

Chaos and repression on first day of US-backed Gaza “aid” operation

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The first day of operations by the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF)—a US- and Israeli-backed body established to control and restrict aid to Palestinians—unfolded in scenes of desperation, chaos and violence in southern Gaza on Tuesday.

Far from alleviating the humanitarian catastrophe wrought by months of the Israeli siege and bombardment, the GHF’s inaugural distribution in Rafah exposed the operation’s true character: a militarized, appalling spectacle that deepens Palestinian suffering and advances the campaign of the Trump administration and Israeli government to depopulate and occupy the enclave.

From early morning, thousands of Palestinians—many of them gaunt, barefoot and carrying children—converged on the GHF’s fenced-in distribution site in Rafah, desperate for the most basic staples after three months of near-total blockade. Al Jazeera described “heartbreaking chaos” as people scaled fences and surged through dense crowds, driven by starvation and the urgent need to feed their families.

One father told Al Jazeera:

We are suffering from starvation. We need to feed our children who are hungry. What else can we do? Fear does not compare to hunger.

Video footage showed long lines snaking through fenced corridors, with the situation rapidly deteriorating as the crowd’s size overwhelmed the site’s completely inadequate capacity. Eventually, the fences were torn down, and thousands stormed the compound, trampling barriers and earth mounds to reach piles of food boxes.

A witness told the BBC:

People climbed over the gates, clashed with one another, and seized all the [aid]. ... The situation was incredibly challenging ... ultimately, chaos ensued.

As the crowds breached the site, Israeli military helicopters circled overhead, and gunfire echoed in the area. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that its troops had fired “warning shots in the area outside the compound,” claiming that control was eventually restored.

Multiple witnesses and journalists reported hearing tank fire and gunshots, as people rushed the aid center, with some describing bullets fired into the air and water dispersed on the crowd. At least one video captured people running and ducking as gunfire rang out in the background.

The IDF insisted its personnel did not target the crowd, but the real purpose of the gunfire was unmistakable: to further intimidate and control a starving population seeking relief. One man told BBC Arabic:

They permitted only 50 individuals to enter at a time. People are exhausted—willing to risk anything, even their lives, just to find food and nourish their children.

The GHF operation is not a humanitarian relief effort. It is a US-orchestrated program designed to bypass the United Nations and Palestinian authorities. The GHF employs armed American security contractors at its sites, a fact confirmed by both the BBC and Al Jazeera.

The private US contractors, working alongside Israeli forces, were tasked with enforcing order but withdrew

from the site as the situation escalated out of control, leaving a handful of Palestinian workers to form a human barrier around the aid piles.

The *New York Times* reported that the GHF was born from “private meetings of like-minded officials, military personnel, and businesspeople with strong ties to the Israeli government,” highlighting the duplicitous and unaccountable nature of the operation. The US contractors’ presence underscores the fact that the purpose of the GHF is to assert control over the movement of the Palestinian population through the control of resources.

Additional proof of this fact is that the actual amount of aid distributed was entirely inadequate. The GHF claimed to have handed out around 8,000 food boxes—each containing flour, pasta, a few cans of beans, tea and biscuits—purportedly enough for “462,000 meals.” These rations were “insufficient to sustain families,” according to an Al Jazeera’s correspondent, who also noted, “This is definitely inadequate, and it does not justify all the humiliation that Palestinians endure to receive these food parcels.”

The BBC, citing UN and aid agencies, emphasized that the GHF’s approach “militarizes aid” and sets a “troubling precedent,” excluding those most in need and conditioning relief on compliance with Israeli and US dictates. The UN’s spokesperson described the images from Rafah as “heartbreaking,” reiterating that numerous aid organizations have a plan to deliver aid but have been denied access to Gaza.

The GHF’s launch came after an 11-week Israeli blockade that has driven Gaza to the brink of famine, with half a million people facing imminent starvation. Since March 2, Israel barred all humanitarian and commercial goods from entering Gaza, resuming military operations and only “loosening” the blockade to allow a minimal trickle of supplies.

Currently, hundreds of truckloads of UN aid remain stranded at the border, as Israeli authorities restrict access and create impossible conditions for distribution. For months, the US and Israel have denied entry to international aid organizations, including the UN, World Food Program, and Red Crescent, while unleashing a relentless military assault that has targeted hospitals, schools and makeshift camps, where Palestinians have been forced to live in tents. The GHF’s operation is a continuation and deepening of the policy of siege, displacement and collective punishment.

The true purpose of the GHF is to facilitate Israel’s plan

to seize two-thirds of Gaza, drive the population into “humanitarian zones” in the south, and prepare for their eventual expulsion. As the *Washington Post* reported on May 24, the GHF is “part of a broader strategy to create controlled enclaves for Palestinians in southern Gaza, where aid can be tightly monitored and movement strictly regulated”—essentially a system of open-air concentration camps.

This policy is comparable to the Nazi removal of Jews from European cities and their transfer to forced labor and extermination camps during the darkest chapters of twentieth century history. Palestinians are being herded into overcrowded, fenced zones, cut off from their homes and livelihoods, subjected to biometric surveillance and military checkpoints, and denied the right to return.

The Israeli government, under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has reportedly dubbed the campaign “Operation Gideon’s Chariots” and called it the “concluding moves,” as Israeli forces prepare to annex the north and forcibly remove the population.

The GHF’s first day of operations has been universally condemned by humanitarian organizations, the United Nations and Palestinian authorities. The UN has refused to cooperate, warning that the GHF’s approach “violates humanitarian principles and seems to weaponize aid.”

Aid agencies have denounced the exclusion of established relief networks, the use of armed contractors, and the conditioning of aid on political and military objectives. The scenes in Rafah are a grim warning of what is to come next. The GHF is not a lifeline but a tool of occupation and ethnic cleansing. Its “humanitarian zones” are the prelude to mass expulsion, with reports circulating that the Trump administration is pressuring neighboring states to accept deported Palestinians, including to war-torn countries like Syria and Libya.

The events of May 27 in Rafah have exposed the GHF as a militarized distribution of food and other vital necessities of life that is central to the US-Israeli campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing of Gaza.



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