

At 5:20 a.m. on March 23

Massacre of Red Crescent and Civil Defense paramedics



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At dawn on March 23, 2025, at 5:20 a.m., a joint team of Palestinian Red Crescent, Civil Defense, and a UN agency responded to distress calls from wounded Palestinians trapped in the area.

They set out with pure humanitarian intentions, carrying only bandages and sincere hearts. Unbeknownst to them, they were the next target of the Israeli occupation army.

What began as a rescue mission ended in a bloody massacre. Shortly after the team's departure, contact with the team was lost, and hours later, the occupation forces declared the area a closed military zone. A convoy of Palestinian Red Crescent ambulances, a UN vehicle, and a fire truck from the Gaza Civil Defense came under fire in the Tel al-Sultan area. Israel initially claimed its forces opened fire because the convoy of vehicles approached «suspiciously» in the dark, without headlights or lights on, and because the vehicles' movements had not been coordinated or agreed upon in advance with the military.

However, the Israeli narrative was debunked by a video taken by paramedic Rifaat Radwan, who was documenting the details of the mission on his mobile phone, unaware that he was also documenting the heinous crime that shocked the world. These were the final moments of the lives of a group of Palestinian paramedics who were killed in cold blood by Israeli occupation soldiers.



The video appears to have been filmed from inside the car they were traveling in. Ahead of them, a convoy of clearly marked ambulances and fire engines with headlights on travel south on the road leading to Rafah in the early morning. The convoy stopped when it saw a car swerving onto the side of the road.



After the two rescue workers, wearing their uniformed vests, emerged from the ambulances, gunfire erupted, lasting for five minutes.

According to a spokesperson for the Palestinian Red Crescent, the body of the nurse whose camera had captured the incident was later found, shot in the head.

The video showed that the ambulances and fire trucks carrying the rescue workers were clearly marked and their emergency lights were on when the IDF soldiers opened fire on them.

The bodies were found on Sunday in a hole in the sand next to the destroyed vehicles. Participants in the search for the bodies said that some of the dead had their hands or feet bound.

Following international pressure, the IDF said that an official investigation had been opened into the incident. On April 5, the IDF admitted to making mistakes in the killing of 15 emergency responders in southern Gaza on March 23, 2025, saying that the army's previous account of the incident was «inaccurate.»



According to the testimony of the sole survivor, Munther Abed, a 27-year-old Red Crescent volunteer who was in the convoy of relief vehicles, the soldiers fired at the ambulances and relief vehicles one by one. According to Abed, after the shooting, the soldiers used a bulldozer to bury the destroyed vehicles.



Abed said, «I heard my friends taking their last breaths. Everything suddenly went silent. The ambulance stopped and the lights dimmed.» Upon opening the door, he saw soldiers with green laser lights and night-vision goggles.

The soldiers dragged him outside, face down, trying to prevent him from seeing what was happening around him. They stripped him of his clothes and handcuffed his hands behind his back. «They threw me on the ground, and the interrogation began. I was severely tortured, beaten, insulted, and threatened with death and suffocation. One of the soldiers pressed his rifle against my neck.» Abed recalled, and another soldier placed a knife on his left palm.



At sunrise, he said, he was able to see his surroundings more clearly. «The area was completely surrounded. Ambulances and a Civil Defense vehicle arrived. Then they buried it and sealed the hole.»



According to a statement from the Red Crescent and Civil Defense, the Red Crescent workers killed were Mustafa Khafaja, Ezz El-Din Shaath, Saleh Muammar, Refaat Radwan, Muhammad Bahloul, Ashraf Abu Labda, Muhammad Al-Hila, and Raed Al-Sharif.

The Civil Defense workers killed were: Youssef Khalifa, Fouad Al-Jamal, Zuhair Al-Farra, Anwar Al-Attar, Samir Al-Bahabhasa, and Ibrahim Al-Maghari. According to the statement, the UNRWA worker killed was Kamal Muhammad Shahtout, a teacher from the Al-Shaboura neighborhood in Rafah.



On the first day of Eid Al-Fitr, 15 bodies were found, including 8 Red Crescent paramedics, 5 Civil Defense workers, and one UNRWA employee.



The Israeli occupation forces mutilated the bodies of the victims by dragging them and burying them in a hole after mutilating them, attempting to bury their heinous act and obscure the truth.



#لست_هدفاً

One paramedic was found bound, another was stripped of his clothes, and a third was headless. Their bodies were riddled with bullets, with at least ten bullets piercing his body.

The occupation forces did not stop at killing them, but rather dragged them from their vehicles, which bore the markings of the Red Crescent and Civil Defense, and buried them in a two-meter-deep hole, out of sight, in an attempt to conceal the crime.

This crime is one of the most heinous crimes that could occur in the modern era. Targeting humanitarian and medical personnel with such brutality is, in short, a violation of all international laws.

Rafat Radwan



RAFAT RADWAN

24 YEARS' OLD

**A WELL KNOWN KIND PERSON, WHO
USUALLY SEEKS ELDERLY PEOPLE'S PRAYERS**

The 24-year-old volunteered with the Red Crescent in Gaza. He joined the Red Crescent Society in 2022 with the aim of helping the wounded and injured. According to testimonies from the injured in Gaza, he traveled from north to south of the Gaza Strip to serve the injured, even transporting them to Egypt for treatment through the Rafah crossing. Rafat was injured, and in his final moments, he repeatedly prayed to God to forgive him and asked his mother for forgiveness for choosing the ambulance route that put him in harm's way. His prayers stopped after his life stopped.

The 24-year-old was a gentle soul. According to his friends, «He made sure to help any elderly woman he encountered.»

Yousef Rasem Khalifa Abu Osama

Yousef Rasem Khalifa: A 41-year-old paramedic with the Civil Defense, he joined the Civil Defense in 2009. He is married and has 6 daughters, the youngest of whom is 3 and a half years old.

Palestine Red Crescent officer Yousef Khalifa disappeared along with 14 of his fellow Red Crescent and Civil Defense personnel while on their way to provide relief to the residents of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, under heavy Israeli bombardment. Yousef Khalifa had prepared to celebrate Eid al-Fitr with his daughters, after a long period of suffering under the war.

His wife says: «On Friday, March 21, my daughter, Lynn, said to her father, «Dad, I have two bad news.» He asked her, «What's the matter?» She replied, «Tomorrow your vacation is canceled, and you're at work.» She added, «That means it's the first day of Eid. You'll be at work. Our Eid isn't a good one, Dad.»» Yousef responded, laughing, «This is my duty, my daughter. God willing, I'll come to see you on the first day of Eid while I'm at work.»

Neither she nor we knew, as his wife says, that those were his last words and his last promise to return.

Yousef then went to work on Saturday morning, and on Sunday, contact with the entire team was lost, increasing the family's anxiety. In the days that followed, his six daughters eagerly awaited his return, imagining that this holiday would be the holiday of reunion. But those were days filled with pain and anticipation, until evening came, and Yousef arrived. He came with a shroud, bringing the occupation to a painful end for a father who sacrificed his life to help others. His only crime was that he was a human being whose mission was to provide aid and assistance in a time of war.

The enemy's goal was to rob the Palestinian family of joy, turning every holiday into a memory filled with sadness and loss.





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