian needs, and peacebuilding must be foreign and domestic policy priorities
- *Keep referencing UN Security Council Resolution 2417.* This is especially relevant in parliament in debates on specific crises, food security and global humanitarian crisis response.

3. Call for investment in peacebuilding, crisis prevention and response

- *Challenge Ministers* on their prioritisation of support to peace negotiations and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Challenge them to use all the diplomatic channels available to them to reduce conflict and its avoidable heavy toll on civilians?
- *Align budgets.* Press your government to ensure the ODA or domestic budgets are aligned with a goal to address the structural causes of crises or vulnerability, such as lack of social protection, and to ensure spending decisions recognise the inherent uncertainty of operating in crises, so are flexible and long term
- *Call for funding.* When voting on budget laws, demand sufficient allocation of funds to address emergencies, as well as long-term hunger crises. Ensure humanitarian topics – including, but not limited to, conflict-induced hunger – are being taken into consideration and given appropriate weight in budget allocation debates.

4. Promote coherent cross-government decision-making

- *Ensure decisions are consistent with IHL.* Examine if the government has the structures in place to ensure decisions made by all departments are coherent with a commitment to upholding IHL and reducing conflict-driven hunger. For example, governments must ensure that trade and export decisions are consistent with the decisions made by diplomatic Ministries. Call for committees or joint units that strengthen coherence across government
- *Promote cross-party committees or working groups.* Groups allowing the use of special rights of questioning, accessing government information or promoting recommendations (such as scrutiny committees, working committees, and enquiry commissions) are especially useful. Such cross-party participation lends particular credibility by showing a broad concern for the issue.

Conclusion

Parliamentarians, either in the government party or in opposition, can play an extensive role in promoting the visibility of conflict-induced hunger, ensuring integrity, and holding the government to account. It is important not to underestimate the impact that relentless scrutiny and sustained awareness of the topic can have on government actions and priorities.