

Another Israeli Attack on a Hospital, Another War Crime

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, July 21, 2014

Gaza Ministry of Health

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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PRESS RELEASE, MINISTRY OF HEALTH GAZA

July 21, 2014

The Ministry of Health Gaza strongly condemns today's attacks on health facilities and personnel by the Israeli occupation forces, and expresses its deep concern at the serious implications for patients, health personnel and provision of critical medical care.

Israeli tanks attacked Al Aqsa hospital in Deir Al Balah three times this afternoon, killing five patients and doctors, and injuring more than 70.

The third and fourth floors, housing the emergency department, orthopaedic department, surgical department, and the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) were destroyed. Operating theatres had to cease work because of the lack of oxygen.

Patients are being evacuated to the already over-stretched Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, and the European Gaza Hospital between Rafah and Khan Younes, which has also been damaged by Israeli fire.

"At a time when hospitals are overwhelmed with patients because of the brutal Israeli offensive, it is vital that these facilities be protected and medical staff be allowed to provide urgent medical, surgical and obstetric care to patients without any risk," said Dr Medhat Abbas, Director of Al Aqsa Hospital.

Today's atrocity is the latest in a series of Israeli attacks on hospitals in Gaza, in clear breach of the Geneva Convention.

The European Gaza Hospital was struck on July 9, damaging the ICU and the paediatric unit, and injuring a nurse. The Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital was struck by rockets several times, eventually forcing the evacuation of 17 high-dependency patients amid fire and smoke on July 17.

Beit Hanoun hospital was hit on July 18 and 19, the first strikes targeting an area containing a children's ward, reception area, and doctors' offices. The next day ten shells were fired around it, injuring many and causing extensive damage in the area.

Six Primary Health Care clinics and four ambulances have been damaged, 13 health facilities closed, 20 health personnel injured, and a pharmacist and a paramedic have been

killed, in addition to today's casualties.

We deplore the escalating violence against Gazan civilians and civilian infrastructure, and demand that the Israeli occupation respect their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, health facilities and health professionals.

We note that attacks against health facilities can be considered war crimes under international law, and call upon the international community and the United Nations to take immediate action to prevent further such outrages against the Gazan citizenry by the Israeli occupation.

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