

“The situation is unimaginable”: MAP, IRC and PCRF doctors report malnourished patients are dying from infections in overwhelmed Gaza hospital

25 March 2024



As Israel's indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza approaches six months, an Emergency Medical Team (EMT) with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) report horrific scenes of patients dying from infections with evidence of serious malnutrition at the European Gaza Hospital (EGH) where they have been recently been treating patients over two weeks.

The EGH, near Khan Yunis in southern Gaza, has experienced a huge influx of casualties as a result of Israel's military offensive on Gaza. It has become even more overwhelmed following Israeli forces' raid and siege of the nearby Nasser Hospital which [is now not functioning](#).

Dr Konstantina Iliia Karydi, an anesthetist in the EMT, said, “The situation is unimaginable. This hospital had an original capacity of just 200 beds, and at the moment it has expanded to 1,000 beds. There are around 22,000 people that have been displaced from other parts of Gaza sheltering in the corridors and in tents inside the hospital, because people feel that it's safer to be here than anywhere else.”

The EMT's surgeons had completed successful complex vascular and orthopedic surgeries on patients, but some of the patients later died due to infections in the hospitals and the inability to provide post-operative care. This is due to the intense security situation that forced healthcare workers to evacuate hospitals and hindered their access. Moreover, significant damage to hospital infrastructure and facilities, coupled with a

complete shortage of equipment and medicine - largely due to Israel's restrictions on medical aid entry into Gaza - severely impacted the ability to provide necessary care.

The surgeons reported large infected open wounds on patients and having to administer emergency nutritional supplies to patients as the lack of food was jeopardising patient treatment.

Arvind Das, IRC Gaza Team Lead said: "The situation we're facing is beyond comprehension. Continuous Israeli military operations near hospitals are making an already tense situation even worse for those seeking shelter or medical help, pushing the healthcare system to the brink of collapse. Despite the relentless efforts of our medical teams, the infrastructure necessary to deliver optimal medical care has been severely compromised by bombing, stringent restrictions on the entry of aid including medical supplies, and the overwhelming surge in needs. We're doing everything we can, navigating through critical shortages and working with very limited resources, to save lives amidst this dire situation."

Israeli attacks have injured more than [73,000 Palestinians in Gaza](#) in just five months, including people with life-changing injuries, while simultaneously systematically dismantling the health system, leaving only 12 hospitals partially functioning and no fully-functioning hospitals in Gaza. Doctors at the EGH report that they faced critical shortages of basic medical supplies due to damage to infrastructure and constraints on aid access.

Dr Husam Basheer, an orthopaedic surgeon with the EMT, said hospitals were: "managing with the bare minimum of resources. One day we wanted to do a plate and screw, which is a standard procedure for bone fixation, but we didn't have the right equipment. Sometimes we've also lacked gauze which is a basic supply for surgery. We worked around the challenges we faced and managed in a different way, but the staff here are overwhelmed."

Since 7 October 2023, the Israeli military has conducted more than [400 attacks on healthcare facilities and personnel](#) in Gaza, which means every single hospital has been impacted. At least 340 healthcare workers have also been killed and more than 160 others have been detained, according to the Ministry of Health. There have also been reported allegations of healthcare workers being [subjected to torture](#).

Guided by MAP's more than 30 years of experience working inside Gaza, the EMT comprised a group of anaesthetists, surgeons and disaster experts. Working alongside Palestinian doctors, nurses and other medical personnel, and despite the difficulties they encountered, the EMT were able to perform a total of 89 surgeries and 229 consultations, including minor procedures and emergency care. The EMT also addressed long-awaited orthopaedic surgeries, providing relief to patients who had been waiting for months. This was the third emergency medical team sent into Gaza by MAP and the IRC.

You can help MAP provide the vital medical supplies, emergency food and humanitarian aid needed to save lives in Gaza. [Please support us today.](#)

Donate

Photo credit: Dr. Basheer. By: Sarah Khalaf. Edited by: IRC. On from Kuwait, works on the MAP/IRC emergency medical team. ©The International Rescue

SHARE THIS PAGE