

Gaza Hospitals in Crisis: Surgery being Performed in Corridors, on the Floor

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, July 31, 2014

Gaza Ministry of Health

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

Press Release

Gaza Ministry of Health, Palestine

July 31, 2014

Gaza hospitals are operating under impossible conditions, with surgery now being performed in corridors and on the floor due to the sheer numbers of wounded from massacres such as Shati park, UNRWA school and Shujeiyah market.

Lack of theatre space sees two persons being operated on at a time in the same theatre, while others receive surgical interventions in the corridors.

Even beds are in such short supply that surgeons are forced to undertake complicated procedures while their patients lie on stretchers on the floor.

There is nowhere to send the patients post-operatively, with Shifa ICU full, and no vacant beds in surgical wards. Some surgical cases have been sent to maternity and internal medicine hospitals, and to other hospitals outside Shifa medical complex.

Despite 30 patients being ready for discharge, they literally have nowhere to go. These 30 beds are desperately needed.

Wards are full to overflowing, with patients lying on mattresses in the corridors. It has deteriorated to the extent that patients have even been sharing beds, and others are being discharged prematurely.

In many cases no patient notes are being recorded contemporaneously or files created because the staff just cannot take the time away from treating the high volume of patients. Some details are being recorded afterwards, but this is less than ideal.

These conditions are a recipe for disaster.

Infection control is well-nigh impossible, and post-operative complications including death will be inevitable.

Deaths are already occurring from a lack of timely treatment, as the numbers of patients far exceed the capacity of the staff. We estimate that we have a 50% shortfall in staff numbers to deal with the case loads presenting for treatment, resulting in some patients receiving

suboptimal care and others receiving none at all.

Current staff are as overburdened as the facilities they serve, working without pay for 24 hours on a day-on, day-off roster. All surgeons and surgical staff have been recalled, to cope with the sheer numbers. They are suffering enormous stress, not only from lack of rest, the horrendous injuries they are dealing with and the under-resourced conditions under which they work, but also due to constant fear for their families, and fear of attack as hospitals have increasingly become targets of Israeli fire.

The Ministry of Health Gaza calls for:

1. The UN, ICRC and other international NGOs to provide as a matter of urgency safe and hygienic shelters for the discharge of displaced patients to free up desperately-needed hospital beds;
2. the borders to be opened immediately to enable the entry of urgently-required medical teams and equipment to alleviate the workloads; and
3. the international community to take immediate and concrete action to reign in the unfettered Israeli war crimes in Gaza.

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