



Food crisis in the countries of the African Sahel

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Introduction

The problem of food shortage is now considered one of the common problems facing nations, and the reports of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) show how difficult the food problem is, as they indicate that tens of millions of people in the world are threatened with death today due to starvation and diseases caused by malnutrition, while More than one billion and one hundred million people are now suffering from hunger and malnutrition, and according to the United Nations report, seven million children die annually due to hunger and this despite the technological revolutions and the industrial and knowledge revolution.

The African Sahel countries are among the treasures of the earth. Their land is full of mines that contain important minerals. These countries also thrive by raising livestock due to their terrestrial and climatic nature, and they export these wealth. These wealth are among the most important sources of national income for these countries, namely:

- 1- Senegal
- 2- Mauritania
- 3- Mali
- 4- Burkina Faso
- 5- Niger
- 6- Algeria
- 7- Chad
- 8- Nigeria
- 9- Eritrea
- 10- Sudan



The African Sahel countries are characterized by their desert climate and the presence of terrain, forests and savannah grasses, so their climate is sunny, dry, and winds blow throughout the year on the regions of the African Sahel countries with irregular rainfall and this is what brings us to the problems that these countries suffer from.

The food crisis is the handicap that adheres to these countries when we mention them, and it leads to famine and a human catastrophe against humanity. Hundreds of those affected are now living, nothing separates them from death, as they are bodies without a soul. If we imagine life one day without our favorite food, we can become depressed, so what if we do not find food at all.

We have all seen pictures of dark-skinned people with a bone-filled body wrapped in a piece of skin. Indeed, this is an expression that some may find disgusting and others may shiver. The truth is that these people are with us somewhere in this world or let's say in many places. Life is not dependent on international policies and interests. Countries are working on their interests, leaving people hungry. It happened that parents devoured their children from starvation. I advise you not to imagine. Let us continue what happened to these countries in terms of famines and killings. Before we continue and talk about the number of dead, one of the most important causes of famines is the security and political instability. There are countries that have terrorism and groups that threaten the national security of the state, such as Niger and Nigeria, for example. There are many cases to kidnap girls. And border wars between countries, such as what happened between the countries of "Sudan" and "Chad" and between northeastern "Bigeria" and "Chad".

These problems were not transient. They threatened the state with its resources and reduced the volume of aid. If we take you to the state of Niger, we find that the drought that affected the state, epidemics, the removal of trees and the attack of locust swarms led to climate change and with the population growth, it became with almost non-existent resources, and then the occurrence of famines.



Niger is now considered one of the poorest countries in the African continent. We can be certain that there is one problem that unites all the countries of the African Sahel, although there are problems that threaten each country separately, but among the problems that threaten the security of these countries and that bring them together is food crisis.

Food is the main source of human life after water, and every country depends on a food source in order to provide its citizens with this source, for example, the state of "Burkina Faso" whose economy depends on animal resources, so it raises livestock and exports them abroad. Thus, the state of "Burkina Faso" was able to preserve the main source of human growth, as well as maintain a fairly good economic level for the state.

The state of "Mauritania" had problems in agriculture because of the agricultural pests and the transfer of funds to without agrarian reform. "Mauritania" has a low GDP as it relies on livestock and agricultural wealth and the travel of Bedouins to other countries because of the drought affecting the country. Many African countries, like most of "Mauritania", were affected by drought, and then a decline in agricultural wealth.

This crisis was not the result of the current era. The countries of the African Sahel, especially the countries of the Central African Sahel, lived through this crisis, and the bitterness of famines constituted a major shock to the countries of the world. Photographers used to go to these countries; To take pictures of people there, and when the photographers published them, the countries were shocked by the size of the people there and their weight. Now writing this report, there are more than 2 million people in need of urgent food aid, yet some countries of the world fail to help these countries, and some do not even pay attention.

This crisis affected many aspects of life:

The educational aspect, as the countries of the African Sahel are outside the international classification of education and the level of intellectual and technology renaissance, and parents are withdrawing their children from schools and reducing their diets, which has led to disease and with the deterioration of the health



situation, the number of deaths has increased dramatically. This world did not show mercy to these countries, but the Corona pandemic was a real and inevitable disaster with the lack of awareness, the absence of any medical aid, and the deterioration of the climatic community; This led to the outbreak of Covid-19 disease and the death of many Africans.

