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The Guardian

The mathematics of starvation How Israel caused a famine in Gaza

Officials know how much food is required, but have allowed only a fraction in

Emma Graham-Harrison
Chief Middle East correspondent

The mathematics of famine are simple in Gaza. Palestinians cannot leave, war has ended farming and Israel has banned fishing, so practically every calorie its population eats must be brought in from outside.

Israel knows how much food is needed. It has been calibrating hunger in Gaza for decades, initially calculating shipments to exert pressure while avoiding starvation.

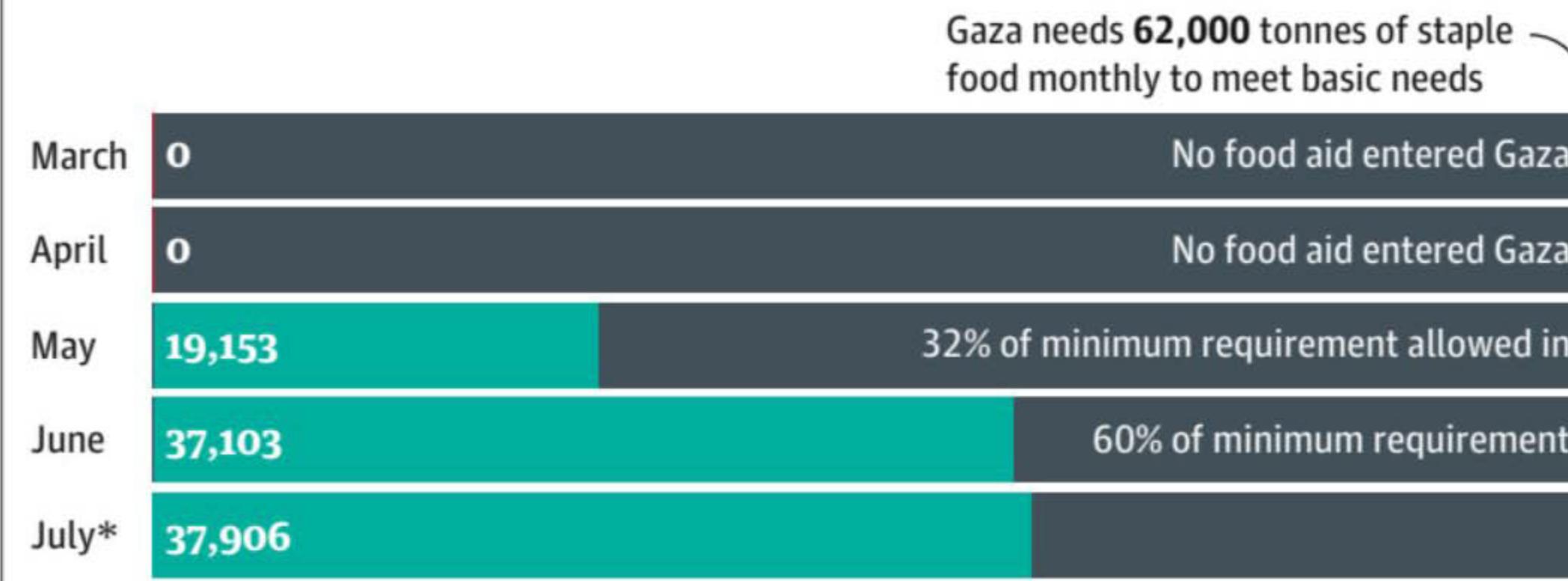
"The idea is to put Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger," a senior adviser to the then prime minister, Ehud Olmert, said in 2006. An Israeli court ordered the release of documents showing the details of those macabre sums two years later.

Cogat, the Israeli agency that still controls aid shipments to Gaza,



By Israel's own figures, the amount of aid reaching Gaza falls well below subsistence levels

Tonnes of food aid entering Gaza by month, 2025



calculated then that Palestinians needed an average minimum 2,279 calories per person per day, which could be provided through 1.836kg of food. Today, humanitarian organisations are asking for an even smaller minimum ration: 62,000 metric tonnes of dry and canned food to meet basic needs for 2.1 million people each month, or around 1kg of food per person a day.

