

Israeli forces open fire on Palestinians waiting for food aid in Gaza



Displaced Palestinians gather to receive food at a government school in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on February 19, 2024 [Mohammed Abed/ AFP]

Rafah, February 20 (RHC)-- At least one Palestinian man has been killed and many others wounded in northern Gaza after Israeli forces opened fire on desperate crowds waiting for food aid, according to witnesses and videos.

Footage verified by Al Jazeera shows Palestinians on Monday fleeing to take cover along a ruined coastal road in northern Gaza – which has been almost completely cut off from aid amid Israel's ongoing war – as

the heavy sound of gunfire rings out.

The videos also show clouds of grey fumes from smoke bombs billowing as thousands of Palestinians gathered in the area west of Gaza City. At least one person was killed in the incident, according to witnesses who shared images of a man splayed on the ground with a wound to his head.

The Wafa news agency said at least 10 people were also injured in the attack.

Victims and witnesses told Al Jazeera the Israeli attack was unprovoked. “I went down,” one man said at a hospital where he had been rushed to for treatment. “I heard gunshots then and I don’t know what happened.”

Another man said he only went to the area to get flour. “We want to feed our children... just like everyone else so we went to get some flour. But then we were shot at, shells were fired and tanks advanced at us,” he said.

The attack is the second of its kind in as many days and comes amid a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the United Nations has warned of famine-like conditions affecting some 2.3 million people.

The footage from Monday also shows Palestinian children rushing to scoop up flour from the ground after one sack broke open.

Despite the desperate situation, Israel – which controls entry points into Gaza – has refused to allow more aid in. Several UN agencies on Monday warned that the “alarming” lack of food and water as well as the spread of disease could lead to an “explosion” of child deaths in Gaza.

“We’ve been warning for weeks that the Gaza Strip is on the brink of a nutrition crisis,” said Ted Chain, UNICEF’s deputy executive director for humanitarian action.

“If the conflict doesn’t end now, children’s nutrition will continue to plummet, leading to preventable deaths or health issues which will affect the children of Gaza for the rest of their lives and have potential intergenerational consequences.”

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, at least 29,092 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 7. Another 69,028 have also been wounded.

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