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منتدى العدالة الدولي ضد الإبادة الجماعية  
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The International Justice Forum Against Genocide

# Food Meals Under Fire: The Israeli Occupation's Targeting of Communal Kitchens and Food Distribution Centers in Gaza

Documentation of War Crimes Through the Starvation of Civilians and the Destruction of the Last Remaining Humanitarian Lifelines in the Gaza Strip



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## **Preface**

In the context of the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, the crimes committed have taken on an unprecedented level of brutality. The occupation has combined killing, starvation, and systematic destruction as part of a policy of genocide directed against more than two million Palestinians—most of whom are children and women.

This report highlights one of the most dangerous tools of genocide: the targeting of food distribution centers and charitable kitchens, locally known as “Takaya,” which have become the sole lifeline for tens of thousands of families left without food, water, or shelter.

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## **I. Takaya in Gaza: A Shelter for the Poor Under Siege**

Takaya are charitable initiatives that cook and distribute free meals to the displaced and impoverished amidst the collapse of the food system. These kitchens emerged extensively in Gaza, supported by local communities and relief organizations, forming the last line of defense against escalating hunger.

With the destruction of local food reserves, the shutdown of bakeries, and the lack of fuel, Takaya have become the only source of hot meals—simple ones consisting of lentils, rice, and firewood-cooked vegetables.

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## **II. Starvation as a Weapon: A Deliberate Policy, Not Collateral Damage**

The targeting of Takaya is not an isolated incident but part of a clear strategy by the occupation, amounting to what can be described as "slow genocide," characterized by:

- The complete closure of all border crossings since March 2, 2025.
- A total ban on the entry of food and fuel, leading to the shutdown of 100% of bakeries.
- Direct targeting of Takaya and nutrition centers, resulting in hundreds of civilian and volunteer casualties.
- The destruction of 68 food facilities, including 29 Takaya and 39 distribution centers.

Statements from Israeli officials confirm the intent. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared:  
“Not a single grain of wheat will enter Gaza”—a statement that reflects a deliberate intention to starve the population, which constitutes a war crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

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### **III. Firsthand Accounts of Hunger and Death**

This report presents harrowing humanitarian scenes:

- Children collapsing in food queues.
- Women waiting up to 7 hours for a plate of lentils.
- Volunteers killed while distributing meals to starving displaced families.
- Takaya bombed during meal distribution, incinerating bodies alongside pots and utensils.

Notable documented incidents include:

- “Al-Quloub Al-Raheema” Takaya in Khan Younis: Direct shelling killed 10 civilians, including children and Takaya workers.
  - “Takiyet Al-Amal” – Al-Shuja’iya: Targeted by a drone during bread distribution, resulting in the martyrdom of several volunteers.
  - World Central Kitchen: Seven international aid workers were killed despite prior coordination with the Israeli military.
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### **IV. The Total Collapse of the Humanitarian System**

According to reports by the UN and health organizations:

- 60% of children in Gaza suffer from acute malnutrition.
- At least 326 deaths have been linked to food and medicine shortages.
- Most relief organizations have ceased operations due to attacks on their staff.
- 95% of the population now relies entirely on aid—up from 60% before the war.

Individual initiatives have become the last resort but are also being targeted, as in the case of three young men—Abboud, Tarek, and Hamza—who were martyred while preparing meals.

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### **V. The Legal Dimensions of the Crime**

The targeting of charitable kitchens and humanitarian distribution centers constitutes:

- A war crime under Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- A violation of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit attacks on civilians and humanitarian workers.
- A breach of the International Court of Justice ruling, which ordered Israel to halt genocidal actions in Gaza.

Furthermore, the deliberate starvation of civilians is considered an act of genocide under Article 6 of the Rome Statute.

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### **To Follow the Details and Victims' Stories**

#### **Hunger Queues and the Tragedy of Communal Kitchens: When a Piece of Bread Becomes a Deadly Dream**

For over 600 consecutive days of war, Israel has used hunger as a central weapon in its assault on Gaza. Access to food has become a daily concern for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians amid the complete collapse of the food supply chain, absence of humanitarian aid, and ongoing siege.

The crisis worsened as unemployment soared to 85%, while World Bank estimates show that 100% of Gaza's population now lives below the poverty line, with 95% depending on aid, up from 60% before the war.

In this grim reality, families line up for hours outside charitable kitchens, hoping for a plate of lentils or vegetable soup. Flour, rice, and oil are unavailable, or priced beyond the reach of the majority.

Citizens describe harrowing scenes: children fainting from crowding, women screaming in desperation, and many returning empty-handed as food runs out. A young girl named

Lynn says she waits for hours in the sun for one meal, while Um Ahmad states that lentil soup has become their means of survival despite lacking basic nutrients.

Some kitchens have ceased operations after being targeted or due to lack of supplies. Others continue with limited capacity under the constant threat of bombardment. Kitchen workers emphasize that the occupation not only closes crossings and blocks aid but also deliberately targets food centers to starve the population into collapse.

