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Overcrowded hospitals in Gaza at imminent risk of full-scale Israeli military attacks

10 November 2023



Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) is raising the alarm about the imminent threat of full-scale military assaults against hospitals in northern Gaza, and demanding that the international community take urgent action to protect them from attack.

Palestinian health services have come under repeated attack during Israel's indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza since 7 October. According to the World Health Organization, 36 health facilities including 22 hospitals have been damaged.

Early on Friday 10 November, the grounds of the Shifa Hospital were targeted with an [Israeli airstrike](#) and [several people were injured](#). The Nasser Hospital was also targeted and attacks caused a fire at the [Rantisi children's hospital](#). Human Rights Watch have reviewed satellite imagery showing Israeli forces [encircling Shifa Hospital](#), and called on world leaders to "act to prevent further mass atrocities".

Israel has ordered 12 still-functioning hospitals in northern areas to evacuate, making threats against them with increasingly bellicose rhetoric. These essential facilities contain thousands of patients, hundreds of staff trying to treat the ever-growing number of wounded, and tens of thousands of displaced people seeking shelter from Israel's bombs. They must be protected from attack, and medical supplies, food, water and fuel must be allowed to reach them.

MAP is deeply concerned by statements from official Israeli government [spokespersons](#) spreading disinformation that seeks to discredit the vital work of Palestinian health workers who are trying to save lives in the most difficult of circumstances.

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We are also concerned by an [article in the Telegraph](#) published on Tuesday 7 October, which claimed erroneously that the Indonesian Hospital in Gaza is now “empty” of patients and being used “to wage war” by militant groups. MAP has spoken to medics at the hospital, who have provided photos and testimony confirming that it remains filled with patients and staff, and is still providing services despite severe shortages of medicines, equipment and fuel.

MAP is not aware of any evidence that the hospital has been used for military purposes, and it retains its protected status under international law. This irresponsible reporting endangers the lives of Palestinian civilians and undermines the protection of healthcare workers and facilities. On the evening of 9 November, Israeli airstrikes close to the Indonesian Hospital [reportedly injured a number of displaced people](#) sheltering in the hospital's grounds.

Dr Mohamad Al Aroun, the Head of the Indonesian Hospital's Surgical Departments told MAP: “The hospital is overcrowded with patients and displaced people. We are looking for a way to make space, and find empty beds to treat new patients. The hospital is full, there is no space anywhere, not in the reception, operation room, care facilities, and even all the hospital corridors.”

Melanie Ward, MAP's CEO, said: “Without urgent action from the international community, including the UK government, Gaza's hospitals remain at serious and imminent risk of full-scale military attacks. Given Israel's persistent history of violations against Palestinian healthcare, [documented by MAP and partners over many years](#) and carried out with blanket impunity, political leaders should take our warnings seriously and act swiftly.”

“Palestinian civilians and healthcare must be protected and Israel must cease its attacks on hospitals now. The media must also be responsible in their reporting and ensure they do not become complicit in Israel's ongoing attacks against healthcare.”

Please join us in [demanding a #CeasefireNOW](#).

Take action

Photo: Doctors treating patients inside the overcrowded Indonesian Hospital, 8 November 2023. (Supplied to MAP by the Indonesian Hospital).

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