



SNISMUN VII

UNHRC

BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)

Delivery of Humanitarian Aid into Conflict Zones with special emphasis on Gaza and Yemen

Letter from the Executive Board Dear Delegates,

We are honoured to welcome you all to the United Nations Human Rights Council at SNISMUN VII 2026. As representatives of UNHRC member states, you are tasked with debating and working towards consensus on the agenda of Delivery of Humanitarian Aid into Conflict Zones, with Special Emphasis on Gaza and Yemen. This agenda lies at the intersection of international humanitarian law, human rights, state sovereignty, and the protection of civilians affected by conflict. The complexities surrounding humanitarian access, security concerns, border restrictions, and international cooperation are likely to bring diverse perspectives to the committee. This background guide is intended as a starting point for your research, but delegates are expected to go beyond it and consult credible sources, including their country's official statements, voting records, and positions at the United Nations. The Executive Board will allow delegates to drive the flow of debate and expects the committee to remain productive through thorough research, constructive diplomacy, and pragmatic negotiation. Given the sensitivity of the agenda, we encourage all delegates to engage with empathy, respect, and academic rigour while recognising perspectives that may differ from their own. Our goal is not to solve these complex humanitarian crises within three days, but to deepen our understanding of them and work towards meaningful, practical solutions. We hope this committee fosters informed debate, effective diplomacy, and a genuine commitment to the principles of the United Nations. With that being said, we wish you all the very best and eagerly look forward to welcoming you to the committee. Good luck, and may the debate begin!

Warm regards,

The Executive Board Chairperson - Shanaz Adam (shanaz.adam28@gmail.com) Vice-chairperson - Krish Chordia

Moderator - Haneesha H Reddy



UNHRC

Introduction to the Committee:

Origins and establishment :

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the principal intergovernmental body within the United Nations system responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the world. Established through UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251 on 15 March 2006, the UNHRC replaced the former UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), which had been widely criticised for its susceptibility to politicisation and for allowing states with poor human rights records to leverage their membership as a shield against scrutiny.

Composition and Membership:

The UNHRC is composed of 47 Member States, elected by the UN General Assembly through direct and secret ballot on the basis of equitable geographic distribution. Members serve three-year terms and are not eligible for immediate re-election after two consecutive terms. The General Assembly may, by a two-thirds majority vote, suspend the membership of any state committing gross and systematic violations of human rights.

Regional Group-Allocated Seats

African States-13

Asia-Pacific States-13

Latin American and Caribbean States-8

Western European and Other States-7

Eastern European States-6

(We will be following a different structure of composition and membership.)

Mandate and Functions:

The UNHRC is mandated to promote universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind. Its principal functions include:

- Promoting human rights education, technical assistance, and capacity-building for member states
- Serving as a forum for thematic and country-specific human rights dialogue
- Addressing situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations
- Making recommendations to the UN General Assembly for the further development of international human rights law
- Undertaking the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations
- Preventing human rights abuses and responding promptly to human rights emergencies

Key Mechanisms:

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) The UPR is a unique process involving a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States once every four and a half years. Each State is reviewed by the Working Group on UPR and receives recommendations from other member states. The state under review may accept or merely 'note' each recommendation; accepted recommendations are subsequently tracked for implementation.

Special Procedures:

Special Procedures are the largest body of independent human rights experts in the UN system — comprising Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts, and Working Groups — mandated to report on and advise regarding human rights from thematic or country-specific perspectives. Mandate holders serve in their personal capacity and do not receive financial compensation. As of 2025, there are over 40 thematic mandates and 14 country-specific mandates.

Advisory Committee:

The Advisory Committee, composed of 18 independent experts, functions as a think-tank for the UNHRC, undertaking studies and providing expert advice on thematic human rights issues at the Council's request.

Complaint Procedure:

The Complaint Procedure is a confidential mechanism that allows individuals and organisations to bring patterns of gross and reliably attested violations of human rights to the Council's attention. It addresses systemic situations rather than individual cases.

