

Israel Pays a Political Price for Killing Aid Workers - When They're Not Palestinians

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The attack that killed seven volunteers from World Central Kitchen is Israel's latest assault on the humanitarian aid system in Gaza. This time most of the dead are Westerners, so Israel will have a hard time playing the strike down

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Somewhere in the Israel Defense Forces' chain of command, a decision was made to attack an international aid convoy based on a suspicion that at some point an armed man had traveled in that convoy. In the attack, missiles fired from an air force drone killed seven aid workers from the group World Central Kitchen.

It's hard to overstate the gravity of the decision to open fire and the headache the drone operators have caused the IDF and Israel's PR efforts. This headache wouldn't have happened if the seven dead had been Palestinians, not Westerners, as six of them were.

After all, Israel has repeatedly claimed that [Hamas](#) hides behind civilians, so if the victims are Palestinians, it can say Hamas was responsible. Normally, [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) wouldn't have rushed to express regret at the "tragic case of our forces unintentionally hitting innocent people in [the Gaza Strip](#)."

Israel's PR efforts can't justify the attack or obscure the repercussions – not only because of the identity of the people killed, but also because of [World Central Kitchen](#)'s importance in the process Israel has been advancing for months: hindering the work of [UNRWA](#) to the point of eradicating the refugee agency. And this is happening as malnutrition and starvation ravage Gaza – especially in the north – and as [the International Court of Justice](#)

expects Israel to ensure Gazans access to humanitarian aid.

World Central Kitchen has been the main player getting aid into northern Gaza by sea. This is the route the United States has promoted for the north since Israel rejected requests from the aid groups to open the short, fast and inexpensive land route through the northern border crossings, sparing the long and dangerous trip from the [Rafah](#) and Kerem Shalom crossings in the south.

World Central Kitchen's first, experimental shipment of aid by sea, funded by the United Arab Emirates, arrived in Gaza at the beginning of March. The second shipment, also funded by the Emirates, arrived near the Gaza City shore only this past Monday. But of the 400 tons of food and equipment for 1 million meals, only 100 tons were unloaded from the ships. Now, because of the attack and the organization's decision to suspend its operations in Gaza, the ships are returning full to Cyprus.

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Featured image: People inspect the site where World Central Kitchen workers were killed in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on Tuesday, April 2, 2024. Photo: Abdel Kareem Hana/Associated Press

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