INVITATION AND CONCEPT NOTE

Protection of Civilians Week 2022

Virtual Side Event:

Addressing the impact of conflict on hunger

Monday, 23rd May, 11:30 – 13:00 EST / 17:30 – 19:00 CET

Please RSVP by using this form: https://forms.gle/uEUpngt99Ptd9y8i8

Background

In 2018, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2417 condemning starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and recognising the impact of armed conflict on food insecurity. The Resolution acknowledges “the need to break the vicious cycle between armed conflict and food insecurity” and reiterates the Council’s commitment to “address conflict-induced food insecurity, including famine, in situations of armed conflict.” Through the Resolution, the Council called on all parties to armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law regarding the protection of civilians and on taking care to spare civilian objects, stressing that armed conflicts, violations of international law and related food insecurity could be drivers of forced displacement. It also underlined the importance of safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians in armed conflicts and strongly condemned the unlawful denial of such access and depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival, including willfully impeding relief supply and access for responses to conflict-induced food insecurity. In April 2021, the Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2573 (2021) — “Protection of Objects Indispensable to the Survival of the Civilian Population”— reinforcing the strong condemnation for the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, which may constitute a war crime.

Tragically, four years on, we continue to see a downward spiral in global food security as more and more families are uncertain of where their next meal will come from. Conflict is the main driver
of food crises, with 75%¹ of people with acute hunger globally living in areas affected by war and violence. In 2021, there were close to 193 million people acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance across 53 countries/territories, according to the findings of the GRFC 2022. This represents an increase of nearly 40 million people compared to the previous high reached in 2020 (reported in the GRFC 2021). Of this total, around 139 million people were facing crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent across 24 countries/territories where conflict/insecurity was considered the primary driver of food insecurity.

Despite being the majority of the world’s food producers, women and girls are also the majority of the people living in hunger. During conflict, women and girls’ face even higher hurdles to meet their food security needs, endangering their health, nutrition and right to protection. For example, in the context of the conflicts in Yemen and South Sudan, women and girls face greater economic pressure, often having to take up the role of heads of household whilst the males are engaged in conflict. Conflict’s impact on access to food, water and sanitation and the increased burden on women and girls to obtain these (e.g., having to travel longer distances to access basic commodities), exacerbates pre-existing vulnerabilities and may lead to negative coping mechanisms and increased risks of SGBV. Hunger also significantly impacts children, with children making up half of those affected by crises. The lack of sufficient, nutritious food is a leading cause of child wasting and stunting and is an underlying cause of 45% of all preventable deaths of children under five.

The Governments of Canada, Ireland, Netherlands and the United States, together with WFP, FAO, the Global Network Against Food Crises, Action Against Hunger, CARE, World Vision, Concern Worldwide, Save the Children and the Global Rights Compliance, will convene to bring attention to the growing impacts of conflict on food systems and food security. The event will highlight conflict and hunger’s disproportionate impact on women, children, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups, and demonstrate why these groups must be put at the centre of our collective efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-induced hunger. Women’s role within food systems and contributors in peace processes warrants reflection on gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches to conflict and famine prevention. This event will offer perspectives from different conflict-affected areas and provide insights into potential measures that Member States, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), donors and other development, humanitarian, and peace actors can take now to prevent and mitigate the impact of conflict on food security.

Objectives of the session

1) Increase shared understanding among relevant stakeholders including Member States, humanitarian, human rights, and development practitioners, donors and IFIs on the short- and long-term impacts of conflict on food systems and the differing impacts on the women, girls, boys, and men who rely on them.

2) Discuss approaches to strengthen the application of UNSC Resolution 2417 and its’ operationalization – including political leadership, the standardization of reporting, when situations of concern should be raised, how they should be raised, through which pathways, and what tools should be available to guide responses.

Guiding questions

1) What are the present barriers to ensuring a gender-sensitive approach to conflict-induced hunger? Considering women’s vital role in food systems, humanitarian responses and

peace processes, how can Member States work more effectively with local women leaders to plan and implement gender-sensitive approaches throughout the conflict cycle?

2) What are the strategic investments that might help to reduce or prevent hunger in conflict settings? What are the barriers to such investments?

3) How can the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2417, UNSC Resolution 2573 and associated UNSC mechanisms be effective in preventing famine?

4) What measures may be proactively taken by parties to armed conflict to ensure that the IHL prohibition on attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population is made part of the operational practice of their armed forces?

5) What actions may UN Member States take to promote the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid to civilians in need? What may States do to protect neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian action in highly politicized conflict environments?

6) What are the strategic investments / approaches that might help to reduce or prevent hunger in conflict settings? What would be the cost implications of such investments? How would this impact on efficiency and effectiveness?

Format
A virtual roundtable dialogue with panelists reflecting on their experiences across a diversity of conflict-affected contexts impacted by food insecurity, their research, and from New York based representatives.

Panelists
- **Ms. Yasmin**, an 18-year-old Yemeni woman who was formerly a child campaigner for Save the Children

- **Mr. Hajir Maalim**, Regional Director for the Horn of Africa for Action Against Hunger

- **Ms. Catronia Murdoch**, Senior Legal Consultant for Global Rights Compliance

- **Ms. Reka Sztopa**, Regional Director for Francophone Africa for Concern Worldwide

Outcome
A short co-chairs’ summary of recommendations arising from the discussion.