



By: *Sharmila Devi*

US shrugs off rising global hunger



Omar Artan, the first Somali picked to referee at a soccer World Cup, returned to a hero's welcome in Mogadishu after being interrogated for 11 hours by **US immigration** in Miami before his diplomatic passport and single-entry visa were rejected.

The incident caused condemnation among soccer fans following the tournament being held in the US, Canada and Mexico.

But it is unlikely to change any anti-immigrant Maga minds, nor change the Trump administration's stance towards Somalia even though the country is heading towards famine.

Artan's denial of entry into the US "is just another manifestation of Trump's vindictive and obsessive politics, which routinely demonises anything associated with Somalia," Abukar Arman, a former Somali diplomat in the US, told Al Jazeera.

The latest ironic twist in the tale

Around the world, 266 million people across 47 countries experienced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2025, almost double the share recorded in 2016, says the UN's 2026 **Global Report on Food Crises** released last month.

In Somalia, compounded by drought, disease and conflict, almost two million people face severe hunger, with the UN warning that the window to prevent famine is short.

But Food for Peace, a programme set up in the 1950s to donate US agricultural surpluses, is failing to help several countries close to famine, according to analysis by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

The \$1.2 billion Food for Peace scheme was moved to the US Department of Agriculture when USAID was dismantled

Neither Sudan, South Sudan nor Somalia – all countries with regions close to catastrophic famine – are set to receive any help from the programme and have been passed over in favour of non-emergency countries.

The \$1.2 billion Food for Peace scheme was moved to the US Department of Agriculture when USAID was dismantled by the Department of Government Efficiency under the tech titan Elon Musk last year. Other humanitarian programmes were moved to the State Department.

A lack of expertise at Food for Peace forced it to issue a contract quote for a manual on how to administer aid even though there are such experts who survived Musk's cull and are at the State Department, said **CFR**.

"The programme's transfer is the latest ironic twist in the tale of President Donald Trump's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE): it destroyed USAID and displaced Food for Peace under a mandate of eliminating waste and inefficiency, only to manufacture significantly more of both," it said.

The rising neglect of the world's poorest

It would appear global hunger was far from the minds of the investors who rushed to fill their portfolios with **Space X** shares in the company's recent initial public offering.

But anyone watching the demise of substantial aid funding not just by Washington but by other high-income countries will have felt queasy watching Musk become the world's first trillionaire.

It is debatable how much the rising neglect of the world's poorest is down to appeasing right-wing voters, failure to take any notice or even active malice. But few expect the situation to improve soon in Somalia, where almost 500 nutrition clinics have closed because of aid cuts.

Tom Fletcher, the **UN's humanitarian chief**, vented his frustration on a recent trip to Somalia. "On top of conflict and displacement, you have got the flash floods and the drought getting worse and that should make us furious about the lack of humanity being shown at this moment – this moment of reckless geopolitics, of war, conflict, indifference and cruelty," he said.

The US alone drove three-quarters of the cut, with its ODA falling by 56.9% compared with 2024

"It just frustrates me because we are running out of ways to try to drive this message home, about the reality for so many people in need right now globally. And we can't understand why people will not listen, why people will not hear the voices of the mothers and children that I am meeting here," he said.

Last month, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said cuts to official development assistance (ODA) last year by the US, UK, Germany, Japan and France accounted for 95.7% of the total fall in 2025, the largest annual decline on record. The US alone drove three-quarters of the cut, with its ODA falling by 56.9% compared with 2024.

Slashed humanitarian funding is also risking a new HIV epidemic as global testing and treatment falls, particularly in low-income countries, says UNAids. "It's the biggest disruption since the global HIV response was put together and it poses a major threat to the progress we have had," said Winnie Byanyima, head of **UNAids**, which may be shut down by the end of this year.

The next chapter of the American story

Aid cuts are being exacerbated by more countries introducing restrictive laws in the name of family values. A draft **African charter** on family, sovereignty and values, seen by The

Guardian earlier this month, urges states to withdraw from any agreements that do not align with the principles of the new charter, including the 2003 Maputo protocol that promotes gender equality and protects the reproductive and health rights of women and girls.



The US crackdown on immigration is targeting people from countries most vulnerable to climate-induced disasters

Not coincidentally, conservative Christian organisations in the US and Europe opposed to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights have found traction in their lobbying of African and other governments.

Rising global hunger or the threat of a new HIV pandemic is not moving hearts and minds, and neither is climate change.

The **US crackdown on immigration** is targeting people from countries most vulnerable to climate-induced disasters such as drought and floods, according to The Guardian.

The UN estimates the climate displacement crisis has pushed 250 million people from their homes globally over the past decade, the equivalent of 70,000 displacements every day, mostly within people's own borders.

"As America turns 250, we must ask what kind of leadership will define the next chapter of the American story. In my view, **American leadership** cannot be measured solely by military strength or economic dominance," wrote Ertharin Cousin, a former US ambassador and executive director of the UN World Food Programme in 2012 to 2017. "It

must also be measured by the example it sets.”