As Gaza has slid into famine this summer, Israeli officials have variously denied the existence of mass starvation, claimed without evidence that Hamas steals and hoards aid, or blamed hunger on

▲ Five-year-old Lana Salih Juha is one of many Palestinian children suffering from severe malnutrition
PHOTOGRAPH: MOHAMMED AL-YAQOUBI/GETTY

UN distribution failures, sharing pictures of aid pallets awaiting collection inside the border.

They point to the deadly and chaotic food distributions by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a US and Israeli-backed logistics startup, as proof that Palestinians have access to food.

Yet data compiled and published by Israel's own government makes clear

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Top Labour MP urges Reeves to consider wealth tax

Pippa Crerar
Political editor

The Treasury should consider a wealth tax to close the growing gap in the public finances, according to a Labour former shadow chancellor.

Anneliese Dodds, who held the role under Keir Starmer in opposition, said ministers must have a "full and frank discussion" with the public about the "really big decisions" they had to take at this autumn's budget. With Rachel Reeves aiming to

fill a financial hole that economists say could exceed £20bn, the senior Labour MP said there was "no silver bullet" to funding big-ticket items such as defence, but that the chancellor should consider tax rises.

Dodds quit her post as international development minister in February over a decision to slash the aid budget to pay for increased defence spending - a move she said was a mistake that would have a big impact on global security.

With Russia and China stepping into the gap to boost their own global

influence, she said now was not the time for the UK to be "walking back" from using soft power.

In her first interview since standing down, Dodds told the Guardian: "It's important that we have a longer-term approach. That does mean asking and confronting difficult questions around our fiscal position, around taxation. But if we're open and honest about the nature of the challenge that we face, we cannot duck that.

"Now is a time when we're seeing forces outside our country's control impacting on our security. It's

important to have an open conversation with the public and say that means we will need to change when it comes to tax. That needs to be done in a way where those with the broadest shoulders take more responsibility."

While she did not set out exactly where wealth taxes might fall, Dodds urged the Treasury to "look carefully" at the work of the economist Arun Advani, whose wealth tax commission in 2020 recommended a one-off levy on millionaire households as a better way of raising revenue than increasing taxes

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At least 91 people killed seeking aid in Gaza as Trump envoy visits Israel

William Christou
Jerusalem

At least 91 people were killed and 600 wounded while waiting for aid in Gaza over a 24-hour period, as the US envoy, Steve Witkoff, visited Israel for ceasefire discussions and to inspect food distribution.

On Wednesday night, crowds of hungry people had gathered at the Zikim crossing with Israel, waiting for trucks loaded with humanitarian aid to enter the besieged strip, when they were shot at. Al-Saraya field hospital said it had received more than 100 dead and wounded after the shooting, while the death toll was expected to rise, the Associated Press reported.

Yesterday morning, 19 people seeking aid were killed by Israeli soldiers outside aid distribution points in central Gaza and in Rafah in the south of the territory.

Gaza is in the throes of famine, according to an international authority on food insecurity, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). The Gaza health authority said seven children died of hunger on Wednesday, bringing the total number of malnutrition deaths to 154.

The World Health Organization said in a statement yesterday: "Dying of starvation is slow and painful. A starving child, among the most vulnerable, might cry constantly from pain until becoming too weak to even do that. If not urgently treated, a child with acute malnutrition will die."

The UN agency added that it would take "months, if not years" to reverse what it called a "man-made tragedy".

As Gaza's famine has deepened, social order has broken down. It is common for crowds of hundreds of desperate people to wait for the rare aid truck to enter Gaza and to loot the vehicle once it arrives.

More than 1,000 people have been shot, primarily by Israeli soldiers, while trying to get aid from the private US Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) and while waiting for aid trucks by border crossings.

