

Al Shifa Hospital Is the Site of Death, Torture and Rape by the IDF

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Soldiers in uniforms round up civilians at gunpoint. They separate the men from the women and children. The men are stripped naked and blindfolded, then taken into a room by the soldiers, [gunshots are heard](#), and finally only the soldiers emerge from the room. The scene, panic, terror and brutality remind us of the Nazi abuse of Jews in the holocaust. But, this time it is the Jews who are killing and abusing, having learned nothing of humanity from their past suffering.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) entered Al Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza city on March 18 and have claimed to have made [500 arrests](#). Doctors and nurses are made to be guides to the 500 IDF invading soldiers as they search the hospital and torture their victims. Patients, their families and medical staff have been forced to stand outside the hospital as human shields, protecting the IDF from resistance to the occupation of the hospital, while 250 people have been killed by the IDF since entering the hospital.

Although most of those arrested were males, in some cases they did arrest mothers and their children. When the women and children became unnecessary to the IDF goals, they forced them to walk long distances to the south without and water or food for days. When they finally arrived in the south, some were near death from dehydration and the children starving.

Al Shifa is the largest medical complex in Gaza. It began as a [British Army barracks](#), and over the decades of use as a hospital, areas were added on and in the 1980's Israel constructed underground bunkers which included a tunnel system.

The hospital was first attacked and raided on November 15, 2023, with the UN, WHO and

other humanitarian organizations condemning the attack which caused the deaths of patients and premature babies. The IDF claimed the Al Shifa hospital was being used by Hamas as a command center, and pointed to the Israeli built tunnels under the hospital as having supported Hamas and its resistance fighters. Despite the IDF's incessant accusation, the Washington Post and Amnesty International both said there was no credible evidence to support the IDF's claim.

Since then, the hospital has been under intermittent attack by the IDF, culminating in the recent invasion and occupation of the hospital which has resulted in mass arrests, executions, sexual abuse, humiliation of innocent civilians, deprivation of both water and food, and the attack on civilian homes near the hospital.

The IDF goal was to justify their claim that Al Shifa served as a Hamas asset. If they couldn't find the evidence they needed, they could manufacture the proof they sought. The IDF needed to arrest hundreds of men and claim they were Hamas resistance fighters, or their allies. The hospital was sheltering 30,000 people, and many were men accompanied by their families. But, the IDF needed more men, so they began attacking the homes surrounding the hospital, and then invading the homes and removing the males found to add to their list of fighters they were creating

One family in a nearby house hunkered down and tried to survive by hiding in a small room, while the father of the large family would crawl to the kitchen to find anything to feed his children. Then the house began to fall apart after days of shelling, which allowed the IDF to invade the home and remove the man, blindfolded and naked. This was repeated among the neighborhood.

Gaza is a conservative society, and men and women wear clothes to cover themselves up as a sign of respect of themselves, their family and their society. Whereas in the West, going shirtless and in very short shorts might be acceptable, in Gaza it is not. [The IDF stripped arrested men to their under pants alone](#) and sent them to the neighboring houses near Al Shifa to warn residents they had 30 minutes to evacuate or die in the bombing.

The eye witness accounts are coming out of Gaza about severe sexual abuse by the IDF. Females have reported being raped by IDF soldiers in a gang rape scene, as well as alone in front of their fathers, brothers or husband. In the religious and conservative society of Gaza, these crimes will be hushed up, swept under the rug, in an effort by male members of the family to preserve the honor and dignity of the victim. However, this leaves the victim to deal with the trauma of sexual abuse alone, and without a support system that gets the facts into the light of day. The abuse and trauma are magnified because she can't talk about it. But, many women and girls are defying the taboos and telling their story to humanitarian workers.

There are no foreign journalists in Gaza. The one and only foreign journalist who was granted a Visa to go inside Gaza by the Israelis was CNN's Clarissa Ward, and she was only allowed several hours in December. Despite the bombardment and siege of Gaza, emails, Facebook messages and Whatsapp messages and videos continue to emerge from the battle zone.

Al Shifa hospital's current nightmare is but one of many healthcare service providers in Gaza who have been under siege. Food and medicine had been going into Gaza in a slow trickle, but now the doors are shut and sealed. Israel refuses to allow any UN trucks into

Gaza after they claimed the UNRWA is in a conspiracy with Hamas. Other humanitarian aid groups say their aid is also prevented from entering Gaza.

More than 32,200 Palestinians have since been killed and over 74,500 injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities.

The international community agrees that only a ceasefire along with massive aid distribution can save Gaza from genocide and starvation. Yesterday, the UN Security Council passed a non-binding resolution calling for a ceasefire for the remainder of the month of Ramadan. But, will Israel comply? The International Court of Justice gave Israel an instruction to improve the humanitarian aid into Gaza or face an ultimate ruling by the court of genocide. However, Israel until now has completely disregarded the court's urging.

In the end, only US President Joe Biden holds the keys to turning off the IDF war machine in Gaza. Only Biden has the power to cut off the weapons flow to Israel. But, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stood firm on his promise to invade Rafah, whether it causes mass deaths beyond comprehension, or not. Will Netanyahu enter Rafah in defiance of Biden and the UN? If he does, will Biden turn on the red-light?

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This article was originally published on [Mideast Discourse](#).

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Featured image: Some of the wounded at al-Shifa hospital (Gaza Health Ministry)

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