

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE FACE OF WAR, IMPERIALISM, AND THE HUNGER OF PEOPLES AROUND THE WORLD

April 2026



"War and hunger are two faces of the same system. Defending land and food is defending life itself."

I. A WORLD ON THE BRINK: THE HISTORICAL MOMENT

We are living through an unprecedented convergence of crises. Never in recent history have so many armed conflicts erupted simultaneously across so many continents. The wars in Gaza, Lebanon, Mali, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen, Myanmar, the Sahel, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Syria are not isolated tragedies. These are the symptomatic manifestations of a single, structurally flawed global system built on the logic of capitalist accumulation, structural racism, escalating tensions over geopolitical power, resource extraction, and neo-colonial, imperial domination.

Today, four mutually reinforcing dynamics are converging: a structural crisis of global capitalism, the escalation of military imperialism by the dominant powers, the development of military technology with increasingly destructive effects, and the deliberate use of food as a weapon. These dynamics constitute an existential threat, not only to food systems, but also to humanity and nature itself, with grave human rights violations that circumvent binding international conventions.

The defense of land and food has historically been part of people’s struggles against colonizers. Since the early colonial period, land, water, forests, and territories have been seized to enrich global hegemony. Today, neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism continue through military interventions and trade systems, neoliberal financial and monetary institutions, and multinational corporations. These dynamics are part of what Naomi Klein calls “disaster capitalism,” a system in which crises are exploited to impose privatization and deregulation, ensuring that they themselves are the ones who rebuild and promote new technologies for a new food production system. For example: (i) After kidnapping President Nicolás Maduro, the Trump administration sought to open Venezuela to United States (U.S.) mining companies, despite Venezuela’s policies aimed at protecting natural resources rather than promoting privatization and market liberalization; (ii) Following the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, President George W. Bush facilitated the entry of U.S. corporations into Iraq.

La Via Campesina, the international movement uniting over 180 organizations from 81 countries and representing more than 200 million peasants, farmers, Indigenous peoples, and rural communities, sounds the alarm. In line with its central struggle “faced with global crises, we build food sovereignty to ensure the future of humanity”—LVC highlights the urgency of the situation. The rural poor, those who feed the world, are paying the highest price. They are trapped in poverty, hunger, and conflicts, which are driving dispossession and forced migration.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), armed conflict is the single greatest driver of hunger globally. The facts demand urgent moral and political clarity.

733 MILLION	3.1 BILLION	60%	\$2.44 TRILLION
people hungry globally (FAO SOFI 2024)	cannot afford a healthy diet (FAO)	of the hungry live in conflict zones (WFP)	global military spending in 2023 (SIPRI)

Sources: *FAO State of Food Security 2024* | *WFP Global Report 2024* | *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2024*

II. THE GLOBALIZATION OF WAR: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS

It is impossible to comprehend the current proliferation of wars without confronting the deep structural contradictions of 21st-century capitalism. Capital accumulation, the engine of the global economic order, has always depended upon two forms of dispossession: the exploitation of human labor, and the commodification of nature. Land, water, seeds, minerals, genes, and atmospheric space have all been transformed into marketable resources. When these resources become scarce or when powerful states perceive their supply is threatened, war becomes the instrument of choice.

The world is witnessing a dangerous transition due to geopolitical power disputes. At the same time, multilateralism under the United Nations (UN) is under threat. It faces increasing pressure from competing hegemonic powers. As a result, the UN's relevance in regulating and shaping international relations is declining.

As U.S. hegemony erodes under the weight of financialization, deindustrialization, the rise of China as an economic and technological superpower and the emergence of BRICS, United States foreign policy has become increasingly assertive. Under Donald Trump and his "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) doctrine, Washington has adopted a more aggressive stance in defending its global position. Trump has even suggested that his authority as commander-in-chief is guided primarily by his own sense of morality rather than by international law, treaties, or global norms.

The result is a cascading militarization of international relations, in which the Global South bears the heaviest burden. Regions such as the Arab world and its geopolitical sphere, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Latin America, and Southeast and East Asia (the Indo-Pacific) have become central theaters of superpower competition.

