300 health workers reported killed in Israel's assault on Gaza exceeds all countries in conflict combined in any year since 2016

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Urgent action to uphold the protection of healthcare is needed to prevent the total collapse of Gaza's health system.

The reported number of healthcare workers killed in ten weeks of Israel's assault on Gaza has exceeded the total number killed in all countries in conflict globally in any single year since 2016, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) said today.

Since Israel's military assault began on 7 October, at least 300 healthcare workers have been reported killed, according to the UN. This is more than the total number of health worker deaths recorded across all countries in conflict last year, and in any single year since 2016.

Israel's relentless attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities, and total siege, are systematically dismantling Gaza's health system. Less than a quarter of hospitals are functioning due to insecurity, damage and lack of fuel, and the average bed occupancy of those that remain operational is more than 200%.

Melanie Ward, MAP's CEO, said: "We are witnessing a whole new scale of attacks on healthcare in Gaza. There is a real danger that, when world leaders return from their Christmas holidays, there will be no health system left in Gaza to serve the 2.2 million people who are in desperate need."

"Violations will continue for as long as there is impunity. Any party who violates the sanctity of healthcare must be independently investigated and held accountable. We demand an immediate end to attacks on healthcare facilities and personnel, and an urgent ceasefire to allow the health system to recover and aid to flow to all who need it."

Attacks on healthcare are exacerbating the worst humanitarian crisis ever seen in Gaza. More than 19,400 people have been killed and at least 52,000 injured in Israel's indiscriminate bombardment. Infectious diseases are spreading rapidly in overcrowded shelters, with 360,000 cases reported including respiratory infections, diarrhoea, hepatitis and skin diseases. Meanwhile, hospitals and clinics seeking to care for them face acute shortages of supplies including medicines, fuel, water and food.

Medical first responders have themselves come under attack, and paramedics lack fuel for ambulances to reach and transport the many wounded. Additionally, dozens of health workers have been detained by Israeli forces and reportedly stripped of their clothes, interrogated and beaten, with some detained at unknown locations.

As Israel's military offensive continues to escalate over the Christmas period, and with only a few remaining lifelines of medical care left, MAP urges the international community not to turn a blind eye to this catastrophe.

Urgent action is needed right now. Attacks on healthcare must cease, Israel's complete siege must be lifted, and an immediate ceasefire must be brokered to safeguard innocent lives and allow the health system to recover as soon as possible.

Notes to editors:

1. For media inquiries or interviews, please contact: press@map.org.uk

2. The 'countries in conflict globally' referenced are taken from Insecurity Insight's global map: https://mapaction-maps.herokuapp.com/health

3. Insecurity Insight has documented the following figures annually on healthcare workers killed in countries in conflict globally: 176 (2016), 125 (2017), 85 (2018), 156 (2019), 171 (2020), 193 (2021), 254 (2022). These figures are compiled on the basis of the reported death of an individual health worker and do not include the aggregate figures from other organizations where the individual cases could not be verified and as such there may be some undercounting.

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