

# The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and the politics of starvation



Dr Faridul Alam  
is a retired academic who writes  
from New York, U.S.

FARIDUL ALAM

The promise of humanitarian aid is simple: to alleviate suffering and uphold human dignity in times of crisis. But in the Gaza Strip, where starvation has been deliberately weaponised, this moral imperative has been grotesquely subverted. The so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), launched in Delaware in February 2025 as a US-registered non-profit, exemplifies how aid can be co-opted not to nourish, but to manage, surveil, and control a besieged population under the guise of compassion.

Launched with much fanfare and backed by both the Trump administration and the Israeli government, the foundation has been marketed as an “innovative solution” to Gaza’s humanitarian catastrophe. But it is widely viewed by critics as a politically engineered instrument designed to bypass the UN, sideline established aid organisations, and normalise a system of military-managed charity. It has, in effect, institutionalised a two-tiered aid regime, one that excludes the most vulnerable while entrenching Israeli control over relief access.

Despite its lofty pronouncements of neutrality, the GHF functions less as a shield against suffering than as an extension of geopolitical strategy. Its convoys are sporadic and heavily surveilled. Its access corridors are negotiated through opaque diplomatic channels. Its food distributions are inconsistent and often restricted to arbitrarily chosen zones. In short, it adapts to the structures of deprivation rather than challenging them.

This distortion is not merely bureaucratic mismanagement; it is the logical outgrowth of a system that instrumentalises humanitarianism. The foundation’s silence on the targeting of aid workers, its complicity in the blockade regime, and its calculated vagueness on the conditions of delivery all point to a larger, grimmer truth: starvation in Gaza is not collateral damage—it is a war tactic.

For around 18 years, Gaza has endured an air-tight blockade, punctuated by periodic military incursions and systematic economic strangulation. Basic infrastructure—electricity, clean water, sanitation, healthcare—has been rendered inoperable. In this context, humanitarian aid becomes both lifeline and leash: it keeps people alive just enough to avoid charges of genocide, arguably again, but not enough to allow



Palestinians carry aid supplies, which they received from the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, in the central Gaza Strip on May 29, 2025.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

autonomy or dignity. What emerges is a logic of containment, not relief.

This is biopolitics at its starkest: life reduced to metrics, nutrition calibrated to the bare minimum, human needs treated as logistical problems. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation is embedded in this regime of control. It decides who eats, when, and how much—not based on humanitarian need, but on political expediency. And when thousands of starving Palestinians frantically converge on the few permitted distribution points, many are gunned down under the pretext that they pose a threat to Israeli forces lying in wait. Hunger is not merely mismanaged, it is weaponised into a site of systematic killing of the most vulnerable, day in and day out, with

perfect impunity.

The humanitarian corridors often touted as breakthroughs are in fact chokepoints—points of high-visibility theatre that create the illusion of access. Aid is allowed through in trickles, often after long delays, while images of children queuing with empty containers are circulated for donor sympathy. The performance of care masks the absence of justice.

story is false, but it is effective. And therefore, it endures.

The rhetorical palette used by the GHF and its backers is thick with euphemism. “Humanitarian pause,” “emergency access,” “de-escalation”—these terms sanitise a brutal reality. They suggest temporariness where there is permanence, balance where there is asymmetry, and neutrality where there is complicity. They rebrand war crimes as

spreadsheets, logistics plans, and press releases.

The ethical failure is profound. Humanitarian aid, by definition, is supposed to be impartial, independent, and based on need. But in Gaza, these principles have been eroded beyond recognition. Aid has become anti-political, refusing to name the aggressor, refusing to call out hunger as a weapon, refusing to demand accountability. This silence is not neutrality; it is complicity.

Some may argue that imperfect aid is better than none. But in Gaza, the calculus is different. The humanitarian apparatus is now so tightly woven into the logic of the siege that it risks sustaining the very crisis it claims to alleviate. The more efficient the aid delivery, the more durable the blockade. The more visible the convoys, the more invisible the causes of suffering.

