

Israeli missile strike on aid convoy kills 4 Palestinians near Rafah

Kevin Reed
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The Israeli military fired a missile into the lead vehicle of an aid convoy in southern Gaza on Friday, killing four Palestinians.

The convoy was organized by the Washington, DC-based nonprofit American Near East Refugee Aid (Anera) and was delivering medical supplies and fuel to a hospital in Rafah, the besieged southern Gaza city on the border with Egypt.

A press release from Anera said, “An Israeli airstrike yesterday killed four Palestinians at the front of an Anera aid convoy carrying food and fuel to the Emirati Red Crescent Hospital.” The statement also said the transport plan had been “coordinated and cleared” with the Israeli military, including the presence of “unarmed security guards” in the convoy.

In a report in the *Washington Post*, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claimed that the missile strike was carried out “after identifying weapons aboard one of the trucks, adding that the four Palestinians were armed and hadn’t been included in the coordinated travel plan.”

The Anera statement said that initial reports from Move One, the transport company contracted to move the food, fuel and medical supplies, showed that “four community members with experience in previous missions and engagement in community security with Move One stepped forward and took control of the leading vehicle, citing concern that the route was unsafe and at risk of being looted.”

Anera said the four Palestinians had not been vetted or coordinated in advance. However, contrary to the assertions of the IDF, initial reports after the missile strike at the scene show that no weapons were present. “The four individuals were not perceived by the convoy as a hostile threat. The Israeli airstrike was carried out without any prior warning or communication.”

Anera said that none of its staff members were

injured, and the convoy was able to continue on its way and complete the successful delivery of aid to the hospital in Rafah.

The missile strike in southern Gaza took place two days after a United Nations World Food Program (WFP) vehicle was fired upon as it approached an IDF checkpoint. In a similar setup by the IDF, the two armored vehicles had received “multiple clearances by Israeli authorities to approach” the Wadi Gaza bridge checkpoint, yet at least 10 bullets struck one of its clearly marked vehicles. No one was injured.

In March, an Anera logistics coordinator in Gaza, Mousa Shawwa, was killed by an Israeli airstrike while he was in a shelter. The relief worker’s 6-year-old son, Karim, died 10 days later from injuries suffered during the attack. In April, three Israeli air strikes hit an aid convoy traveling through Gaza, killing seven World Central Kitchen workers.

According to the UN, more than 280 humanitarian workers have been killed by Israel during the onslaught on Gaza that began in October. The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said on Friday that the number of planned missions in August that had been denied by Israel had doubled since July.

The IDF strategy of approving aid workers to bring assistance to Palestinians and then targeting their vehicles with precision missile strikes is of a piece with the genocidal onslaught on the entire population in Gaza. Every criminal act carried out by Israel in Gaza has been carried out with lies about the presence of terrorists.

Terrorizing aid workers providing desperately needed assistance amidst the catastrophic conditions in Gaza is part of the system of forced evacuation and ethnic cleansing pursued by the Zionist state with the support and approval of its imperialist partners.

Palestinian families have been forced to relocate multiple times over the past ten months to so-called “safe zones” which now comprise approximately ten percent of the total land area of Gaza. Palestinians have been fired upon and murdered in the streets after leaving their homes or blown to bits with US-made 2,000 lb. bombs before they have time to evacuate.

Meanwhile, the war to uproot and kill Palestinians has been expanded by Israel from Gaza to the West Bank. The IDF reported Friday that Israeli forces have killed 20 people in the West Bank, claiming they were “terrorists,” in airstrikes and “exchanges of fire” since an incursion began Tuesday in the West Bank locations of Jenin, Tulkarm and the al-Fara’a refugee camp.

In what is described as the largest actions in the West Bank since the siege of Gaza began in October, hundreds of Israeli troops have moved into the areas, sometimes with air cover. The Israeli government claims the attacks are needed “to root out militant cells and destroy their infrastructure and weapons,” according to the *Washington Post*.

The Post report continued, “Thousands of civilians have been affected, with families trapped in battle-shaken neighborhoods, often without water, electricity or internet,” and Israeli combat bulldozers have “plowed many of the area’s streets to rubble.”



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