**Call for Input: Violence and the Right to Food**

**Situation in Palestine**

**Question One: Describe the nature and degree of violence prevalent in different parts of a food system in your country or community**

Using food insecurity as a weapon is a critical pillar of Israel’s apartheid system against Palestinians so that they are forced to forfeit their rights. Through the use of systematic strategies, Israel successfully restricted Indigenous Palestinians from accessing their resources of production including land and water. As a result, food insecurity has become an effective tool of oppression and domination against Palestinians. Here we name a few tactics deployed by Israel against Palestinians:

* Israel regularly uproots and destroys thousands of orchards, primarily those with olive and fruit trees, as part of their systematic attacks on Palestine's agricultural infrastructure. These attacks also succeed in uprooting farmers from their lands, eliminating their livelihoods and making them more susceptible to land confiscation by Israel.
* Land continues to be confiscated illegally. The presence of countless checkpoints, roadblocks, and the illegal separation wall constructed by Israel further restricts access to fertile land, divides families, and separates communities from their farms and local markets. In fact, due to Israeli-only military zones, nature reserves, and settlement jurisdictions, 40% of the West Bank is inaccessible to Palestinians.
* Since 2007, Palestinians have also been trapped in the Gaza Strip, which is thought to be the largest open-air prison in the world. Israel has imposed a ban on exports and imports and has enforced a military buffer zone on 35% of Gaza's fertile land as well as a maritime buffer zone on 15% of the Mediterranean Sea, limiting access to food and agricultural products and increasing food insecurity.
* Not only does Israel place restrictions on access to land but also limits access to a sufficient supply of clean and safe water by controlling all of Palestine's water resources and infrastructure. For example, Palestinians are prohibited from constructing any water infrastructure, including drilling new water wells and installing water pumps, without first obtaining a permit from Israel. Palestinians are also denied access to the Jordan River and freshwater springs. Furthermore, Israel continuously destroys Palestinian communities' rainwater cisterns, preventing them from collecting water from any other source.
* Potentially one of the most violent attacks on Palestine’s food system is the systematic and slow poisoning of Palestinian soil and water. Israel frequently sprays large amounts of herbicides along the Gaza border, eradicating and destroying hundreds of Palestinian crops and farmlands. Because the chemicals are sprayed at such high concentrations, they become embedded in the soil, infiltrate the water basin, and contaminate groundwater. Moreover, the systematic bombing of Gaza by Israel has resulted in significant contamination of water and land from sewage and military ammunition. Finally, Israel continues to turn the West Bank into a toxic landfill by transferring and disposing of hazardous wastes within its borders resulting in significant socioeconomic, environmental, and health problems for Palestinians.
* In many cases, dispossession is cyclical and extends to Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. During the Nakba and its aftermath (between 1948-1953), many agro-pastoralist Bedouins of Naqab were expelled from their villages and driven to take refuge in Arab countries, the West Bank and Gaza, and in other Bedouin villages that were able to evade the expulsion. In 1984, Israeli courts formalized the expropriation of Naqab lands that had been long held, used, inherited, and purchased by Palestinian Bedouins, who used customary tenure systems, as well as the rights accorded to them through their active use of the land. Bedouin land was declared mewat i.e. dead /empty and the property of the state. However, many Bedouins continue to live on this land and suffer from the illegalization of their villages’ presence on so-called state land, and their state-designation as “trespassers” living in “illegal clusters”.

**Question Two: Provide examples of laws, policies, or campaigns that have successfully prevented or reduced violence in a food system, held perpetrators accountable, or provided reparation**

Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, aggressive attacks and tactics have been launched to reduce Palestinian farmers' power and increase their reliance on Israel. Farmers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship face daily struggles because of a broken supply chain system that limits access to land, water, and agricultural infrastructure. This is compounded by the fact that there are sanctions placed on obtaining construction material. Without international assistance, it will be nearly impossible to rebuild the system and restore Palestinian food sovereignty.

Accordingly, several United Nations resolutions have been issued to condemn several of Israel’s malicious attacks on Palestine including Resolution ES-10/14 issued by the International Court of Justice which demands that Israel stops and reverses the construction of the separation wall in Palestine, and the Security Council’s Resolution 2334 which acknowledged that Israel’s settlements in Palestinian territory have no legal validity. Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) states that Palestinians who wish to return to their land are allowed to do so, and that compensation must be paid for the property of those who choose not to return, as well as for any loss or damage incurred. Despite their adoption, these resolutions have failed to protect Palestinians from Israel's attacks on their food system as they hold no repercussions if they are not implemented by Israel.

Stricter accountability measures are needed to hold Israel responsible for its attacks on Palestinians and to force Israel to compensate Palestinians for the damages and losses caused by these attacks. This is in line with the Fourth Geneva Convention which states that civilians in areas of occupied territories are to be protected by the occupying power. Only through these measures will Palestinians be able to reclaim their food sovereignty, which is a key component of their right to self-determination.

**Question Three: Indicate and describe what population groups and peoples are targets of this violence?**

Although population groups whose income solely depend on farming are impacted the most, all Indigenous Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza as well as holders of Israeli citizenship, are affected by Israel’s attacks on Palestine’s food system to some degree since food security is greatly reduced. According to the World Food Program, 40% of Palestinians in t he West Bank and 60% of Palestinians in Gaza face food insecurity.

**Question Four: How have authorities and people created spaces of sanctuary or protection from violence within food systems?**

Civil society organizations have stepped up in lieu of intervention and compensation from official parties to alleviate some of the farmers' suffering. For example, the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN) has planted over 2.7 million trees in Palestine as part of its Million Tree Campaign which aims to protect Palestinian land from confiscation by reviving and rehabilitating lands to strengthen Palestinian’s resilience and provide them with a sustainable source of income. Moreover, several civil society organizations (e.g., Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Al-Haq) support farmers legally by monitoring and reporting human rights violations relating to food, water, and a healthy environment. Further international support is needed for Palestinians to access international courts.

Another successful campaign is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS) which aims to apply international pressure on the Israeli government to abide by international law by applying bottom-up public pressure to economically and culturally isolate Israeli and international organizations that are complicit in violations of Palestinian rights.

**\*note: Please contact APN (****gm@apnature.org** **/****advocacy@apnature.org****) for more information and resources.**