

Human Rights Watch Criticizes U.S.-Backed Gaza Aid Centers Amid Civilian Casualties

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Human Rights Watch (HRW) has issued a strong condemnation of the current aid distribution system in Gaza, describing it as dangerously flawed and responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Palestinian civilians. The organization specifically criticized the involvement of Israeli forces and U.S.-supported contractors operating outside these aid centers, warning that the ongoing setup has turned humanitarian efforts into lethal events.

The report centers around four aid distribution sites inside Gaza, operated by the *Gaza Humanitarian Foundation* (GHF), a private relief effort established in late May. The foundation is backed by the United States and Israel and staffed by U.S. military contractors and the Israeli military. Its operations have effectively replaced the long-established United Nations-led humanitarian framework during a period of heightened conflict and blockade.

HRW's Associate Crisis and Conflict Director, Belkis Wille, stated, "U.S.-backed Israeli forces and private contractors have put in place a flawed, militarized aid distribution system that has turned aid distributions into regular bloodbaths." According to reports from Gaza-based civil defense agencies, journalists, and eyewitnesses, Israeli troops have regularly opened fire on Palestinian civilians approaching the aid centers in search of food.

Between May 27 and July 31, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded at least 859 Palestinian deaths linked to the GHF aid distribution sites. Most of these fatalities were attributed to Israeli military fire during aid-seeking events. Wille further stated, "Israeli forces are not only deliberately starving Palestinian civilians, but they are now gunning them down almost every day as they desperately seek food for their families."

In addition to the casualties, international observers have expressed concern over the broader humanitarian conditions. A recent United Nations expert report indicated that famine is now actively unfolding in Gaza as a result of nearly 22 months of continuous military action and blockade. The same report warned that the conditions on the ground have reached what it calls a "worst-case scenario."

The introduction of the GHF's distribution network, despite its stated goals of improving efficiency, has sidelined the traditional UN system and has drawn increased scrutiny from humanitarian organizations. While U.S. officials have defended their support for alternative aid mechanisms in response to logistical and political challenges, the mounting civilian toll has sparked renewed calls for accountability and adherence to international humanitarian law.

Human Rights Watch has urged both the U.S. and Israeli governments to reconsider their approach and ensure that humanitarian aid does not come at the cost of civilian lives. As pressure builds internationally, observers continue to monitor whether changes to the distribution model will be made in response to the criticism and documented consequences on the ground.

