Hunger and Food Shortages are On the Rise

Although according to the information voiced by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, 88 million people were starving in the world at the end of 2020, numerous media and public organizations indicate that the number of hungry people on our planet is many times greater.

According to the UN specialized agencies alone, about three billion people on the planet can’t afford a healthy and balanced diet. The leading cause of malnutrition is poverty. While the European population is getting poorer and shrinking its food basket in an attempt to satisfy basic needs somehow, the situation in the developing regions of the world is much more dramatic, as people there face the threat of real hunger and malnutrition.

From 690 million to 820 million people starve globally, or about 10% of the world’s population. The trend of food scarcity persists despite modern agroindustrial technology. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) analysts, the previously set goal of eradicating hunger by 2030 will not be achieved. A report on global hunger published jointly by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe noted: “after the world committed to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, we are still off-track to achieve this objective by 2030.” With reference to current expert projections, this report shows that the world as a whole and 47 countries in particular will not even achieve low levels of hunger by 2030.
In addition to the African continent and parts of Asia, Latin America, famine zones are emerging for the first time in the Western Balkans and some areas of the former Soviet Union, particularly in Ukraine and Georgia.

Thus, according to conclusions of Ukrainian agencies and international organizations, the actions of the current Kyiv authorities have led to the fact that in Ukraine, more than one million are officially recognized as starving. Given the stalemate in the Ukrainian economy, this figure threatens to grow exponentially in the near future. UNICEF states that 9.8 million Ukrainians lack food and money for food, every fourth inhabitant of the country is not officially recognized as hungry or poor in Ukraine.

Based on a study conducted by the FAO, the UN has warned that 23 million Afghans are at risk of starvation and death. As Chief of Communication, Advocacy, and Civic Engagement for UNICEF Afghanistan, Samantha Mort said recently, more than 1 million children in this country are on the verge of starvation. “Some 22.8 million people across Afghanistan are facing food insecurity. And that’s more than a half of Afghanistan’s population of 38 million. Many Afghans cannot buy food. Afghan children have no childhood. It’s not just about how to survive. It’s about how to live to see another day,” Mort said. People in Afghanistan have had to sell their children in order to provide food and necessities in the face of economic crisis and hunger, reports France 24.

The UN has warned of the threat of catastrophic famine in Yemen, where some 3 million children alone are on the brink of starvation in this war-torn world’s poorest country.

Pakistan was ranked 92nd out of 116 countries in this year’s Global Hunger Index (GHI), Dawn.com of Pakistan reported on November 29. The country’s hunger score is 24.7, which means it’s serious. At the regional level, Pakistan ranks better than India (101), while two other immediate regional neighbors, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, “outshine” Pakistan, ranking 76 and 65, respectively.

In North Korea, people are also increasingly in need as winter is coming, writes the German magazine Der Spiegel. If even Kim Jong-un called the situation serious, it means the problem is indeed tense. A hunger crisis threatens North Korea due to closed borders since the pandemic began, suspended trade, natural disasters, and Western sanctions.

But developing countries are not the only ones hard hit today by the growing risk of hunger. Even the United States was directly affected by the famine. According to ABC News, US food banks are in crisis as 42 million US citizens, that is one in eight Americans, are going to bed hungry this year.

Global food commodity prices rose by a further 3 percent in October to their highest level since July 2011, reports FAO. According to the FAO, the indicator has been rising for three consecutive months.

Food security in the world is threatened on many fronts: growing conflicts, extreme weather events due to global climate change, and economic and health problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic all contribute to hunger. Food insecurity is more than just a market food shortage. The crisis has increased food prices, disrupted supply chains, and devastated farmers in many countries. Due to the energy crisis and high gas and electricity prices, the agricultural sector faces serious problems, one of which is the shortage of artificial fertilizers, whose production is being shut down across the EU. And the lack of fertilizers for farmers means nothing precisely reduced yields. According to some estimates, the current crisis could increase the number of hungry people by 132 million.

Under these circumstances, the outraged Fox News in particular states that the mainstream media is blathering on about trivia or fomenting artificial Russo-phobic, Xenophobic campaigns without noticing the children dying of starvation in Ethiopia or another poor country, for example.

The current global threat of hunger and the unjustified procrastination of the world community in combating it is frankly incomprehensible. And this even though in 2020 there were 20.8 million people in the world whose fortune exceeded $1 million, and during the crisis year, their number grew by 6.3%! Capgemini SA presented such calculations in its World Wealth Report. In first place among countries by the number of dollar millionaires is the United States. In 2020, their number increased by 11.3% and reached 6.575 million people. The top five countries also include Japan with 3.537 million people, Germany with 1.535 million, China with 1.461 million, and France with 714,000 people. The number of billionaires worldwide has reached 3,228, a new record, according to a study by the Hurun Research Institute. The fortune of the dollar billionaires in the world reached a record $10.2 trillion by the end of July 2020 and today significantly exceeds this figure. The wealth they have accumulated is a very substantial sum that could defeat world hunger!

David Beazley, the Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), rightly told CNN that a
small group of super-rich people could solve world hunger by allocating only a fraction of their wealth to the cause. He specified that $6 billion is needed to help the 42 million people who are at risk of starvation, for example, approximately 2 percent of the fortune of Elon Musk alone. However, a little later on his Twitter page, Beasley clarified that CNN’s headline was inaccurate. Six billion dollars won’t solve the problem of world hunger, but it will help prevent global instability, mass migration and save 42 million people who are on the brink of starvation. This is an unprecedented crisis and a perfect storm formed by COVID-19, conflict, and climate change.

In response to David Beasley’s plea, Elon Musk promised to hand over $6 billion to WFP if the organization provided a detailed plan of how the funds would be spent with full accountability.

In this regard, the silence on this issue of other moneybags of the world is surprising! One wonders: can the current democratic society, the construction of which Washington is paying lip service to in convening its fake Summit for Democracy, solve the problem of starvation deaths, and what should the international community do for that?

_Vladimir Odintsov, political observer, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”._