Gaza aid group says Hamas killed at least 8 local staffers, possibly abducted others

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By [Jacob Magid](https://www.timesofisrael.com/writers/jacob-magid/) and [Lazar Berman](https://www.timesofisrael.com/writers/lazar-berman/)

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The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation said Thursday that eight of its “local team members and volunteers” had been killed when Hamas gunmen attacked a bus transporting its Gazan staffers, updating the death toll of five it had given the previous day. Others were injured, the GHF said, and it expressed fear that some team members had been taken hostage.

The bus was ferrying 20 staffers to one of the GHF’s aid distribution sites west of  Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip at around 10 p.m. on Wednesday when it came under attack, the GHF said on Thursday.

The statement noted that the GHF was still working to gather the facts on what unfolded, and a spokesperson did not immediately provide corroborating evidence.

Hamas-linked social media [accounts](https://t.me/amsak2024/4746) published a statement on what they said was the terror group’s attack on members of the [Israel-backed](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-confirms-arming-gazan-clans-whats-wrong-with-that/) Abu Shabab clan in which five people were killed and 12 more were injured.

It was not immediately possible to verify the identities of those killed. However, a Facebook page run by the Abu Shabab clan issued a [statement](https://www.facebook.com/Popularforces2024/posts/pfbid0HXEzWRgafQeQ9khvf3rA5YHVEiQhtRfsSbvwxksCoNd8zT3aqYxKWm21UZQtA269l) denying that its members were targeted by Hamas.

“This attack did not happen in a vacuum. For days, Hamas has openly [threatened](https://www.timesofisrael.com/gaza-aid-group-says-hamas-threats-to-staff-kept-distribution-hubs-closed-on-saturday/) our team, our aid workers, and the civilians who receive aid from us. These threats were met with silence,” GHF said, adding that the attack will not deter the organization’s efforts to provide aid to Palestinians in Gaza.

Despite the violence, GHF decided to open three distribution sites on Thursday morning.

According to its own figures, the GHF delivered the most meals it has in a single day today.

It opened three sites, two in southern Gaza’s Tel Sultan and one at Wadi Gaza in the central Strip. The organization distributed over 45,000 boxes of food aid, with more than half of those distributed at its original aid site in Rafah, near the shore along the Gaza-Egypt border.

The US- and Israeli-backed foundation says each box contains meals for 5.5 people for 3.5 days.

“We carefully considered closing our sites today given the heightened security risks and safety concerns, but we decided that the best response to Hamas’ cowardly murderers was to keep delivering food for the people of Gaza who are counting on us,” said GHF interim executive director John Acree on Thursday. “We will not be deterred from our mission towards providing food security for the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Hamas has pushed for the resumption of aid distribution through UN-backed mechanisms, which Israel and the US say allowed the terror group to divert much of the aid. The UN has denied this, while arguing that the GHF model for aid distribution endangers Palestinians, by forcing them to walk long distances across IDF lines in order to pick up boxes of food.

Red Cross and Hamas-linked health officials have reported near-daily fatal shooting incidents involving Palestinians trekking to aid sites since GHF’s launch on May 26. The IDF has acknowledged on at least eight occasions that it fired what it said were warning shots against those who strayed off the approved access routes.

GHF said Wednesday it has distributed roughly 271,200 boxes of aid to date, though these are largely filled with dry food products that need to be prepared elsewhere.

An average of 65 aid trucks have entered Gaza each day since Israel partially lifted its blockade on May 19, but the World Food Program, a UN agency, says roughly 300 trucks a day are needed to serve Gaza’s population, which IDF officials acknowledged was on the brink of starvation before Israel resumed allowing aid in last month after a 78-day blockade.

The UN and other humanitarian organizations have argued that neutralizing the threat of looting requires flooding Gaza with as much aid as possible so demand and costs go down, rather than rationing assistance as Israel has done over the past month.

Just before 3 a.m. Thursday local time, GHF issued an additional statement updating Gazans that it had just finished distributing boxes of food at its central Gaza site, even though the IDF has repeatedly warned Palestinians not to approach aid sites before 6 a.m.

The GHF announcement was made on its Arabic Facebook page, which it uses to communicate with Palestinians about operating hours at the distribution sites.

A GHF spokesperson did not explain why the Israeli- and US-backed organization appeared to be distributing aid overnight, when the IDF has cautioned Palestinians against walking to the sites. It has done so on several other occasions over the past two and a half weeks of operation.

Hours earlier, footage of a GHF aid site being completely overrun by Gazans upon opening on Tuesday had gone viral on social media. The scene highlighted the chaos that has plagued GHF aid distribution sites since their launch.