Despite their limited resources, these kitchens remain the last lifeline for tens of thousands of families in the complete absence of sufficient humanitarian support and amidst international complicity in the genocide-by-starvation policy.

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### **The World Central Kitchen Massacre and the Targeting of Relief Kitchens: When Humanitarian Work Becomes a Military Target**

On April 1, 2024, a shocking crime occurred when Israeli drones targeted a convoy belonging to World Central Kitchen upon its return from a humanitarian mission. Seven international aid workers were killed despite prior coordination with the Israeli army and clearly marked humanitarian signs on their vehicles.

The convoy had just unloaded over 100 tons of sea-delivered food at a warehouse in Deir al-Balah. According to the organization, three consecutive vehicles were struck with deadly timing, suggesting deliberate premeditation: the first vehicle was hit, then the second—carrying survivors—was bombed, followed by the third.

Palestinian Red Crescent teams recovered the bodies and transferred them to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital and later to Abu Youssef Al-Najjar Hospital, ahead of repatriation to Egypt. The victims wore protective vests bearing the organization's insignia, confirming their civilian, humanitarian role.

Victims included:

- Saif Al-Din Issam Abu Taha (26) – Palestinian from Rafah, driver for WCK.
- Lalzawmi Frankcom (43) – Australian.
- Damian Sobol (35) – Polish, previously active in Ukraine, Turkey, and Morocco.
- James Henderson (33) – British, former Royal Navy security contractor.
- John Anthony Chapman (57) – British, former Royal Navy.
- James Kirby (47) – British, former soldier.
- Jacob Flickinger (33) – Dual Canadian/American national.

**Chef José Andrés, founder of WCK, stated:** "Our team was deliberately targeted. This was no mistake, but a premeditated attack on individuals whose location was known and whose movements were fully coordinated".

The attack caused a shockwave throughout Gaza's humanitarian landscape. Organizations such as Anera and Project Hope Palestine suspended operations. Ships carrying 240 tons of aid returned to Cyprus without unloading.

This incident was not isolated. It was part of an intensified wave of attacks on food kitchens and distribution centers in Sheikh Radwan, Al-Jalaa Street, and Al-Mawasi in Khan Younis, where dozens of civilians were killed, including: Doaa Abu Jamaa (6) – killed while holding an empty plate, Tala Mansour (12) – survived and described the horror: "food mixed with children's body parts".

Field volunteers Yasser Abdel Hamid and Mohammed Wasfi documented the devastation of the kitchens, where exploding pots mingled with blood, and humanitarian efforts were reduced to ashes amid the absence of international protection.

This systematic targeting of aid, both international and local, is a blatant violation of Article 71 of Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions, which mandates the protection of humanitarian workers. Using hunger as a method of siege, then targeting those trying to relieve it, constitutes a complete war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

This is more than war: it is the criminalization of survival itself. Every hand reaching out to feed the hungry has become a legitimate military target under the occupation's framework. The UN, international courts, and civil society must act urgently to halt these crimes, hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure the full protection of humanitarian work in Gaza.

### **"Gaza's Communal Kitchens": The Last Line of Defense in the Battle Against Hunger and Slow Death**

In the heart of Gaza City, amid a devastating war now entering its second year, the "Sanad" communal kitchen bears witness to chilling humanitarian scenes; hundreds of residents and displaced persons—men, women, and children—stand daily in long queues under the scorching sun or pouring rain, all hoping to receive a hot meal that will keep them alive for one more day. In a scene reminiscent of famine-stricken conflict zones around the world, these kitchens have become the last refuge against the policy of mass starvation practiced against the residents of the Gaza Strip.



In this kitchen, which operates with scarce resources, pots boil with whatever food is available over wood fires—not out of a desire to use primitive methods, but due to the lack of fuel and the absence of gas as a result of the tightened blockade and the closure of crossings. While the smell of lentils or rice cooked over wood fires fills the air, volunteers hurry to distribute meals to families devastated by hunger and weighed down by displacement, many of whom have lost their homes and livelihoods due to bombing and destruction.

Naseem Abu Naji, founder of the “Sanad” kitchen, says the increasing number of displaced people in shelters and camps has far exceeded the kitchen's capacity, which relies almost entirely on individual donations and external aid. He adds: "The shortage of funding and the difficulty of delivering humanitarian support due to ongoing bombings and the suffocating blockade have made it difficult for us to continue. We have been forced to reduce meal sizes and lower the quality of the food, while some families wait for hours and return disappointed because the food has run out."

Abu Naji warns of the sharp rise in the prices of basic goods such as rice, lentils, oil, and even salt, which have increased by more than 400% compared to before the war, in addition to a liquidity crisis that has reached catastrophic levels, making the continuation of the kitchens' work almost impossible. He affirms that the threat of total collapse looms, warning of an imminent humanitarian catastrophe, especially in the absence of alternative food sources and a complete lack of income for most residents.