Humanitarian organizations did not hesitate to help them, as did international organizations such as the United Nations, but is this enough?! The question remains, is the aid sufficient to ensure security or to revitalize the wheel of the economy and the state's self-sufficiency? In order to meet the basic and primary needs of its people? If we look a little closer to these countries, we will find that they are rich in wealth that make them one of the richest countries in the world and one of the richest in science and knowledge.

Can we ignore the human wealth in which African countries are rich, for the harsh conditions in these countries make their residents more bearable to adversity, and harsh, hot and dry conditions. Any source of human life and taking basic rights.

If we talk about the "Niger" country, it has agricultural wealth and crops that are rarely planted in any other country because of its demand for a specific climate that is only found in the "Niger" country, such as: (crops of millet, sorghum, cassava, rice, beans, onions, garlic, peppers, potatoes and wheat.

The state of "Eritrea" is distinguished by its fish wealth and it also exports to neighboring countries, as well as we previously talked about the state of "Burkina Faso" and the validity of its soil for agriculture, as its economy depends mainly on the cultivation of cotton. Despite these agricultural wealth and the possibilities of exploiting the climate, and the soil suitable for cultivating the most crops exported abroad, and thus reviving the economies of countries, this does not happen. On the contrary, these countries have lost their capacity to be productive countries or countries with high efficiency in the ranks of the developed countries that have been affected by drought, but rather the deterioration of most of the situation These countries (such as Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Chad, as well as Mali)



have experienced droughts and famines, and their condition has become deplorable.

Some may be surprised, where is the government of these countries and where are the human rights associations in the whole world, and corruption reaches this level of inhumanity? The question remains, do international laws prevent resolute intervention to curb these famines from curbing the corruption of governments, which has led the situation to this extent? If we look again, we will find that wars are the answer, although they are not the only reason. Yes, so far, civil wars between tribes and conflicts on the borders have led to this deterioration. One of the things that may lead to the deterioration of the country is the civil war for the state to judge itself. Interference from abroad penetrates its land and people, and each group of individuals is convinced of their full right to own the state's lands without anyone else, then all wealth is for nothing and the state goes to the wind, and there is no land or people.

The conflicts of governments over borders and the lack of consideration of the basic needs of the state, but sometimes reach a major rupture between states, and the intervention of international organizations; To resolve the conflict, such as the countries of "Chad" and "Sudan" and the existing conflict between them, which led to the preoccupation of governments with the conflict, but in 2010 this conflict was resolved and relations between Chad and Sudan were strengthened.

For every conflict and war, there are negative consequences for the state, and the role of the government and the people comes to unite to advance and compensate for the losses resulting from these wars. The reasons did not stop there only. There are reasons beyond the control of these countries. African countries are trying to reduce these reasons, which is the rise in food prices by 2017, which stood as an obstacle for people with limited incomes to reach their right to food commodities such as rice, wheat, and corn. According to the International Monetary Fund, the use of food crops to produce oil is the most important reason for the rise in food prices between 2006 and 2007, and after the decline in real estate prices, investment turned to the food commodity markets, in addition to the rise in global oil prices.



The food crisis in the countries of the African Sahel and its beginning

The food crisis was not a product of this era and did not arise out of nowhere. It has deep roots, beginning with myths and the gods of hunger, representing the struggle to obtain a living and portraying the disasters of food shortages. The food crisis continued to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the countries of the whole world, especially the countries of southern and eastern Africa as well as East And central Asia, but the disaster began to sweep the African continent, where it was more affected by this crisis since the middle of the 22nd century BC, according to what was reported historically.

The sudden and brief climate change that caused a decrease in rainfall led to several decades of drought in Upper Egypt. Historians believe that the resulting famine and civil strife was a major cause of the collapse of the Old Kingdom and dates back to the first Egyptian transitional period, as "people were dying of starvation in Upper Egypt and people were eating their children." In 1880 the famine extended across the entire Sahel region, and in 1738 half died of hunger The population of Timbuktu (a city in northern Mali) due to starvation.

In 1967 to 1969 a large-scale famine occurred in Biafra in Nigeria due to the government blockade of the separatist lands and 1.5 million people died of starvation due to this famine. Since that time, African famines have become more widespread and more severe. Sudan witnessed some famines in the late 1970s and again in 1990 and 1998.

Famines in Africa include the food crisis in Niger in 2005 and 2006. The most famous is the Sahel famine of 2010, when many areas were affected, such as the Senegal River, Mauritania, Mali and Sudan, and the main cause of this famine was drought. The 2011 East African Drought, where the loss of two consecutive rainy seasons caused the worst drought in East Africa in 60 years.