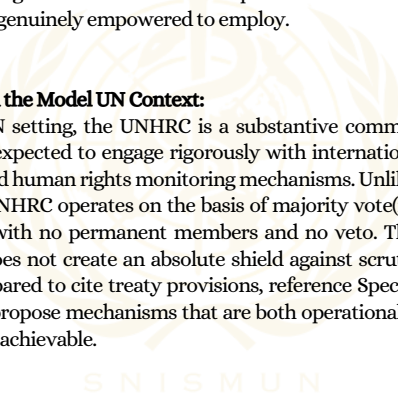


Nature of UNHRC Resolutions:

Resolutions adopted by the UNHRC are, in legal terms, non-binding recommendations. They carry no enforcement mechanism and cannot compel state action in the manner of a Security Council resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. However, they carry significant moral, political, and normative authority. Resolutions can mobilise international pressure, galvanise civil society, shape emerging customary international law, and lay the groundwork for binding instruments. In the context of this committee, delegates should focus their operative clauses on mechanisms the UNHRC is genuinely empowered to employ.

The UNHRC in the Model UN Context:

In a Model UN setting, the UNHRC is a substantive committee in which delegates are expected to engage rigorously with international law, treaty obligations, and human rights monitoring mechanisms. Unlike the Security Council, the UNHRC operates on the basis of majority vote (requiring 24 of 47 members) with no permanent members and no veto. The principle of sovereignty does not create an absolute shield against scrutiny. Delegates should be prepared to cite treaty provisions, reference Special Rapporteur findings, and propose mechanisms that are both operationally specific and diplomatically achievable.





Introduction to the Agenda :

Humanitarian aid is essential for protecting civilians affected by conflict, displacement, food insecurity, disease, and the collapse of basic services. However, delivering such assistance in conflict zones remains extremely difficult due to insecurity, damaged infrastructure, restricted access, shortages of fuel and transportation, and insufficient funding. Gaza and Yemen demonstrate how these barriers can leave vulnerable populations without timely access to food, healthcare, clean water, shelter, and other essential support.

In Gaza, humanitarian organizations face major challenges including threats to the safety of aid workers, damaged roads and warehouses, limited fuel and trucking capacity, unpredictable inspection processes, restrictions on essential supplies, communication blackouts, and difficulties reaching vulnerable populations, particularly in the north. UNICEF has emphasized that humanitarian aid alone cannot meet the scale of needs and has called for improved access, faster and more predictable approval processes, increased fuel and transportation capacity, protection of civilian infrastructure, and the resumption of commercial activity.

Yemen faces a similarly severe humanitarian situation, compounded by prolonged conflict, economic deterioration, displacement, climate-related shocks, and major funding shortages. According to OCHA, 22.3 million people are projected to need humanitarian assistance in 2026. The challenging operating environment, particularly in areas under Houthi control, has also affected humanitarian operations, while reductions in funding have forced the scaling back of critical life-saving programmes.

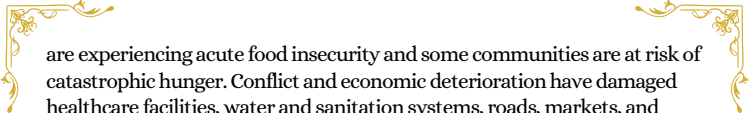
This agenda therefore focuses on identifying the major barriers that prevent humanitarian assistance from reaching people in need and examining practical measures to improve humanitarian access, safety, logistics, funding, and coordination in conflict-affected areas, with particular emphasis on the experiences of Gaza and Yemen.