The UN has said the key to stopping the looting of aid is to reassure the population that a constant, adequate supply will enter Gaza. Israel controls aid crossings into Gaza and has been accused of creating the hunger crisis through its blockades of humanitarian supplies. It denies this and rejects that there is starvation in Gaza.

Israel recently expanded aid access into Gaza but humanitarians have said the new measures will not reverse the starvation crisis and have called for urgent, unfettered access.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Ocha)

said on Wednesday that the amount of food being brought into Gaza was "far from enough".

The foreign minister of Cyprus, Constantinos Kombos, announced yesterday that his country was working to reactivate a sea route to ship humanitarian aid to Gaza. Cyprus helped deliver about 2,200 tonnes of aid last year before several incidents stopped the route altogether.

Kombos said more planning was needed before reopening the sea corridor. He called the situation in Gaza "unacceptable, unbearable".

After arriving in Israel, Witkoff met the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Israeli media reported that they discussed the flagging ceasefire talks, and the White House later announced that Witkoff and US ambassador Mike Huckabee would travel to Gaza today "to inspect the current [food] distribution sites and secure a plan to deliver more food and meet with local Gazans to hear firsthand about this dire situation on the ground".

Israel had sent a response on Wednesday to Hamas's latest ceasefire plan, which proposed a 60-day pause in fighting and a hostage-prisoner exchange.

As Witkoff visited Israel, Donald Trump called on Hamas to surrender and release the remaining Israeli hostages. The group holds about 50, with 20 believed to be living.

In a post on Truth Social, the US president wrote: "The fastest way to end the Humanitarian Crises in Gaza is for Hamas to SURRENDER AND RELEASE THE HOSTAGES!!!"

Trump had suggested on Wednesday that the US would partner with Israel to run new food distribution points in Gaza, but has given few details about what this plan would look like. GHF has the backing of the Trump administration and is chaired by an associate of the president, but it was not clear whether the US would work through the private initiative.

Israel has come under international pressure as images of starving people have prompted an outcry.

Several countries including Canada said they would move towards recognising a Palestinian state in September. Canada's prime minister, Mark Carney, said its recognition would be contingent on changes within the Palestinian Authority.

Germany's foreign minister, Johann Wadephul, said before a visit to Israel yesterday that recognition of a Palestinian state should come at the end of talks on a two-state solution.

Israel has condemned the international censure of its actions in Gaza and the moves to recognise a Palestinian state, which it says are in service of Hamas.



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Israel knows how many calories the people need. It has let just a fraction in

that it has been starving Gaza. Between March and June, Israel allowed just 56,000 tonnes of food to enter the territory, Cogat records show, less than a quarter of Gaza's minimum needs for that period.

Even if every bag of UN flour had been collected and handed out, and the GHF had developed safe systems for distribution, starvation was inevitable. Palestinians did not have enough to eat. A "worst-case scenario" famine is now unfolding in Gaza, UN-backed food security experts have said this week.

Food deliveries are "at a scale far below what is needed", amid "drastic restrictions on the entry of supplies", the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) said in a report citing Israeli figures on aid. The Famine Review Committee, an independent group



