

**International symposium:**  
**Sustaining peace - the right to food in conflict contexts and protracted crises**  
**25 November 2026**

**Co-organized by AECID, CIHEAM Zaragoza, FAO**  
*with the financial support of Ireland (GCP/GLO/1448/IRE-F)*

## **Background and Rationale**

Around one in eight people around the world were estimated to have been exposed to conflict in 2024, with a 25 percent increase in political violence incidents recorded between the start and end of the year. The total number of people facing Catastrophic food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 5<sup>1</sup>) more than doubled between 2023 and 2024, driven by conflict. Over 95 percent of them were in Palestine (Gaza Strip) and the Sudan.<sup>2</sup>

Armed conflict and violence are a primary driver of acute food insecurity<sup>3</sup> in multiple mutually reinforcing ways, including through the displacement of civilians, the destruction of food systems and constraints on humanitarian access. Conflicts can fuel environmental degradation, exacerbating climate vulnerability and diverting resources away from humanitarian, mitigation and adaptation efforts. Conflicts hinder households' ability to access food in multiple ways. Gender-based and sexual violence violates women's right to life and can impede women's and girls' capacity to physically access lands, markets or natural resources, or even to access food aid. Conflicts can lead to increases in the price of food and food inputs, which hampers households' economic access to food.

Conflicts can be triggered or worsened by weather extremes, climate crises and competition over the changing availability and distribution of natural resources. Economic shocks can also lead to social unrest, violence, conflict, and political instability as a result of rising unemployment, and increasing levels of poverty.<sup>4</sup>

Famines are not inevitable – they are almost always foreseeable, preventable and driven by human actions.<sup>5</sup> Famine is considered a failure of the humanitarian system and tends to occur in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcinfo.org/famine-facts/>

<sup>2</sup> FSIN and GNAFC. 2025. GRFC 2025. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.71958/wfp130664>

<sup>3</sup> FAO and WFP. 2025. Hunger Hotspots. FAO–WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: November 2025 to May 2026 outlook. Rome

<sup>4</sup> FSIN and GNAFC. 2025. GRFC 2025. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.71958/wfp130664>

<sup>5</sup> FAO and WFP. 2025. Hunger Hotspots. FAO–WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: November 2025 to May 2026 outlook. Rome

contexts of conflict, extreme vulnerability, poverty and marginalization, where livelihoods and coping strategies have been exhausted and access to basic services is increasingly lacking. Greater coherence in political commitments, funding allocations and interventions along the humanitarian–development–peace nexus is needed.<sup>6</sup> This includes acting early when signs of acute food insecurity and malnutrition appear, supporting livelihoods, and improving access to essential services, rather than relying on food assistance alone.<sup>7</sup>

Under International Human Rights Law (IHRL), the Right to Food is grounded in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)<sup>8</sup> and clarified by CESCR General Comment No. 12 (1999)<sup>9</sup>, which affirms States’ obligations to ensure access to adequate, nutritious and culturally appropriate food—including in crises, displacement and disasters—and underscores its link to the right to life. Under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Additional Protocol I (Art. 54)<sup>10</sup> and Additional Protocol II (Art. 14)<sup>11</sup> prohibit attacking or destroying objects indispensable to civilian survival (food, crops, water, livestock), while the Fourth Geneva Convention (Arts. 55<sup>12</sup> & 59<sup>13</sup>) requires an occupying power to ensure food supplies and facilitate humanitarian relief; the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court<sup>14</sup> criminalizes the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, and ICRC Customary IHL Rules 53<sup>15</sup>–54<sup>16</sup> confirm the customary prohibition binding all parties. Complementary policy frameworks— such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>17</sup> (1979) – art. 14(2)(g), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) - Art 11, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (2015)<sup>18</sup> and the FAO Right to Food Guidelines<sup>19</sup> (esp. Art. 15–16)—reinforce that the right to adequate food must be protected in fragile settings and guide post-

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<sup>6</sup> FAO and WFP. 2025. Hunger Hotspots. FAO–WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: November 2025 to May 2026 outlook. Rome

<sup>7</sup> FAO and WFP. 2025. Hunger Hotspots. FAO–WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: November 2025 to May 2026 outlook. Rome

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/ec1219995-general-comment-no-12-right-adequate-food>

<sup>10</sup> <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-54>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/apii-1977/article-14>

<sup>12</sup> <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-55>

<sup>13</sup> <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-59>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule53>

<sup>16</sup> <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule54>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

<sup>18</sup> <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d0b4a356-d805-469e-86c0-d6b224e22d36/content>

<sup>19</sup> <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/f1d1988c-0938-4b06-aa54-bfc676f3f87a>

conflict reconstruction. Together, these instruments establish a clear mandate: the right to food must be protected during war and must guide post-conflict- reconstruction processes.