In Al-Nuseirat in the center of the Gaza Strip, Wadieh Abu Fanounah, supervisor of the “Takiya Al-Kul,” describes the situation in painful words: "The kitchens have become the last barrier against famine. Today we feed between 600 and 750 people daily, and this number represents only a drop in the ocean of immense need." He adds that the Israeli occupation has begun directly targeting the kitchens as part of a systematic policy to strike the social and humanitarian infrastructure. He explains that recent attacks forced them to take unprecedented safety measures, such as distributing meals in small intervals to avoid gatherings and reduce the risk of targeting.

Abu Fanounah points out that the repeated targeting of food service facilities and the tightening of the entry of essential foodstuffs has led to a severe shortage in vegetables, meat, and cooking gas, prompting the kitchens to resort to cooking basic soups that do not truly satisfy hunger but at least ensure the bare minimum of survival.

Journalist Mohammed Qreieqa, based in Gaza City, describes a grim scene in the north of the Strip where “charity work is dying.” He says that what remains of the kitchens now operates secretly and in a very limited scope, and meals are distributed to the poorest families in ways that preserve their dignity and protect them from the risk of being

targeted. He adds: "People have lost everything, and now they cling to what is left of the kitchens that have become the last lifeline. With declining donations and diminishing resources, there are real fears that these kitchens could disappear at any moment."

Although the kitchens were originally established to serve residents in shelters, the need has gone far beyond that. Even those who remained in their partially destroyed homes or live with relatives now turn to the kitchens in search of a meal to feed their children, after their savings have run out and food has become a luxury rarely available.

The continuation of these kitchens is no longer merely a social service or a voluntary initiative, but rather a national and humanitarian duty, and a fundamental pillar in preventing the spread of famine, especially in the absence of any real or effective role by the international community in providing safe humanitarian corridors or pressuring the occupation to lift the siege.

With the repeated targeting of kitchens, declining aid, and growing food insecurity, a moral and humanitarian question becomes inevitable: How long will an entire population be left to face hunger and slow death without serious and effective action from the international community?

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### **Targeting of "Merciful Hearts" Kitchen in Khan Younis: A Full-Fledged Crime Against the Hungry and Displaced**

In one of the most horrific acts of targeting humanitarian and relief work in the Gaza Strip, an Israeli occupation drone bombed a tent sheltering displaced persons in the Al-Amal neighborhood in the Al-Mawasi area west of Khan Younis, as dozens of civilians stood in line to receive meals from the "Merciful Hearts" kitchen. The attack resulted in a horrifying massacre that claimed the lives of seven martyrs, including four residents of the tent (two brothers, one of their wives, and their child), and three others who were waiting in line for food, including two children. More than 25 people were injured, including the kitchen owner, several volunteers, children, and women who were present at the scene.

The following day, medical sources at Nasser Medical Complex announced the death of three of the injured due to critical wounds, raising the death toll of this massacre—carried out near a civilian relief facility—to ten martyrs.

Mohammed Jumaa Mohammed Yehia, 40, owner of the "Merciful Hearts" kitchen, recounted the horrific moments, saying: "We were preparing to distribute food to displaced families who were lining up in a long queue, and suddenly I heard two loud



explosions. Dust and smoke filled the area. I saw the kitchen workers lying on the ground, blood pouring from them. I felt severe pain in my right foot, and when I looked down, it was bleeding heavily. I realized I had been injured, but what shocked me more was the large number of wounded and martyrs around me—children and women among them."

Yehia noted that the strike caused extensive damage to the kitchen facility, including **the destruction of water tanks, cooking equipment, and six large pots used daily to prepare meals for the poor and displaced.**

This crime, which adds to a long series of violations against humanitarian and charitable institutions, clearly demonstrates that the occupation forces are not only targeting infrastructure and homes, but are deliberately attempting to annihilate the basic means of human survival by attacking food, water, and direct aid provided to civilians.

In recent days, there has been an unprecedented escalation in the targeting of humanitarian work teams and aid distribution points, whether institutional or individual. Several volunteers and activists have been executed across different areas of the Gaza Strip, including those responsible for distributing food and water inside displacement camps and residential areas.

This escalation has resulted in an **almost complete paralysis of relief activities**, with most forms of charitable work disappearing, including communal kitchens that once served hot meals to those in need—particularly in the streets, camps housing thousands of makeshift tents, and shelters now facing catastrophic conditions amid a lack of food, drinking water, and basic hygiene supplies.

Saeed Al-Ghaf, 54, one of the supervisors of a kitchen that recently ceased operations, described the scene: "We used to feed no less than 400 people a day, and now we declare our inability. Our food supplies have run out, and with continued strikes on other kitchens, we have nothing left. The occupation not only closes crossings and blocks aid but also bombs what remains of life itself, in an attempt to starve our people into submission."