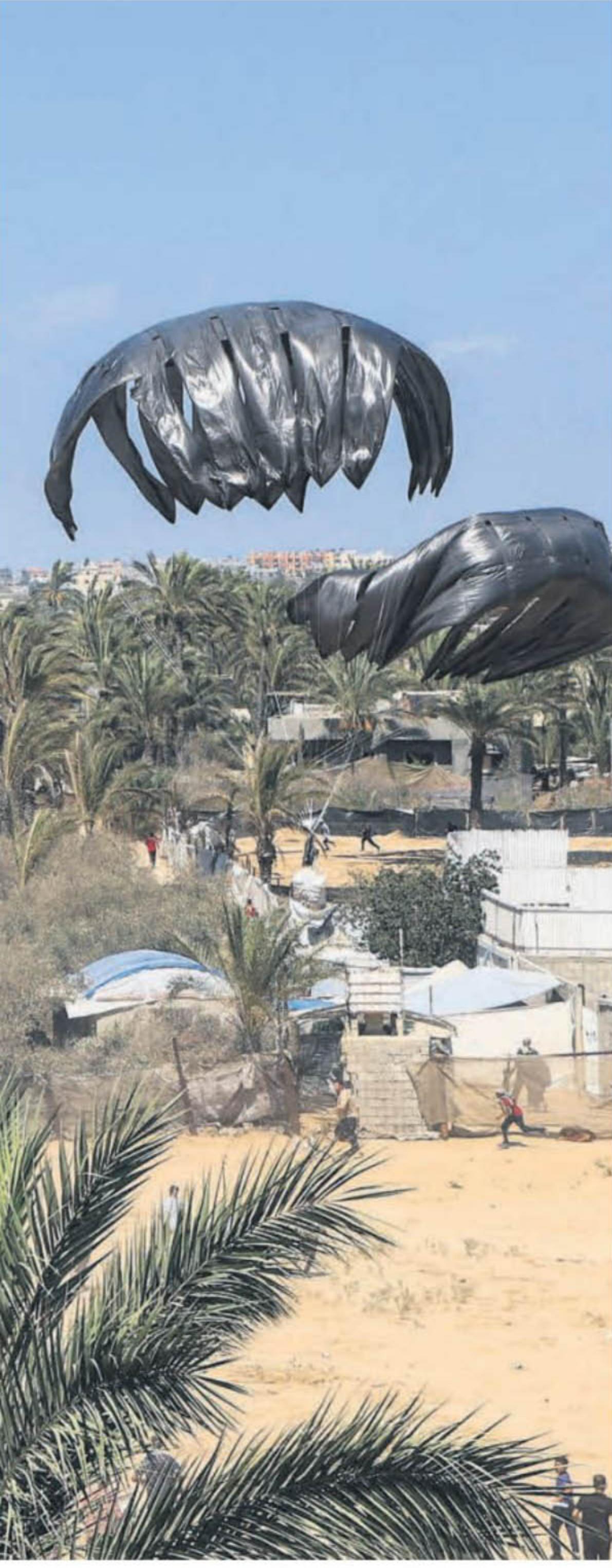
▲ Children among people waiting for food in Gaza City this week. There are still far too few aid trucks entering Gaza PHOTOGRAPH: ABDALHKEM ABU RIASH/GETTY



▲ An infant at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis on Wednesday, amid a shortage of baby formula and medicine PHOTOGRAPH: ABDALLAH FS AL-ATTAR/GETTY

▼ Aid packages descend on Gaza yesterday. Delivering food by air is highly inefficient and dangerous

PHOTOGRAPH: HATEM KHALEDHE/REUTERS



of experts that scrutinises IPC alerts, said food shipments "have been highly inadequate", and singled out the GHF.

"Our analysis of the food packages supplied by the GHF shows that their distribution plan would lead to mass starvation, even if it was able to function without the appalling levels of violence that have been reported," the FRC said.

Just a few weeks of extra aid shipments during the ceasefire in January and February this year provided enough calories to bring Gaza back from the brink of famine, UN data shows.

In March and April Gaza was under total siege, with no food entering. In mid-May Netanyahu said shipments would restart because of international pressure over a "starvation crisis".

