

Israeli military kills and bulldozes 15 Palestinian aid workers in drive to finish ethnic cleansing of Gaza

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Exposure of the barbarity of the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza reached a new level with the recovery of the bodies of 15 emergency and aid workers from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Palestinian Civil Defense and the United Nations from a grave in the sand south of the Gaza Strip over the weekend.

On Monday, Palestinians held funerals for the medics and emergency responders, who were hunted down and killed by Israeli troops and buried in a mass grave in a blatant violation of international law. The dead included eight PRCS workers, six members of Gaza's Civil Defense emergency unit, and a staffer from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians (UNRWA).

According to a report by the Associated Press, the dead bodies and ambulances of the aid workers were gathered, buried and then plowed over by Israeli military bulldozers. The AP report also said video footage released by the UN showed "workers from PRCS and Civil Defense, wearing masks and bright orange vests, digging through hills of dirt that appeared to have been piled up by Israeli bulldozers."

The AP report went on:

The footage shows them digging out multiple bodies wearing orange emergency vests. Some of the bodies are found piled on top of each other. At one point, they pull out a body in a Civil Defense vest out of the dirt, and it is revealed to be a torso with no legs. Several ambulances and a UN vehicle, all heavily damaged or torn apart, are also buried in the dirt.

Jonathan Whittall of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a video:

Their bodies were gathered and buried in this mass grave. We're digging them out in their uniforms, with their gloves on. They were here to save lives. It's absolute horror what has happened here.

Another OCHA spokesperson responded to questions from Reuters about how the burial site resembled a large mound of sand, which was "clearly created by a bulldozer or similar machinery rather than the impact of a blast."

The spokesperson said:

the available information indicates that the first team was killed by Israeli forces on March 23 and that other emergency and aid crews were struck one after another over several hours as they searched for their missing colleagues.

The Palestinian rescue teams had been missing since March 23, when they departed around noon to retrieve casualties after Israeli forces launched an offensive into the Tel al-Sultan district of the southern city of Rafah.

The Zionist military had demanded an evacuation of the area earlier that day, saying Hamas militants were operating there, while knowing full well that there was

not enough time for civilians to leave and avoid the Israeli onslaught. Alerts at the time said displaced Palestinians sheltering in the area had been hit, and a team that went to rescue them was “surrounded by Israeli troops.”

According to a UN statement on Sunday night, “The available information indicates that the first team was killed by Israeli forces on March 23.” Additional emergency teams that went to rescue the first team were “struck one after another over several hours,” the UN said.

The murderous campaign against aid workers took place as the Israeli forces attacked the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in Rafah, the southernmost city of Gaza. The sky over the area glowed red from Israeli shelling as tanks advanced from all directions, and warplanes rained down missiles without mercy. According to official Palestinian estimates, over 5,000 Palestinians were trapped beneath the air and ground assault.

Palestinian residents of Tel al-Sultan thought the worst was over after a ceasefire brought a glimmer of hope. Families returned to their homes and tried to salvage fragments of their lives from under the rubble.

But on Sunday, the thin peace proved to be a ruse when Israeli tanks stormed the neighborhood without warning. Drones circled above, issuing orders over loudspeakers for evacuation. Anyone who did not move to leave immediately was met with gunfire.

Tom Fletcher, UN under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, posted on X:

15 emergency & aid workers in Gaza—from @PalestineRCS, Palestinian Civil Defense, and UN—were found buried by their wrecked & well-marked vehicles. Our condolences to their families. They were killed by Israeli forces while trying to save lives. We demand answers & justice.

In a statement late on Sunday, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it was “appalled” at the deaths. The ICRC said:

Their bodies were identified today and have been recovered for dignified burial. These staff and volunteers were risking their own lives to provide support to others.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent said it was the deadliest attack on its aid workers in eight years, which goes back long before the plan to remove all Palestinians from Gaza began on October 7, 2023. Central to the Israeli strategy of killing or removing by force all Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, which has been endorsed by the fascist in the White House Donald Trump, is the murdering of hospital and aid workers.

According to the UN, the Zionist regime of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has killed more than 100 civil defense workers and more than 1,000 health workers since the Gaza genocide began 18 months ago.

As the WSWS has reported previously, the Israeli military is implementing a plan to fully occupy Gaza, impose starvation and then force the displacement of the Palestinian population to other lands.

This program is nothing new in a historical sense. It is a reprise of the systematic extermination of Europe’s Jews by Germany during World War II. At that time, the Nazis removed Jews from their neighborhoods and concentrated them into ghettos in preparation for their transport to death and extermination camps in Eastern Europe.

The Nazi restriction of food rations in the Warsaw Ghetto in occupied Poland, for example, resulted in the mass deaths of Jews. As the crisis of Hitler’s mad attempt to invade all of Europe deepened, the Nazis made the decision to move from “relocation” to “slow death” in the form of the extermination camps such as Dachau and Auschwitz-Birkenau.



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