The targeting of the "Merciful Hearts" kitchen and other community food centers constitutes a **double crime**: it strikes unarmed civilians and deprives them of food at a time when famine has become a reality. It also represents a flagrant and repeated violation of international humanitarian law, particularly Article 54 of Additional Protocol I to **the Geneva Conventions of 1977**, which prohibits attacking or destroying "objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population," such as food and its distribution centers.

In the face of this catastrophic reality, it becomes imperative for the international community to act immediately and seriously to stop these crimes, ensure the protection of humanitarian facilities and volunteers, and guarantee the unconditional entry of aid. Leaving the people of Gaza to face both hunger and bombardment is a stain on the conscience of humanity—one that cannot be justified by silence or complicity.

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### Targeting of “Qawafel Al-Khair” and “Al-Khair” Kitchens in Gaza and Khan Younis: Famine Looms Amid the Flames of War

In one of the crimes that encapsulate the cruelty of the Israeli war on Gaza, Israeli warplanes bombed the “Qawafel Al-Khair Kitchen,” affiliated with a charitable association, which was operating in the vital Al-Jalaa Street in the heart of Gaza City, providing hot meals to the poor and displaced. The bombing resulted in the killing of ten civilians, including volunteers who were working in the kitchen at the time of the attack, seeking to distribute food to those in need amid the worsening hunger crisis.

Among the martyrs was volunteer Mahmoud Al-Muqayyid (40 years old), who died while performing his humanitarian duty. His uncle, Shaaban Al-Muqayyid, recalled his deep commitment: “Mahmoud believed that food is a human right that must not be denied. He always said hunger cannot wait—he was the first to arrive and the last to leave.”

This crime highlights **the deliberate targeting by the occupation of humanitarian workers**, not only those in rescue and medical teams but also those operating on the frontlines of feeding the hungry, a field that has itself become a battleground of steadfastness against policies of starvation and genocide.

In another equally tragic incident, an Israeli drone targeted the “Al-Khair Kitchen” in the Al-Sadd Al-Aali area of Khan Younis refugee camp, killing three workers:

- Bilal Saeed Mohammed Abu Mustafa (31 years old)
- Mohammed Suleiman Ibrahim Abu Mustafa (30 years old)
- Mohyeddin Hussein Mohammed Al-Khawas (29 years old)

**Suleiman Ibrahim Jumaa Abu Mustafa (65 years old)**, the father of one of the martyrs, stated that the “Al-Khair” kitchen was a grassroots volunteer initiative launched by a group of young men passionate about serving their community. Over the past months, it had provided daily meals to dozens of local families and displaced individuals, amid the complete collapse of the food and service infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.



The grieving father added: “They worked with modest means and purely manual efforts. Their only intention was to satisfy the hunger of the people. So why were they targeted? Has bread and lentils become a threat to Israel’s security?”

The targeting of these kitchens, whether officially run by charities or launched as individual volunteer initiatives, reveals **the occupation’s persistent attempt to strip Gaza’s population of the most basic elements of survival**, and its deliberate deprivation of civilians of their fundamental rights. This is a blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit the targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers and ban the use of starvation as a weapon of war.

Targeting food initiative volunteers—who bear no weapons but only cooking utensils and food containers—is **proof of the systematic nature of this aggression**, turning hunger itself into a silent and complex weapon of death, claiming those who survive the bombing.

Amid these crimes, **the ability of local communities and relief organizations to continue their work is drastically diminishing**. Many communal kitchens have been forced either to shut down completely or to operate in secrecy, fearing the same fate as their predecessors. As a result, **the gates of famine are being thrown wide open**, with no official or international alternatives in place to fill this catastrophic void.

What is happening in Gaza—the direct targeting of communal kitchens—represents a **dark stain on the conscience of humanity** and demands urgent action to protect the remaining humanitarian facilities and to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for using food as a weapon against civilians.

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### **Grassroots Initiatives Turned into Military Targets: The Targeting of Aboud, Tareq, and Hamza’s Kitchen**

Amid the near-total collapse of the international relief system in Gaza due to relentless bombardment and lack of funding, dozens of Palestinian youth have turned to launching grassroots initiatives to provide the minimum sustenance needed by displaced persons and the poor. Among them, three young men—known locally as “**Aboud, Tareq, and Hamza**”—dedicated their time and daily efforts to preparing and distributing meals to displaced families in western Khan Younis.

These young men bore no weapons—only **cooking pots and wooden spoons**. But Israeli drones did not distinguish them from so-called “military targets.” In a scene documented in a widely circulated video, the final moments of the young men were captured as they

prepared food, moments before a missile launched from a drone struck the site, turning the field kitchen into a fireball. They were all martyred at the doorstep of the kitchen they had dreamed would be a refuge for the displaced.