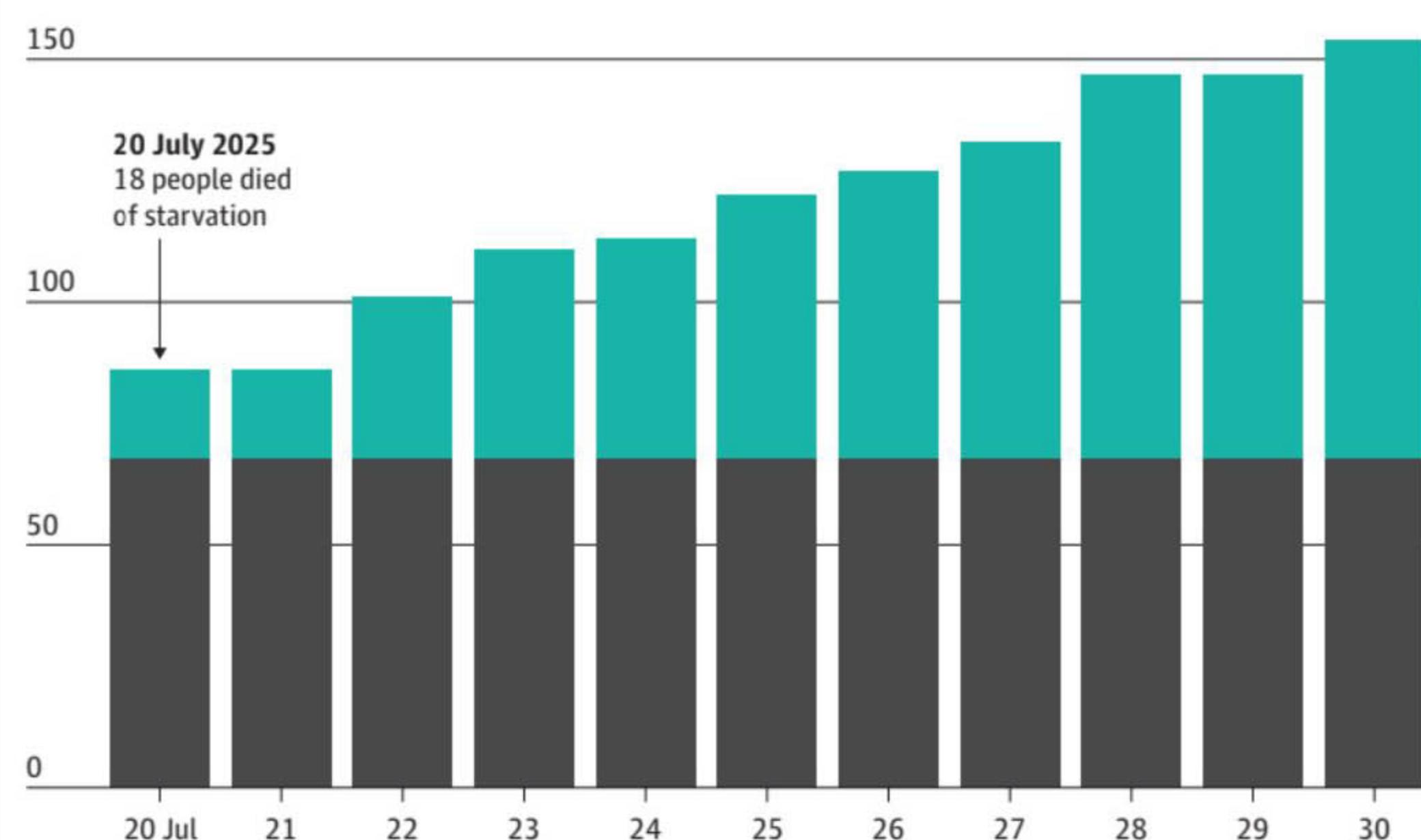
However, in May only a trickle of food returned, in quantities that served only to slow Gaza's descent into starvation, not stop it. Two months on, the scale of suffering has spurred more international outrage, including demands from the US president, Donald Trump, to get "every ounce of food" to starving children.

In response Netanyahu has promised only "minimal" extra aid. The number of food trucks entering the territory has risen, but is still well below the minimum needed to feed Palestinians there, much less reverse a famine.

