

Israel directly targets UN food distribution center in Rafah, killing at least five people including staff



Palestinians inspect an UNRWA-run aid distribution centre following an Israeli strike in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on March 13, 2024 [Mohammed Salem/Reuters]

Rafah, March 14 (RHC)-- The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) says at least five people, including a staff member, were killed and 22 others wounded after Israeli forces targeted a food distribution center in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

UNRWA Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini in a statement on Wednesday said that the strike hit one of the very few remaining UNRWA distribution centers in the eastern part of Rafah. "Today's attack on one of the very few remaining UNRWA distribution centers in the Gaza Strip comes as food supplies are running out, hunger is widespread and, in some areas, turning into famine," Lazzarini said.

"Every day, we share the coordinates of all our facilities across the Gaza Strip with parties to the conflict," he continued. He said the attack was carried out even though "the Israeli Army received the coordinates including of this facility yesterday."

Lazzarini further urged the protection of the UN, its staff, and its premises and called for an independent investigation. Israel acknowledged an airstrike on a food aid distribution center in southern Gaza, which it claimed targeted and killed a high-ranking member of Hamas.

Meanwhile, the statement by the UNRWA head added that since October 7, at least 165 team members have been killed while in the line of duty and more than 400 people sheltering in UN buildings also lost their lives due to Israel's attacks.

More than 150 of the agency's facilities, including schools and shelters, have been hit in the war, with some destroyed, and UNRWA staff have reportedly been mistreated and humiliated while in Israeli detention centers, according to the UNRWA.

Separately, the health ministry in the Gaza Strip said six people were killed in the latest attack on Palestinians waiting for humanitarian aid at the Kuwait Roundabout in Gaza City. The Wafa news agency said some 83 people who were wounded in the attack have been transferred to the al-Shifa Medical Complex in the city.

Over the past weeks, Israeli forces have increased their offensives on the Kuwait Roundabout, an area where large groups gather to wait for aid deliveries.

Hamas rejects a statement by UNRWA about aid supplies to the Gaza Strip, saying it attests to the international community's failure.

The Israeli military has restricted the delivery of humanitarian supplies to northern Gaza for weeks, and thousands of children are going without sufficient food and medication.

The prevention of aid convoys comes as humanitarian officials have already issued a dire warning, stating that unless a ceasefire is implemented and aid is significantly increased, the toll of malnutrition and disease is expected to rise, leading to an alarming loss of lives.

So far, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 31,272 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 73,024 others.

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