This is the paradox of humanitarianism in Gaza: its presence legitimises the conditions that necessitate it. The GHF’s very existence allows Israel and its allies to point to “international cooperation” while continuing policies that dismantle livelihoods, destroy infrastructure, and restrict movement. It becomes not a challenge to injustice, but its mask.

So what is to be done?

First, there must be an honest reckoning with the political economy of humanitarian aid. Foundations operating within siege conditions must be held accountable not only for what they deliver, but for the structures they sustain. An aid convoy that passes through a checkpoint controlled by the same forces besieging a population is not neutral, it is implicated.

Second, the language of humanitarianism must be reclaimed. If starvation is weaponised, it must be named—not as a supply-chain issue, but as a war crime. Aid organisations must abandon the fiction that suffering in Gaza is apolitical. They must speak truth to power, even if it means losing access or funding.

Finally, solidarity must replace charity. True humanitarianism in Gaza cannot be divorced from political advocacy. Aid must be linked to justice, not mere survival. That means supporting efforts to lift the blockade, demanding accountability for war crimes, and affirming the Palestinians’ right to live—not just without hunger, but with dignity, security, and freedom.

What we are witnessing in Gaza is not merely a humanitarian crisis. It is the collapse of humanitarianism’s ethical core. If this term is to retain any meaning, it must reject complicity in the politics of starvation. It must speak not only in calories and metrics, but in moral clarity and political courage. Until that shift occurs, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation will remain a symbol not of compassion but of betrayal, indelibly etched in history.

## Sustaining the oceans as they sustain us



Selim Jahan  
is former director of the Human Development Report Office  
under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and  
lead author of the Human Development Report.

SELIM JAHAN

Oceans are a wonder to humans, not only because of their vastness or that they cover more than 70 percent of the Earth’s surface and constitute more than 95 percent of the biosphere, but because of the fact that the wonders they contain below their blue surfaces are beyond imagination. We know only parts of them, but the larger parts of the world’s oceans are still unexplored. Oceans remind us that we are part of something bigger, that we all are inherently connected. Every year, June 8 is observed as World Oceans Day to celebrate the oceans’ essential wonders, calling on all of us not to lose sight of their value when determining their fate.

It was the 1987 Brundtland Report, prepared by the Brundtland Commission on environment and development, which noted that the oceans lacked a strong voice compared to other aspects of nature. As a

follow-up, the concept of a day dedicated to them was proposed at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, and since 2008, the day has been observed on June 8 every year. It supports the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fosters public interest in protection of the oceans and sustainable management of their resources.

The importance of oceans in human lives can hardly be overemphasised. They are our life source, supporting humanity’s sustenance and that of every other organism on Earth. They produce at least 50 percent of Earth’s oxygen, are home to most of the world’s biodiversity, and are the main source of protein for more than three billion people around the world. The oceans are key to the global economy: ocean-based industries

are projected to employ around 40 million people by 2030. More than 80 percent of global trade is done through oceanic routes. Well-preserved oceans have a major role to play in ensuring food security for humans; in fact, they will be a critical source for feeding an estimated global population of nine billion by 2050. Their contributions to human livelihoods and global economic growth need to be recognised.

Blue economy, based on the oceans and their resources, can be a driving force for global economic growth. The world today faces multiple challenges of food insecurity, climate change, conflicts, economic sluggishness, and financial uncertainties. An integrated response and an urgent transition to a sustainable path is quite necessary right now. In 2012, a global blue economy strategy was adopted to unleash the potential of oceans for human prosperity and development. Blue economies may fuel economic growth via fishery development, aquaculture, tourism, water sports, cruise tourism, blue energy and biomass, ocean-based renewable energy, biotechnology and marine genetic resources, etc.

However, with all their potential benefits, the oceans now face severe problems and challenges. About 90 percent of their big fish populations are now depleted and about half of the coral reefs are destroyed.

Approximately 11 million tonnes of plastic enter the oceans annually—equivalent to dumping 2,000 trucks full of plastic waste into oceans, lakes and rivers every day, according to UNEP. About one-third of the fish caught for human consumption is contaminated with plastic. By 2050, there could be more plastic than fish in the oceans. More than 100,000 marine mammals and one million seabirds are killed by marine plastic pollution every year.

