

# The destruction of Shifa Hospital is latest evidence of Israel's systematic dismantling of Gaza's health system

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After a two-week-long invasion and siege, the Israeli military withdrew from Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa Hospital, on 1 April, leaving it in ruins and completely out of service. The hospital's main surgery building, its intensive care unit, and emergency, general surgery, and orthopaedic departments have [all been destroyed](#).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 21 patients died during the siege due to the denial of access to medical care by Israeli forces. For two weeks, multiple attempts by humanitarian organisations to evacuate patients trapped inside were denied by the Israeli military. Dozens of bodies, many of which were dismembered, [have also been found](#) in the hospital's grounds.

During their siege, the Israeli military used the area around the hospital's outpatient clinic as a space to detain and interrogate healthcare workers. Israeli forces killed hundreds of Palestinians around Shifa, including at least [two doctors](#), Dr Ahmad al-Maqadmeh and his mother Yusra, while they were at their home in an area nearby the hospital. Dr Ahmad was a promising young plastic surgeon who had worked with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)'s team in Gaza and completed MAP's [general surgery programme](#). We mourn his loss.

Sixty of the 100 patients trapped in Shifa Hospital for two weeks were transferred to al-Ahli Hospital on 1 April. Dr Tayseer al-Tanna, a vascular surgeon now working at al-Ahli, after [fleeing Shifa Hospital](#), told MAP that 15 of the 60 patients needed limb amputations, at least 10 of which were only necessary because the patients were without any proper medical care during the Israeli military's siege of Shifa. Doctors at al-Ahli Hospital also reported that wounds had been left without care and had become infected with maggots.

Dr Tayseer reports that some of the dressings he changed on patients released from Shifa Hospital were the dressings he, himself, had applied to the same wounds two weeks previously. He also reports that all patients

were severely malnourished, including critically ill siblings Rafif and Rafiq Doughnosh, who MAP had been working with partners to evacuate for two weeks. The Israeli military denied the evacuation attempts.

Following the destruction of Shifa Hospital, at least 350,000 Palestinians in the north are now served by as few as 200 hospital beds, with Kamal Adwan and al-Ahli hospitals operating at just 30% and 70% capacity, respectively, and lacking many of the specialist services that were available at Shifa.

The WHO recommends a minimum of 2.3 hospital beds per 1,000 people for a well-functioning healthcare system in normal circumstances. Northern Gaza currently has less than one bed per 1,000 people, [while a famine is setting in](#) and the whole population faces [the plausible risk of genocide](#), according to the International Court of Justice.

MAP has been warning for months that the Israeli military is systematically dismantling the healthcare system in Gaza. The destruction of Shifa Hospital is the latest evidence that this is the case. Dr Tayseer reports that he has never witnessed such levels of destruction in his life before and that rebuilding the hospital could take more than 20 years.

Attacking healthcare facilities violates international humanitarian law. We call on the international community to take urgent action to protect the remaining hospitals in Gaza and ensure accountability for perpetrators who violate international humanitarian law. Israel must also be held to its legal duty to restore the damage created by its attacks on Gaza's hospitals.

MAP insists on unfettered humanitarian access to the people in the north of Gaza as ordered by the International Court of Justice, as well as an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. We also call on Israel's allies, including the UK, to immediately cease the transfer of arms and other military equipment to Israel.

**Famine is imminent in Gaza and half the population is facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity. [Email your MP now](#) to demand action to stop starving Gaza.**

[Email your MP](#)

Photo: The destruction of Shifa Hospital.

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