In a similar incident in the **Al-Amal neighborhood** of Khan Younis, a young man, **Mohammed Al-Masri (24 years old)**, and four of his companions set out in a small vehicle carrying crates of fresh vegetables—tomatoes, zucchini, and potatoes—as part of an initiative to distribute them to affected families in the area. Along the way, an Israeli drone launched a direct strike that turned the vehicle into a fireball, killing three of them and severely injuring the others. The blood-stained vegetables became a painful symbol of the brutality faced by humanitarian efforts in Gaza.

Samir Al-Dalo, an eyewitness near the scene, said while trembling in shock: “There was nothing in the vehicle but vegetables and food. Mohammed’s body was charred, and I couldn’t recognize Moaz’s face. It was a horrifying scene... All they wanted was to feed the people.”

That same day, a **charitable kitchen in central Khan Younis** was also targeted, as dozens of displaced persons lined up to receive a hot meal. A missile exploded suddenly, killing one kitchen worker and injuring two others. Umm Khaled, a widowed displaced woman who was about to receive her meal at the time of the attack, said: “The soup mixed with blood. I was in line when I heard the screaming and the whistling. I haven’t been able to eat since that day. Everything changed.”

### **A Systematic Policy of Criminalizing Humanitarian Giving**

It has become clear that the Israeli occupation has not limited its attacks to infrastructure or command centers—as it claims—but has expanded its Target Bank to include **the basic aspects of civilian life**, specifically those initiatives that serve as lifelines for thousands of families under siege.

Bread has been turned into a threat. The volunteer distributing meals has become a **military target**. Cooking stations have become **deliberate bombing sites**. The targeting of kitchens and individual food initiatives is not the result of “accidental strikes” but a **deliberate strategy aimed at strangling civil society, reshaping consciousness, and crushing resilience** by dismantling every form of solidarity and social support.

**Maryam Taha**, coordinator of the “Bread for All” initiative, summarized the tragedy by saying:

“We don’t carry guns; we carry loaves of bread. But it seems that bread has become an existential threat to the occupation.”

She added:

“Every time we announce a food distribution, we have to change the time and place at the last minute, as if we were a resistance cell. All we want is to feed people.”

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### **A Double Crime: Killing and Starving**

The targeting of grassroots humanitarian initiatives represents not only a flagrant violation of **international humanitarian law**, but also a component of a **compound crime** that combines **deliberate killing** with **the use of starvation as a method of warfare**—both of which are prohibited under Article 14 of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, and Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

What is happening in Gaza is not merely a siege—it is an attempt to criminalize life itself and to dismantle the last remaining networks of popular support on which civilians rely for survival.

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### **Targeting of Al-Khair International Foundation – Beit Lahia: Silencing the Flame of Giving Under Fire**

In the heart of **Beit Lahia** town, in northern Gaza Strip—where hope was daily renewed despite siege and death—the communal **kitchen of Al-Khair International Foundation** served as a beacon of life amid the darkness, providing hot meals to afflicted families and displaced persons. On the day of the massacre, the site was bustling with activity—dozens of chefs, volunteers, and journalists were preparing food. None of them carried weapons; they only held **spoons and kitchen knives**, as described by **Ibrahim Safi**, one of the survivors of the attack.

“I was standing beside a tray of mujaddara, and saw my colleagues fall one by one. There was no soldier or fighter among us... Nine of my friends were martyred in a single moment,” Ibrahim said in a voice choked with testimony.

The massacre was carried out with a single missile launched by an Israeli drone at the food distribution yard. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation, **Qasem Rashid Ahmad**, expressed the tragedy with bitterness:

"The occupation is not merely targeting individuals, but is attempting to assassinate everything humane in Gaza."

**In a residential neighborhood in northern Gaza**, a small kitchen was bombed while distributing lentil soup to children. **The humanitarian worker Nasser** was killed

in the attack, and two others were injured. The testimony of witness **Abu Anas Hamdan** describes the scene with painful precision:

"Nasser was ladling soup from the pot. We were standing in a long line, waiting. Then the ground shook, and I found his body torn beside the pot he had been using to serve life."

In the **Al-Qatatawa Camp west of Khan Younis**, the bloody pattern repeated: an Israeli drone targeted a food kitchen serving displaced persons. **Bilal Saeed Mohammed Abu Mustafa, Mohammed Suleiman Abu Mustafa, and Mohieddin Al-Khawas** were all killed, and others injured. All were civilians, working to feed the hungry.

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### **“Bombing for Bread”: Turning Food into a Weapon**

The repeated and systematic targeting of communal kitchens cannot be considered “collateral damage”; rather, it is a practical execution of the policy of starvation as a method of warfare. It is a strategy aimed at **dismantling the civil foundations of life** in Gaza and turning any attempt at survival into a deadly gamble.

With the intensification of displacement and internal migration, communal kitchens have become the last refuge for thousands of families deprived of food. Yet the Israeli occupation has deliberately worked to dismantle even this lifeline, as part of a broader plan to **destroy the social infrastructure and tear apart the civilian fabric** of Gaza.