The humanitarian aid crisis in Gaza has developed into a severe and prolonged emergency, with civilians facing widespread displacement, hunger, destruction, and limited access to essential supplies. Following the escalation of conflict in October 2023, infrastructure, healthcare facilities, neighborhoods, shops, and shelters were heavily damaged, while around



90% of the population became displaced and the entire population experienced hunger. Humanitarian organizations, particularly the World Food Programme (WFP), struggled to deliver adequate assistance because border crossings were closed or restricted, aid convoys faced lengthy inspections, unsafe routes, looting, violence, and a lack of security. Although humanitarian aid began entering through the Rafah crossing on October 21, 2023, the quantities remained far below the needs of more than two million people. By December 2023, the entire population of Gaza was experiencing crisis-level hunger or worse, with hundreds of thousands facing catastrophic hunger and starvation and a serious risk of famine. Efforts to reach northern Gaza were repeatedly disrupted, including the suspension of WFP deliveries after convoys encountered crowds, gunfire, looting, and access restrictions. Humanitarian workers themselves also faced grave dangers, with nearly 200 aid workers reportedly killed in the first six months of the conflict, including seven World Central Kitchen workers killed on April 1, 2024. A temporary ceasefire beginning on January 19, 2025 allowed a major increase in humanitarian deliveries, enabling WFP to bring in more than 22 million pounds of food in the first week and, over the 42-day ceasefire, more than 88 million pounds while assisting 1.3 million people. However, the closure of border crossings on March 2, 2025 again stopped humanitarian and commercial supplies from entering Gaza. By April 25, WFP had exhausted its remaining food stocks, and its supported bakeries were forced to shut down because of shortages of flour and fuel. Although limited aid was allowed to enter again in May, supplies remained far below what was required, while aid convoys continued to face looting and dangerous conditions. The crisis therefore remained characterized by extreme food insecurity, inadequate humanitarian access, displacement, and serious risks to both civilians and aid workers. The situation described by WFP highlights the urgent need for safe and consistent humanitarian access, protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel, and sufficient supplies of food and other essential assistance to prevent further suffering and famine.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen has likewise become a severe and prolonged emergency, with civilians facing the consequences of more than a decade of conflict, economic collapse, displacement, disease outbreaks, droughts, and floods. In 2026, more than 22 million people are expected to require humanitarian assistance and protection, while 18.3 million people



are experiencing acute food insecurity and some communities are at risk of catastrophic hunger. Conflict and economic deterioration have damaged healthcare facilities, water and sanitation systems, roads, markets, and other essential infrastructure, leaving millions without reliable access to food, healthcare, clean water, shelter, and education. Humanitarian organizations have struggled to respond because of insecurity, restrictions on movement, bureaucratic delays, interference by authorities, disrupted supply chains, and the detention of humanitarian personnel. These challenges have been particularly serious in areas under Houthi control, where restrictions on humanitarian activities and the detention of aid workers have limited organizations' ability to assess needs and reach vulnerable communities. In government-controlled areas, insecurity, administrative fragmentation, and rising food prices have also delayed humanitarian programmes and made essential goods increasingly unaffordable. Funding shortages have further reduced the scale of the response: by May 2026, only 12.7 percent of the funding required for Yemen's humanitarian response had been received, forcing agencies to scale back essential food, health, nutrition, protection, and water programmes even as needs continued to increase.

As a result, nearly half of the population in government-controlled areas is facing crisis-level food insecurity or worse, while poor access to safe water and sanitation continues to increase the risk of cholera and other disease outbreaks. Although humanitarian organizations such as WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and other UN and NGO partners continue to provide food, healthcare, nutrition, water, and protection services, assistance remains insufficient and difficult to deliver consistently. The situation in Yemen therefore highlights the urgent need for safe, sustained, and impartial humanitarian access, the protection of humanitarian workers, the removal of unnecessary administrative and movement restrictions, stronger logistical capacity, predictable international funding, and improved coordination so that aid can reach civilians according to need.