Drought was not the only cause of the problem of famine, as there are many other causes, including: (war, inflation, failed agricultural seasons, population imbalance, or an increase in the death rate and the outbreak of epidemics). With the advent of French colonialism and years of bloody fighting, the French established a



permanent presence and the French began looking for ways to make the new government pay the administrative costs of the occupation. The French did not find anyone to pay because the countries were only self-sufficient, so the French decided to force the farmers to grow crops that are exported abroad such as cotton and groundnut, cotton was a necessity for the French textile mills while groundnut was to provide a cheap alternative to the nut oil commonly used in France at the time.

And there were interchangeable crops with these crops such as oats and legumes, which led to soil fatigue. With the end of colonialism and the formalization of colonialism, taxes were imposed. In Mali in 1929, the French began asking for a tax from every adult over the age of fifteen to grow between five and ten kilograms of cotton. In 1960, the last year of the formal colonialism of France, the tax rose to the equivalent of forty kilograms. In 1970, during a drought, the government forced every adult peasant to harvest at least forty-eight kilograms of cotton to pay taxes. So the peasants allotted most of their land for cash crops.

Causes of food shortage in African Sahel countries

If we discuss the causes of the food shortage crisis in the countries of the African Sahel, we will find that:

1- Decreased agricultural productivity:

The lack of efforts made to improve the means of agriculture, the poor infrastructure and the failure of these countries to pursue modern agricultural technology means in addition to the climatic challenges facing this continent such as climate change, loss of soil fertility, water shortage due to drought, loss of good water quality in addition to floods and the spread of agricultural pests.

2- High rate of population growth:

Population growth is linked to the increased demand for food resources and with the deterioration of agricultural productivity, the tendency of some countries to import from abroad and the neglect of agriculture.



3- Inefficiency of food distribution systems and policies:

This is related to the population's inability to obtain the food they need, even with the population's ability to obtain it with the availability of material resources and this is due to the inefficiency of accurate distribution policies.

4- Poverty and low income:

With the increase in the prices of food commodities and the decrease in wages, the rates of poverty in these countries and migrations increased, such as the State of Sudan, which witnessed a rise in food commodities, and the migration of farmers to cities or outside the country.

5- Oil price increase:

Modern agriculture now depends on energy, and the price of a barrel of oil has now reached more than \$100. Basically, these countries suffer from poverty, so how can they have this energy to provide modern agriculture?

6- Epidemic outbreaks:

Diseases were not a marginal factor in the deterioration of the countries of the African coast, as these epidemics revealed the fragility of the countries' health support against diseases, and the death rate rose significantly, especially with the spread of the Corona virus in the African continent with poor food support for countries and their dependence on foreign aid and aid, which led to famines.

We can define the famines caused by the food shortage crisis and their criteria according to the United Nations humanitarian standard, which are:

- 1- When at least 20% of households in an area face severe food shortages with limited ability to cope.
- 2- When the prevalence of acute malnutrition in children exceeds 30%.
- 3- When the death rate exceeds two people per 10,000 people per day.

The African continent has become the country most affected by this crisis and the most frequent one. This is due to:

Lack of self-sufficiency in food resources and security precautions due to drought problems that may afflict the country. Many organizations have contributed to



raising support for self-sufficiency in resources such as initiatives to address the problem of food security such as the “Great Green Wall” and the “Community Development Approach” to agricultural development, an NGO program with the aim of providing an alternative approach to increasing food security in Africa which is implemented across areas specific to intervention, such as the introduction of drought-tolerant crops and new methods of food production such as agro-forests, spread in Ethiopia in the 1990s and in Malawi, Uganda, Eritrea and Kenya.

However, the food shortage crisis has not yet ended. On October 16, 2020, the World Food Program confirmed that the Central African Sahel region, which includes (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), is facing a serious food crisis, with approximately 11,000 people one step away from famine, especially in parts of northern Burkina Faso. He explained that two provinces in Burkina Faso are in the phase of humanitarian emergency; He stressed that the number of affected people reached more than half a million people in Niger and one hundred thousand in Burkina Faso.

It is believed that the crisis will be exacerbated by the Corona virus pandemic, which has become a pressure factor on countries that already had a food shortage crisis. Increased agricultural commodity prices, higher shipping costs, and higher standards of living. Every year, famines occur in all countries of the world, not only in the African continent, but the impact on the countries of the African Sahel remains for as long as eternity, but with every crisis of food shortage and the occurrence of famine, the problem is exacerbated more and armed groups appear, backwardness and the struggle for access to food becomes. Humans are in a state of madness in which reason cancels out.