This geopolitical dynamic is characterized by four structural features:

- **Militarization of the global economy:** Military spending reached a record \$2.44 trillion in 2023 (SIPRI, 2024), while the FAO estimates that ending world hunger would cost \$267 billion per year. The choice to arm rather than to feed is not an economic necessity—it is a political decision. It reflects a perspective in which the domination of geopolitics is seen as a pathway to the domination of the global economy.
- **The rise of the military-industrial complex:** Arms lobbies in the United States, France, Israel, and others exert significant influence over foreign policy. Weapons exports generate profits measured in hundreds of billions while the territories receiving them are measured in body counts. The destructive capacity of modern weaponry is unprecedented and puts the entire world at nuclear risk.
- **The race for natural resources:** Rare earth elements, fossil fuels, water, and agricultural land are the true stakes of most contemporary conflicts. The targeting of Ukrainian grain exports, the scramble for Congolese cobalt, and the siege of Gaza's fishing grounds all reflect this logic.
- **Structural dependency on the Global South:** Decades of neoliberal structural adjustment have eroded the food sovereignty of developing nations, leaving them dependent on import corridors easily weaponized through sanctions, blockades, or maritime interdiction.

War and Ecological Collapse

Contemporary wars are ecological catastrophes. Armed conflicts accelerate environmental destruction through the bombing of ecosystems, contamination of soils and water, the burning of fossil fuels in massive quantities, and the collapse of environmental governance. War zones frequently become sites of toxic pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss.

At the same time, the accelerating ecological crisis itself fuels geopolitical tensions. As planetary boundaries are crossed, including climate instability, water scarcity, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss, competition for natural resources intensifies. Land, water, rare minerals, and fertile agricultural territories become strategic assets in geopolitical struggles.

The result is a vicious cycle: ecological breakdown increases the likelihood of conflict, and conflict in turn deepens environmental destruction. In this context, the militarization of the global economy represents not only a threat to peace but also a profound obstacle to climate justice and ecological survival.

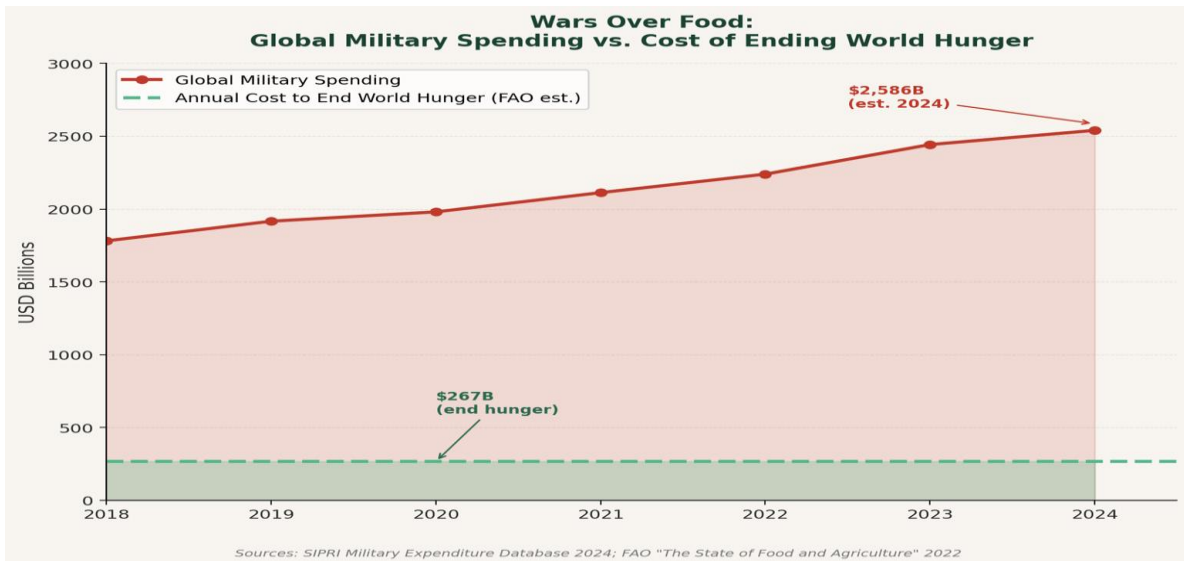


Figure 1. Global Military Spending vs. Annual Cost of Ending World Hunger — Sources: SIPRI 2024; FAO "State of Food and Agriculture" 2022

