

Israeli government must face consequences for blocking humanitarian aid

A coalition of humanitarian, global health and faith groups are demanding the Australian Government hold Israel accountable for blocking lifesaving aid into Gaza and using starvation as a weapon of war.

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), Australian Global Health Alliance (AGHA), National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) and Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) call on the Australian Government to:

- Apply and implement targeted sanctions on Israeli officials who have called for the denial of aid, and military and civil servants denying essential food and materials to civilians of Gaza.
- End any trade for military purposes between Australian and Israeli companies.
- Use all diplomatic measures to achieve a permanent ceasefire.

Chief Executive Officer of ACFID, Marc Purcell said:

“As the world watched in horror and condemned unequivocally the militant attacks on Israel on October 7; so now do we unequivocally condemn the use of starvation of the Palestinian people as a weapon of war against them.

“High-ranking Israeli officials, including [Defense Minister Yoav Gallant](#), [National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir](#), [Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich](#) and [Energy Minister Israel Katz](#) have made public statements expressing their aim to deprive civilians in Gaza of food, water and fuel. We have seen this approach of denying aid being carried out with effects on the civilian population since the conflict began.

“Starvation is being used as a weapon of war, amounting to a war crime under the Geneva Conventions. What we are witnessing in Gaza is a man made, preventable famine, and it will have a permanent stain on all our collective humanity.

“The deliberate prevention of aid convoys, including the United Nations, from reaching people in the north of Gaza, is a complete and total violation of international humanitarian law which must be condemned with tangible punishment attached.”

AGHA Executive Director, Dr Selina Namchee Lo said:

“Without adequate healthcare and nutrients, malnutrition has continued to deepen its grip on people in Gaza, many of whom are now facing starvation. Starvation is the most extreme form of malnutrition and can cause a horrific, slow death as people’s vital organs shut down.

“There is a vicious cycle between malnutrition and illness. As the immune system weakens, someone who is severely malnourished becomes more susceptible to infections, such as diarrhoeal diseases. In the same way, someone who is already sick due to an infection such as diarrhoea is more susceptible to malnutrition. This makes it

ever more challenging to ingest life-saving nutrients or medication. If these infections don't kill them, eventually the prolonged deprivation of nutrition and energy sources will.

"It is unconscionable to continue to withhold access to life-saving food aid from those who desperately need it."

NCCA President, Rev John Gilmore said:

"The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) is dismayed by news of the deaths of the seven aid workers. There can be no excusing this terrible action, nor for starvation coming from the impact of the war. Provision of food is a human right. We continue to plead for an unconditional ceasefire, restoration of the provision of the needs of daily life for the people of Gaza and for peace with justice."

ANIC President, Imam Shadi Alsuleiman said:

"We strongly condemn the targeting of civilians and aid workers. The people of Gaza continue to face severe humanitarian crisis perpetrated by the Israeli occupation, leading to the killing of over 30,000 people, mostly women and children, and starving an entire city of over 2 million people.

"These worsening conditions are exactly why the International Court of Justice has called for 'unhindered provision at scale of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance' in line with Israel's obligations under the Genocide Convention. We demand for an immediate end to this war and for the accountability of Israel."

The purposeful blockade of food and basic materials necessary for survival – medical equipment, materials for water purification, coupled with the targeted destruction of civilian infrastructure such as power plants -- is widespread and systemic.

Additionally, the targeting of those who are assisting in reaching the starving population is unprecedented. The brutal killings of Australian Zomi Frankcom and her six colleagues adds to an already documented 196 deaths of aid workers, the highest number of casualties of humanitarian workers in any other context.

The results of starvation are horrific and repugnant to our common humanity. When a government starves a people, all are dehumanized in the process.

Background:

Gaza has been an occupied territory of the Israeli state since 1967 and since 2007, the Government of Israel's blockade of aid and assistance has limited human and economic development in Gaza.

Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited under article 54(1) of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions (Protocol I) and article 14 of the Second Additional Protocol (Protocol II). Parties to a conflict may not "provoke [starvation] deliberately" or deliberately cause "the population to suffer hunger, particularly by depriving it of its sources of food or of supplies."

The Geneva Conventions also require the "rapid and unimpeded passage" of humanitarian aid for civilians in need, the freedom of movement for humanitarian workers, and the protection of civilians.

Starvation is the most extreme form of malnutrition and is defined as an intake of caloric energy less than needed to maintain life. Starvation can cause permanent organ damage and eventually death.

According to [the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#) "The entire population in the Gaza Strip (2.23 million) is facing high levels of acute food insecurity. Between mid-March and mid-July, in the most likely scenario and under the assumption of an escalation of the conflict including a ground offensive in Rafah, half of the population of the Gaza Strip (1.11 million people) is expected to face catastrophic conditions (IPC Phase 5), the most severe level in the IPC Acute Food Insecurity scale."

'Sanctions' are defined by the Australian Government as: 'measures not involving the use of armed force' imposed 'in situations of international concern', including 'the grave repression of the human rights or democratic freedoms of a population by a government.'

Under the regime, the Minister for Foreign Affairs may designate a person or entity for targeted financial sanctions and declare a person for a travel ban if the Minister is satisfied the person or entity has engaged in, has been responsible for, or has been complicit in an act that constitutes a serious violation or serious abuse of a person's:

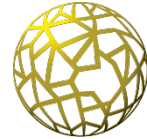
- right to life; or
- right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or
- right not to be held in slavery or servitude, or right not to be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Further information can be found [here](#).

About the organizations:

ACFID

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak body for Australian non-government organisations involved in international development and humanitarian action. ACFID currently has 128 full members and 20 affiliate members operating in more than 85 developing countries. ACFID's members range between large Australian multi-sectoral organisations that are linked to international federations of NGOs, to agencies with specialised thematic expertise, and smaller community-based groups, with a mix of secular and faith-based organisations.



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

AGHA

The Australian Global Health Alliance is the member-based peak body for Australian global health organisations, with a mandate to strengthen the global health ecosystem through national and global connections, partnerships, research, and innovation, promoting best practices in global health, and advocacy. The membership is diverse, ranging from universities and research institutes to international and national non-government organisations or peak bodies, to government entities and public private partnerships.



AUSTRALIAN
GLOBAL HEALTH
ALLIANCE

NCCA

The NCCA is its eighteen member Churches in their commitment each to the others and all to the world for which Christ died. It works in collaboration with state ecumenical councils around Australia. It is an associate council of the World Council of Churches, a member of the Christian Conference of Asia and a partner of Pacific Conference of Churches and other national ecumenical bodies throughout the world.



National Council of
Churches in Australia

ANIC

ANIC is the currently sole national organisation of Imams and Islamic Scholars with broad community representation. This places the ANIC Council in a unique position of official representing the wider interests of the Australian Muslim Community. ANIC members are involved in the day-today affairs of the Islamic Community and addressing the affairs and concerns of the community.

