Israeli military admits to firing on ambulances in Gaza

The Israeli army killed Palestinian Red Crescent and Civil Defense crews in cold blood during a humanitarian mission a few days ago northwest of Rafah.

Tel Aviv, March 29 (RHC)-- Israel's military has admitted it fired on ambulances in the Gaza Strip, with Hamas condemning it as a "war crime." The Israeli regime's military made the admission on Saturday,

saying it fired on ambulances after identifying them as "suspicious vehicles."

The incident took place last Sunday in the Tal al-Sultan neighborhood in the southern city of Rafah, close to the Egyptian border. Israeli troops launched an offensive in Rafah on March 20 after the regime resumed aerial bombardments of Gaza.

Israeli troops had "opened fire toward Hamas vehicles and eliminated several Hamas" fighters, the military said in a statement to AFP.

"A few minutes afterward, additional vehicles advanced suspiciously toward the troops... The troops responded by firing toward the suspicious vehicles, eliminating several Hamas and Islamic Jihad" fighters. It added that "after an initial inquiry, it was determined that some of the suspicious vehicles... were ambulances and fire trucks."

Hamas spokesman Basem Naim said Israel carried out "a deliberate and brutal massacre against Civil Defense and Palestinian Red Crescent teams in the city of Rafah."

"The targeted killing of rescue workers- who are protected under international humanitarian law- constitutes a flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions and a war crime," he said.

Tom Fletcher, head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said that since March 18, "Israeli airstrikes in densely populated areas have killed hundreds of children and other civilians".

"Patients killed in their hospital beds. Ambulances shot at. First responders killed," he said in a statement. "If the basic principles of humanitarian law still count, the international community must act while it can to uphold them."

Since March 18, the regime has launched strikes on Gaza, breaking the ceasefire and prisoner-captive exchange agreement that had lasted nearly two months.

Since dawn on Friday, Israel has intensified its air and artillery strikes on several areas across Gaza, including Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun in the north, and Gaza City, as well as Abasan al-Kabira, Bani Suheila and Rafah City in the south.

The latest casualties bring to 896 the number of people killed since Israel resumed the war on Gaza earlier this month. The renewed strikes also left 1,984 injured.

The regime has massacred over 50,200 Palestinians and injured at least 114,000 others since, according to the health ministry.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and NEWS AGENCIES]

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