According to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (2025), there are **129.9 million** forcibly displaced and stateless people globally and to protect and assist those people, UNHCR spends \$10.785 billion. In this critical context, countries in the Global North have tightened their racist, anti-immigration policies, thereby also affecting millions of people displaced by the overlapping crises.

III. HUNGER AS A WEAPON: THE SYSTEMATIC DESTRUCTION OF FOOD SYSTEMS

The use of starvation as a weapon of war is strategic. Throughout history, empires understood that destroying a people's capacity to feed themselves is among the most effective tools of subjugation. Today, this ancient logic is applied with modern precision: through aerial bombardment of irrigation systems, maritime blockades on food imports, sanctions that cut access to fertilizers and pesticides, and the deliberate targeting of seed banks, grain stores, fishing fleets, and agricultural markets.

The following three cases demonstrate the deliberate dismantling of food systems as a mechanism of coercion, punishment, and population control.

In Gaza, the destruction of 80% of agricultural land, the bombing of fishing boats, and the blocking of humanitarian corridors constitute what the UN Special Rapporteur called "genocide by starvation."

In Yemen, a decade of blockading Hudaydah port, the entry point for 70% of food imports, has produced one of the worst famines in modern history.

In Sudan, Rapid Support Forces systematically destroyed granaries and looted agricultural land, turning a breadbasket into catastrophe. These are not collateral damages. They are deliberate policies and they must be named as such: war crimes.

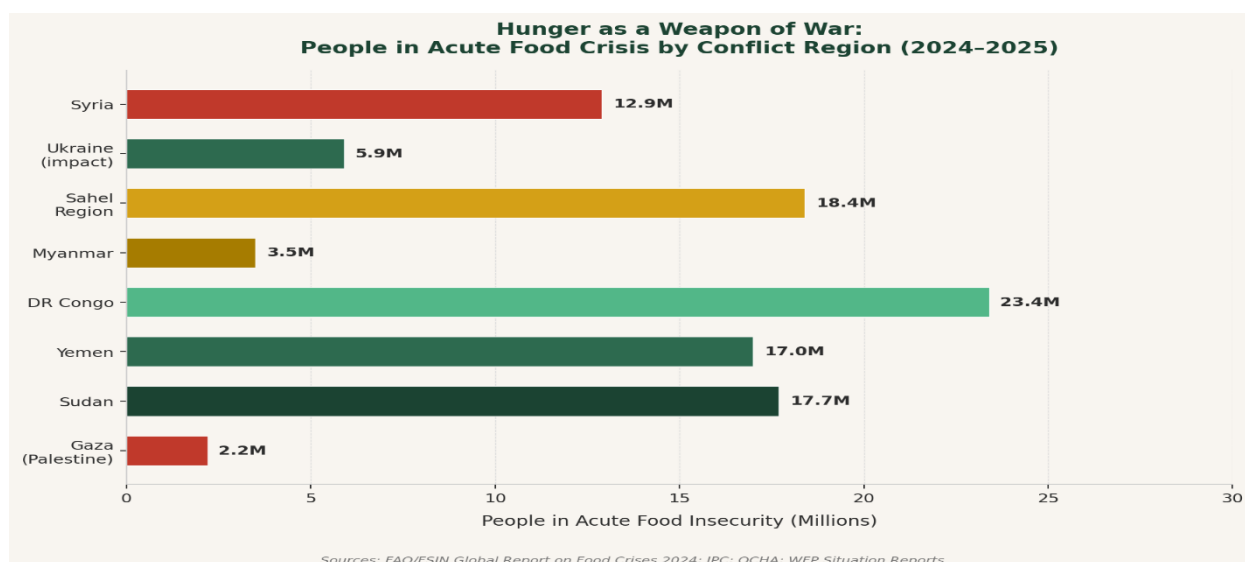


Figure 2. People in Acute Food Crisis by Conflict Region (2024–2025) — Sources: FAO/FSIN; IPC; WFP Situation Reports