Airdrops, used intermittently throughout the war, have also restarted, with France, Germany, the UK, Egypt, Jordan and the UAE among the countries announcing flights, even though parachuting

More people in Gaza died of starvation in just over 11 days than in the previous 21 months of conflict

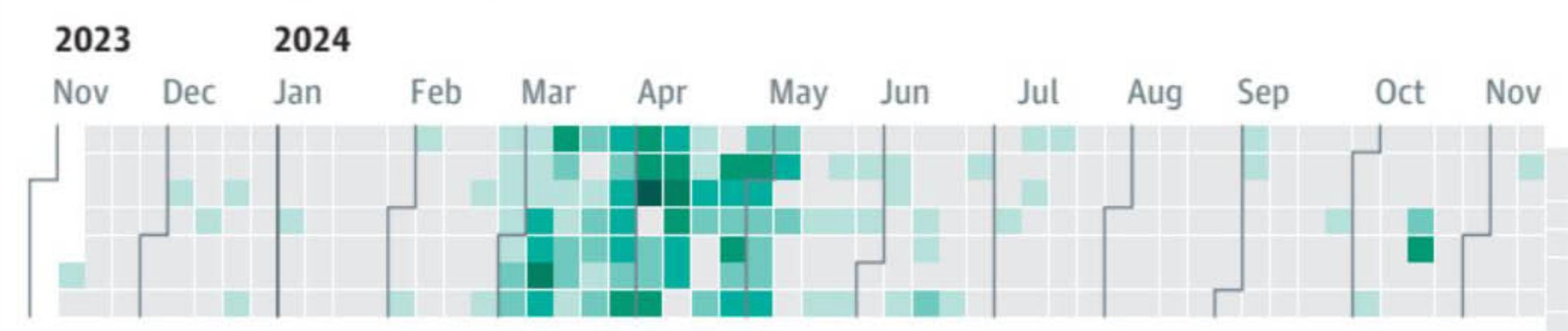
Cumulative recorded deaths in Gaza as a direct result of malnutrition
● Deaths before 20 Jul 2025 ● 20 to 30 July 2025



Source: MoH Gaza. Note: deaths reported by hospitals in Gaza, figures for the previous 24 hours

