

Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya's life in danger due to torture: Immediate international intervention needed for his release



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Israel-Palestinian Territory

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Palestinian territory - The Israeli government bears full responsibility for the life of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, amid alarming indications of torture and ill-treatment since his detention in late December.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor has received information that Dr. Abu Safiya's health has deteriorated due to the torture he endured during his detention, particularly while being held at the Sde Teyman military base in southern Israel. Euro-Med Monitor warns of the grave risk to his life, following patterns of deliberate killings and deaths under torture previously suffered by other doctors and medical staff arrested from Gaza since October 2023.

Euro-Med Monitor has documented testimonies confirming that Israeli soldiers physically assaulted Dr. Abu Safiya immediately after he left the hospital on Friday, 27 December 2024. He was then directly targeted with sound bombs while attempting to evacuate the hospital in compliance with orders from the Israeli army.

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According to testimonies gathered by Euro-Med

Monitor, the Israeli army subsequently transferred Dr. Abu Safiya to a field interrogation site in the Al-Fakhura area of Jabalia Refugee Camp. There, he was forced to strip off his clothes and was subjected to severe beatings, including being whipped with a thick wire commonly used for street electrical wiring. Soldiers deliberately humiliated him in front of other detainees, including fellow medical staff. He was later taken to an undisclosed location before being transferred to the Sde Teyman military camp under Israeli army control.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor has also received information from recently released detainees at the Sde Teyman military camp, confirming that Dr. Abu Safiya was subjected to severe torture, leading to a significant deterioration in his health. This occurred despite him already being injured by Israeli air strikes on the hospital, where he worked tirelessly until the facility was stormed and set ablaze by Israeli forces.

The Israeli army has attempted to mislead the public regarding Dr. Abu Safiya's detention and torture. Pro-Israeli media outlets circulated a misleading promotional video portraying his treatment as humane, even though he was tortured and humiliated immediately after filming.

Euro-Med Monitor warns of the severe implications of Israel's denial of Dr. Abu Safiya's detention, describing this as a deeply troubling indicator of his fate and detention conditions. This denial also reflects a blatant disregard for binding legal standards.

Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHRI) submitted a request on behalf of Dr. Abu Safiya's family to obtain information and facilitate a lawyer's visit on 2 January 2024. However, the Israeli authorities claimed to have no record of his detention, stating they had no indication of his arrest.

Euro-Med Monitor expresses deep concern that Dr. Abu Safiya may face execution during his detention, similar to the fate of Dr. Adnan Al-Bursh, head of the orthopaedics department at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, who was killed under torture at Ofer Detention Centre on 19 April 2024. Dr. Al-Bursh had been detained along with colleagues from Al-Awda Hospital in December 2023.

Likewise, Dr. Iyad Al-Rantisi, head of the obstetrics department at Kamal Adwan Hospital, was killed due to torture at an Israeli Shin Bet interrogation centre in Ashkelon, one week after his detention in November 2023. Israeli authorities concealed his death for more than seven months.

Dozens of doctors and medical staff remain subjected to arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in Israeli prisons and detention centres, where they face severe torture and solitary confinement, according to testimonies from former detainees.

The detention of Dr. Abu Safiya must be understood within the context of Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza, which has persisted for nearly 15 months. His arrest, torture, and potential execution form part of a broader strategy aimed at destroying the Palestinian people in Gaza—both physically and psychologically—and breaking their will.

This strategy includes not only the deliberate destruction of the health sector and the disruption of medical staff operations, particularly in northern Gaza, but also an attack on the symbolic and humanitarian role represented by Dr. Abu Safiya. Despite the grave crimes committed against Kamal Adwan Hospital, its staff, and patients, especially in the past two months, Dr. Abu Safiya remained unwavering in his dedication to providing essential medical care and fulfilling his medical duties.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor calls on all concerned states, international entities, and UN bodies to take immediate and effective measures to secure the unconditional release of Dr. Abu Safiya. His fundamental rights to life, physical safety, and dignity must be protected, shielding him from torture or any cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

Euro-Med Monitor also urges international and local human rights organisations to be granted full access to visit Dr. Abu Safiya, monitor his health condition, provide necessary medical treatment, and ensure he is free from human rights violations until his release.

Furthermore, Euro-Med Monitor reiterates its call for the United Nations to deploy an international investigative mission to examine the grave crimes and violations faced by Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons. It calls for the immediate release of those detained arbitrarily, for international and local organisations to be granted visitation rights, and for detainees to have access to legal representation.

Euro-Med Monitor expresses regret over the continued inaction of Ms. Alice Jill Edwards, the Special Rapporteur on Torture, who has failed to address these atrocities. It condemns her bias and deliberate negligence in fulfilling her mandate and calls for her dismissal. A new Special Rapporteur who is neutral and committed to universal human rights principles must be appointed.

Additionally, Euro-Med Monitor urges the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to conduct immediate and thorough investigations into crimes committed by the Israeli military in Gaza. It calls for direct engagement with victims and families, as well as for reports to be submitted to pave the way for investigative committees, fact-finding missions, and international courts to prosecute Israeli crimes, hold perpetrators accountable, and compensate victims in line with international law.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor renews its call for relevant states and entities to fulfil their legal obligations to halt the genocide in Gaza. This includes imposing a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, holding it accountable for its crimes, and taking effective measures to protect Palestinian civilians. Immediate steps must also be taken to prevent forced displacement, ensure the return of residents, release arbitrarily detained Palestinians, and facilitate the urgent entry of life-saving humanitarian aid into Gaza without obstacles. Finally,

Euro-Med Monitor demands the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from the entire Gaza Strip.