The following table lists 20 cases in which food has been deliberately used as a weapon in contemporary conflicts—drawn from documents of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (CIP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and human rights organizations:

20 documented cases: food used as weapon of war		
#	Region / conflict	Food weaponization Method & Impact
1	Gaza, Palestine (2023 -)	Total agricultural destruction: 80%+ farmland damaged; fishermen banned from sea; famine declared by IPC (2024)
2	Yemen (2015 -)	Saudi-led coalition blockade on ports: 70% food imported via Hudaydah; 21M people food insecure (WFP)
3	Sudan (2023 -)	RSF forces destroyed grain stores; 17.7M people in crisis; agricultural collapse in Darfur and Khartoum state
4	Ukraine (2022 -)	Russian strikes on grain infrastructure: 28% of global wheat exports disrupted; global food price spike of 34% (FAO)
5	DR Congo (ongoing)	Armed groups control farmland; 23.4M acutely food insecure; eastern DRC sees systematic destruction of crops
6	Cuba (1962 -)	US blockade restricts food imports; oil ban (2024) paralyzed food distribution chains across the island
7	Syria (2011 -)	Deliberate destruction of irrigation systems; wheat production fell 75%; food prices rose 800% between 2011–2020
8	Ethiopia / Tigray (2020 - 2022)	Ethiopian and Eritrean forces destroyed harvest; WFP reported deliberate starvation; 2M displaced from farmland
9	Myanmar (2021 -)	Military burned rice paddies and granaries; 3.5M displaced; IPC estimates 13.2M food insecure
10	Sahel – Mali/ Burkina Faso / Niger	Armed groups systematically block markets and farm access; 18.4M food insecure across Sahel (FEWSNET)
11	Venezuela (2015 -)	US economic sanctions cut agri-chemical imports; food production fell 35%; acute malnutrition rose to 22%

12	Iraq (1990 - 2003)	UN sanctions caused 500,000 child deaths (UNICEF); import restrictions crippled food and medicine supply
13	North Korea (ongoing)	International sanctions compounded by government collectivization led to famine; 42% undernourished (FAO)
14	Somalia (2011)	Al-Shabaab blocked aid; drought plus conflict = famine; 260,000 died; 4.6M food insecure at peak (UN)
15	Afghanistan (2021 -)	US asset freeze of \$7B; 22.8M people – over half the population – facing acute food insecurity (WFP 2022)
16	Zimbabwe (2000s)	Land seizures destroyed commercial farming; wheat production fell 90%; hyperinflation collapsed food system
17	Libya (2011 -)	Conflict shattered water and irrigation networks; Sahel destabilized by weapons overflow from Libya
18	Haiti (ongoing)	Gang control of Port-au-Prince blocks food supply; 5M people face crisis-level hunger (IPC 2024)
19	Lebanon (2020 -)	Beirut port explosion destroyed primary grain silos; economic collapse + blockade = 30% food insecure
20	Palestine / West Bank (ongoing)	Israeli settler attacks on olive orchards; 800,000+ trees uprooted since 1967; systematic land confiscation

Figure 3. 20 Documented Cases of Food Used as a Weapon of War — Sources: FAO, WFP, IPC, OCHA, HRW, Amnesty International (2020–2025)

The systemic destruction of food production and distribution in conflict and affected areas reinforces the fragility of the globalized nature of food systems. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI, 2025) reports additional conflict-related factors that exacerbate hunger are economy slowdown and heightened income inequality, especially due to the rapid inflation. The SOFI report notes that the food price index has significantly outpaced the overall consumer price index over the past six years. This is attributed to factors related to supply and demand, increased imports, and monetary expansion; the report also notes that this is a direct impact of the health crisis caused by COVID-19 in 2019.

It is important to note that the currency that has benefited most from these crises is the dollar; the dollarization of the global economy is directly linked to the business of war and food crises.