Bangladesh, a low-lying country in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, faces significant challenges related not to an ocean, but to a sea, particularly the Bay of Bengal. Because of climate change, the sea level in the country is predicted to rise by up to 0.30 metres by 2050, resulting in the displacement of 900,000 people, and by up to 0.74 metres by 2100, resulting in the displacement of 2.1 million people, according to research. Rising sea levels, exacerbated by climate change, are causing coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources, and inundation of low-lying areas. These changes threaten livelihoods, agriculture, and human settlements.

But at the same time, Bangladesh has the potential to develop a blue economy that can make significant contributions to the country’s economic growth, poverty reduction, food and nutrition security,

mitigation and adaptation of climate change, and generation of sustainable livelihoods. Such an economy may entail maritime trade and shipping, coastal shipping and feeder services, tourism, fisheries and sea foods, mariculture, marine aquatic products, oil and gas, ocean renewable energy, sea salt production, etc. Developing a blue economy in Bangladesh would require a balanced approach between conservation, development, and utilisation of marine and coastal ecosystems. The transition to a blue economy would encompass identification of various maritime economic functions and fundamental and systematic changes in its policies, regulatory management, and governance frameworks.

Today, humanity faces some of the greatest threats ever to its blue planet: the climate and the biodiversity crisis. We need a healthy ocean system for our survival, and thus we have to catalyse action to protect the oceans and climate. The world will have to strengthen the 30x30 movement – protecting at least 30 percent of the blue planet by 2030. The ongoing Third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, France (June 9-13) is aimed at finding solutions to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources. Let’s hope we find those solutions before it is too late.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

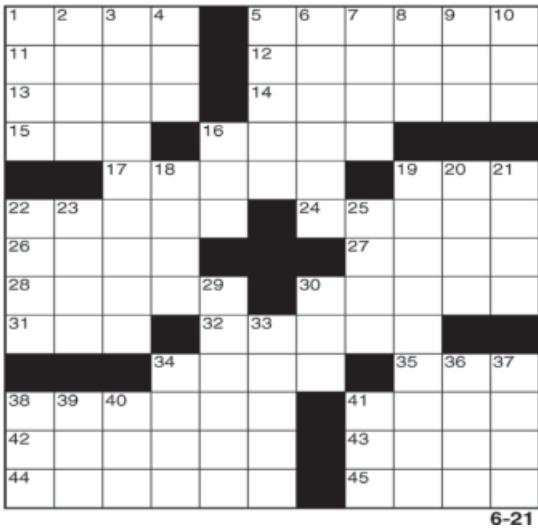
#### ACROSS

- 1 Spigots
- 5 Takes in eagerly
- 11 Lotion additive
- 12 Large lizard
- 13 “Das Kapital” author
- 14 Burrowing rodent
- 15 PC key
- 16 Fisherman’s hope
- 17 Merge
- 19 Bowl-shaped pan
- 22 Honshu home
- 24 Was vocal
- 26 Tel—
- 27 Folk learning
- 28 Record material
- 30 Car type
- 31 Sports drink suffix
- 32 Scientist Newton

#### DOWN

- 1 Unexciting
- 2 Weary word
- 3 Large rodent
- 4 Kinsey topic
- 5 Put a cap on
- 6 Some marbles
- 7 Undiluted
- 8 Friend of Frodo
- 9 First número

- 10 Light touch
- 16 Storage spot
- 18 Blue hue
- 19 Heavy rodent
- 20 Gumbo base
- 21 Acute
- 22 Coffee, in slang
- 23 Gung-ho
- 25 “Not guilty,” for one
- 29 Police station event
- 30 Spotted
- 33 Categorizes
- 34 “Get lost!”
- 36 Kunis of “Black Swan”
- 37 Order to Spot
- 38 Argon or ozone
- 39 Motor need
- 40 Debate side
- 41 Status—



### YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR  
OPINION PIECES TO  
dsopinion@gmail.com.