

# *Israel massacres more than 300 in Gaza in 48 hours as U.S. mercenaries reportedly shoot and kill Palestinian aid seekers*

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Funerals and prayers held at the hospital for the people killed while collecting aid

**A funeral is held at Nasser Hospital for a Palestinian killed by Israeli forces while attempting to collect aid at a Gaza Humanitarian Foundation site [Mohamed Solaimane/Al Jazeera]**

Gaza City, July 4 (RHC)-- More than 300 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces during the past 48 hours, according to the Gaza Government Media Office, which says Israel has "committed 26 bloody massacres" in that period.

At least 73 people have been killed by Israel since dawn on Thursday, including 33 desperate aid seekers at the controversial Israeli and United States-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) aid sites.

Thirteen people were killed when Israeli forces attacked a tent in al-Mawasi in the south, while 16 were killed and many wounded in an attack on Mustafa Hafez School, sheltering displaced people west of Gaza City, medical sources told Al Jazeera.

Ahmed Mansour, a displaced Palestinian taking shelter in the school building said: "We woke up to fierce [Israeli] airstrikes. It felt like an earthquake. People say it was a drone attack, but the sound was horrifying, relentless shelling. Missiles were so destructive that they set everything on fire. Victims were left burning for hours without help. There is no one here to save us."

The Government Media Office statement on Thursday said the attacks over the last 48 hours had targeted civilians in shelters and displacement centres overcrowded with tens of thousands of displaced people, public rest areas, Palestinian families inside their homes, popular markets and vital civilian facilities, and starving civilians searching for food.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah on the latest killings of Palestinians near GHF aid centres, Al Jazeera's Tareq Abu Azzoum said: "People described scenes of horror as they wait for hours just hoping to get their hands on basic food supplies, only to be met with sudden and unprovoked gunfire ... I've been speaking to a number of survivors this morning, and they told me such heartbreaking testimonies and they shared the horrific scenes that unfolded near the GHF-run aid centers."

"They told me that there was no prior warning, no prior indication – just gunfire ripping through the crowd, desperate Palestinians scattered for cover as bullets flew. They told me that emergency services and medical teams were not able to access the area due to the intensity of the gunfire ... This absolutely reflects the collapse of the humanitarian landscape here in Gaza," he added.

GHF's U.S. contractors reportedly using live fire

U.S. contractors (read: mercenaries) ostensibly guarding aid distribution sites in Gaza have been using live ammunition and stun grenades as hungry Palestinians scramble for food, according to accounts and videos obtained by The Associated Press news agency.

Two U.S. contractors, speaking to the AP on condition of anonymity, said they were speaking out because they were disturbed by what they considered dangerous practices. They said the security staff hired were often unqualified, unvetted, heavily armed and seemed to have an open licence to do whatever they wished.

Al Jazeera's Nour Odeh, reporting from Amman, said an Israeli statement on a recent Haaretz report that detailed Israeli troops shooting Palestinians at aid sites stated "that the Israeli army does not deliberately target civilians and that media reports are exaggerated about the number of casualties. Of course, this is a template, if you will, of Israeli reaction that we see every time something is uncovered about the conduct of the Israeli army. This particular report talks about the [U.S.] contractors as well."

GHF, she added, is “not just to replace the humanitarian mechanism run by international organisations for decades in Gaza, but it’s also to apply maximum pressure on the civilian population”. Odeh also noted that Israel’s National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has said this week that too much aid is going to Gaza and that none should enter to ensure an Israeli victory.

Dr Mads Gilbert, a Norwegian emergency medicine doctor and professor who has provided healthcare in Gaza for more than 30 years, told Al Jazeera the GHF operation “is part of the Israeli occupation forces’ and the Israeli government plan to ethnically cleanse and to fulfil their goal of genocide in Gaza”.

“This has nothing to do with alleviating starvation in Gaza,” Gilbert said.

Describing the aid from GHF as a “drop in the ocean” and a “sham operation”, Gilbert added: “The distribution organisation is aimed at using food as bait to attract starving people, to terrorise them and to kill them. The shooting of people in food lines is a war crime.”

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has called for investigations into the killings and wounding of Palestinians trying to access food through GHF. UNRWA notes that while it operated about 400 sites across the besieged enclave, GFH has set up only four “mega-sites”, three in the south and one in central Gaza – none in the north, where conditions are most severe. In a post on X, UNRWA called for the UN to “do the work” in distributing aid.

More than 130 humanitarian organisations, including Oxfam, Save the Children and Amnesty International on Tuesday demanded the immediate closure of the GHF, accusing it of facilitating attacks on starving Palestinians. The NGOs said Israeli forces and armed groups “routinely” open fire on civilians attempting to access food.

Since the GHF began operations in late May, more than 600 Palestinians have been killed while seeking aid and nearly 4,000 have been wounded.

Possible ceasefire in the balance

Meanwhile, Hamas has said it is studying a new proposal for a 60-day ceasefire in Gaza, but insisted it is seeking an agreement that would bring an end to Israel’s devastating war.

Hamas said in a statement on Wednesday that it had received proposals from the mediators and is holding talks with them to “bridge gaps” to return to the negotiating table and try to reach a ceasefire agreement.

The Palestinian group said it was aiming for an agreement that would end the Gaza war and ensure the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the enclave.

The announcement came a day after U.S. President Donald Trump said Israel had agreed to the ceasefire proposal and urged Hamas to accept the deal before conditions worsen. Trump has been increasing pressure on the Israeli government and Hamas to broker a ceasefire and an agreement for the group to release the Israeli captives held in Gaza.

Word is that Trump wants to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

[ SOURCE: AL JAZEERA ]



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