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### **International Warnings... That Go No Further Than Statements**

Reputable international organizations such as Oxfam, OCHA, the World Food Programme, and UNRWA have issued repeated warnings over the past months about the imminent threat of famine in Gaza. Their reports describe the food situation in the Strip as the worst globally, noting that their staff “**witness children daily who are suffering from acute malnutrition, to the point where they are too weak to cry.**”

This tragic reality is not the result of aid shortages alone, but of a systematic Israeli policy that prevents the flow of food and targets those who provide it, in flagrant violation of international law, especially:

- **Article 54 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions**, which prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.
- **The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**, which criminalizes the use of starvation as a weapon.



### **International Silence: Complicity or Incompetence?**

The continuation of these crimes in the face of **international silence constitutes implicit complicity** and strips the international justice system of credibility before the millions of victims of famine and mass killing in Gaza. **Urgent and unconditional action** is needed to ensure:

- An immediate ceasefire.
- The opening of border crossings for the flow of aid.
- Full protection for humanitarian workers and volunteers.
- Prosecution of Israeli leaders responsible for targeting relief centers before international courts.

**"Turning humanitarian aid into a tool for blackmail and control poses a direct threat to civilians,"** OCHA warned, adding that the situation in Gaza threatens the **complete collapse** of the humanitarian system.

### **Together for Justice and Survival**

The communal kitchens have become a symbol of resistance against hunger and death. Targeting them is not merely the bombing of cooking pots, but the destruction of the last remnants of dignity and hope for the population. Every loaf of bread distributed in Gaza is a cry against genocide, and every volunteer who falls as a martyr stands as a witness to **one of the most heinous humanitarian crimes of the 21st century.**

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### **Al-Amal Communal Kitchen in Al-Shuja'iya: When Bread Becomes an Act of Resistance**

In the heart of Al-Shuja'iya neighborhood, east of Gaza City—among the rubble and charred pillars of buildings destroyed by Israeli bombardment—stood Al-Amal Communal Kitchen, a living symbol of resilience and dignity in the face of siege, hunger, and fire. It was not merely a charity kitchen for cooking food, but a space for survival and continuity, a daily refuge for hundreds of families who had lost their homes, livelihoods, and all they owned.

From the early hours of dawn, volunteers would gather to light wood fires under pots of soup and prepare fresh bread, despite the scarcity of resources, the lack of fuel and gas, and the power outages. They were not merely cooking food; they were preparing hope

and distributing it to children and displaced persons in a time when bread had become as rare as safety.

One of the pillars of this kitchen was 25-year-old Ayman Mushtaha, who had lost his father in a previous airstrike but chose to turn his pain into volunteer work, dedicating his time to serving the hungry. He would always say, “No one should sleep hungry in our city, even if the skies rain fire.”

But one morning, while Ayman and his colleagues were distributing food to children, the sound of an Israeli drone filled the sky, followed by a horrific explosion that struck near the kitchen. There was no time to flee or find shelter. In moments, Al-Amal Kitchen turned into a fireball. Flour scattered like dust in the air, and hot soups flowed across the blood-stained ground.

Ayman fell to the ground, wounded by shrapnel and scorched by flames, but he did not think of himself. He cried out, “Where are the children?” and crawled with his injured body toward five-year-old Layan, who was crying amid the smoke. He carried her in his wounded arms and took her to the street where the stunned survivors had gathered. He was not just a hero, but a living example of what it means for bread and water to become acts of daily resistance in Gaza.

The next day, nothing remained of Al-Amal Kitchen but ashes and memories. Yet the residents of the neighborhood did not surrender. They gathered, collected the remains of metal sheets and broken cooking pots, and rebuilt the kitchen once again. In Gaza, hope is not bombed, dignity is not defeated, and the loaf of bread does not surrender.

This crime was not isolated, but part of a systematic series of attacks on communal kitchens and field kitchens that thousands of displaced and vulnerable people depend on. These violations have escalated at a time when Israeli authorities continue to block essential humanitarian aid and impose a land, sea, and air blockade on the Strip, intensifying the threat of famine—especially during the holy month of Ramadan, when communal kitchens are expected to be at the peak of their humanitarian efforts.

Targeting communal kitchens does not only strike pots and bread, but attacks the entire social solidarity network and turns hunger into a weapon of war—in clear violation of Article 54 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

The targeting of Al-Amal Kitchen is an assault on humanity itself and places the world before a moral and legal responsibility: Is it permissible to turn food into a military target? And can we remain silent in the face of a deliberate starvation policy imposed on more than two million people in a besieged territory?

### **Nuseirat Charity Kitchen: Deliberate Targeting of Humanitarian Work in a Densely Populated Area**

In a scene that reflects the escalation of Israeli attacks against relief facilities and civilian communities, an Israeli drone attacked a group of citizens gathered in front of the Al-Salhi family home near Al-Qassam Mosque in Nuseirat Camp, in the central governorate of Gaza Strip—only about 15 meters away from Nuseirat Charity Kitchen, which was, at the time, preparing to distribute meals to displaced and impoverished individuals.

