








# Gaza: Al-Shifa Medical Complex massacre provides proof that the Israeli army engaged in full-fledged crimes



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**Palestinian Territory** - The Israeli massacre of Palestinians in Gaza City's Al-Shifa Medical Complex and its environs, the consequences of which are still unfolding almost two weeks later, demonstrates that

the army committed complete and self-evident war crimes and crimes against humanity. These crimes include carrying out killings and unlawful executions of civilians and attempting to conceal evidence by burying victims' bodies and even disfiguring them in the hospital courtyard.

Members of the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor field team were present inside Al-Shifa Medical Complex during the Israeli army's attack and its aftermath. About a week after the end of the military operation, during the recovery of dozens of victims' remains, Euro-Med Monitor documented horrific scenes of body parts strewn on the ground as well as human remains inside a large pit dug by Israeli forces in the courtyard of one of Al-Shifa's hospitals.

According to ongoing Euro-Med Monitor investigations, which include dozens of testimonies documented during and after Israel's operation, the Israeli army committed many serious crimes against every Palestinian in the vicinity, including the murder and execution of hundreds of civilians. The fate of dozens of missing individuals is still unknown today.

In addition to the unlawful executions and killings, the Israeli army also forcibly evacuated thousands of Palestinians who had sought safety in the medical facility, and subjected hundreds of ailing and injured patients to cruel treatment that constituted an immediate threat to their lives, such as deprivation of

food and medical attention. The Israeli army later bulldozed the medical facility's courtyards, destroyed all of its rooms and departments, and set fire to most of its buildings, which were already on the verge of collapse, forcing the medical facility out of service.

While medical teams are still attempting to count the number of victims and manage the exhumation of bodies that were inhumanely buried by the Israeli army in an attempt to hide evidence of the serious crimes committed, new testimonies have emerged about crimes of targeting, killing, execution, siege, torture, and forced displacement against Palestinian civilians in Al-Shifa Medical Complex and its surrounding area. The documented crimes were perpetrated against civilians including women, children, elderly people, displaced people, medical professionals, and sick and wounded people.

Euro-Med Monitor earlier estimated that over 1,500 Palestinians have been killed, injured, or are reported missing as a result of the massacre at Al-Shifa, with women and children making up half of the casualties. Euro-Med Monitor is now able to confirm from its initial investigation and the testimonies that followed that hundreds of dead bodies, including some burned and others with their heads and limbs severed, have been discovered both in and around Al-Shifa Medical Complex.

“We were inside one of the hospital buildings when we heard intense, continuous gunfire that lasted for

a long time,” reported a Euro-Med Monitor field researcher who was inside the Complex when the Israeli army stormed it. “A young man eventually showed up and informed us that the Israeli army had dispatched him to tell us that the men ought to undress, while the women must wait at the back while [remaining] on one side.”

Continued the field researcher, “We had stripped off everything but our boxers, and we were accompanied by old people. Inside the room, a quadcopter drone entered and began hovering over our heads and filming us. Following daybreak, they divided us into five-person groups and bound our hands behind our backs.”

The field researcher explained that an Israeli soldier “told some of the older people who asked to use the restroom or get water to sit down, and that since we Palestinians are their enemies, they should not give us any food or medical attention”. The researcher added, “A few of the people were taken from the room by the soldiers, and we would hear their agonised cries from outside before they brought them back in deplorable condition.”

Euro-Med Monitor researchers, along with hundreds of civilians inside the hospital, were forced to evacuate, barefoot and naked except for their underwear. They walked long distances before they reached the Baptist Hospital area in eastern Gaza, where residents gave them some clothes and shoes.

Heba Raafat Abu Hasira informed the Euro-MedMonitor team that her mother, two sisters, and brother had all been executed in front of her by the Israeli army: “On 18 March, Israeli forces stormed our house located behind Al-Shifa Medical Complex amid gunfire in the morning. We were all hiding in one corner when one of the soldiers broke into the room where my mother, Bushra Saeed Abu Hasira, 55, and I, along with my sisters, Rozan, 25, Rania, 19, and Saif, 21, were sitting and covered by a winter blanket.”

Abu Hasira stated that the Israeli soldier “pointed his weapon at us and kept shooting, and with every movement we made, he fired at us again”. As a result, she continued, “My mother and my brothers were killed, and I survived. I was yelling at him, telling him we were civilians. After he stopped firing, the soldier came over to me, lifted his weapon to my head, lowered it, and then dragged me away.”

She told the Euro-Med Monitor team, “When I asked to stay with my family, he told me to shut up. After that, I was taken out of the house by another soldier who ordered me to leave. I went outside barefoot and saw that tanks had surrounded the area and were positioned at both ends of the street.”

The soldiers fired at her, Abu Hasira added, and one of their bullets struck her left hand. “So I ran barefoot over the glass and stones that had shattered in the streets,” she said. “My foot was bleeding from a nail puncture, and my hand was also hurt, but I kept

running through [the debris] until I arrived at a friend's house, which was a short distance from the western Gaza besieged area.”

The following information was provided to the Euro-Med Monitor team by Maha Sweilem, a nurse at Al-Shifa Medical Complex, regarding her husband Abdulaziz Mustafa Salman's arrest by the Israeli army and ensuing forced disappearance: “My husband and I work as volunteers in the hospital; therefore, after our house was bombed, we moved to Al-Shifa [Medical Complex] and stayed there.” On the day of the 18 March raid, said Sweilem, “I was working in the surgical building in the chest intensive care department. We were around 50 people when the Israeli army told the medical staff to leave the building.”

She stated, “They said we would return once they gathered us in the hospital yard, but they took 35 of us and released the other 15. After telling them to leave the building, they shot four people in front of my eyes, including two doctors who were taken to the Baptist Hospital for treatment.”

