

UN experts horrified at blatant disregard for health rights in Gaza following deadly raid on Kamal Adwan hospital

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GENEVA – The UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, today called for an end to blatant disregard of the right to health in Gaza, following last week's raid on Kamal Adwan Hospital and the arbitrary arrest and detention of its director, Dr Hussam Abu Safiya.

“For well over a year into the genocide, Israel's blatant assault on the right to health in Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory is plumbing new depths of impunity,” the experts said.

“We are horrified and concerned by reports from northern Gaza and especially the attack on the healthcare workers including the last remaining of 22 now destroyed hospitals: Kamal Adwan Hospital,” the experts said. “We are gravely concerned with the fate of Dr Hussam Abu

Safiya, yet another doctor to be harassed, kidnapped and arbitrarily detained by the occupation forces, in his case for defying evacuation orders to leave his patients and colleagues behind. This is part of a pattern by Israel to continuously bombard, destroy and fully annihilate the realisation of the right to health in Gaza.”

They noted that before his kidnapping, Dr Abu Safiya’s son was killed in front of him, and he was recently injured while on duty as a result of Israel’s genocidal acts. However he continued to provide care while the hospital was under continuous bombardment and threat.

More disturbing reports indicate that Israeli forces allegedly conducted extrajudicial executions of some people in the vicinity of the hospital, including a Palestinian man who was reportedly holding a white flag.

More than 1,057 Palestinian health and medical professionals have been killed so far and many have been arbitrarily arrested.

“The heroic actions of Palestinian medical colleagues in Gaza, teach us what it means to have taken the medical oath. They are also a clear signal of a depraved humanity that has allowed a genocide to continue for well over a year,” the experts said.

They stressed that medical personnel are civilians serving a critical function at the most critical moment, therefore enjoy special protections under international humanitarian law. They are not legitimate targets for attack, nor can they legitimately be detained for exercising their profession.

“Attacks on healthcare workers, hospitals, and healthcare facilities, including ambulances, contravene the fundamental right of individuals to access essential healthcare services, a matter of acute significance during times of armed conflict,” the experts said.

They called on Israeli authorities, as the occupying power, to respect and protect the right to life and the right to health in Gaza and the whole occupied Palestinian Territory, including – pending the end of their presence in the occupied territory – by ensuring unhindered access to

necessary healthcare and urgently restoring the continuity of essential health services in Gaza.

“Under occupation, intentional assaults on healthcare facilities have the potential to expose individuals to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and may constitute a war crime. In Gaza, this is clearly part of a well-established pattern of genocide, for which Israeli leaders will have to be held accountable,” the experts said.

“We urge Israel to end its current assault on Gaza and cease its attacks on healthcare facilities. They must also ensure the immediate release of Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, and all other arbitrarily detained healthcare workers. May they be the last arbitrarily arrested Palestinians, and may the new year begin under different auspices,” they said.

The experts: **Tlaleng Mofokeng, UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health**; and **Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967**.

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For additional information and **media requests** please contact: **hrc-sr-health@un.org**.

For **media enquiries** regarding other UN independent experts, please contact Dharisha Indraguptha (**dharisha.indraguptha@un.org**).

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