

# *Going hungry: More than 700 Palestinians killed seeking aid in Gaza*

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Gaza City, July 6 (RHC)-- More than 700 Palestinians have been killed trying to get food in the Gaza Strip over the past few weeks, according to new figures from the Gaza Health Ministry, spurring renewed condemnation of a contentious United States and Israeli-backed aid scheme.

The Health Ministry said on Saturday that at least 743 Palestinians were killed and more than 4,891 others were injured while seeking assistance at Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) distribution sites.

The GHF, which began operating in the bombarded Palestinian enclave in late May, has drawn widespread criticism amid multiple reports that its contractors as well as Israeli forces have opened fire on aid seekers.

“The tragedy is that this is again a conservative reading of casualties who were at these distribution points, waiting for food parcels,” Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud said of the ministry’s latest figures.

Reporting from Gaza City, Mahmoud said the attacks on aid seekers come as Palestinian families are desperate to feed their families amid dire shortages caused by Israel’s blockade of Gaza. “People are going hungry. People are rationing supplies. A lot of families are not eating. Mothers here skip meals in order to provide for their children,” he said.

Earlier this week, a report by The Associated Press news agency quoted American contractors who said live ammunition and stun grenades have been fired at Palestinian civilians seeking aid at GHF distribution points.

Two unnamed U.S. contractors told AP that heavily armed staff members appeared to be doing whatever they wanted.

The GHF denied the news agency’s reporting as “categorically false” and said it takes “the safety and security of [its] sites extremely seriously” -- without being able to explain why hundreds of hungry Palestinians have been shot by snipers while trying to get something to eat.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump also has stood by the GHF, with a State Department spokesperson telling reporters on Wednesday that the group is the “one entity that has gotten food and aid into the Gaza Strip.”

In late June, the Trump administration pledged \$30 million in direct funding for the organization.

On Saturday, the GHF said two U.S. workers at one of its sites in southern Gaza’s Khan Younis were injured when grenades were thrown at them at the end of food distribution. “The injured Americans are receiving medical treatment and are in stable condition,” the group said. It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the attack.

Leading humanitarian and human rights groups have demanded the immediate closure of the GHF, which they accused of “forcing two million people into overcrowded, militarized zones where they face daily gunfire and mass casualties.”

Amnesty International has described the group’s operations as an “inhumane and deadly militarized scheme.” “All the evidence gathered, including testimonies which Amnesty International is receiving from victims and witnesses, suggest that the GHF was designed so as to placate international concerns while constituting another tool of Israel’s genocide,” Amnesty said.

Still, faced with dire shortages of food, water and other humanitarian supplies under Israel’s blockade, many Palestinians in Gaza say they have no choice but to seek assistance from the group, despite the risks.

“I was forced to go to the aid distribution centre simply because my kids had not eaten for three days in a row,” Majid Abu Laban, a Palestinian man who was wounded in an attack at a GHF site, told Al Jazeera.

“We try to fool our children by all means, but they are starving,” Abu Laban said.

“So I decided to risk my life and head to [an aid distribution point] at Netzarim,” he said, referring to an Israeli military-established corridor south of Gaza City. “I took the road at midnight hoping to get some food. As crowds rushed in, Israeli forces fired artillery shells at us. In the chaos, everyone was just trying to survive.”

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