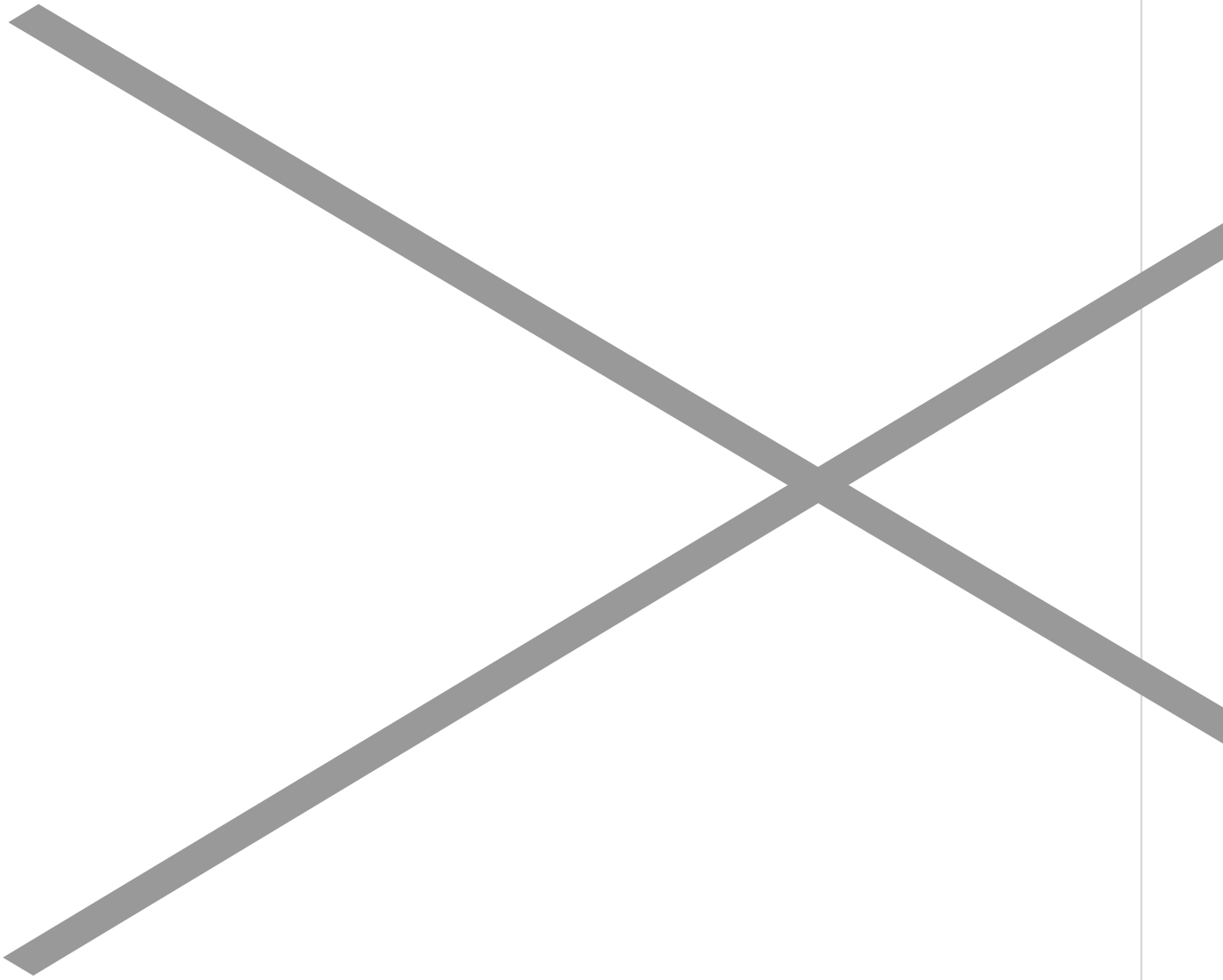


United Nations says 88 staff killed in Gaza, highest ever in single conflict

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United Nations, November 8 (RHC)-- United Nations Secretary General António Guterres said that 89 employees of the U.N. agency aiding Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, had been killed in Gaza in the month of war between Israel and Hamas.

That is more “than in any comparable period in the history of our organization,” he told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York, adding that many of the employees had been killed with members of their family. The United Nations employs large numbers of Palestinians in Gaza, where almost half the working-age population is unemployed.

On Sunday, the leaders of United Nations agencies and other humanitarian groups issued a joint statement calling for an immediate cease-fire, saying: “Enough is enough. This must stop now.”

In the statement, they expressed “shock and horror” at the loss of life and called for the immediate release of hostages taken during the Hamas attacks in Israel last month. They noted that “more than 100 attacks against health care” had been reported and that “scores of aid workers” had been killed since the attacks and Israel’s retaliatory airstrikes on Gaza.

Of the loss of U.N. staff members, Juliette Touma, a spokeswoman for UNRWA, said: “The number goes up every day. They are killed in the north, the middle and the south, men and women, some at home, some at displacement shelters, some bringing refugees to the shelters,” she added.

One staff member was killed as he waited in line for bread, she said, and another was killed at home with his wife and eight children. Most worked in the agency’s schools in Gaza, she said.

The World Health Organization said 16 health care workers had died while on duty in Gaza, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said its member organizations had lost seven staff members in the war.

The fatalities, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said, included three medical staff of Magen David Adom, Israel’s emergency medical service, who were killed as they tried to rescue people from the kibbutzim under attack by Hamas and take them to the hospital.

It also said it lost four paramedics working for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Gaza as they treated casualties from the bombardment and tried to bring the wounded to the hospital. “What happened in a couple of days is for us deeply worrying and shocking,” said Tommaso Della Longa, a spokesman for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. “It’s a reminder there is no respect for humanitarian teams in general.”

The humanitarian leaders, in their statement, condemned the deaths of some 1,400 Israelis and the continuing trauma for civilians exposed to rocket attacks. They also said the number of civilians killed in Gaza and the cutoff of essential supplies of food, water, medicine and fuel was “an outrage.”

The signatories included Martin Griffiths, the U.N.’s chief official for humanitarian and relief affairs, and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the World Health Organization.



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