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Gaza Operation



Evacuating the wounded in Gaza Photo: AFP



Qassam rocket cell in Gaza Photo: AP



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Palestinians: IDF chopper attacked rescue workers

Ambulance driver Khaled Abu Saada tells Ynet that during IDF operation in Beit Lahiya army helicopter launched missile at rescue workers as they were evacuating dead, wounded. 'I do not know for certain whether the missile was meant to kill us or warn us to keep away – but it was definitely aimed in our direction,' he says

Ali Waked

Palestinian ambulance driver Khaled Abu Saada told Ynet that during the IDF [operation](#) in Beit Lahiya the army launched a missile at rescue workers as they were evacuating the dead and wounded.

"I have no doubt that one missile was aimed at us," he said. "I do not know for certain whether it was meant to kill us or warn us to keep away – but it was definitely aimed in our direction."

Four Islamic Jihad members were killed and eight other Palestinians were wounded in the first IDF infiltration into the heart of Gaza since last summer's disengagement. According to the Palestinians, some innocent civilians were also among the casualties.



Gaza mayhem following IDF attack (Photo: AFP)

Abu Saada said that a few minutes before midnight the hospital in Gaza received word of an incident with casualties near the American school in Beit Lahiya.

"We arrived at the scene, three Red Crescent and hospital

ambulances, and as we neared the area of confrontation we noticed an IDF Apache chopper hovering above a Peugeot jeep. We were not sure if we should come closer because of the chopper, but people were yelling at us, "there are dead and wounded inside." We tried to get closer to the car, but the Apache made sounds as if it was about to open fire. We left the scene."

Abu Saada said that "despite our fears, we decided to carry out our duty and enter the area. We began to search for casualties; we found one body and then another a few meters away. As we were moving the bodies to the ambulance we heard the Apache, and then a missile was launched in our direction. It landed a few dozen meters from us, and we didn't know what to do. We threw ourselves aside to avoid it, and when we recovered we saw that a number of rescue workers were injured. Two of our colleagues were seriously wounded and later required surgery. Two journalists nearby were also hurt and required surgery.

'This is not new'

Upon arriving at the hospital with those killed and injured, the paramedics were told of another IDF attack on a terror cell in the area.

"We found another body of a man who apparently approached the car that was targeted," Abu Saada said. "One of those we evacuated had a bullet in his head, not shrapnel, and this proves that he was shot by one of the IDF soldiers. The exchanges of fire persisted throughout the evacuation of the casualties."

Palestinians claim the incident was the second in recent months in which IDF forces targeted medics and rescue workers.

"Three months ago a Palestinian was killed in the area; three shells were fired on us as we were clearing his body from the scene," Abu Saada said. "This is not new that the Israelis fire in the direction of medics."

When asked whether he believes the Palestinian

gunmen operating in the area pose a danger to locals, Abu Saada said, "yesterday (Monday), when we arrived to evacuate the casualties, we screamed at the gunmen through a loudspeaker to leave the area and halt their fire; the gunmen were not operating in our area, and the exchanges of fire were also taking place in a distant area, but this did not prevent the Israeli Apache from firing a missile at us."

Army officials dismissed the claims, saying that at no time did forces open fire at rescue workers.

Hanan Greenberg contributed to the report

(05.30.06, 10:40)



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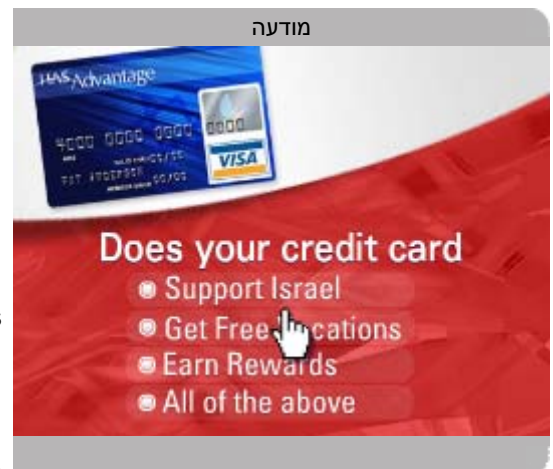


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