Timeline:

GAZA -

7 October 2023 — Hamas and other armed groups attacked Israel, followed by large-scale Israeli military operations in Gaza. [UN Secretary-General report]



15 November 2023 — The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2712, calling for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors in Gaza [UN Security Council Resolution 2712]

22 December 2023 — The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2720, calling for immediate humanitarian assistance and establishing a UN mechanism to accelerate aid deliveries to Gaza. [UN Security Council Resolution 2720]

26 April 2024 — The UN2720 Mechanism began collecting data on humanitarian aid transported through the Cyprus Maritime Corridor [UN2720 Mechanism — UNOPS]

1 July 2024 — Data collection began for humanitarian aid transported through the Jordan Corridor under the UN2720 Mechanism. [UN2720 Mechanism — UNOPS]

19 January 2025 — The Gaza ceasefire began, and the UN reported a significant increase in humanitarian aid entering Gaza. [UN2720 Mechanism — January 2025]

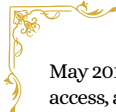
2 March 2025 — The entry of goods and supplies into Gaza was suspended, and humanitarian aid deliveries stopped. [UN2720 Mechanism — March 2025]

19 May 2025 — Limited humanitarian aid movements into Gaza resumed after the suspension. [UN2720 Mechanism — May 2025]

YEMEN-

March 2015 — The conflict in Yemen escalated following the beginning of the Saudi-led military intervention. [UN DPPA — Special Envoy for Yemen]

April 2015 — Restrictions on flights and ports severely affected the movement of humanitarian supplies into Yemen. [UN Yemen humanitarian information]



May 2015 — A humanitarian pause temporarily improved humanitarian access, allowing aid workers to reach previously inaccessible areas. [UN Yemen humanitarian information]

June 2018 — Fighting around Hudaydah intensified, threatening a major entry point for humanitarian assistance. [UN Yemen humanitarian information]

December 2018 — Yemeni parties reached the Stockholm Agreement, including a ceasefire in Hudaydah. [UN DPPA — Special Envoy for Yemen]

January 2019 — The United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) was established. [UN DPPA — Special Envoy for Yemen]

2 April 2022 — The UN-brokered nationwide truce entered into effect, including increased fuel shipments through Hudaydah and the resumption of commercial flights from Sana'a. [UN Secretary-General — Yemen Truce]

2 June 2022 — The nationwide truce was renewed for another two months. [UN Secretary-General — Extension of Yemen Truce]

2 August 2022 — The nationwide truce was renewed again. [UN Secretary-General — Yemen Truce]

2 October 2022 — The UN-brokered nationwide truce formally expired. [UN Secretary-General — Yemen Truce]

December 2023 — Yemeni parties agreed to commitments toward a nationwide ceasefire, including measures concerning roads, Sana'a Airport, Hudaydah Port and oil exports. [UN DPPA — Special Envoy for Yemen]

Relevant Legalities and International Legal Framework

The delivery of humanitarian aid into conflict zones is governed by an interconnected framework of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL), international criminal law, customary international law, United Nations resolutions and international judicial decisions. For the present agenda, the most relevant legal principles



concern the protection of civilians, prevention of starvation, humanitarian access, protection of medical and humanitarian personnel, and access to food, water and medical assistance.

1. Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949 — Articles 23, 55 and 59: The Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War contains several provisions directly relevant to humanitarian relief. Article 23 requires each High Contracting Party to allow the free passage of certain consignments of medical and hospital stores and essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases. This obligation is subject to safeguards concerning possible diversion, ineffective control and potential military advantage. It therefore does not establish an unconditional right for all humanitarian supplies to enter a territory, but creates specific obligations concerning the categories of relief covered by the provision. Article 55 provides that, where the law of occupation applies, the Occupying Power has the duty, to the fullest extent of the means available to it, to ensure the food and medical supplies of the population and, where local resources are inadequate, to bring in necessary foodstuffs, medical stores and other articles. Article 59 provides that where the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes and facilitate them by all means at its disposal. Such schemes may include food, medical supplies and clothing provided by States or impartial humanitarian organizations. The Convention also requires Contracting Parties to permit the free passage and protection of such consignments, while allowing certain controls over their passage. These provisions are particularly relevant to discussions concerning humanitarian access in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, while the precise application of occupation law must be assessed according to the factual and legal circumstances of the territory concerned.

2. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions: 1949 Common Article 3 establishes minimum protections applicable to non-international armed conflicts. It requires persons taking no active part in hostilities, including civilians and persons rendered hors de combat, to be treated humanely and prohibits murder, torture, cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity. It also requires that the wounded and sick be collected and cared for. The provision forms a fundamental part of the legal protection of



civilians and persons requiring medical assistance in conflicts containing non-international armed conflict dimensions, including Yemen.

3. Additional Protocol I, 1977 — Articles 54 and 70: Article 54 of Additional Protocol I expressly prohibits starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. It also prohibits attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to civilian survival, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas, crops, livestock and drinking-water installations and supplies, when carried out for the specific purpose of denying their sustenance value to civilians or the adverse Party. The provision contains specific qualifications concerning objects used by an adverse party and imperative military necessity. Article 70 addresses humanitarian relief actions where the civilian population of territory under the control of a party to an international armed conflict, other than occupied territory, is inadequately supplied. Relief actions that are humanitarian and impartial and conducted without adverse distinction shall be undertaken, subject to the agreement of the parties concerned. The provision further states that offers of such relief shall not be regarded as interference in the armed conflict or as unfriendly acts. The distinction between Article 70 and the occupation-specific provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention is important: Article 70 applies to territory under a party's control other than occupied territory, while relief in occupied territory is addressed principally through the Fourth Geneva Convention.

4. Additional Protocol II, 1977 — Article 18(2): Article 18(2) of Additional Protocol II addresses humanitarian relief in non-international armed conflicts. Where the civilian population is suffering undue hardship because of a lack of supplies essential to its survival, such as food and medical supplies, relief actions that are exclusively humanitarian and impartial and conducted without adverse distinction shall be undertaken subject to the consent of the High Contracting Party concerned. This provision is relevant to Yemen because of the non-international armed conflict dimensions of the conflict. However, it should not be interpreted as granting an unconditional right of humanitarian organizations to enter territory without consent, nor does the consent requirement remove the separate prohibitions applicable to starvation and other violations of IHL.



5. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 — Articles 3 and 25: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides a foundational human-rights framework for the protection of civilians. Article 3 recognizes the right to life, liberty and security of a person. Article 25(1) recognizes the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, medical care and necessary social services. The UDHR is a declaration rather than a treaty, but its principles form a central foundation of the international human-rights system and are directly relevant to the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict.

6. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 — Articles 6 and 7: Article 6 of the ICCPR recognizes the inherent right to life and provides that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of life. Article 7 prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. These provisions are relevant where conflict conditions and the deprivation of essential necessities create serious threats to civilian life and physical integrity. The Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 36 on Article 6 further addresses threats to life arising from conditions such as deprivation of food and water. The ICCPR therefore complements IHL by providing a broader human-rights framework for the protection of life and human dignity during humanitarian crises.

7. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 — Articles 11 and 12: The ICESCR contains some of the most directly relevant human-rights provisions for humanitarian assistance. Article 11 recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. Article 12 recognizes the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. These provisions are directly relevant to humanitarian assistance involving food, water, sanitation, medicines and healthcare. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' General Comment No. 12 further elaborates the right to adequate food and its accessibility.

8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979: CEDAW provides additional protection relevant to the specific humanitarian needs of women and girls. Article 12 requires States



Parties to eliminate discrimination against women in healthcare, while Article 12(2) specifically addresses appropriate services for women during pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, including adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation where necessary. Article 14(2)(h) specifically concerns rural women and their right to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications. CEDAW is therefore relevant to ensuring that humanitarian assistance addresses gender-specific needs, particularly maternal healthcare, nutrition, sanitation and access to essential services.

