

Episode 5: Alex de Waal, The Starvation of Gaza

Guest: Prof. Dr. Alex de Waal, Executive Director, World Peace Foundation, Fletcher School of Global Affairs, Tufts University

Hosts: Yusuf & Mert

Bio: Professor Alex de Waal is a world-leading authority on famine, mass atrocities, and the intersection of humanitarian crises and international law. He serves as Executive Director of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Global Affairs and has conducted extensive field research in Sudan, Ethiopia, Syria, and other regions affected by conflict and starvation. He is the author of the landmark book *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine*, which has shaped global understanding of how famine is both produced and prevented. His work combines academic rigor, field expertise, and legal insight, particularly regarding the use of starvation as a weapon of war. He has published numerous books and articles on famine, human rights, and conflict prevention, making him one of the foremost voices for understanding and preventing mass atrocities worldwide.

In this episode: In this emergency chapter of the podcast, Professor de Waal explains the unfolding starvation of Gaza. He discusses why the current famine is both extreme and man-made, breaking down the mechanisms—military, bureaucratic, and logistical—that are contributing to mass starvation. He situates the crisis within the framework of international law, explaining the legal implications of starvation as a weapon and the responsibilities of all parties, including Germany and international civil society. The episode also addresses reports of hostages being denied food and medical care, the verification of humanitarian data in a highly polarized context, and what immediate actions are required to prevent further deaths. Finally, Alex de Waal speaks directly to young people and civil society about the role they can play in responding to this urgent crisis.

Links:

Alex de Waal @Fletcher School for Global Affairs / Tufts University: <https://fletcher.tufts.edu/people/faculty/alex-de-waal> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

de Waal, Alex. *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine*. Polity Press, 2018. <https://worldpeacefoundation.org/publication/mass-starvation-the-history-and-future-of-famine/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

World Peace Foundation: <https://worldpeacefoundation.org/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Recent Articles by Alex de Waal: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jul/26/israel-food-starvation-gaza-famine-aid> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/how-to-prevent-more-starvation-deaths-in-gaza> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

<https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/humanitaere-lage-in-gaza-das-entspricht-der-definition-eines-kriegsverbrechens-a-3e4b23a5-3682-472d-8015-e995b0b4fd91> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Further Resources:

IPC: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/resources/infographics/en/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

UN declaring Famine in Gaza: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165702> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNICEF, World Food Program (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO) reiterate call for immediate ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access to curb deaths from hunger and malnutrition <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-08-2025-famine-confirmed-for-first-time-in-gaza> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Sen, Amartya. Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Deprivation and Entitlement. Oxford University Press, 1981. <https://academic.oup.com/book/32827> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Dedication:

We dedicate this Podcast to all victims and survivors of October 7, the hostages and their families, to all innocent civilians killed and injured in Gaza and their grieving families and friends. To our dear guests Udi Goren, Khalil Sayegh, Sima and Mai who shared their losses so powerfully with us. To their families: Tal's wife Ella Haimi, their children Nir, Einav, Udi and Lotan, who never got the chance to meet his father. To Khalil Sayegh's mother and siblings, to Mai's and Sima's family, to her mother Bushra.

To the blessed memory of: Tal Haimi, Lara Sayegh, Jeris Sayegh, Mahmoud, Danny Darlington and Haim Perry.

Disclaimer:

In each episode of this podcast, the invited guests speak on their own behalf. They share their experiences, assessments, and expert perspectives. These contributions are central to the multiperspectivity of the project but do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or producers.

Legal & Historical Anchor Episodes:

This podcast may include controversial legal terms of specific technical significance. Their legal applicability requires a thorough expert contextualization; for this, we refer to our legal chapter. All relevant terms of international law, its institutions, current controversies, and the state of jurisprudence are explained in the anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Claus Kreß LL.M. (Cambridge) (Episode 36). He is co-author of the Rome Statute, Special Advisor to the International Criminal Court, and Judge at the International Court of Justice in the parallel Gambia vs. Myanmar genocide case.

Historical matters are discussed from multiple perspectives in this podcast. Please check the cross-references in the shownotes of the respective episodes for details. All historically contested issues are addressed in the history anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Gudrun Krämer (Episode 21), author of the comprehensive work *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton 2008), a standard reference in the field. For her scholarly achievements as a historian, she was awarded the *Preis des Historischen Kollegs* in 2025, the highest distinction in her discipline in Germany.