

Details show Israel's airstrike on World Central Kitchen staff was deliberate

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On Monday night, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killed seven international aid workers from World Central Kitchen (WCK) in Gaza in an airstrike on their vehicle convoy as it was returning to their warehouse.

The attack used precision munitions directly targeting the roofs of the vehicles, which displayed large logos clearly identifying their occupants as humanitarian workers.

World Central Kitchen had informed the Israeli military of its travel plans, meaning that the Israeli military would have been fully aware of the vehicles it was attacking.

Herzi Halevi, the chief of staff of Israel's armed forces, claimed that the attack was a "grave mistake" and a "misidentification." While White House spokesman John Kirby declared that "there's no evidence" that the attack was "deliberate."

These claims are belied both by the direct circumstances of the attacks and by Israel's systematic targeting of food distribution workers as part of its systematic effort to starve the population of Gaza.

In a statement condemning the attack, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the attack brings the number of humanitarian workers killed in Gaza "to 196 – including more than 175 members of our own UN staff."

Over the past month, Israel has killed hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza at food distribution centers in so-called "flour massacres," including one in late February that killed at least 112 and injured more than 700.

Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, said in a statement on Tuesday, "Knowing how Israel operates, my assessment is that Israeli forces intentionally killed #WCK workers so that donors would pull out and civilians in Gaza could continue to

be starved quietly."

In its investigation of the killing, Al Jazeera found that the three vehicles transporting the aid workers were targeted one at a time.

After leaving the World Central Kitchen's warehouse, the first vehicle in the convoy was struck approximately one mile down the road. Al Jazeera reported that "the injured were transferred from the first targeted car to another armoured vehicle to expedite their transport."

Al Jazeera's investigation found that "the second vehicle was targeted approximately 800 metres (2,525 feet) away from where the first was hit. The third car was targeted about 1.6km (nearly a mile) away from the second car." Based on these facts, Al Jazeera's Sanad Verification Agency "found that the attacks were, in fact, intentional."

World Central Kitchen CEO Erin Gore said in a statement, "This is not only an attack against WCK, this is an attack on humanitarian organizations showing up in the most dire of situations where food is being used as a weapon of war. This is unforgivable."

The aid organization said the victims were from Australia, Poland, United Kingdom, a dual citizen of the US and Canada, and Palestine.

After World Central Kitchen released the names and photos of the aid workers later in the day on Tuesday, Gore added, "These are the heroes of World Central Kitchen. These 7 beautiful souls were killed by the IDF in a strike as they were returning from a full day's mission. Their smiles, laughter, and voices are forever embedded in our memories. And we have countless memories of them giving their best selves to the world. We are reeling from our loss. The world's loss."

In a statement Tuesday, US President Joe Biden attempted to verbally distance himself from the

massacre, saying, “I am outraged and heartbroken by the deaths of seven humanitarian workers from World Central Kitchen.”

But when asked whether the killing was a war crime, White House spokesman John Kirby categorically asserted that it was not and that Israel has not committed any violations of international law during the entire conflict.

“To date,” Kirby said, the US government “have not found any incidents where the Israelis have violated international humanitarian law.”

When asked by a shocked reporter whether the White House was really claiming that Israel has “never violated international humanitarian law ever in the past five to six months,” Kirby replied, “the State Department has looked at incidents in the past and has yet to determine that any of those incidents violate international humanitarian law.”

The latest massacre comes as Israel is moving ever closer to its planned assault on Rafah, where over 1 million displaced refugees are sheltering. The city, which has swelled into a massive tent camp, is being bombarded on a daily basis.

In a statement over the weekend, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention warned that Israel’s ongoing bombing of Rafah “could be the opening salvo to Israel’s promised ground invasion of the town, which is home to the critical crossing to Egypt.” The institute concluded, “This bombing is a genocidal act conducted by Israel against a trapped civilian population.”

It concluded, “There is no way to ensure that protection in urban combat with an army that has proved to be motivated by genocidal zeal.”

Over the past 48 hours, US officials effectively gave Israel a green light to proceed with its assault on Rafah. On Monday, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said that the scenario in which “Israel does nothing about the Hamas fighters that continue to exist in Rafah” is not an “acceptable alternative.”

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre added, “We also know that there are Hamas operatives in Rafah as well. But if they’re going to move forward with military operations, we have to have this conversation. We have to understand how they’re going to move forward.”

The damage that has been inflicted on the Gaza Strip with the full backing of the Biden administration is

beyond devastating. In a report published Tuesday, the United Nations and World Bank found that Israel caused \$18.5 billion worth of damage to infrastructure in Gaza in just the first month of the onslaught.

This figure is equivalent to 97 percent of the combined gross domestic product of all of the Palestinian territories in 2022. The report concluded, “An estimated 26 million tons of debris and rubble have been left in the wake of the destruction, an amount that is estimated to take years to remove.”

It noted that over a million people are without homes, and 75 percent of the population has been displaced.

A staggering 84 percent of health facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and virtually the whole sanitation system has collapsed. Almost the entire student population is out of school, as the education system has been shattered.

In a statement Tuesday, the Palestinian Ministry of Education said that 6,050 Palestinian students have been killed by Israel since October 7.



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