"Every year of conflict reduces agricultural output by an average of 4.4%. When food systems are destroyed, entire generations pay the price." — FAO

The war caused by the attack of US-Israel on Iran is straining the global energy market and economy, especially given the high dependency on oil from the Middle East. *"The closure of commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz caused oil prices to surge; Brent crude rose from \$73 on February 27, 2026 to \$107 on March 8, 2026 – more than 40 percent increase in 10 days. Market uncertainty and price volatility force countries and companies dependent on global supply chains to reconsider policies and economic structures, potentially leading to fundamental shifts in global trade and energy.¹"*

Asia imports approximately 60% of its crude oil and petrochemical feedstocks from the Middle East, making it the region with the highest dependence on energy supplies from that region. In 2025, Asia's oil supply was made up of the following: Middle East (59.0%), Eastern Europe (9.0%), South

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2026/3/10/geopolitical-analysis-of-the-imposed-war-against-iran>

America (8.0%), West Africa (7.0%), and Other (17.4%)². The current war against Iran will cause energy inflation due not only to the disruption of oil supply, but also about bombing of oil refineries both in Iran and Gulf countries.

Due to these challenges, some countries are seeking new suppliers and are attempting to lessen oil use, such as decreasing the number of work days per week as Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia have implemented. At the same time, oil-rich countries are prioritizing domestic needs over export.

IV. PEASANTS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ON THE FRONT LINE: VICTIMS AND RESISTERS

Peasant communities and Indigenous Peoples, including women and children, are the first victims of wars and the last to be recognized as such. While the cameras of global media document urban destruction, the suffering of the countryside remains largely invisible. Yet it is rural populations who bear the accumulated weight of displacement, agricultural collapse, and the predatory advance of corporate agribusiness into war-weakened territories.

The statistics tell a devastating story: 60% of conflict-displaced persons were farmers before displacement (UNHCR). Conflicts have destroyed over 12 million hectares of arable land in the past decade (FAO). Smallholder farmers, who produce 80% of the food consumed in the Global South, are systematically dispossessed, both by war and by the corporate land grabs that follow. The supply of synthetic fertilizers used in conventional agriculture is also severely impacted, challenging peasants to strengthen organic production methods. At this moment, the world's small-scale farmers and Indigenous Peoples are the guardians of biodiversity and are fighting to ensure that this is recognized in global policies in the face of the climate crisis and the environmental costs of wars.

Yet, the same peasant communities in Indigenous Peoples who are targeted by war also constitute the primary force of resistance. La Via Campesina's members are:

- **Defending land and territory** against military occupation, corporate seizure, and forced displacement, often at great personal risk.
- **Preserving local seeds** - the living archives of agricultural heritage - against the monopolization of seed systems by transnational corporations.
- **Building agroecological resilience by** developing farming systems less dependent on imported inputs, more adapted to local conditions, and more resistant to shocks.
- **Constructing local food networks by** shortening supply chains, building community granaries, and ensuring that food systems serve communities rather than export markets, as well as solidarity economies based on collective rights, such as peasant cooperatives and other community institutions.
- **Supporting each other with solidarity actions:** As a peasant movement, our organizations build solidarity with one another. We mobilize in many regions and countries make visible the struggle of peasants impacted by wars. This is part of our popular political formation and collective reflection: to understand and act facing the current global situation. Together with allied social movements we are working towards an international day for peace and against imperialism and wars.

² <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/research/20260309074015-128-717151/asia-bisa-duluan-terkena-krisis-energi-kilang-minyak-berebut-pasokan>

V. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE GLOBAL ORDER

Food sovereignty is not merely an agricultural policy proposal. It is a political project, a comprehensive alternative to the neoliberal food system that has made hunger a structural feature of global capitalism. Defined as the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture policies, food sovereignty confronts the root causes of hunger: the concentration of land, the monopolization of seed systems, the financialization of food, and the subjugation of rural communities to corporate and imperial interests.