9. UN Security Council Resolution 2417 (2018): UNSC Resolution 2417 (2018) is one of the principal Security Council instruments concerning starvation and humanitarian access. It condemns the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and emphasizes the need for safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access to civilians in need. The resolution is significant because it explicitly connects armed conflict, starvation, food insecurity, humanitarian access and civilian protection within the UN Security Council's international peace and security framework.

10. UN Security Council Resolution 2286 (2016): UNSC Resolution 2286 (2016) concerns the protection of the wounded and sick, medical personnel, medical facilities and humanitarian personnel in armed conflict. It condemns attacks against medical personnel and facilities and calls upon parties to armed conflicts to respect and protect medical personnel and facilities and facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian and medical assistance. This is directly relevant to Gaza and Yemen, where attacks on or insecurity surrounding hospitals, ambulances, medical personnel and medical supply chains can obstruct life-saving humanitarian assistance.

11. UN Security Council Resolution 2720 (2023) — Gaza: UNSC Resolution 2720 (2023) is one of the most directly relevant Security Council resolutions concerning humanitarian assistance in Gaza. It demanded the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip and addressed the use of available routes and border crossings. It specifically referred to essential supplies including food, fuel, medical supplies and emergency shelter. The resolution also established the position of a Senior



Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza and requested a United Nations mechanism to facilitate, coordinate, monitor and verify humanitarian relief consignments entering Gaza. The resolution must be read alongside the existing obligations of the parties under international humanitarian law.

12. UN Human Rights Council Resolutions on the Occupied Palestinian Territory:

The Human Rights Council has repeatedly addressed the applicability of both international human rights law and international humanitarian law to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. A/HRC/RES/S-30/1 (2021), adopted during the Council's thirtieth special session, is titled "Ensuring respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel." It established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry to investigate alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. More recently, A/HRC/RES/55/28 (2024) addressed the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice. The resolution expressly recalls the ICCPR, ICESCR and other international instruments and affirms their applicability and the obligation to respect them in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. For a 2026 background guide, A/HRC/RES/61/4, adopted on 27 March 2026, is particularly relevant as the most recent HRC resolution under the same title concerning the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and accountability and justice.

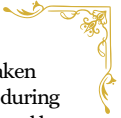
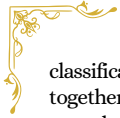
13. UN Human Rights Council Resolutions on Yemen:

The Human Rights Council has maintained a separate country-specific framework concerning Yemen. A/HRC/RES/60/31, adopted on 8 October 2025, concerns "Technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights." It reaffirms Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity and continues the Council's engagement with the country's human-rights situation. The preceding A/HRC/RES/57/37 (2024) similarly concerns technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights. It is relevant to the agenda's Yemen component, but should not be inaccurately described as a resolution specifically regulating humanitarian aid delivery.



14. International Court of Justice — South Africa v. Israel, 2024: In the case concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), the International Court of Justice issued several provisional-measures orders directly addressing humanitarian conditions. In its Order of 26 January 2024, the Court ordered Israel to take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza. The Order was a provisional-measures order and not a final determination that genocide had occurred. In its Order of 28 March 2024, the Court ordered Israel, in view of the worsening conditions and spread of famine and starvation, to take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay and in full cooperation with the United Nations, the unhindered provision at scale of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, including food, water, electricity, fuel, shelter, clothing, hygiene and sanitation requirements, medical supplies and medical care. It also directed Israel to increase the capacity and number of land crossing points and maintain them open for as long as necessary. In its Order of 24 May 2024, the Court reaffirmed its earlier provisional measures and issued additional measures concerning the situation in Rafah, including measures concerning humanitarian access and the Rafah crossing. The Court's provisional measures have binding effects. However, these orders do not constitute a final judgment on the merits of South Africa's genocide allegations.

15. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court — Article 8(2)(b)(xxv): The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court establishes individual criminal responsibility for certain serious violations of international humanitarian law. Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) identifies, in the context of an international armed conflict, the intentional use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival, including by wilfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions, as a war crime. This provision is significant because deliberate starvation and obstruction of relief can, where all elements of the offence are satisfied, give rise to individual criminal responsibility. However, not every delay, restriction or interruption of humanitarian assistance automatically constitutes this war crime; the required intent, conduct and applicable conflict



classification must be established. Legal Relevance to the Agenda Taken together, these instruments establish that humanitarian assistance during armed conflict is not merely a matter of political goodwill. International law protects civilians from starvation, protects medical and humanitarian personnel, recognizes fundamental rights to life, food and health, and establishes rules governing humanitarian relief and access. At the same time, humanitarian access is not governed by a single unconditional rule. Its precise legal requirements depend upon the classification of the conflict, occupation status, applicable treaty obligations, customary international law, the circumstances of the relief operation and, under certain provisions, the consent of the parties concerned. For Gaza, the legal framework is reinforced by specific Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions and by the ICJ's binding provisional-measures orders concerning humanitarian assistance. For Yemen, the framework combines the Geneva Conventions and applicable Additional Protocols, customary IHL, international human-rights obligations and the Human Rights Council's continuing country-specific engagement. The central legal question for the international community is therefore how to ensure safe, rapid, sufficient, impartial and unhindered humanitarian assistance to civilians in conflict zones while maintaining compliance with international humanitarian law, international human rights law, humanitarian principles and applicable rules concerning sovereignty and consent.

SNIS MUN

Case Studies:

Case Study 1: Syria – The Challenge of Humanitarian Access in a Divided

Country Essay: The case of Syria is a clear illustration of the difficulties encountered by the UNHRC team when it comes to getting humanitarian aid to people who live in areas controlled by opposing warring groups. Since the Syrian government had control over the situation and did not fully allow international organisations access to the areas, the crossings at the main entry points in Syria were taken over by the Syrian authorities, who preferred to send humanitarian aid via Damascus so as to have more control over how it was distributed. As a result, the people who were under the control of anti-government militias suffered greatly because of the lack of resources, the lengthy visa and permission processes, and the months they had to wait before humanitarian aid arrived. The other option proposed by the United Nations was to arrange for aid to be delivered from neighbouring Turkey into northwestern Syria. Over 65,000 vehicles have



thus transported humanitarian aid into Syria through its border with Turkey, and in 2024 alone 808 vehicles delivered more than 13,000 tonnes of relief supplies to the country. Yet the international community has had to deal with the problem of securing free transit for the aid, since the shipment of goods depended on the approval of the UN Security Council, while the Syrian authorities made several attempts to limit the unofficial supply of humanitarian aid. Despite the fact that the need for humanitarian aid has been very severe in Syria, 16.7 million people needed life-saving aid in 2024 as compared with 15.3 million in 2023, the access to assistance was very uneven among the various regions and relied upon the military control of a given area. Because of the poor access to food, health care, and other resources, many of the populations in need were not able to get adequate support. The situation in Syria shows the UNHRC that limiting humanitarian aid leads to a variety of problems beyond the direct effects on the people concerned. As the right to food, to health care and to other basic necessities is a fundamental human right, the fact that humanitarian organisations are unable to carry out their duties because of, among other things, the political situation results in further difficulties for the Syrian population. The fact that this issue arises underlines the need to tackle the problems relating to humanitarian access and to institutional capacity if a more dependable response to Syria's humanitarian needs is to be achieved.

Case Study 2: Ethiopia (Tigray) – The Challenge of Humanitarian Aid Denial

Essay: The current situation in Ethiopia's Tigray region is yet another example of the complicated character of humanitarian problems in areas affected by conflict. The Ethiopian government blockaded the Tigray region, and the local population also suffered from restrictions imposed by the warring parties as well as from humanitarian aid being stolen by the military. Because of the humanitarian difficulties caused by the war, more than 20 million people in Ethiopia now need humanitarian aid, including over 5.4 million in Tigray. Furthermore, the whole of the Tigray region was severed from electricity, communication, and financial services, and commercial flights as well as international trade were stopped. This meant that the limited food supplies could not get to the people in the region, so that more than 5.4 million people in Tigray were suffering from severe food shortages. Despite relief access to Tigray being resumed at the end of 2022, with 2,740 trucks conveying more than 101,000 tonnes of food entering the area between 15 November and 30 December 2022, the relief