Persistent disconnects remain between humanitarian practice, localization agendas, protection frameworks, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, underscoring the need for stronger dialogue, greater technical consensus and more coherent engagement across these communities. Bridging these divides is essential to support more principled, effective and context-responsive action, strengthen accountability, protect livelihoods and food systems, and promote locally grounded and sustainable recovery and resilience pathways in conflict and protracted crisis settings.

This symposium is part of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM Zaragoza, Spain) thematic series on international cooperation in agrifood systems. Co-organized by CIHEAM, FAO and Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), it is also framed within the implementation of FAO's new cooperation framework with the Government of Ireland (GCP/GLO/1448/IRE-F), which supports work on sustainable food systems, food systems transformation, social resilience and the reduction of humanitarian need, among other priority areas. In this sense, the symposium also contributes to a broader effort to strengthen analysis and dialogue on the right to food in conflict and protracted crisis settings.

### **Objectives of the Symposium**

The overall objective of the symposium is to strengthen understanding, awareness and capacity on the Right to Food in conflict contexts and protracted crises. It aims to articulate the policy, institutional, and programmatic dimensions of the right to food. Finally, it will seek concrete solutions to prevent hunger and food insecurity and ensure respect, protection and fulfilment of people's rights from early warning and risk prevention of violation of the right to food in conflict situations to rights-based and people-centered rebuilding, reconstruction and resilience.

Specific objectives:

- Raising awareness, strengthen understanding of the existing applicable international framework and analyze the impact of conflicts and protracted crises on agrifood systems. Explore reconstruction models grounded on rights-based approaches and peace building processes based on the right to adequate food.
- Strengthen dialogue and collaboration across human rights, humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding actors for enhanced respect, protection, and fulfilment of the right to food in conflict contexts and protracted crises.

## Draft Agenda

### OPENING SEGMENT

#### 9.00 - 9.15 Opening session

- Raúl Compés – Director, CIHEAM Zaragoza; Professor of Agrifood Economics and Policy, University of Valencia
- Benjamin Davis – Director, FAO Rural transformation and Gender Equality Division
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Spain (tbc)

### INTRODUCTORY SESSION THE RIGHT TO FOOD FRAMEWORK

**09.15 - 09.25** Juan Echanove – Ensuring the right to food in conflict contexts and protracted crises

### INSPIRATIONAL PRE-RECORDED VIDEO MESSAGE

**09.25 - 09.30** - Jeffrey Sachs or fellow scholar (tbc)

### PANEL 1 – PREVENTION AND EARLY WARNING IN CONFLICT CONTEXTS AND PROTRACTED CRISES (90MINS)

**09.30 - 11.00** – Panel 1 – Prevention and early warning - anticipatory action to prevent violations of the right to food in conflict contexts and protracted crises

*Setting the stage - Sofia Monsalve, Special Rapporteur on the Right to food – International Human Rights system of complaints, monitoring for RTF and mechanism to anticipate, alert, prevent and respond on violations of the right to food*

- Andrew Seal - Associate Professor in International Nutrition Centre for Climate Change, Migration, Conflict, and Health, UCL Institute for Global Health – Early warning mechanisms in food crises– experiences, challenges and good practices
- Daiana Banciu or Marlene Urscheler, Human rights officer, OHCHR
- Timothée Herviault, Project Manager, Med-Amin Network - forecast on food security as a tool to prevent hunger crises (tbc)
- Mohammed Hassan, Executive Director, Darfur Network for Human Rights - The situation on the ground in Africa — monitoring and reporting on violations of the RTF in conflicts - the important role of Human Rights defenders
- Moderator - Tanuja Rastogi, Chief, the Global Network against Food Crises (tbc)
- Rapporteur – Andrew Forde, Assistant Professor of Law, School of Law and Government at Dublin City University, and Commissioner on the Irish Human Rights - Summarizing session, setting out the importance of monitoring violations of the RTF from a global

perspective – how do we foster collective responsibility and hold governments accountable?

