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FRIDAY MARCH 1, 2024, SHA'BAN 20, 1445
WEEKEND EDITION

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Israeli soldiers shoot dead 104 at aid point

MORE THAN 750 PEOPLE ALSO HURT IN THE INCIDENT

GAZA STRIP

Israeli forces shot dead 104 people when a crowd rushed towards aid trucks yesterday, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said, in one of the worst single incidents of a nearly five-month war.

More than 750 people were also hurt in the incident, the ministry said. It came after aid agencies had intensified warnings over Gaza's humanitarian situation, with famine threatening particularly in Gaza's north.

Looting of aid trucks had previously occurred in northern Gaza, where residents have taken to eating animal fodder and even leaves to try to stave off hunger.

Ministry spokesman Ashraf Al Qudra said hundreds were killed and wounded from "bullets of the occupation forces that targeted a gathering of citizens" at Gaza City's Nabulsi roundabout. He called it a "massacre".

Trucks stormed

A witness told AFP that "thousands of people" had "just stormed the trucks", which were near army tanks.

"The soldiers fired at the crowd as people came too close to the tanks," the witness said.

Israeli sources confirmed that troops opened fire at Palestinians rushing toward aid trucks in Gaza, with one saying soldiers thought they "posed a threat" to troops.

A spokesman for Israeli



AFP

■ Palestinians receive medical care at Kamal Edwan Hospital in Beit Lahia, Gaza Strip, yesterday after Israeli soldiers opened fire at Gaza residents who rushed towards aid trucks.

30,035

Palestinians have died in the war that began on October 7 while the death toll in Israel is around 1,160

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, however, said many of the dead were crushed by the trucks themselves, after "aid trucks were overwhelmed by people trying to loot".

The Gaza City shooting adds to the war which the health ministry earlier Thursday said had topped 30,000. It came after mediators said a truce deal between Israel and Hamas militants could be just days away.

In a reflection of increased

concern at the White House, President Joe Biden's administration is considering air-dropping aid into Gaza, US news site Axios reported yesterday.

Mediators from Egypt, Qatar and the United States have been seeking a six-week pause in the war.

Negotiators hope a truce can begin by around March 10 or 11 when the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins, depending on the lunar calendar. —AFP

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THE TAKEAWAY



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UAE ranks 10th in Soft Power Index

ABU DHABI

BY KHITAM AL AMIR
Chief News Editor

The UAE has been ranked 10th in the Global Soft Power Index 2024, standing as the only Gulf nation among the world's top 10 soft powers.

The announcement came during the annual Global Soft Power Summit in London, in the presence of a group of global leaders and public figures, led by former British Prime Minister Sir John Major; Eliza Jean Reid, the First Lady of Iceland; and Olena Zelenska, the First Lady of Ukraine.

His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, expressed his pride in this outstanding result via his X account.

"The UAE's ascent in global recognition continues unabated. Our 10th place ranking in the Global Soft Power Index, encompassing 193 nations and based on input from 170,000 experts, serves as a testament to this growing acknowledgement," Shaikh Mohammad said.

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