operations still encountered major difficulties, since as of early January 2023 only 3.3 million of the 5.4 million people in need had received food aid. The UNHRC should take note of the situation in the Tigray region, which is ethnically and territorially defined, and recognise the need to deal with the humanitarian problems caused by the blocking of aid and the restriction of access to essential items. The severe situation in Tigray shows that when local people are unable to obtain food, water and other basic resources their most fundamental human rights are being violated. It is therefore necessary for the international community to guarantee free access to humanitarian aid, keep an eye on how it is distributed, and make those who deliberately prevent humanitarian assistance from reaching people in need answerable.

Case Study 3: South Sudan – The Challenge of Insecurity and Limited

Access Essay: In contrast to the earlier examples, the humanitarian problems in South Sudan are not primarily the result of one interconnected economic, political, or military factor but rather stem from a combination of various causes. Even though many regions of South Sudan are experiencing active hostilities, the main humanitarian difficulties are due to the population's restricted access to resources resulting from the decline of the road network, insecurity, and the large-scale displacement of people. Outbreaks of large-scale violence lead to sharp increases in emergency displacements, as whole communities are compelled to look for safer places when the hostilities worsen, and some stay in those areas for a long time. The total number of displaced people is very high, with 9.4 million in need of humanitarian aid, 500,000 asylum seekers and refugees, and nearly 200,000 internally displaced people in 2023. Humanitarian workers are also restricted in their capacity to provide aid as a result of the much higher level of danger, since there were 241 cases of restricted humanitarian access between January and June 2025. In addition to the difficulties caused by the hostilities, humanitarian workers say that they encounter many problems, such as extortion, checkpoints, and the bad condition of the roads, with a number of routes having been closed because of seasonal flooding. The seasonal floods in the White Nile river are especially troublesome, as they make it difficult to transport both goods and people between Jonglei and Upper Nile. The worsening security situation has led to further restrictions in a number of places, the two sides together restricting humanitarian access. Specifically, in 2026, large sections of South Sudan suffer from the



deliberate refusal of humanitarian aid, the government introducing wide restrictions in areas under opposition control. For the UNHRC, the situation in South Sudan shows the need to deal with the increasing humanitarian problems since the people who require help can be cut off from humanitarian assistance by both deliberate actions, for example those resulting from restrictions imposed by the government, and by causes related to natural disasters such as seasonal flooding. Since these obstacles violate the populations' right to health care, food and shelter, the international community should respond by enhancing the protection offered to humanitarian workers and by improving access to areas affected by conflict.

QARMA

1. What roadblocks can be identified in existing frameworks and what measures can be taken to address this adequately?
2. How can the issue of lack of funding for humanitarian operations be addressed?
3. What measures can be taken to ensure the safety of humanitarian aid personnel in contact regions?
4. What can be done to ensure the resumption of services of WFP and other humanitarian organizations in the regions?
5. How can humanitarian access be made safe, sustained, timely and genuinely unhindered while ensuring that aid remains neutral, impartial and needs-based and is protected from diversion, confiscation, politicization or military exploitation?
6. What measures can ensure the continuity of essential civilian services: including food, water, healthcare, sanitation, electricity and shelter and protect vulnerable populations in conflict zones such as Gaza and Yemen.
7. How can the international community strengthen accountability for deliberate obstruction of humanitarian assistance, attacks on humanitarian personnel and violations affecting civilian access to essential goods and services?
8. What measures can the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations undertake to aid the situation whilst also strengthening coordination with relevant national or de facto authorities and ensure the efficient, transparent and non-discriminatory delivery of humanitarian assistance?



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