**11.00 – 11.30** Coffee break

## **PANEL 2 – GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION**

**11.30 - 13.00** - Panel 2 – Gender Based Violence, structural discrimination and the right to food in crisis contexts: Examining the right to food of women and people in situations of vulnerability and their strategies for resilience.

This panel will examine the impact of gender-based violence and structural discrimination on women and other groups in vulnerable situations on the right to life, the access to food, and livelihoods: ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and displaced populations, youth, children, older persons, people with disabilities with an emphasis on non-discrimination and the obligations of States.

*Setting the stage - Mona Rishmawi, Member, UN Fact-finding mission, Sudan, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)/- Overview of gender-based violations in conflict and their impact on the right to food*

- Hassan Ali Ahmed, Nutrition Specialist - Emergency Preparedness, Data Analytics and Advocacy, UNICEF (tbc)
- Anne Sophie Laenkholtm, Regional Protection and Gender Expert, European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (DG-ECHO) (tbc)
- Rahma El Nemr, Senior Specialist in Agricultural Research, Center for Applied Research on the Environment and Sustainability, Americal University, founder & CTO of MicroFert, Agrination programme, Egypt
- Wafaa Dikah Hamze, Elected Vice president, CIHEAM
- Moderator – Miriam Ciscar, Deputy Director for Feminist Cooperation, human and economic development and governance, AECID
- Rapporteur – Omnia Rizk, Gender officer, FAO

**13:00 – 14:15** LUNCH

## **PANEL 3 –ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION**

**14.15 - 15.45** Panel 3 — Armed conflicts, environmental degradation, and disruption of food systems

This panel will explore the environmental damage caused by armed conflicts and their direct and lasting effects on food systems and the right to food.

*Setting the stage - Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme – the implication of environmental damage caused by conflicts on the right to food (tbc)*

- Livia Peiser, Senior Land and Water Officer, FAO – Geospatial Unit at the Land and Water Division (NSL) of FAO - Collecting evidence of damage to water, soil, livestock and food systems in armed conflicts
- Nathaniel Raymond, Humanitarian Research Lab, Yale School of Public Health – The Impact of Systematic Razing of Agricultural Communities around El-Fasher, Sudan (tbc)
- Lisa Shahin, Coordinator of the CSIPM Working Group on Protracted Crises and Advocacy Officer, Arab Group for protection of Nature - From protection to advocacy: civil society defending food systems in protracted crises and reconstruction processes (tbc)
- Rami Zurayk, Professor, American University of Beirut
- Moderator - Antonia Mulvey, Legal Action Worldwide - LAW
- Rapporteur - Julia Choucair Vizoso, Non-resident Senior Fellow, Arab Reform Initiative Team

**15.45 – 16.15** Coffee break

#### **PANEL 4 – PEACE-BUILDING, RECONSTRUCTION, AND RESILIENCE**

**16.15-17.45** Panel 4 – International cooperation, Rights-based approaches and people-centered reconstruction for the recovery of food systems

Reflection on the role of international cooperation, and the application of human rights-based and people-centered approaches for inclusive, sustainable, and equitable peace building and food recovery after crises.

*Setting the stage – Dina Saleh, Special Envoy for the Middle East, IFAD – Rebuilding food systems after crisis: responsible investment for recovery and resilience - experiences from the West Asia and North Africa (tbc)*

- Olena Borodina - Head of the Department of Economics and Policy of Agrarian Transformation at the Institute for Economics and Forecasting, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of Ukraine - Rights based reconstruction for supporting diverse production models. The example of Ukraine

- Sergio Coronado, Ombudsman's Office, Regional Office for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - Right to Food and Peacebuilding: Experiences from Latin America (Colombia and Guatemala)
- Rosendo Castillo López, Director, CINGRAL S.L. – Agrifood system reconstruction projects and barriers to food production in reconstruction phases (focus on water, soils, credit and public policies)
- Jameson Zvizvai, Project officer, FAO Syria – Lessons learned from the Building Local Resilience in Syria (BLRS) project
- Moderator – AECID (tbc)
- Rapporteur – Ludovic Hennebel, Professor of International Law, Aix-Marseille University and Member, UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (tbc)

## CLOSURE

### 17.45 – 18.15 Closing session

- Anas A. Al-Nabulsi, Committee on World Food Security Chair (tbc)
- CIHEAM - Teodoro Miano, CIHEAM, Secretary General or Director CIHEAM
- FAO (tbc)
- Government of Ireland (tbc)
- AECID Foreign affairs (tbc)