

Israeli forces open fire on hungry Palestinians waiting for aid, killing at least ten

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Rafah, May 29 (RHC)-- At least 10 Palestinians desperately seeking aid from a contentious and heavily criticized United States-backed organization have been killed by Israeli forces in Gaza over the last 48 hours, according to the besieged enclave's Government Media Office.

The updated toll on Wednesday comes a day after a harrowing video showed thousands of starving Palestinians rushing to get aid, with many of them herded into cage-like lines, from the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) distribution point in Rafah in southern Gaza.

In a statement, the Government Media Office said Israeli forces “opened direct fire on hungry Palestinian civilians who had gathered to receive aid” at the distribution site, wounding at least 62 people.

It was not immediately clear exactly how many incidents of gunfire occurred or on which days the 10 Palestinians were fatally shot, but there were deaths on both days.

“These locations were transformed into death traps under the occupation’s gunfire,” the media office said, decrying the killings as a “heinous crime.”

For its part, the GHF said it had opened a second of a planned four aid distribution sites in Gaza on Wednesday.

The centres are part of an aid delivery scheme that has been roundly condemned by United Nations officials and the humanitarian community, who have repeatedly said that life-saving aid could be adequately and safely scaled up in Gaza if Israel would allow access to aid and let those organisations that have decades of experience handle the flow.

Speaking earlier in the day, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, decried the U.S.-backed delivery model as a “distraction from atrocities” and called on Israel to allow the UN-backed humanitarian system to “do its life-saving work now”.

The message was echoed by several members of the UN Security Council during a meeting in New York discussing the conflict, with Algeria, France and the United Kingdom among those appealing for Israel to allow unfettered aid deliveries.

Reporting from UN headquarters, Al Jazeera’s Kristen Saloomey said that Sigrid Kaag, the UN’s special coordinator for Middle East peace, and Feroze Sidhwa, a surgeon who recently went on a humanitarian mission to Gaza, were among those who addressed the council.

“The message from both of these experts was again calling for a ceasefire and the full resumption of aid into the Gaza Strip,” she said.

Israel’s ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, criticised the UN for what he said were “attempts to block access to aid” and demanded a retraction from Tom Fletcher, the UN’s humanitarian chief, for accusing Israel of committing genocide.

Al Jazeera’s senior political analyst Marwan Bishara said the attacks levied by Danon should come as no surprise.

“They are on the defensive, knowing all too well that they lost their public relations campaign and that their reputation around the world is in the mud,” he said, referring to Israel’s near-daily bombardment and siege of Gaza.

The alternate U.S. representative at the UN, John Kelley, said that the UN should “work with the GHF and Israel to reach an agreement on how to operationalise this system in a way that works for all.” He maintained that the GHF was “independent” and developed to “provide a secure mechanism for the delivery of aid to those in need”.

As the debate over aid access raged, Israel’s punishing attacks continued across Gaza, with rights observers warning of an even worsening humanitarian situation.

At least 63 people were killed in Israeli attacks since the early hours of Wednesday, according to medical sources speaking to Al Jazeera Arabic, bringing the death toll since October 7, 2023, to at least 54,084 Palestinians, with more than 123,308 wounded.

The ministry added that only 17 hospitals in Gaza remained partially functioning, with critical shortages of essential medicines and oxygen supplies.

Separately, the Red Cross reported that its field hospital in southern Gaza's al-Mawasi area came under Israeli fire early on Wednesday, causing panic and injuries among patients there.

In an open letter, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), Oxfam and other nonprofit groups called for "full, independent and international investigations into the attacks on healthcare in Gaza as violations of international humanitarian law".

The UN's World Food Programme, meanwhile, reported that its warehouse in central Gaza's Deir el-Balah had been broken into by hungry people "in search of food supplies". Preliminary reports indicate that at least four people were killed amid the stampede and gunfire, though the cause of the latter was not immediately clear.

The agency said that increasing aid was "the only way to reassure people that they will not starve."

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud reported from Gaza City that the search for food has proven deadly, even away from crowded distribution areas. "For example, in the past couple of hours, two people were reported killed in the Shujayea neighbourhood [of Gaza City]. They were killed trying to get to their homes," he said.

"They were forced to evacuate in the past few weeks. They left everything behind. All of their belongings, all of their food supplies that they managed to get ... [were] inside the house."

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/383748-israeli-forces-open-fire-on-hungry-palestinians-waiting-for-aid-killing-at-least-ten>



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