104 days of airdrops into Gaza supplied less than four days' worth of food

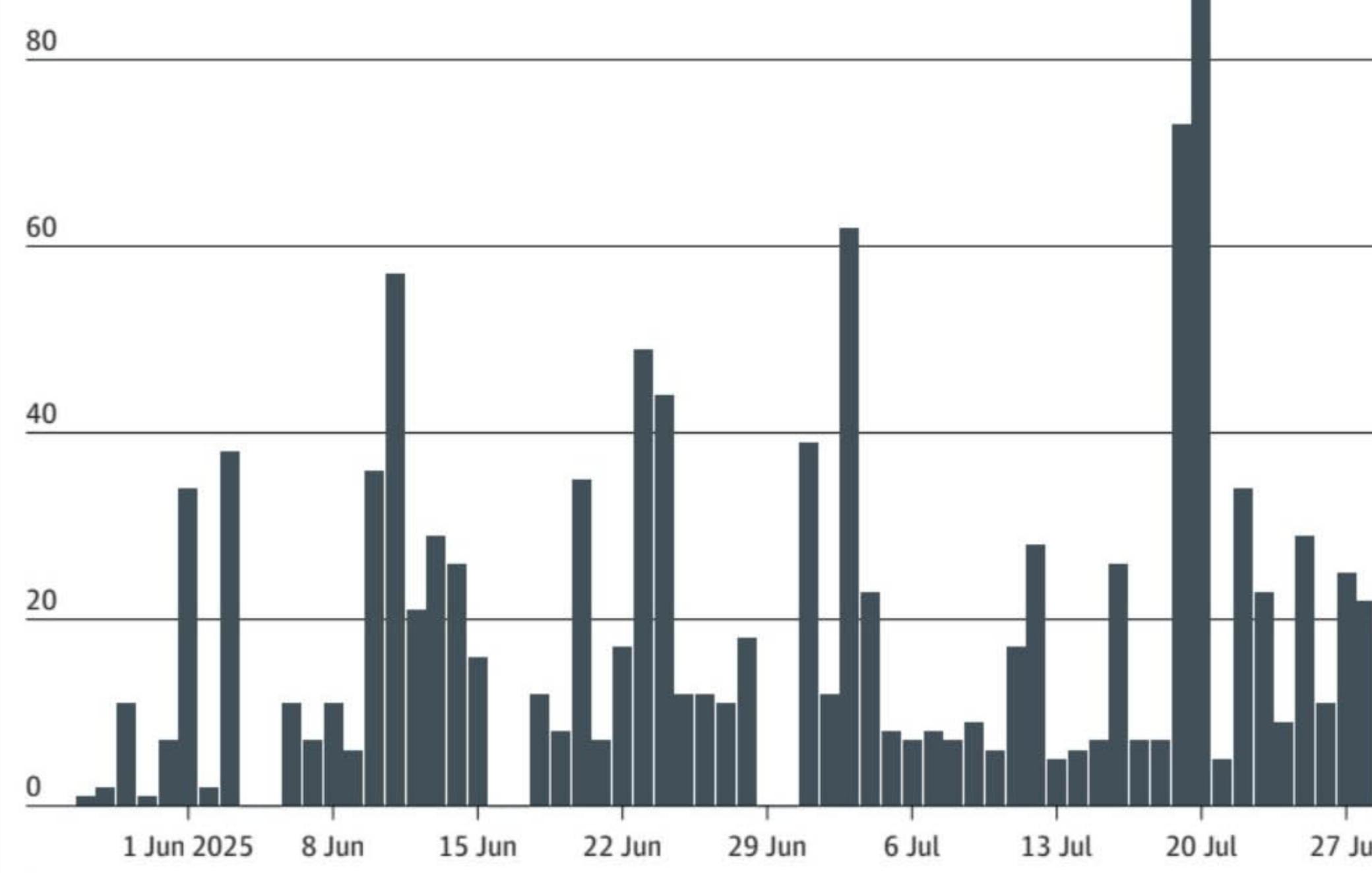
Days with airdrops, tonnes of food aid
● Up to 50 ● 100 ● 150 ● 200 ● 250 ● 300+



Source: Cogat, IPC. Note: Days of full population basic food provision calculated using the IPC 62,000 tonnes per month benchmark. Data excludes recent airdrops starting 27 Jul 2025

People killed and injured while seeking aid in Gaza

Daily deaths



Source: Gaza ministry of health. Note: preliminary data, subject to revisions. The daily reported figures fall short of MoH totals by 24 deaths. Figures for 17-18 July are averaged across two days

in food is expensive, inefficient and occasionally deadly. Last year at least 12 people drowned trying to recover food that had landed in the sea, and at least five were killed when pallets fell on them.

In the first 21 months of war, 104 flights supplied the equivalent of just four days of food for Gaza, Israeli data shows, at a cost running to tens of millions of dollars.

Spent on trucks, the same budget would deliver much more food, but the price of these flights is not only a monetary one.

They allow Israel and its allies to frame starvation as a catastrophe caused by logistics, not a crisis created by state policy.

Airdrops would usually be ordered as a last resort to feed people in emergency situations where hostile armed forces or geography make road deliveries impossible. In Gaza the only obstacles to driving aid across the

border are restrictions imposed by Israel, an ally of many western nations including Britain, and armed with UK and US weapons.

Two Israeli-based rights groups this week declared Israel was committing genocide in Gaza, with reports citing evidence including the weaponisation of hunger. B'Tselem described an "official and openly declared policy" of mass starvation.

Israel's government knows how much food Gaza's people need to survive, and how much food goes into the territory, and in the past used that data to calculate how much food was needed to avoid starvation. The vast gap between the calories Gaza needs, and the food that has entered since March makes clear that Israeli officials are doing different maths today.

They cannot pass responsibility for this human-made famine to anyone else. Nor can their allies.

