

Israel kills seven humanitarians in three 'targeted' air strikes in Gaza

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UK, Poland and Australia ask Israel to 'explain' how it killed World Central Kitchen workers as the military claims responsibility

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Australian citizen Lalzawmi "Zomi" Frankcom, 44, (Lef) in a social media video on 25 March in Deir el-Balah. World Central Kitchen has provided more than 37 million meals to displaced people in Gaza since 7 October. (X/WCK)

Australia, Poland, the [UK](#) and the [US](#) are among several countries calling on Israel to urgently explain the circumstances of [Israeli](#) air strikes that [killed](#) seven international aid workers in central Gaza on Monday.

[World Central Kitchen \(WCK\)](#) said that its workers were travelling in a "deconflicted zone" when two armoured cars branded with its logo were targeted by Israeli air strikes in Deir al-Balah.

The organisation said the strikes took place despite coordination with the Israeli military about its movements. It occurred just hours after the WCK team unloaded a new shipment of 100 tonnes of food aid into Gaza.

While the Israeli statements referred to just one air strike, a [report](#) by Haaretz on Tuesday citing defence sources stated that an Israeli drone fired three missiles at the WCK convoy.

One of the cars was [attacked](#), and then some of the passengers in the targeted car switched to the other two vehicles, before another missile hit.

The passengers in the third car then attempted to get those who had survived the second strike out of danger - before the Israeli drone operators targeted them with a third missile strike, according to the report. All seven volunteers were killed following the third strike.

WCK said the aid workers were from several countries, including the UK, Poland, Australia, as well as two dual [Palestinian](#) nationals (American and Canadian).

The organisation said it was "immediately" pausing operations in the region.

Israel's military released a statement confirming that its air strike in Gaza killed seven WCK workers. It added that Israel's top military general would review the findings of a preliminary inquiry.

A man displays British, Polish and Australian passports next to the bodies of World Central Kitchen workers at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, 1 April 2024 (AFP)

"The tragic incident last night occurred as a result of an IDF strike and we are investigating the circumstances," a military statement on Tuesday said.

Meanwhile, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted that his military had carried out an "unintended strike" on "innocent people in the Gaza Strip."

He added that officials are looking into the incident and would "do everything for this not to happen again."

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese confirmed the death of citizen Lalzawmi "Zomi" Frankcom, 44, and said his government had called on Israel to launch an investigation.

"This is a human tragedy that should never have occurred, that is completely unacceptable and Australia will seek full and proper accountability," Albanese told a press conference on Tuesday.

Poland also demanded answers, after Polish aid volunteer Damian Sobol was identified as one of those killed.

"I personally asked the Israeli ambassador @YacovLivne for urgent explanations," Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"He assured me that Poland would soon receive the results of the investigation into this tragedy. I join in my condolences to the family of our brave volunteer and all civilian victims in the Gaza Strip."

UK Foreign Minister David Cameron called on Israel to immediately explain what happened.

"British Nationals are reported to have been killed, we are urgently working to verify this information and will provide full support to their families," Cameron said on X.

"It is essential that humanitarian workers are protected and able to carry out their work. We have called on Israel to immediately investigate and provide a full, transparent explanation of what happened."

A US national security spokesperson said that Washington was "heartbroken and deeply troubled" by the air strike.

"Humanitarian aid workers must be protected as they deliver aid that is desperately needed, and we urge Israel to swiftly investigate what happened," spokesperson Adrienne Watson wrote on X.

'Brutal attack'

Earlier on Tuesday, Spanish-American celebrity chef Jose Andres, the founder of WCK, condemned Israel over the killings, and called on its government to "stop killing civilians and aid workers, and stop using food as a weapon".

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who was visiting a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan's Amman, called on Israel to clarify the circumstances of the killings.

"I hope and demand that the Israeli government clarifies as soon as possible the circumstances of this brutal attack that has taken the lives of seven aid workers who were doing nothing more than

helping,” Sanchez said.

“It is urgent that Israel allow access to humanitarian aid in Gaza, as demanded by various international bodies, including the International Court of Justice.”

WCK has been heavily involved in the delivery of aid to Gaza via a new maritime route from Cyprus, which delivered its second consignment of aid to the enclave last month.

The organisation is currently finishing building a jetty made from the rubble of bombed buildings to ease Gaza’s food deprivation.

The president of Cyprus, from where the shipments are taking off, called for an urgent probe and said that the maritime aid corridor would continue.

“We need to double down on efforts to get aid to Gaza,” Nikos Christodoulides said.

Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said the incident would be investigated in the “Fact Finding and Assessment Mechanism”, which he described as an “independent, professional, and expert body”.

He also said he had expressed condolences to Andres.

“We also express sincere sorrow to our allied nations who have been doing and continue to do so much to assist those in need,” Hagari said.

The Gaza-based government media office condemned the attack as “another Israeli massacre”.

In a press conference from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, the general director of the media office Ismail Thawabta said: “The brutal raid targeted armoured vehicles that were clearly marked.”

‘Famine is setting in’

Since Israel declared war on Gaza after the 7 October attacks, WCK has shipped more than 37 million meals to the territory.

For months, the UN and other humanitarian groups have been warning of famine in northern Gaza.

In late March, 70 percent of the population was suffering from catastrophic levels of hunger, according to a recent UN-backed report.

Monday’s assault comes after a series of attacks on convoys and aid seekers, including the shelling of a United Nations aid truck carrying food supplies in February.

At least 400 Palestinians seeking aid have been killed by Israeli shelling, according to Palestinian health officials.

Additionally, Israeli strikes on aid missions have killed several Palestinian policemen working to secure food deliveries.

The [International Court of Justice](#) ordered Israel last week, in a legally binding decision, to “ensure, without delay” that humanitarian aid is provided to Gaza, encompassing essentials such as food, water, electricity, and other fundamental necessities.

The additional provisional measures ordered by the UN’s top court came amid several deaths by

starvation and warnings by UN and international NGOs of imminent “man-made” [famine](#) in the Gaza Strip due to Israel’s prevention of the entry of aid through land crossings.

The court added that Palestinians in Gaza are not only facing a risk of famine, “but that famine is setting in”.

Rayhan Uddin

P.S.

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