

*U.S. allows tax incentives for
donations to Israeli groups
blocking aid from reaching
Palestinians*



An activist settler group of dozens of people, holding Israeli flags, gather at the exit of Ashdod Port near the Gaza Strip and block trucks carrying aid to Gaza Strip, in Ashdod, Israel. MOSTAFA ALKHAROUF / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

By Sharon Zhang

New York, July 18 (RHC)-- Americans who wish to financially support far right Israeli groups working to block humanitarian aid from entering Gaza are given tax incentives to do so, a new investigation finds.

Reporting from The Associated Press and Israeli news site Shomrim finds that three groups that have worked to obstruct aid efforts in Gaza have gotten tax deductible donations from the U.S. and Israel. The groups have collectively raised \$200,000, the investigation found.

The groups, Mother's March, Torat Lechima and Tzav 9, have been active in organizing Israelis to block and attack aid trucks as Palestinians in Gaza are subjected to what UN officials have called a "genocidal starvation campaign" by Israeli forces. Over the past two months, Israeli forces have intensified their blockade on resources like food, fuel, and medical aid entering Gaza, which has been in place since October — on top of the illegal air, land and sea blockade Israel has used to impoverish and isolate the people of Gaza for over 17 years.

The purpose of donations being tax deductible in the U.S. is supposedly to incentivize giving to charitable groups, though these rules are often abused by the ultra-wealthy in order to dodge taxes. In this case, Americans have an incentive to donate to groups, including one that was recently sanctioned by the U.S. for its efforts to block aid, that are seeking to manufacture a famine in Gaza amid Israel's genocide — even as U.S. and Israeli officials dubiously claim that they wish to increase humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The groups receive funding from crowdfunding websites Givechak, an Israeli site, and JGive, a U.S. and Israeli site, the investigation found, with Mother's March raising funds through a partnership with Torat Lechima. Mother's March has raised the equivalent of roughly \$138,000 through these sites.

The group's comment about supposedly stopping the "war" appears to be a call for Israeli forces to accelerate their extermination campaign in Gaza and effectively wipe out the Palestine population by denying aid. This echoes statements by some of the most extreme members of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's administration, who have similarly called for a total blockade of aid and any supplies that support Palestinian life.

The group's claim that "hundreds" of trucks pass every day through the Kerem Abu Salem crossing is false. According to the UN, Israeli officials have allowed less than 100 trucks into Gaza on average each day in recent months, with only 59 trucks a day entering Gaza in June — far, far less than the 500 to 600 trucks needed each day to meet Palestinians' needs.

Tzav 9, which was sanctioned by the U.S. State Department last month, has raised \$85,000 through JGive. The State Department said the group is responsible for multiple acts of sabotage of humanitarian aid, including an attack in May in which Israeli settlers set two aid trucks bound for Gaza on fire in the occupied West Bank.

JGive said that donations to Tzav 9 were frozen before the sanctions and have not been delivered to the group, according to the AP and Shomrim report. The report points out that allowing tax incentives for supporting these groups is fundamentally incompatible with U.S. officials' claims that they wish to increase the amount of humanitarian aid entering Gaza.

"If you're on the one hand saying you're allowing aid in but then also facilitating the actions of groups that are blocking it, can you really say you're facilitating aid?" Tania Hary, executive director of Israeli nonprofit Gisha, told AP and Shomrim.

Meanwhile, Hary pointed out that Israeli officials are essentially endorsing these groups through their own efforts to block desperately-needed humanitarian aid: "They're getting signals from various places in the government that Gaza should be completely cut off."

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