The attack resulted in the killing of four civilians, including Jalal Harb, one of the volunteers working at the kitchen, and the injury of 15 others with varying degrees of wounds, including several volunteers who were preparing the food at a moment that should have been protected under international humanitarian law.

One of the wounded, who was transported to Al-Awda Hospital after suffering serious injuries, described the horrifying moments he experienced:

“We were preparing food to distribute to displaced families living in unimaginable conditions. Suddenly, a massive explosion struck just meters away. Dust and smoke rose in the air. Then I felt sharp pain in my left leg—the pain was so intense I thought my foot had been severed. I tried to escape but lost consciousness. I later woke up in the hospital, where I learned that four people were martyred in the strike, including my colleague Jalal, with whom I worked daily at the kitchen.”

This bombing is neither a random incident nor an accidental military error; rather, it comes within a systematic context of targeting community relief centers, which have become the only lifeline for providing food to the displaced and needy amid the collapse of food supply chains, the destruction of markets, and the ongoing suffocating blockade on the Strip.

Nuseirat Charity Kitchen, like other kitchens in Gaza, operates under extremely dangerous conditions and without any international guarantees or protection. It has become an exposed target in a war that appears intent on destroying all means of civilian survival—from hospitals to bakeries, and from relief convoys to food kitchens.

This attack constitutes a direct violation of Article 18 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which requires the protection of civilian and humanitarian facilities, including locations for food aid. It also breaches the principle of distinction between military and civilian targets, enshrined in international humanitarian law, and represents a war crime that necessitates the opening of an urgent international investigation and the prosecution of the perpetrators.



Amid this continued bombardment, many communal kitchens are forced to reduce or completely halt their operations, which threatens to further aggravate the risk of famine, disease, and malnutrition—especially among children, the elderly, and the ill. With the absence of any safe humanitarian corridors, these repeated attacks on relief facilities amount to the systematic execution of Palestinian civil society under the eyes and ears of the world.

### **Targeting Communal Kitchens: When Food Becomes a Target in a War of Extermination**

In a grave escalation of violations of international humanitarian law, the Israeli occupation has not only closed border crossings and prevented the entry of food and humanitarian supplies into the Gaza Strip, but has gone further to commit a compounded crime by targeting communal kitchens and charitable food centers—facilities that constitute the last lifeline for tens of thousands of starving families. Since the beginning of the Israeli war on Gaza, these kitchens have been the sole refuge for the poor and displaced. Yet recently, they have become direct targets of bombardment, reflecting a deliberate policy by the occupation to expand the tools of genocide to include food and relief institutions.

Field activists and human rights defenders agree that the targeting of communal kitchens is not merely “collateral damage,” as the occupation claims, but a systematic act that falls under the policy of forced starvation—aimed at breaking the will of the civilian population in Gaza and stripping them of even the most basic means of resilience. The targeting of these vital facilities can only be understood as a war against survival itself, a fully-fledged crime that contravenes all international conventions.

At a time when public dependence on communal and field kitchens is escalating to provide the minimum level of nutrition—especially amid the deepening famine caused by the prolonged blockade—Israeli forces have carried out direct attacks on food distribution centers and the surrounding civilian gatherings. According to the Government Media Office in Gaza, 68 communal kitchens and food distribution centers have been targeted since the beginning of the war, including **39 food and aid distribution centers**, and **29 kitchens that prepare and serve daily meals to the poor and displaced**.

These figures highlight the magnitude of the catastrophe and the depth of the crime—especially in light of the continued ban on the entry of food, water, and fuel, and the inability of international organizations to fulfill their roles due to the repeated

bombardment of humanitarian facilities. The Media Office has affirmed that such targeting can only be interpreted as the occupation's use of food as a weapon of war, in blatant violation of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which strictly prohibits, under any circumstances, the targeting of civilian and humanitarian facilities, including relief centers and social solidarity hubs.

The heaviest targeting of communal and field kitchens has occurred in the central and southern areas of the Gaza Strip, due to waves of forced displacement that have struck northern areas such as Jabalia, Beit Hanoun, and Beit Lahia, following mass evacuation orders. This massive displacement has led to severe overcrowding in areas like Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat, Khan Younis, and Rafah—substantially increasing the pressure on communal kitchens and rendering them exposed targets amid ongoing bombardment, despite their humanitarian nature.

The bombing of communal kitchens is not limited to the destruction of buildings or disruption of services—it poses a direct threat to the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians who have no alternative means to obtain food. As such, it constitutes a grave violation of the **principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity**, which govern the conduct of armed forces in conflict and warrants an independent international investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators before competent courts, including the International Criminal Court.

The targeting of communal kitchens is not just a legal violation—it is a stain on the conscience of humanity, and further evidence of the use of starvation as a tool of genocide against the population of Gaza, in one of the most brutal and systematic crimes of modern history.