Sweilem told Euro-Med Monitor, “My spouse was brought to the square and made to undress before being detained and taken somewhere else. My spouse is not facing any charges, unless the army views volunteering to help and tend to the injured as a crime.”

Ghassan Riad Qunita, who lives near Al-Shifa Medical Complex across from a recently excavated cemetery, also spoke to Euro-Med Monitor after his father's body was found on 8 April in the initial stages of decomposition. "The Israeli army stormed the house at around 10 a.m. on 19 March, the day after storming the hospital. Due to his advanced age and a broken back, my father was unable to stand and was therefore sleeping on the bed," said Qunita.

"During the raid," he continued, "they gathered everyone inside, divided the men and women, made the men take off their clothes, and tortured them, except my father, because he was too old."

Stated Qunita, "He was taken out with the women when they moved to the south, along with the husbands of my wife's sister and my sister, who were both about 65 years old. Once outside, they found the streets to be quite slippery due to the heavy downpour." Because of their advanced age and exhaustion, he explained, it was quite challenging for them to hold his father up: "They were unable to walk, and when the husband of my wife's sister stopped, the soldier ordered them to move on and leave him, threatening to shoot them if they didn't."

Qunita told the Euro-Med Monitor team that they were forced to leave his father behind and "in fear", and that the family had been "looking for him everywhere" ever since. "We discovered his body on the inside of Al-Shifa [Medical

Complex]'s surgery building wall on 8 April 8," he said.

Dr Khalil Ahmed Hamadeh, Director General of Forensic Medicine and Forensic Evidence, told Euro-Med Monitor that the medical and forensic teams working at Al-Shifa Medical Complex right now are having a lot of trouble trying to "collect the remains of the victims, and inventory them and identify their owners, especially since many of them are 'deformed' or 'have already begun to decompose'." The doctor continued, "We are attempting to identify victims' severed bodies, which were buried with bulldozers and [thus] started to decompose significantly. We are making every effort, but the bodies are incomplete and mutilated, and the remnants and body parts are dispersed throughout the area."

"After the end of the siege, the medical, nursing, and administrative staff who were present in Al-Shifa [Medical Complex] were unaccounted for, and we did not know their fate even now," Dr Jadallah Al-Shafi'i, Director General of Nursing at Al-Shifa, told the Euro-Med Monitor team. A total of 47 persons were reported missing, including four confirmed victims: 15 doctors, including anesthesia technician Ahmed Al-Maqadma;<sup>17</sup> nurses; Mohammed Zaher Al-Nono, the head of the pharmacy department; five laboratory technicians (one of whom was killed by the Israeli army); Bahaa Al-Kilani, the head of the



engineering and maintenance department; and seven administrators.

“Counting the bodies, searching through mounds of bodies and victims’ remains, and excavating graves are being done by medical teams in collaboration with the municipalities,” Al-Shafi’i told Euro-Med Monitor. “However, the majority of the bodies are unknown, hard to identify, and decomposed.”

Explained Al-Shafi’i, “They cannot be identified [immediately], and it is not possible to identify them through body examination. A large number of bodies were dispersed by the sweeping. You will discover a limb, a foot, or a corpse’s skull, but not the entire body.”

Israel’s army committed its crimes in Al-Shifa Medical Complex with blatant disregard for international humanitarian law, particularly the principles of distinction, proportionality, military necessity, and the special protection afforded to civilian hospitals and medical teams. The Israeli army has also, in its Al-Shifa massacre, disregarded the protection afforded to civilians, including the displaced, whether in their official capacity or not, as their targeting is prohibited, even if they are military personnel.

The destruction of Al-Shifa Medical Complex must be viewed within the framework of its medical and societal symbolism for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and within the framework of the crime of

genocide carried out by Israel against the Palestinian people in the Strip, ongoing since 7 October 2023. Its destruction serves as further evidence of Israel's systematic, organised, and broad plan to destroy the lives of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Israel aims to turn the Strip into an uninhabitable place that lacks the most basic components of life and basic services, through a series of integrated crimes, the most serious of which is the systematic and widespread targeting of the health sector, i.e. putting it out of commission through destruction and siege, bringing it to the point of no return, and depriving Palestinians of the chances of survival, life, recovery, and even shelter.

Attempts have been made by Israeli political and military institutions to strip hospitals across Gaza of their special international legal protection because they are among the civilian objects that are protected under international law. Additionally, Israel has claimed that armed factions are using hospitals as military headquarters and/or bases for military attacks, without providing evidence to support these claims, which are meant to justify their destruction. It is important to remember that civilian hospitals have unique international legal protection that must always be respected and that all civilians within them must be protected from the dangers of military operations, including targeting and siege.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is among the international

organisations present and functioning in the Gaza Strip, and has a responsibility to record all forensic evidence pertaining to the serious crimes perpetrated by Israel inside and outside Al-Shifa Medical Complex and to hear victim and witness testimonies.

The international community must act swiftly and forcefully to defend Palestinian civilians against the genocide that Israel has been committing in the Gaza Strip for the past six months. This action should include safeguarding the ill, injured, displaced, medical personnel, and journalists, as well as applying genuine pressure on Israel to cease its grave crimes in the region, including those committed against medical facilities, as well as its forced displacement and starvation of civilians.



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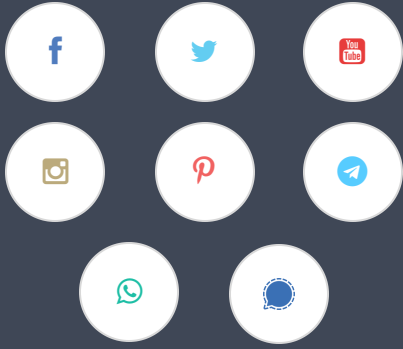
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