Palestinian gunmen slay female aid worker in Gaza in volley of bullets

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Palestinian gunmen in the Gaza Strip shot and killed an aid worker from a US-based charity, firing on her car in what officials from the Hamas-run government told her family was a case of mistaken identity, Reuters reported Friday.

However, anti-Hamas Palestinian activists cited by the Walla news site said that Hamas gunmen murdered her for refusing to turn over aid funds to the terror group.

The car in which Islam Hejazy, Gaza program manager at HEAL Palestine, was traveling was intercepted on Thursday in the area of Khan Younis in the south of the enclave.

Gunmen riding in three cars sprayed the vehicle with dozens of bullets, according to residents and the woman’s family.

“She was the mother of two small children and a humanitarian with the highest ethics and professionalism,” HEAL Palestine, posted on its Facebook page.

“HEAL Palestine is more dedicated than ever to serving Gaza, in her honor. Ceasefire now,” it added.

Her family issued a statement on Friday, saying they were told by government parties at the hospital where her body was taken that she was killed by mistake. Her killers, whose identity was not disclosed, had failed to identify the vehicle she was driving, they said.

Later on Friday, the Hamas-run interior ministry said it had launched an investigation into Hejazi’s death, which it described in its statement as an “accident,” without further details.

“That was a bigger shock… How would an innocent soul be wasted and 90 bullets fired at her car just for mistaken identification?” the family said in a statement published by Palestinian media.

Reuters was not able to verify the number of bullets fired.

The incident highlights growing chaos and anarchy in Gaza almost a year into Israel’s military offensive, which the Hamas-run government says has weakened the ability of its security services to police the streets.

The ongoing war began on October 7 when Hamas-led terrorists rampaged through southern communities, slaughtering some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostages to Gaza.

Israel launched its military operation, which has stretched for over 11 months, aiming to eliminate Hamas and bring back those kidnapped.

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry says more than 41,000 people in the Strip have been killed or are presumed dead in the fighting so far, though the toll cannot be verified and does not differentiate between civilians and fighters. Israel says it has killed some 17,000 combatants in battle and another 1,000 terrorists inside Israel on October 7.

Israel has said it seeks to minimize civilian fatalities and stresses that Hamas uses Gazans as human shields, fighting from civilian areas including homes, hospitals, schools, and mosques.

Israel’s toll in the ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza and in military operations along the border with the Strip stands at 348.