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## Israel denies firing on civilians near Gaza aid center



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The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have denied responsibility for the deaths of at least 31 Palestinians near a humanitarian aid distribution point in southern Gaza, following an incident on Sunday that sparked widespread outrage.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the IDF claimed its forces did not open fire on civilians at or near the aid center. It added that the military was coordinating with the Gaza Humanitarian

Foundation and international relief agencies to ensure aid reaches civilians, while preventing supplies from being seized by Hamas.

Blaming Hamas for obstructing aid distribution, the IDF accused the group of deliberately sabotaging humanitarian efforts. Drone footage released by IDF spokesperson Avichay Adraee appeared to show armed, masked individuals firing at civilians gathering near an aid center in Khan Younis.

Contradicting the IDF's account, Gaza health officials reported that Israeli forces had opened fire in Rafah, another southern city, where thousands had assembled to collect food and essential supplies. Mohammed Abu Afash, director of the Medical Relief Organization in Gaza, said most injuries were to the upper body, warning that the death toll could rise.

Eyewitnesses said chaos erupted after sudden gunfire and explosions, adding that panic ensued among the civilians gathered for aid.

The conflicting reports have heightened concerns over civilian safety amid ongoing humanitarian crises in Gaza. Independent verification of the events remains difficult due to restricted access.