Food sovereignty as a framework offers five transformative dimensions:

- **National and community food autonomy:** reducing dependence on import corridors and global commodity chains that can be weaponized through sanctions and blockades.
- **Protection of peasants, Indigenous Peoples, and rural communities:** through agrarian reform, secure tenure, and the legal recognition of peasant rights (UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, 2018) and Indigenous Peoples rights (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007) .
- **Elimination of corporate power over food chains:** by challenging the monopoly control of seed, fertilizer, and food retail corporations over agricultural systems.
- **Environmental and climate justice:** agroecological approaches regenerate soils, restore biodiversity, and build climate resilience while reducing carbon footprint.
- **Demilitarization of food policy:** ending the use of economic sanctions, trade blockades, and agricultural destruction as instruments of political coercion.

KEY EVIDENCE BASE: 30 Statistics from UN & Reports

30 Key statistics: Hunger, Conflict & Food Systems		
#	Statistic	Category
1	733 million people suffer from hunger globally (FAO, SOFI 2024)	Global Hunger
2	3.1 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet (FAO 2023)	Global Hunger
3	Conflict-affected countries host 60% of the world's hungry (WFP 2024)	Conflict & Food
4	1 in 5 conflict-affected people faces acute food insecurity (IPC 2024)	Conflict & Food
5	Wars are the primary driver of hunger in 80% of famine-risk countries (FAO)	Conflict & Food
6	Gaza: 2.2M people – entire population – face food insecurity (IPC 2024)	Gaza
7	Gaza: 80%+ of agricultural land damaged or destroyed (FAO assessment 2024)	Gaza
8	Gaza: 96% of water infrastructure destroyed (WASH Cluster 2024)	Gaza
9	Gaza: caloric intake fell to 245 kcal/person/day in March 2024 (IPC/WFP)	Gaza
10	Gaza: child acute malnutrition reached 15.6% in northern Gaza (NutriHAF 2024)	Gaza
11	Yemen: 17M people food insecure, 2.7M severely malnourished (WFP 2024)	Yemen
12	Yemen: 70% of food imports came through Hudaydah port – blockaded since 2015	Yemen
13	Yemen: food prices 180% above pre-war levels (WFP Market Monitor 2023)	Yemen
14	Ukraine: global wheat prices rose 34% in one month after Feb 2022 (FAO)	Ukraine & World
15	Ukraine/Russia supply 30% of global wheat and 60% of sunflower oil (IFPRI)	Ukraine & World

16	Ukraine: 4.8M hectares of farmland rendered unusable (FAO 2023)	Ukraine & World
17	Food price crisis 2022–23 pushed 70M more people into poverty (World Bank)	Ukraine & World
18	Sudan: 17.7M people acutely food insecure – worst on record (IPC 2024)	Sudan / Sahel
19	Sahel: 18.4M people in Phase 3+ food insecurity (FEWSNET 2024)	Sudan / Sahel
20	DRC: 23.4M acutely food insecure – largest food crisis in Africa (IPC 2024)	Sudan / Sahel
21	Global military spending hit \$2.44 trillion in 2023 – record high (SIPRI)	Military
22	US alone spent \$886B on military in 2023 – more than next 10 countries (SIPRI)	Military
23	Cost to end world hunger estimated at \$267B/year (FAO 2022)	Military
24	Every dollar spent on war prevention saves \$16 in reconstruction (UN)	Military
25	The 5 biggest arms exporters hold permanent Security Council seats (SIPRI)	Military
26	80% of the world’s food is produced by smallholder farmers (FAO)	Peasants
27	60% of conflict-displaced people were farmers before displacement (UNHCR)	Peasants
28	1.3B people depend on agroecology and traditional farming (IPES-Food 2022)	Peasants
29	Conflicts destroyed 12M+ hectares of arable land in past decade (FAO)	Peasants
30	Each year of conflict reduces agricultural output by 4.4% on average (FAO)	Peasants

Figure 4. 30 Key Statistics on Hunger, Conflict & Food Systems — Sources: FAO, WFP, IPC, SIPRI, World Bank, UNHCR, FEWSNET (2020–2025)

VI. LA VIA CAMPESINA'S POLITICAL POSITION

La Via Campesina declares with unambiguous clarity its position on the current global situation. We are a movement built on internationalism, solidarity, and the political conviction that the struggles of peasants, women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples across the world are fundamentally connected.