West Bank Activist's body held as suspect in his killing is released

William Christou
Quique Kierszenbaum
Jerusalem

Israeli police have refused to release the body of the Palestinian activist and journalist Awdah Hathaleen, while the settler accused of killing him has been released from custody.

Awdah Hathaleen, who helped make the Oscar-winning documentary *No Other Land*, was fatally shot on Monday night during a confrontation between residents and settlers driving a bulldozer in the occupied West Bank village of Umm al-Kheir.

A video appears to show Yonin Levi firing his gun wildly and then people screaming as Hathaleen, who was standing some distance away, collapsed.

Levi was released from custody by a court on Tuesday and placed under three days of house arrest, which ends today and allows him to roam free. According to Levi's lawyer, Avihai Hajabi, the court found there was evidence that he acted in self-defence, and ordered his release.

Levi, who was put under sanctions by the former US president Joe Biden and later removed from the sanctions list by Donald Trump, could still face charges. However, Hathaleen's family are still struggling to recover his body so they can hold his funeral.

Salem Hathaleen, Hathaleen's older brother, said: "It's devastating. His body is still being held and the killer is free. His mother and his wife, they keep asking where he is, when his body will come back. I have no answers anymore. I tell them an hour, two hours, but I don't know."

Israeli police said they will not release Hathaleen's body until his family agrees to 10 conditions, including limiting the funeral to 15 people and burying him outside his



▲ *No Other Land*, the film that Awdah Hathaleen helped to make

'His mother and his wife, they keep asking when will his body come back'

Salam Hathaleen
Awdah's older brother

birth village, according to a lawyer representing the family.

"The idea is that the police want the funeral to be really small and quiet, so it is like it never happened and nobody will come," said Karin Wind, who is communicating with the police on behalf of the family.

According to a document seen by the Guardian, police requested that no "signs calling for incitement" be displayed or "amplification" system used at the funeral, with a deposit from the family requested to ensure they comply. The family refused to sign the document and its conditions.

"Fifteen people - this would mean basically half his siblings and children couldn't even attend," said Salem.

The Guardian contacted the Israeli police and military for a comment but did not receive one by the time of publishing. The Israeli military has claimed the conditions are necessary to preserve public order.

Israeli soldiers raided the tent erected for mourners on Tuesday, declaring it a closed military zone as they pushed mourners out and threw stun grenades at activists and journalists in attendance.

Alaa Hathaleen, Awdeh's brother who witnessed him die, said: "Coming to the place that he was killed, where they killed him, and kicking people out? This is not a life, this is against any law in the world."

The Guardian attempted to reach Alaa Hathaleen for a comment yesterday but discovered he had been arrested, along with 13 other residents, by the Israeli military.

More than 70 women from the village have declared that they are going on hunger strike until the police return the body of Awdah Hathaleen.

Activists and relatives of Hathaleen said the case underscored what they called a system of impunity. At least 1,010 Palestinians have been killed and more than 7,000 injured in the West Bank by Israeli settlers and soldiers since October 2023.

Yesterday morning, another settler attack was carried out in the village of Silwad. The Palestinian Authority said Israeli settlers descended upon the village and set fire to homes and cars, killing a Palestinian man.

"Forty-year-old Khamis Abd Latif Ayad was martyred due to smoke inhalation caused by fires set by settlers in citizens' homes and vehicles," the Palestinian health ministry said in a statement.

The Israeli military told AFP several suspects set fire to property and vehicles in Silwad, but that they were unable to identify the suspects. The Israeli police said it had launched an investigation into the incident.

The killing of Hathaleen prompted international condemnation. The French foreign ministry urged Israeli government to hold Hathaleen's killer accountable and called settler violence "a matter of terrorism."

Umm al-Kheir is within Area C of the West Bank, which is under full Israeli control. All settlements in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, are illegal under international law.

"There's a saying here," said Salem Hathaleen: "The dignity of the dead is in burial." When someone is killed, there should be immediate burial. It brings some small relief to the heart. But until now, we've received neither the body nor the right to do anything."