For every unresolved problem, another problem appears, and perhaps in conjunction with the problem, other problems appear that are affected in parallel on the first problem, which is the water problem. Human only. The agricultural lands fall away or the crop spoils due to the inadequacy of the water and its cleanliness, and some people throw it away because they do not find a primary food source in order to secure their food needs.



Manifestations of the food crisis and its impact on development in the countries of the African Sahel:

Algeria is now living in an era of agricultural development. One of its most important projects now is to plant six million trees to re-grow forests for the next twenty years along the northern edge of the African Sahara. In 1965 to 1970, 160 acres were reclaimed in the desert village of Youssadou in Algeria, through Cultivation of acacia and eucalyptus trees. These trees provided protection from sandstorms and increased soil moisture. Did these manifestations befall the countries of the African Sahel, or did the manifestations of drought and famine appear?

It is embarrassing to blame the encroachment of the Sahara as the cause of the famine in the African Sahel. Huge amounts of agricultural commodities are sent out of countries, even during drought years. Ships bringing relief food to the port of Dakar, Senegal, were loaded with peanuts, cotton, vegetables and meat. Among the agricultural commodities worth hundreds of millions of dollars that the Sahel exported during the drought, many exports from Sahel countries increased, some reaching huge levels. Livestock exports during 1971 totaled more than 200 million pounds, and the annual export of chilled or frozen beef tripled compared to years before the drought. In addition, 65 million pounds of fish and 32 million pounds of vegetables were exported from the Sahel 1971 during the drought years, exports amounted to 1.5 billion dollars.

Mali was one of the countries worst affected by the drought and was one of the main recipients of urgent food shipments. However, during this period the area devoted to cotton doubled, and cotton exports reached during the drought years (about 50 million pounds, or 10 pounds per man) so that the cotton was grown in the best lands that were less affected by the drought.

In 1934 peanuts occupied 182 thousand acres in Niger. In 1954 the area doubled. By 1961 it had increased by five meters, and in the drought of 1968, the area planted with groundnut covered a large area of one million and eighty thousand acres. Government campaigns, taxation, as well as research on new varieties of



groundnut were the main reason for this expansion and campaigns for grants to companies when the crop was harvested.

The expansion was at the expense of green areas and soil depletion. Peanut cultivation began in the 1960s to take on the form of an expansion further north of the lands used by pastoralists. Thus, the shepherds and their animals are more at risk of dehydration. In the five years before the drought, Chad implemented a program to support the countries of the European market to increase cotton production.

Two-thirds of a million acres were devoted to cotton cultivation. The main reason for this attrition of citizens is imports. In 1974, about 30% of the foreign currency that Senegal earned went to buy air conditioners, tobacco, pure sugar, and alcohol. 47.2% of the budget is spent on the salaries of the velvet class of government.

Between 1961 and 1971, Niger doubled its cotton production in 1971, about \$18 million. four times together, and triple production of peanuts. The net profit of these two exports together in 1971 was about \$18 million. It was used to import clothes, and \$1 million went to buy luxury cars, and nearly \$4 million went to gasoline and tires.

Most of these cars are driven by the elite of society and more than million dollars were spent on importing alcoholic beverages and tobacco products. Even when a portion of the export earnings are used to import food, this food does not reach the poor in general but is consumed by the velvet classes of the cities. More than half of what Senegal earned from exporting groundnuts in 1974 was spent on importing wheat for French mills, which produce flour to make French bread for urban dwellers.

The truth is that the countries of the African Sahel are producing enough for their population and keeping them away from famines, but the governments of the countries abroad are the ones who support these famines. These famines affected the development of this country even after getting rid of colonialism. People were used as a tool to bring money, and they neglected human rights. As a result of greed, there were famines, ignorance, and terrorism.



The truth is that these countries are far from the manifestations of development and this is for the villages, not for the cities, as we explained previously that all state revenues are the first beneficiary of the owners of the velvet class and cities, but the owner of this money, the farmer, only takes crumbs of bread. In fact, the countries of the African Sahel live in agricultural development in themselves, so everyone realizes the extent of the quality of the soil and its suitability for agriculture in these countries, and if the opposite was not coveted by the colonial countries despite the end of colonialism.

