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U.S. Envoy Promises New Gaza Aid Plan Following Deadly Incidents at Food Distribution Sites

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A U.S. envoy representing former President Donald Trump has announced plans to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, following a visit to a U.S.-backed food distribution centre in Rafah. Steve Witkoff spent over five hours in Gaza on Friday, meeting staff at the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) amid growing concern over aid-related casualties.

The United Nations (UN) human rights office reports that 1,373 Palestinians have been killed since 27 May while seeking aid—859 near GHF centres and 514 along UN and agency routes. Most deaths are attributed to the Israeli military.

Witkoff stated the visit aimed to help Trump better understand the humanitarian situation and develop a plan to deliver food and medical supplies. Trump later told Axios: “We want to get people fed. It is something that should have happened a long time ago.”

While the specifics of the aid plan remain unclear, it is uncertain whether it will expand GHF operations or introduce a new distribution mechanism. GHF was created as an alternative to the UN-led system, which struggled during Israel’s partial blockade.

During Witkoff’s visit, GHF announced it had delivered its 100-millionth meal. U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee also attended. However, the effort has been marred by violence. Gaza’s civil defence agency said 22 people were killed by Israeli strikes on Friday alone, including eight queuing for food.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report accusing Israeli forces of using starvation as a weapon of war and firing on civilians collecting aid. “They are now gunning them down almost every day,” said Belkis Wille, HRW’s associate crisis and conflict director.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) responded that troops near aid sites aim to ensure orderly distribution while limiting friction with civilians. The IDF also blamed Hamas for disrupting aid efforts and confirmed an internal review of reported deaths.

Witkoff also met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who reiterated his objective to dismantle Hamas and recover hostages. Germany’s Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl separately called the Gaza crisis “beyond imagination” and urged improved aid access.

The BBC reported that more than 160 children have been shot during the war, including 95 struck in the head or chest. The IDF stated that intentional harm to civilians, especially children, is prohibited under international law.

The conflict began on 7 October 2023, when Hamas militants killed 1,219 people and took 251 hostages in southern Israel. In response, Israel's military campaign has killed at least 60,249 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry. Forty-nine hostages remain in Gaza, with 27 declared dead by the IDF.

Hamas released a video on Friday showing Israeli hostage Evyatar David appearing weak in a narrow tunnel, underscoring the ongoing humanitarian toll.