WE CONDEMN	All imperialist wars and military aggressions against sovereign peoples. The wars in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen, and beyond are products of a system that places the interests of capital and empire above human life.
WE DENOUNCE	The use of hunger as a weapon of war. The deliberate destruction of agricultural infrastructure, food blockades, and targeting of civilian food systems constitute war crimes under international humanitarian law.
WE OPPOSE	The militarization of the global economy. The \$2.44 trillion invested in weapons in 2023 could have ended world hunger nine times over. This choice is not inevitable, it is political.
WE REJECT	Monopoly control of global food systems by transnational agribusiness corporations whose power is structurally exploited by war.
WE AFFIRM	The principles of food sovereignty, comprehensive agrarian reform, peasant agroecology, grassroots feminism, and the rights of peasants as the foundation of a viable alternative.
WE SUPPORT	The global movement against wars, and the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Nuclear arsenals pose an existential threat to humanity and the planet. True security lies not in nuclear deterrence, but in collective disarmament and the redirection of global resources toward peace, food sovereignty, and climate justice.

VII. MANIFESTO FOR ACTION

To fight this catastrophic situation, we call for organized, internationalist resistance. La Via Campesina invites states, social movements, civil society organizations, and peoples to take concrete action across three interconnected fronts:

To States and International Institutions:

- Strengthen and utilize the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court to hold aggressor states accountable for using hunger as a weapon of war.
- Invoke UN Resolution 377 "Uniting for Peace" to bypass Security Council vetoes and convene emergency general assembly sessions on active conflicts.
- Intensify the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW, 2017), endorsed by 93 countries.
- Redirect military expenditures toward food sovereignty, climate adaptation, and agricultural resilience programs in affected regions.
- Strengthen South-South cooperation to build food system independence from imperial trade structures.

To Social Movements and Peoples:

- Mobilize against imperialist aggressions and in solidarity with all peoples suffering under military occupation or siege, from Gaza to Sudan, from Ukraine to Yemen.
- Oppose military spending increases in all countries and demand that public budgets prioritize health, education, agriculture, and climate action.
- Build and strengthen independent information networks, free from corporate and imperial media control.
- Forge alliances between peasant movements, labor unions, feminist organizations, environmental groups, and urban social movements.
- Support local food production and agroecological practices as acts of political resistance.

To Peasant Organizations and Communities:

- Strengthen local seed systems, community granaries, and short food circuits as foundations of food sovereignty.
- Document and publicize the destruction of agricultural systems in conflict zones, making the invisible visible.
- Build solidarity networks between rural communities in conflict-affected regions and those in more stable areas.
- Defend the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP, 2018) and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 2007; both legal and political instruments of protection.
- Defend a comprehensive agrarian reform, rural development and a trade framework based on Food Sovereignty principles.

CONCLUSION

War and hunger are not separate crises. They are twin instruments of the same system, a global order built on the commodification of life, the militarization of power, and the structural dispossession of rural communities. The evidence is overwhelming: from Gaza's destroyed fields to Sudan's looted

granaries, from Yemen's blockaded ports to Ukraine's bombed grain terminals, food systems are being dismantled as acts of war.

But the evidence also shows something else: resistance is possible. Peasants in Cuba built agroecological resilience against six decades of blockade. Palestinian farmers continue to plant olive trees under occupation. Sahelian communities maintain seed sovereignty in the midst of conflict. These are not miracles, they are the products of organized, internationalist, food sovereign movements.

La Via Campesina stands, as it always has, on the side of the people. We stand against every war, every blockade, every sanction designed to starve populations into submission. We stand for the right of every community on earth to feed itself with dignity, on its own land, with its own seeds, according to its own traditions and choices.

Peasant agroecology and international solidarity are our main causes in the struggle to heal this world in crisis. The defense of land and food is the defense of life itself for our peoples. The defense of life demands that we globalize our solidarity as effectively as imperialism has globalized its wars.

GLOBALIZE THE STRUGGLE, GLOBALIZE HOPE!

La Via Campesina — International Peasant Movement

April 2026