It is worth noting that the countries of the African Sahel are looking at new ways of farming, but the question that arises here is what about the harsh consumption of soil, and it is likely that there will be more expansion of agricultural lands, as well as the trend towards agriculture, local consumption and non-importation.

This was not only a unilateral effect on development, so another development appeared in the wake of this development, which is cultural development, so the countries supporting the countries of the African Sahel went to send educational missions to the peasants and the needy, as well as religious missions to introduce them to religions. and some in separate countries of the world, especially the continent of Europe.

There are leaders, leaders and militants that these countries gave birth to, and some of them contribute to the strengthening and advancement of these countries and solving the crisis of famine and food shortages that affect their lives. They are now standing on the threshold of their inevitable death. The countries are now supporting the countries of the African Sahel against poverty that led to terrorism, so they are provided with weapons and trained soldiers. Chad sent 1,200 soldiers to the border triangle between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to fight the mujahedeen, and even the aid that was sent to the international organization to Sudan when the skirmishes between Sudan and its south.

These countries are still developing and keen to get rid of the manifestations of poverty and drought as much as possible and put strategies and methods in order to reach a standard of living that secures a decent life for its citizens.



The food crisis in the Sahel countries according to the reports of the United Nations and the FAO:

The Global Network Against Food Crises indicated on the latest numbers of cases of hunger and malnutrition for the year 2019 that there are 183 people suffering from acute food insecurity, and that 17 million children suffer from wasting and physical weakness, and this is according to statistics for 55 countries suffering from a food shortage crisis. According to reports, South Sudan ranked third out of the ten countries with the most food shortages and malnutrition in 2019, while northern Niger ranked ninth, where the percentage there reached five million people, and in southern Sudan the percentage reached seven million people.

Parts of northern and eastern Burkina Faso are now living in a state of food insecurity, and one of the main reasons was the outbreak of war and the harsh climate. According to reports for the year 2019 for the year 2020, if the crisis is not resolved, it will worsen further until the numbers indicate:

Countries	Chad	Mali	Niger	Nigeria	South Sudan	Sudan
The number of difficult cases	22,000	39,000	86,000	412,000	1.8 Million	One Million
The number of cases living in crisis	619,000	2.9 Million	1.4 Million	4.6 Million	5.1 Million	4.8 Million
Number of cases living at risk of food shortage	2,7 Million	648,000	4.8 Million	18.8 Million	3.2 Million	11.8 Million



Total number of hungry people according to the FAO 2017-2019	Around 6.1 Million	Around 5 Million	Around 6.8 Million	Around 24.6 Million	Around 8 Million	More than 10 Million
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Recommendations

- 1- Raising the efficiency of agricultural productivity by supporting the small farmer with his agricultural needs of seeds and fertilizers and introducing modern technological means to contribute to modern agriculture. Where the African Sahel countries enjoy arable soil with a dry apricot climate that is available for the cultivation of many important crops with allocating programs for the equitable distribution of food to society and soil reform.
- 2- Raising food and agricultural awareness among the different groups of people and making them realize the size of the responsibility that falls on both the state and the people, by enabling civil organizations to assist them culturally and educationally.
- 3- Create plans to assist the most vulnerable groups and those who have lost their jobs due to the closure, so that they can obtain sufficient, safe and nutritious food. It is possible to empower them in other jobs that grow the country's economy, reduce unemployment rates and reduce the food shortage crisis.
- 4- Focusing on the woman component in the community; Because it is one of the most important elements of society in increasing the awareness of individuals, and even its keenness on its innate help to others, it makes it a distinct factor to benefit from the creation of a human element that attracts extreme cases to help,



It affects others with the emotion that convinces individuals of the importance of raising awareness, as well as helping us. Every conscious woman spreads awareness to others and her family members saves an entire generation from ignorance and backwardness, and even saves a country.

- 5- African international cooperation. It is possible to establish a committee that specializes in certain tasks, namely (choosing 3 or 4 countries that are about to die) and communicating with the rest of the committees in order to develop a solid plan to save these countries, communicating with international organizations for special supplies for these countries, communicating with the government of these countries And civil associations of all kinds in order to discuss the plan and the beginning of enabling actual support inside the country and to set a time plan at the time of ending the aid, which is the time when these countries are able to rely on their people and their land).
- 6- Develop technological means and mechanisms to make the state control food commodities and not leave them to the greed of traders, monitor the missing commodities in the state, how to provide them, and the possibility of having alternatives for these unavailable commodities.
- 7- Ending the colonial exploitation of countries and supporting the farmer by taking the largest share of the revenues.