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## Victims' Stories from the Targeting of Communal Kitchens in the Gaza Strip

### 1. Ayman Mushtaha: Steadfastness in the Face of War

Ayman Mushtaha, a 25-year-old young man, was one of the pillars of “Al-Amal Kitchen” in the Al-Shuja’iya neighborhood in eastern Gaza. He had lost his father in the previous war, but he dedicated his life to serving his people by preparing and distributing food to displaced persons who had lost everything.

On a tragic morning, while he was distributing food to children, aircraft sirens blared, followed by a violent explosion that turned the kitchen into ashes. Despite his injuries, Ayman crawled through smoke and fire to rescue Layan, a young girl who was crying alone. Today, after the destruction of the kitchen, the people of

Al-Shuja'iya have not lost hope—they rebuilt it, determined to continue providing support despite all challenges.

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**2. Aboud, Tareq, and Hamza: A Meal on the Edge of Fire**

Three Palestinian young men—Aboud, Tareq, and Hamza—were preparing meals in Khan Younis for displaced persons exhausted by hunger. Their work was voluntary, and their spirits were high despite the harsh conditions.

One day, while they were preparing meals as usual, Israeli aircraft launched a direct airstrike. A video documented their final moments as they continued working, before death engulfed them. They left behind a great void and deep sorrow in the hearts of their families and the community they served.

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**3. Umm Khaled: Soup Mixed with Blood**

Umm Khaled, a displaced widow, was standing in line at the kitchen waiting for her family's food portion when the explosion occurred. She said: "I heard screaming, and the food mixed with blood—I haven't been able to eat anything since then."

This horrific scene reflects thousands of sorrowful stories in the Gaza Strip, where innocent people die while simply trying to get a meal to survive another day.

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**4. Doaa Abu Jamaa: The Child Who Never Tasted the Food**

Doaa was only six years old. She wore her elegant embroidered dress and went to the kitchen for the first time with her sisters. She didn't know that her path—carrying an empty dish to be filled with food—would be her last.

Her father said: "All Doaa dreamed of was to eat. It's as if she felt the end of her path and chose her most beautiful dress."

In a heavy airstrike that targeted the kitchen, the child ascended to the heavens, leaving behind an unhealable pain in everyone's hearts.

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**5. Nasser the Soup Distributor: Between the Pot and the Body**

In the Al-Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in northern Gaza, Nasser carried his large pot, distributing lentil soup to children longing for food amid bombardment and destruction.



In a tragic moment, the soup pot that once gave life became a witness to the tragedy of his loss—he was struck by a missile that turned his body into fragments beside the pot he was serving from.  
His story represents the innocence of war victims—those who have no power but to hold a spoon to feed an endless hunger.

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#### **6. Mohammed Al-Masri and His Friends: A Food Initiative Turned into a Tragedy**

In the Al-Amal neighborhood in Khan Younis, Mohammed Al-Masri (24 years old) and four of his companions left in a vehicle loaded with vegetables to deliver food to affected families. Their initiative was small but vital amid the shortage of official aid.

Suddenly, a drone targeted them with a missile, turning the vehicle into a fireball. Three were martyred, and two were severely injured.

Samir Al-Dallou, a nearby resident, said: “They were only delivering food. The message of the occupation was clear: no giving in Gaza, no life.”

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#### **7. Victims of the World Central Kitchen: Relief Convoy Under Fire**

On April 1, 2024, a World Central Kitchen convoy was leaving the Deir Al-Balah warehouse after unloading more than 100 tons of aid. Despite prior coordination with Israeli forces, drones targeted the convoy’s three vehicles, resulting in the killing of seven humanitarian workers of various nationalities, including Palestinians and foreigners.

This targeting prompted many humanitarian organizations to suspend their operations in the Gaza Strip out of fear for their workers, halting the arrival of vital aid to thousands in need.

### Recommendations

1. **Immediate action by the United Nations** to open crossings and ensure the entry of food and fuel.
2. **Establishment of an independent international investigative committee** to document the targeting of nutrition centers and prosecute perpetrators.
3. **Provision of international protection for relief facilities and initiatives**, especially Takaya and bakeries.
4. **Legal action before the International Criminal Court** against Israeli political and military leaders.
5. **Imposition of international sanctions on Israel** for using starvation as a weapon.
6. **Pressure on supporting countries (USA, UK, France, Germany)** to fulfill their moral and legal responsibilities.

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### Conclusion

What is unfolding in the Gaza Strip is not merely a war—it is a systematic campaign to strangle life and subjugate the population through tools of starvation, bombardment, and destruction. **The targeting of food and water represents the most severe face of genocide**, placing the international community before a historic responsibility:

Either act to stop the catastrophe, or remain a complicit bystander to an unforgivable crime.

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**Together for international justice, and redress for the victims of genocide in Gaza**

International Justice Forum Against Genocide  
Turkey – Istanbul

















